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By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Asks For It!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter addressed Harry Wharton & Co. at the breakfast-table on board the Golden Arrow yacht.

Bunter had been silent for several minutes.

This was not only due to the fact that his plump jaws had been busily engaged upon the excellent provender provided by Mr. Vernon-Smith for his guests on the Golden Arrow.

Bunter had been thinking.

To judge by their expressions, Harry Wharton & Co. were thinking also, and not very agreeable thoughts. The chums of the Greyfriars Remove were breakfasting almost in silence, each fellow busy with his own reflections.

Perhaps that was why no one heeded Bunter's remark.

Having made his remark, Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles, as if expecting a general movement of interest.

Instead of which the Famous Five and Smithy and Tom Redwing continued their breakfast, as if they were deaf or as if William George Bunter had not spoken.

Bunter frowned.

"I say, you fellows!" he repeated, more emphatically.

"Don't bother!" said Bob Cherry laconically.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up, old bean!" said Harry Wharton.

"Look here—"

"The talkfulness of the esteemed Bunter is somewhat terrific," murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I've got an idea!" hooted Bunter.

"Boil it!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"You silly ass!"

"Give us a rest, Bunter!" said Vernon-Smith.

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"If that's what you call politeness to a guest, Smithy—"

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the Bounder of Greyfriars, and opened his mouth for a wrathful reply. Then he remembered his breakfast, and filled his capacious mouth instead of delivering an indignant speech.

For some minutes Bunter's jaws were too busy for speaking. The other fellows were silent. From Mr. Vernon-Smith's state-room the millionaire's voice could be heard, talking to his man Soames. Mr. Vernon-Smith's voice was loud and angry, and Soames' answers were in a soft, deferential murmur. Mr. Vernon-Smith was evidently in a bad temper that morning, and his man Soames was getting the benefit of it. James Soames' position as valet and confidential servant to a millionaire had its advantages, but it appeared to have its drawbacks also.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bunter restarted after the interval.

No reply.

"I say, Smithy, your pater seems to be in rather a bate this morning!" grinned Bunter.

The Bounder did not answer.

"He's giving it to Soames—what?"

"Mind your own business!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Can't you dry up?" demanded the Bounder.

"I've got an idea!" hooted Bunter.

"I want to put it to you, Smithy. Now, this voyage looks like being mucked up, doesn't it?"

"Well?" snapped the Bounder.

"It's all Redwing's fault—"

"Mine?" exclaimed Tom Redwing, staring across the table at the Owl of the Remove.

"Yes, yours!"

"How do you make that out, fat-head?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"It's that blinking chart," said Bunter. "Redwing's got a chart that

his uncle or his grandfather, or somebody, sent him from somewhere or other, and somebody or other is after the blessed thing! There's a man on this yacht who is after it. You all know that!"

"No need for you to tell us what we know!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"First of all, the fellow, whoever he is, collared Redwing one night," pursued Bunter. "It's rather a pity he didn't collar me—I could have handled him. Redwing couldn't—"

"Ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" retorted Bunter cheerfully. "Next, the fellow collars Vernon-Smith, and if I hadn't happened to be on board, goodness knows what would have happened! I saved Smithy's life and—"

"Rats!"—from Smithy.

"I don't expect gratitude. But facts are facts. The fellow had Smithy by the neck last night on deck, and if I hadn't rushed to the rescue, what would have happened?"

"You didn't rush to the rescue," said Bob Cherry. "You just yelled like a cat with its tail trodden on!"

"I called for help!" said Bunter, with dignity. "Smithy would have got it in the neck if help hadn't come. You fellows were snoring in your bunks. I'm not the chap to talk about what I do—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Nothing of the kind!" roared Bunter. "But, as I said, facts are facts. I stood by Smithy in the hour of—of fearful peril, and shaved his wife—I mean saved his life! Saved the chart, too, as Redwing had given it to Smithy to mind for him. Much better hand it to me—I could have taken care of it. Still, I saved Smithy's life—"

"Are you wound up?" asked Smithy.

"There's such a thing as gratitude, Smithy, though you don't seem to have heard of it," said Bunter scornfully.

"I've let you stick on the voyage, after you stowed yourself away on the

yacht," said Vernon-Smith. "That makes us quits. I meant to kick you out at Port Said. Now shut up!"

"But according to what your pater says, there isn't going to be any voyage," snorted Bunter. "He said to the captain that unless the man who attacked you was found, he wouldn't take the yacht on to the South Seas at all!"

"I know that, ass!" grunted the Bounder.

"Well, that mucks it up," said Bunter. "Now, I've got an idea. That chart of Redwing's is all rubbish, of course. I dare say there isn't any Caca Island at all—anyway, there aren't any pearls buried there; and if there are, you fellows could never find them. My idea is, chuck up the whole thing."

"Fathead!"

"We're in the Mediterranean now," continued Bunter. "The weather's good, and we can have a good time here, cruising about. I suggest chucking that rotten chart overboard——"

"What?"

"Then the man who is after it will chuck up, you see—there won't be anything for him to go for," said Bunter. "The thing's no use, as I've explained to you, so it won't be any loss. We'll have a Mediterranean cruise, and put in at Monte Carlo and try our luck at the tables, and all that—in fact, I think I could have a very good time."

"Which is all that matters?" inquired Bob Cherry, with deep sarcasm.

Sarcasm was wasted on Bunter.

"Exactly!" he assented. "I came out here to have a good time, you know. I don't want to waste the summer holidays. I turned down a lot of invitations to come on this yacht, and it's up to Smithy to see that I don't waste my time. You see that, Smithy?"

"Idiot!"

"Look here——" roared Bunter.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Aren't you finished yet?"

"No!" hooted Bunter. "After saving Smithy's life——"

"If you hadn't been a fat funk you'd have got hold of that villain who collared me," growled the Bounder. "If you hadn't been a blind owl you'd have spotted who he was, at least, and we should have been able to lay him by the heels. It's all your fault that he isn't in irons now."

"Well, I like that!" gasped Bunter.

"Now cheese it!"

"But what about my idea?" demanded Bunter. "We should enjoy a cruise in the Mediterranean. The South Seas are all rot—let 'em rip. I'll look after you fellows, and show you the sights and all that. We can rely on getting good food here; and how do you know what we shall get in the South Seas? I dare say you haven't thought about that at all!" added Bunter crushingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I suppose you wouldn't mind chucking that silly chart overboard, Redwing?"

"Well, just a little, I think," said Tom Redwing, laughing.

"I've told you it's no good," said Bunter impatiently. "Your uncle—— Was it your uncle?"

"Yes, it was my uncle."

"Well, then, your uncle was, I understand, only a common seafaring fellow, just like you are yourself. Isn't that right?"

Redwing looked at the Owl of the Remove.

"That's right," he said quietly.

"Well, then, my belief is that he had been drinking in one of those South Sea ports, and simply fancied it all about

the pearls, and all that. Don't you think it's likely?"

Redwing did not answer that.

"It's just a boozy seaman's yarn, that's all," said Bunter. "Can't you see that, Redwing?"

Squash!

An egg whizzed across the table from Herbert Vernon-Smith, and squashed on Bunter's fat little nose.

There was a roar from Bunter.

Bunter liked eggs, and had already disposed of four or five during breakfast. But he did not like them taken externally. He roared and spluttered.

"Groooogh! Ooooh! Beast! Ooooh!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Well, you asked for it, Bunter. You're always asking for it."

"Ooooh! You cheeky beast, Smithy!" roared Bunter, mopping his eggy face with a handkerchief. "If you call that a joke—— Ooooh!"

The Bounder glared across the table at William George Bunter.

"Do you want another?" he snapped.

"Ow! Ooooh! No!"

"Then shut up!"

And Billy Bunter, at long last, shut up. He mopped his fat, indignant face, and devoted himself to breakfast in wrathful silence. Since the service he

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fun and entertainment to
be had out of the

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on pages 14 and 15 of
this bumper issue, chums.
Have a peep at it and
then get your pals to join
you in a game!

had rendered Vernon-Smith, the stow-away of the Golden Arrow had been allowed to count himself a guest on board the yacht. But evidently Vernon-Smith did not regard him as he regarded his other guests. William George Bunter tried the patience of all the Greyfriars fellows sorely; and the Bounder, at least, seemed to have little patience to waste on him.

Breakfast finished in silence, and Harry Wharton & Co. left the table—leaving Billy Bunter there, still going strong. Bunter's opinion of Herbert Vernon-Smith as a host could hardly have been expressed in words; but fortunately the Bounder's manners did not affect his appetite. That would have been the most serious of calamities; but luckily it was a calamity that was never likely to happen to William George Bunter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Mr. Vernon-Smith Settles It!

"NONSENSE!"

Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith fairly boomed.

The millionaire's plump face was red, and his eyes sparkled under his knitted brows.

There was no doubt that Smithy's pater was angry; and, like the prophet of old, he considered that he did well to be angry.

Certainly the recent occurrences on board the Golden Arrow were enough to make any man angry.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was combining a business trip to the Far East with a holiday cruise for his son and his son's school friends. Money was nothing to Mr. Vernon-Smith; it was spent like water to make the trip a success. Certainly Mr. Vernon-Smith's business deals at Singapore and in the Marquesas Islands were likely to bring back his expenditure threefold or fourfold. All should have been calm and bright on board the handsome steam-yacht, gliding on its way over the sunny waters of the Mediterranean, heading for the Suez Canal on its southward journey. Instead of which, unexpected trouble had cropped up—trouble of the most amazing and extraordinary kind.

Mr. Vernon-Smith attached no importance whatever to the South Sea chart in Tom Redwing's possession. The idea of hunting for treasure in the South Seas seemed to him just a romantic schoolboy idea—merely that, and nothing more.

So it was surprising and disconcerting to him to learn that there was some unknown person on the Golden Arrow who regarded the chart as being so valuable as to be worth both risk and crime.

Who the unknown person was was a mystery.

There was not a man on the yacht whom both the millionaire and his captain had not known for years.

Yet some unknown individual had attacked Herbert Vernon-Smith in the dark and half choked him, to obtain Redwing's chart from him.

After the attack on Redwing, Smithy had taken the chart into his keeping for safety. Somehow, the mysterious unknown had become aware of it. Redwing had been left alone; the attack had been made on the Bounder.

But for Billy Bunter's unexpected intervention, it would have been successful.

The man had to be found and put in irons; on that point, Captain Greene fully agreed with the millionaire.

The trouble was that the man could not be found.

Captain Greene had searched and investigated tirelessly; and now he made his report to the millionaire; and his report was that there was absolutely no clue to the unknown enemy.

"Nonsense!" puffed Mr. Vernon-Smith two or three times, with growing emphasis. "Utter nonsense!"

"There is no clue whatever, sir," said the worried skipper. "No reason at all for suspecting one man more than another."

"My son was attacked!" boomed the millionaire.

"I am aware of it, sir."

"He has the marks of the scoundrel's hands still on him."

"Quite so. But——"

"And you tell me that the man cannot be found."

"He cannot."

Mr. Vernon-Smith was purple with wrath.

"What? What? Am I to understand that this state of affairs is to continue? Is not my own son to be safe from murderous attacks on board my own yacht? Good gad! A pretty state of affairs!"

"I understand your feelings, sir. If you can suggest anything that can be done——"

"The man must be found!"

Captain Greene was silent. He was as perplexed and mystified as any man on board. He was deeply anxious to lay hold of the unknown scoundrel who had attacked Herbert Vernon-Smith in the

dark. But he could not effect impossibilities.

There was no clue.

The Bounder, seized from behind, had not even caught a glimpse of his assailant. Bunter had had a glimpse of him; but in the dark, and the Owl of the Remove was short-sighted, too. Bunter could only say that he had seen what seemed to him like a black shadow. That vague description might have applied to any man on the yacht.

"Well, I know what I shall do!" snapped Mr. Vernon-Smith. "If the man is not found before we reach Port Said, I shall leave the yacht there and proceed by liner to the East. My son shall not be exposed to murderous attacks on his holidays."

"It is inexplicable," said the skipper. "I can answer for every man in the crew."

"Nonsense!"

"Really, sir—"

"I repeat, sir, nonsense!" boomed the millionaire. "Of course, the man is one of the crew."

"It seems impossible that he could be one of the afterguard," admitted the captain. "But I have known every man forrard for years."

"The man must be found."

"I have done my best, sir."

"Nonsense!"

Captain Greene retired with a red face. He made allowance for his employer's anger and exasperation, both very natural. But he was not to be talked to like Soames.

Mr. Vernon-Smith snorted as he went.

"Soames!"

"Sir!"

The sleek manservant appeared instantly and silently, as was his wont.

"You will pack my baggage, Soames. I shall leave the yacht at Port Said."

"Very good, sir!"

And Mr. Vernon-Smith went on deck, to tramp to and fro with a very ruffled brow and console himself with a cigar. He called to the Bounder, who was on deck with his friends.

"Herbert!"

"Yes, dad!"

The Bounder came across to him.

"You and your friends had better be getting ready to leave the yacht. We shall proceed by liner."

Smithy's face fell.

"I am sorry, my boy, but we cannot

keep on in these circumstances," said the millionaire. "Such a state of affairs is intolerable. There is a man on board whom we cannot discover, but who seems to be some sort of a dangerous lunatic. I cannot have you exposed to such risks."

"Very well, dad," said the Bounder. "I suppose you know best."

"There's nothing else to be done. We cannot ship a fresh crew in a foreign port, and we cannot sail with a dangerous maniac on board. And that is what the man must be. Two murderous attacks have been made, for no reason whatever, that I can think of. The man must be mad."

"It was the chart, father—"

"Nonsense!"

"But it was, father," persisted the Bounder. "The man got it off Redwing when he attacked him, and Bunter found it where it was hidden away. Then I took charge of it, and I was attacked next. The man was after the chart."

The millionaire grunted.

"If that is true, Herbert, it demonstrates that he must be mad to believe that the nonsensical thing is of any value."

And Mr. Vernon-Smith, much ruffled, walked on, and the Bounder rejoined the Greyfriars juniors.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wanted—Fifty Quid!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. gave the Bounder inquiring looks as he came back to them. His face was dark and grim.

"It's all up with the voyage," he said. "I'm sorry, you fellows! It's not my fault. The pater thinks we can't go on in the yacht with that scoundrel on board undiscovered."

"Well, he's right," said Harry Wharton. "It's a peculiar state of affairs, and it couldn't very well go on."

"It's all my fault," said Redwing ruefully. "It's the chart, of course! I've spoiled the cruise for you fellows."

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry. "I think Mr. Vernon-Smith is right; but I wish we were keeping on the yacht, all the same. I'd like to find out who that villain is before we quit."

"Yes, rather," said Nugent. "But I don't quite see how we're to find him out. There isn't the shadow of a clue. If we leave the yacht behind we shall leave him behind, at any rate."

"That's certain," said the Bounder. "The pater is taking Soames on with him, of course, but nobody else on board the yacht."

"Soames?" repeated Redwing.

"Yes; he will want his man on the steamer going east. The pater's valet is above suspicion, of course," added Vernon-Smith, with a slight smile.

"I suppose so."

The Bounder gave his chum a quick look.

"My hat! You haven't thought of Soames in connection with that unknown villain, have you, Reddy?"

The chums of the Remove smiled at the idea.

The sleek, deferential manservant was about the last man on board they would have thought of in such a connection.

Redwing coloured a little.

Deep in his heart was a vague distrust and suspicion of James Soames. Yet even to himself he admitted that the suspicion seemed absurd.

"Well, you see, suspicion is upon one man as much as upon another, so long as we know nothing for certain," said Tom.

The Bounder laughed.

"That's true, but I think we can safely count Soames out. Whoever is after the chart is a seaman, I fancy, who knows something about the South Seas, and knows it is possible that a cache of pearls exists on the island. Look here, you chaps, it's rather rotten having the voyage cut short like this, but we shall get where we want to go, and that, after all, is the chief thing."

"That's so," assented Wharton.

"My esteemed chums—" began Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Go it, Inky!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "What have you got in your old noddle now?"

"If I may make a suggestive remark—"

"If you mean a suggestion, fathead, go ahead!"

"The esteemed and execrable rotter who mopped up Smithy was after the chart," said the nabob of Bhanipur. "That is the certain and foregone conclusion, is it not?"

"That's so."

"If the chart was out of his reach his ridiculous and dastardly game would be up."

"Eh? Are you suggesting that Reddy should chuck it overboard?" asked Bob. "That was Bunter's big idea."

"I say, you fellows, it's a jolly good idea," chimed in the Owl of the Remove. "I think—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up!"

"I was not suggesting the chuckfulness of the esteemed chart into the sea," said the nabob. "But in Mr. Vernon-Smith's cabin there is a safe, which is terrifically strong. The esteemed and unknown rotter who is after the chart could not open the safe. Smithy's worthy pater has many valuables there, which are not in danger. Suppose the chart was locked up in the safe—"

"Oh, good!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Then the disgusting rascal may remain unknown, without doing any harm," said the nabob. "He is after the chart, and the chart will be out of his reach. If the esteemed Redwing will request Smithy's pater to lock the chart in the safe everything on the yacht will be lovely."

"That's a jolly good idea!" Harry Wharton. "The fellow won't bother anybody, except to get at the chart. We know well enough that that is what he is after."

"Only Smithy's pater doesn't believe the chart is of any value," said Nugent. "He thinks it's some lunatic that noddled Smithy last night."

"I'll put it to him, though," said the Bounder, brightening. "We know that it would make the matter all right, and I'll try to make the pater think so. I — What is it, Soames?"

The silent-footed Soames was at his elbow.

"Excuse me, sir," said Soames, in his soft voice. "Perhaps I can be of some assistance to you in packing—"

"I'm not sure, after all, that we shall have to pack," said Vernon-Smith.

Soames raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith has decided to leave the yacht at Port Said, sir," he answered. "In the very strange and unusual circumstances, sir, I am sure you young gentlemen see how necessary it is."

Redwing fixed his eyes on the man.

He was sure that Soames had heard the discussion among the juniors, and the thought forced itself into his mind that Soames desired the millionaire to keep to his decision to leave the yacht.

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Bunter blinked into the room and saw Soames with a large automatic in his hand, which he was examining before he packed it. The man stared round at Bunter, and a gleam of fury blazed in his eyes. The next moment he was his suave self again. "Dear me!" he said. "You startled me, Master Bunter." (See Chapter 3.)

If the chart was locked up in the great iron safe in the millionaire's state-room it would be safe from thievish hands. Was that Soames' motive?"

Then, as he scanned the respectful, sleek, deferential face, Redwing almost smiled at his own misgiving. If any man on the Golden Arrow was above suspicion, surely this sleek manservant was?

"If I may make a remark, sir—" went on Soames deprecatingly.

"Well?"

"Mr. Vernon-Smith is very much disturbed and put out, sir, by what has happened," said Soames. "He has resolved to leave the yacht at Port Said, and at present, sir, opposition may annoy him very much. I trust, sir, that you will excuse the liberty I am taking in making the observation."

The Bounder gave him a rather grim look.

"Certainly," he said, "I suppose you mean well, Soames. But I am going to make my father alter his mind, if I can."

"You know best, of course, sir," said Soames.

"I hope so," grunted the Bounder.

His look and tone indicated that he considered it impertinence on the part of James Soames to offer him advice. Soames moved quietly away, his face expressionless, and went below to proceed with the packing of his master's extensive baggage and his own.

Billy Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove when Soames was gone.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Don't what?"

"Don't say! Take a bight on your jawing tackle, old fat man."

"About my packing—" said Bunter.

"Your packfulness will not be terrific, as you have no esteemed baggage," remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"That's just it," said Bunter. "I came on board with what I stand up in. If we're going on a liner from Suez, I shall have to have some things. You fellows see that. Now, what about it?"

"Nothing about it," said Bob.

"I suppose I shall have to change my shirt some time before we get to the South Seas!" bawled Bunter.

"You should have thought of that when you stowed yourself away," chuckled Bob. "Still, you can do some shopping at Port Said."

"If you fellows will lend me fifty pounds—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Say twenty," said Bunter, moderating his transports, so to speak.

"Say what you like," agreed Bob.

"If you fellows are going to be mean I shall not be able to get an outfit at Port Said. I left my money at home."

"It won't take up much room there," granted Johnny Bull.

"Yah! Now my idea is, you fellows make contributions all round," said Bunter. "A shirt here, and a collar there, and so on. I can wear your collars, Nugent—"

"Can you?" said Frank, rather grimly.

"Yes. I've borrowed them at Greyfriars, you know."

"I know; and I know I've kicked you for it. If you want to be kicked again you've only got to start borrowing my collars."

"Your waistcoats will do for me, Wharton. I should have to slit them at the back. You wouldn't mind that."

"I think I should," said the captain of the Remove.

"Don't be selfish, Wharton. It's settled that you fellows hand out some of your things all round; it's the only way," said Bunter. "But I shall have to have a trunk. Can you lend me a trunk, Smithy?"

"No."

"Who can lend me a trunk?"

"Echo answers that the who-fulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Now look here, you fellows—"

"Go and ask Soames, and give us a rest!" snapped the Bounder. "Soames will be able to find you something. Tell him I told you."

Bunter grunted and rolled away to the companion and went below. He looked into the millionaire's state-room, but Soames was not there. He looked next into Soames' room, which adjoined the millionaire's. Bunter did not trouble to knock at the door before opening it; he had no good manners to waste on a valet. He pushed the door open and blinked in.

"You here, Soames? Oh, my hat!"

Soames was packing a suitcase, and as Bunter blinked in he had a large automatic pistol in his hand, which he was examining before he packed it. He started round as Bunter spoke, and a gleam of fury blazed in his eyes. His hand, as if unconsciously, closed on the butt of the automatic, and for the moment Bunter felt quite alarmed.

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But the next moment the manservant was his suave self again.

"Dear me! You startled me, Master Bunter," he said.

"What are you doing with that pistol?" demanded Bunter. "You made me jump—gripping it like that!"

"I am sorry, sir," said Soames. "You startled me, as I said. The pistol is not loaded, sir."

"Jolly queer thing for you to be packing a pistol," said Bunter, blinking at him.

"We are going to a dangerous quarter of the world, sir," said Soames gently. "I took the liberty, sir, of packing a firearm for that reason." He placed the automatic in the suitcase. "Did you wish to speak to me, sir?"

"Yes, I did," grunted Bunter. "Smithy says you're to find me a trunk for my baggage."

"It will be a pleasure, sir," said Soames. "I shall certainly be able to find you a trunk, Master Bunter, and I will do so immediately. Is there anything else I can do, sir?"

"Thanks, no," said Bunter, quite placated by Soames' respectful deference. "That's all right."

And he rolled away. Soames closed the door after him with a glitter in his eyes.

"The fat fool!" he muttered. "But it matters little, even if he babbles."

And Soames resumed his packing.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

MR. SAMUEL VERNON-SMITH sat in his deck-chair, with a frown on his plump face, watching the curls of smoke from his cigar float away across the white deck. The millionaire was still angry and disturbed. He was intensely irritated by the mysterious happenings on board the Golden Arrow, and still more exasperated by the skipper's failure to discover the culprit among the crew. That the unknown enemy was a member of the crew he had no doubt whatever, and, so far as he could reason the matter out, the man's conduct was that of a lunatic.

Having stated his opinion that Redwing's chart was nonsense, Mr. Vernon-Smith did not see fit to change his opinion, and did not think it worth while to look into the matter more closely. As he scoffed at the treasure story himself, he took it for granted that everyone else would, or should do so—excepting, of course, a set of schoolboys, whose romantic ideas he was willing to regard with indulgence. So he looked upon the attack on the Bounder as motiveless, and therefore the act of a lunatic. It was disturbing to think that some man on board was dangerously out of his right senses, and the millionaire did not like it at all.

"Have you done your packing, Herbert?" he asked, as the Bounder joined him.

"Not yet, dad. I want to talk to you first," said the Bounder, dropping into a chair beside his father.

"Well?"

"I want to tell you about the chart, father."

"Stuff and nonsense!"

"Let me tell you, all the same," said Smithy. "You know I'm no fool, dad, and I really believe that the chart is genuine, and gives the clue to a cache of pearls on a Pacific island."

"Rubbish!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "You may tell me what you like, but it

is all nonsense! Where did the chart come from?"

"Redwing's uncle was a seaman in the South Seas. He was killed somewhere in the islands, and sent the chart to his nephew by a shipmate. A seaman named Ben Dance—a man with a wooden leg—brought it half round the world to give it to Redwing."

"A foolish waste of time," commented Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"He was followed all the way from the South Seas by the half-caste, Silvio Zero, who tried to kill him to get the chart, more than once, from what he told us."

"Stuff!"

"But he really did get hold of the chart, dad, and we got it away from him. He threw a knife at me, and I had a jolly narrow escape," said Smithy. "I told you about that. The half-caste ran a lot of risk to get hold of the chart. Would he have done that without believing in it?"

"Some ignorant half-savage," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "No doubt he believed in the treasure."

"And some man on board this yacht has heard the talk about it, and believes in it, too," said Smithy. "Reddy was attacked, and I was attacked, simply to get at the South Sea chart. It really isn't some irresponsible lunatic, dad. It's some cunning rascal who believes in the treasure and wants to get hold of the clue to it. Some man who may have known Redwing's uncle in the South Seas, perhaps."

The millionaire grunted.

"It's possible," he said grudgingly. "From what you say, a number of fools seem to have believed in the treasure—and there may be one more fool on the Golden Arrow to add to the number."

"More rogue than fool, I think," said Smithy. "But the long and the short of it is, dad, that the chart is at the bottom of all the trouble. Hurree Singh has suggested locking it up in your safe. Once it is in a safe place, the man who is after it will chuck up the game. At least, he will let us alone. I suppose the safe's secure enough?"

"Secure enough, even against a professional cracksman," said the millionaire.

"Then that would settle the matter," urged the Bounder. "Lock up the chart, and let's keep on the voyage in the yacht."

Grunt—from Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"If the matter is as you think, Herbert, that would settle it. But if those attacks were made by some lunatic—" He paused. "Soames is a sensible fellow, and he thinks so—in fact, he made the suggestion to me to account for what has happened."

The Bounder knitted his brows.

"He might have minded his own business!" he grunted. "Nothing has happened to Soames, anyhow, and he has nothing to be afraid of."

"He has as much to fear as anyone if there is an irresponsible lunatic among the crew," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Still, I admit that there may be something in your view, Herbert. I am very reluctant to give up the voyage if it can be helped. If, as you think, the chart is the cause of the trouble—"

"I'm certain of that, father! And all the fellows think the same."

Another grunt from the millionaire. Obviously, Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith did not attach much importance to the opinion of a set of schoolboys.

"Give it a chance, anyhow," urged the Bounder. "We shall all be on our guard after what has happened, anyway. If there's any more trouble after the chart is locked up we can chuck the

voyage at any point—Aden, for example. Give the idea a trial."

The millionaire was silent for some moments; but he nodded at last.

"Very well, Herbert. I am going below now. Tell Redwing to bring me the chart, and I will lock it in the safe."

"Good!" exclaimed the Bounder.

Five minutes later the portly millionaire entered his cabin, the Greyfriars party following him as far as the door. Soames was in the state-room, packing. The millionaire glanced at him.

"Soames!"

"Sir?"

"You need not pack; I have decided not to leave the yacht."

"Indeed, sir!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith selected a small key on his watchchain.

"Now give me that chart, or whatever it is," he said.

He glanced rather curiously at the disc of teak as it was handed to him. But his interest in it was not deep. He unlocked the iron door of the safe, which was let into the wall of the state-room, and placed Black Peter's chart within. Then the door was closed and locked again, and the key returned to the millionaire's watchchain.

"Safe now, if it has any value!" he grunted. "I will hand it to you, Redwing, when we reach the Marquesas."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom.

"You really believe that that piece of wood contains a clue to a treasure in the Pacific?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith, eyeing the sailorman's son curiously.

"Yes, sir," said Tom. "My uncle would not have sent it to me for nothing. He must have believed in it, and he has spent almost all his life in the South Seas. He must have known whether the pearls were there or not."

"If they are there, how did he get hold of them in the first place?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"I don't know, sir."

"What sort of a man was your uncle?"

"I hardly remember him, sir. He was a big, powerful man with a black beard. He was called Black Peter. He had been away more than ten years when he met his death in the South Seas. He may have worked among the pearl fisheries, or—or—"

"Or lifted the pearls, what?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith, with a grim smile.

Redwing flushed.

"I think not, sir—I am sure not. But he may have found them—"

"It is possible that there is something in the story," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "No harm in you young fellows putting it to the test while I am engaged on business at the Marquesas. It will keep you amused during your holidays, at all events. But I shall have to take care that you are carefully looked after; I must place some responsible person in charge of you. That we can settle later, however. The chart is safe now; and when you leave the yacht at the Marquesas you will leave behind anyone who may have designs on it."

And the juniors returned to the deck, quite satisfied in their minds. Mr. Vernon-Smith, perhaps, was not quite so satisfied; it was difficult for him to believe that any sane man on the Golden Arrow believed in the chart to such an extent as to be prepared to commit crime to obtain possession of it.

But as the subsequent days passed the millionaire had to admit that it looked like it. For the unknown enemy, whose identity was still unknown and unsuspected, seemed to have vanished into thin air. The yacht threaded the Suez Canal and glided through the

glowing waters of the Red Sea, day following day of blazing heat and sunshine, and there were no more mysterious happenings on the Golden Arrow.

For some days the Greyfriars fellows were watchful and on their guard, but nothing happened, and gradually they dismissed the mysterious affair from their minds.

It was clear to all of them that the treasure chart had been the mysterious enemy's object; and now that it was not in possession of any of the juniors they were safe from the unknown rascal's attempts.

Even Mr. Vernon-Smith came to take that view at last.

The mystery was unsolved, but it no longer troubled the minds of the Greyfriars fellows.

Under the blazing Southern sun the Golden Arrow glided through the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and her prow cut the glistening waters of the Indian Ocean.

Day followed day of burning sunshine as the Golden Arrow glided ever and ever to the south and east.

"What did I tell you, dad?" the Bounder asked one hot, moonlight evening on deck, with Ceylon in view on the port side.

"Eh, what?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"About the chart——"

"Eh? Bother the chart!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Hasn't it all been plain sailing since it was locked up in the safe, dad?" grinned the Bounder.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "It seems that you were right, Herbert. Certainly there has been no trouble since. But, by gad, I should like to find out who the rascal was!"

"Whoever he was, he's still on the yacht," said Smithy. "You don't want to give him a chance to get hold of the key of the safe, father."

Mr. Vernon-Smith chuckled—a fat chuckle.

"There are more valuable things than the chart in the safe, Herbert. Depend upon it the key never goes out of my sight. I sleep with it under my pillow."

"Safe as houses!" agreed the Bounder. "But I wish you'd lock your state-room door at night."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the millionaire.

But Mr. Vernon-Smith was destined to discover that it was not stuff and nonsense, as he expressed it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Dead of Night!

"IT'S hot!" William George Bunter made that statement.

He made it in peevish tones at about midnight, and he made it to sleeping ears that heeded it not.

Now that the stowaway of the Golden Arrow had become a passenger on the yacht, he had been assigned the spare bunk in Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's state-room. Bunter was not wholly satisfied with the arrangement. On a millionaire's yacht, he did not see why he should not have a state-room all to himself. It was true that the other fellows went two to a room. But the other fellows, of course, did not matter so much as Bunter.

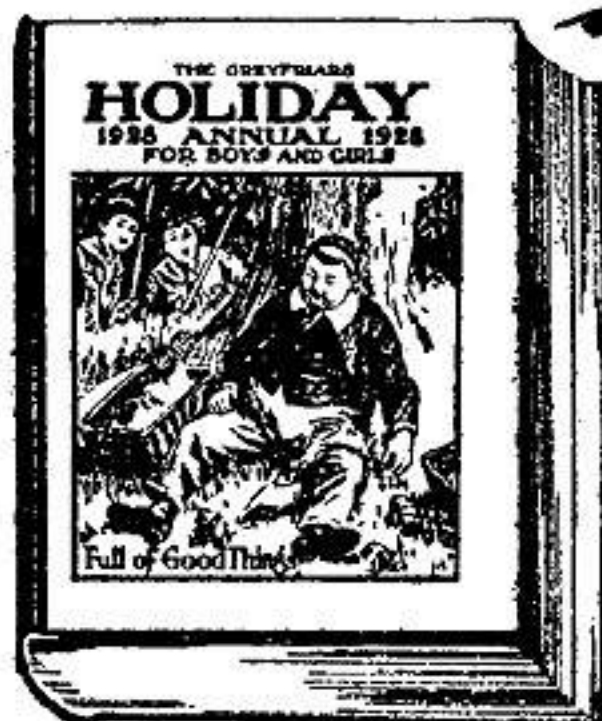
Still, there it was. Bunter had a bunk in Hurree Singh's room, and had to make the best of it. He groused considerably, while Hurree Singh, who really had much more reason for grouching, accepted the Owl of the Remove's company without complaint.

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When Bunter slept soundly, as he generally did, he snored. When he could not sleep, he talked. Sleeping or waking, William George Bunter had his drawbacks.

On this particular night it was very hot. Bunter did not know very much about the world he lived in, having a rooted objection to the acquirement of knowledge of any sort. But even Bunter must have known before he started that it would be hot in the Indian Ocean. But, to judge by his remarks, the heat he found off the shores of India was the outcome of some conspiracy on the part of the powers of Nature, just to make him uncomfortable.

He did not like it, and he was peeved. He seemed to regard it as a personal grievance.

"It's hot!" repeated Bunter, in a louder key.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in the lower bunk, made no reply. He was fast asleep, probably dreaming of Bhanipur and the ancient palace in the shadow of the Himalayas which was his home. Bunter had claimed the upper bunk, which Hurree Singh had occupied before the stowaway was discovered. The nabob had politely yielded the point. The polished politeness of the Indian junior was almost inexhaustible, and he needed it all in dealing with William George Bunter.

"I say, Inky!" Only quiet, regular breathing came from the bunk below.

Bunter snorted indignantly. "Sleeping like a blinking top!" he grunted. "I dare say the dashed nigger likes this heat! Beast! I say, Inky!"

Bunter could not sleep. When Bunter could not sleep, there was no necessity for anybody else to sleep, so far as Bunter could see.

"Inky!" he hooted.

Still no reply from Hurree Singh.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. "Fat lot he cares whether I can get to sleep or not! He doesn't care a straw if a

fellow's thirsty! A fellow might perish of thirst, and he would go on snoozing! I think he's about the most selfish of the lot, though they're all selfish beasts! Inky!"

Bunter reached down and groped for the nabob's shoulder to shake him into wakefulness.

It was the nabob's nose that his fat fingers encountered in the dark, but as that answered the purpose Bunter did not grope farther. He fastened a grip on Hurree Singh's nose, and shook.

There was a sudden howl from the nabob. He was awake now—there was no doubt about that.

"Whoooooooh! Ooooooh! What——" "Oh, you're awake, are you?" grunted Bunter.

"You fat and frabjous dummy!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Why have you awakened me?"

"It's hot!" "What?"

"Hot!" roared Bunter.

"Have you wakened me to tell me that it is hot, you esteemed idiot?" demanded Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I'm thirsty!"

"I trust that you are suffering terrifically!" answered Hurree Singh.

He seemed to be at the end of his politeness for once.

"Look here, Inky, you might get a chap something to drink!" said Bunter. "Go and wake up the steward, and tell him I want a lemon-squash!"

"The esteemed steward might throw a boot at me, fathead! Certainly I should deserve it!"

"I don't suppose he would, old chap, and if he did you could dodge, you know! Go and see!"

"And why cannot you go yourself, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Inky, I don't want to turn out in the middle of the night!"

"Oh!" gasped the nabob.

"Buck up, old fellow!" said Bunter.

"I'm frightfully thirsty! Look here, if you can't get me a lemon-squash, a

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glass of water will do! I never was a chap to give trouble!"

Bunter paused for a reply, but no reply came. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had settled down to sleep again.

Apparently he did not see why Bunter should not turn out in the middle of the night. There were many reasons, all of them good to Bunter, but Inky did not seem to see them.

"Inky! My hat, he's gone to sleep again! Niggers can sleep in this horrid heat! Makes a fellow almost wish he was a nigger!" groaned Bunter. "I say, Inky! Inky! Inky!"

"Will you let a fellow get some sleepfulness?" hissed the nabob from below.

"Don't be such a slacker, old chap! What about that lemon-squash?" asked Bunter. "Look here, if you're afraid to tackle the steward, go and wake up that man Soames! He's only a manservant, and he wouldn't have the cheek to say anything!"

"The esteemed Soames is entitled to a night's rest, fathead!"

"Rubbish! He's paid, isn't he?" snarled Bunter. "I don't believe in coddling servants! Go and call him, and tell him to bring me a lemon-squash, there's a good chap!"

"Will you shut up, you esteemed and execrable fathead?"

"Beast!"

It was obvious that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh did not intend to turn out. If anybody was to turn out on Bunter's account, apparently it had to be Billy Bunter himself. Bunter did not want to turn out. He was sleepless, which was unusual; but he was lazy, which was usual. But he made up his fat mind to it at last.

He rolled over and lowered his fat legs from the bunk. There was a sudden yell from the nabob.

"Ow! Yaroo!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "You fathead! You startled me! What are you howling about, you dummy?"

"Keep your idiotic toes out of my eye!" gasped Hurree Singh.

"Bother your eye!"

Bump!

"Ow!"

A dusky hand smote in the darkness, and Bunter landed on the floor of the state-room with a heavy concussion.

"You cheeky nigger!" gasped the fat junior. "I've a jolly good mind to have you out of that bunk and mop up the room with you!"

"The mopfulness will be a boot on the other leg if you do not shut up, fathead!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter sorted himself out, grunting, and groped round for clothes. Then he remembered the electric-light switch, and groped for it and turned it on. The state-room was flooded with light, and Bunter blinked in it like an owl. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh glared at him. He wanted to sleep—which did not matter at all to Bunter, but mattered somewhat to the nabob himself.

"Turn the light off, you fat duffer!" he snapped.

"Shan't!"

There was a switch beside the bunks, and Hurree Singh promptly turned it off. The state-room was dark again.

"Beast!"

Bunter turned it on again at the door. Hurree Singh promptly turned it off again at the other switch. Again the Owl of the Remove switched it on, and again the nabob switched it off.

Then the fat junior gave up the contest. He had found his trousers, and he plunged into them, and put on a pair

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of slippers. Then he opened the door of the state-room and stepped out into the alley-way. This opened into the saloon, where a light burned all night. Bunter rolled along, blinking round him. All was silent and still. The captain and mate had their berths in the charthouse above, and the steward's quarters were shut off by a door at the end of the alley-way. In the various state-rooms Harry Wharton & Co, and the Bounder and Tom Redwing, were sleeping the sleep of healthy youth, in spite of the heat. Probably Bunter would have been sleeping also had he not taken so many naps during the day.

Bunter had requested the nabob to knock up the steward, but he did not venture to do so himself. Neither did he think of waking up Soames, dashed manservant as he was. He knew where there was a locker containing supplies of lemonade, lime-juice, and soda-water, and he rolled to it. He was thirsty, and a cooling drink that hot night would be grateful and comforting. But as he reached the locker, Bunter paused, his round eyes opening wider behind his spectacles. The state-room occupied by the millionaire opened off the saloon itself, not off the alley-way. Bunter was only a few feet from the door, and he observed—he could not help observing—that a light gleamed under it. Apparently Mr. Vernon-Smith had not yet gone to bed.

Bunter blinked at the glimmer under the door.

There was something so odd about it, that his curiosity was aroused at once.

If the millionaire had a light on in his cabin, it would naturally be the electric light. But the light that glimmered under the door was not steady and clear. It moved, with alternations of light and shade. Obviously, it was not the electric light that was burning; it was an electric torch carried in the hand, and moving as the man who held it moved.

Bunter blinked.

In his surprise and curiosity, he even forgot that he was thirsty. A slight feeling of alarm rose in his breast also.

It was impossible to suppose that Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was lighting himself about his state-room with an electric torch, when he had the electric light switch at hand. It was not the millionaire who was holding that light.

Bunter's fat heart began to beat faster.

Someone was in the millionaire's state-room, who did not care to turn on the electric light to illuminate the room. If that was the case, it was someone who did not want to risk his presence there becoming known. Mr. Vernon-Smith, doubtless, was fast asleep. Bunter—who seldom remembered or thought of anything unconnected with his important self—had forgotten about the chart locked up in the safe. He remembered it now, with a sudden, terrified start.

The chart!

The unknown who had attacked Redwing, who had attacked the Bounder—it was he who was in the millionaire's cabin in this dead hour of the night—stealing the key of the safe from under the millionaire's pillow—unlocking the safe—

Bunter gasped.

From the millionaire's room came a faint sound—a sound that Bunter knew was made by a key being inserted into a lock.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bunter.

He made a step towards the juniors' state-rooms, to call them. Then he paused. Suppose he was mistaken

after all—suppose it was the millionaire who was unlocking his safe, for some reason, in the middle of the night—suppose—

Bunter hesitated, and then he crossed to Mr. Vernon-Smith's door, and tapped.

If it was the millionaire who was up, he would answer the tap. If it was the unknown thief, he was not likely to speak. The tap sounded loudly, sharply, in the silence. Bunter heard a sudden, startled gasp in the state-room, and every vestige of light vanished at once. That was enough for Bunter. Any other fellow in the Greyfriars party would have torn open the door, glad of a chance to get at the unknown marauder and discover his identity. The thought of doing so did not even cross Bunter's mind. He had no use for dangerous characters at close quarters.

He jumped away from the door—so far from thinking of opening it himself, he was terrified to think of the unknown opening it from within. He turned and rushed frantically back into the alley-way, and burst into the Bounder's room.

"Help! He's here—wake up—help—murder! Fire!" roared Bunter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A False Alarm!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH started out of sleep. In a twinkling he had switched on the electric light.

Bunter, in his excitement, clutched him by the arm.

"Quick! I say, Smithy—help! It's him!"

"What the thump—"

"What is it, Bunter?" exclaimed Tom Redwing.

"It's him!" gasped Bunter breathlessly and ungrammatically. "He's in the room—old Smith's room—"

Vernon-Smith was out of his bunk with a bound. At any other time, he would have paused to kick Bunter for alluding to Mr. Vernon-Smith as "old Smith." Now he was gone, as swiftly as an arrow from a bow. Tom Redwing was after him rapidly, but the Bounder's movements were like lightning. Incoherent as Bunter's words had been, Smithy had caught his meaning at once, and the thought of danger to his father was in his mind. On the instant he was wide awake, and his face was set and fierce as he darted out of his room, and raced across the saloon to his father's door.

He tore it open.

"Father!"

There was no answer from the room, and it was completely dark. Smithy felt for the light switch.

In a moment, the millionaire's state-room was flooded with light.

"Father!" panted the Bounder.

There was still no reply; but now that the state-room was lighted, he could see Mr. Vernon-Smith in bed.

The millionaire seemed to be sleeping calmly enough, and his son's sharp, anxious voice had not disturbed him.

Vernon-Smith threw almost a sobbing breath of relief.

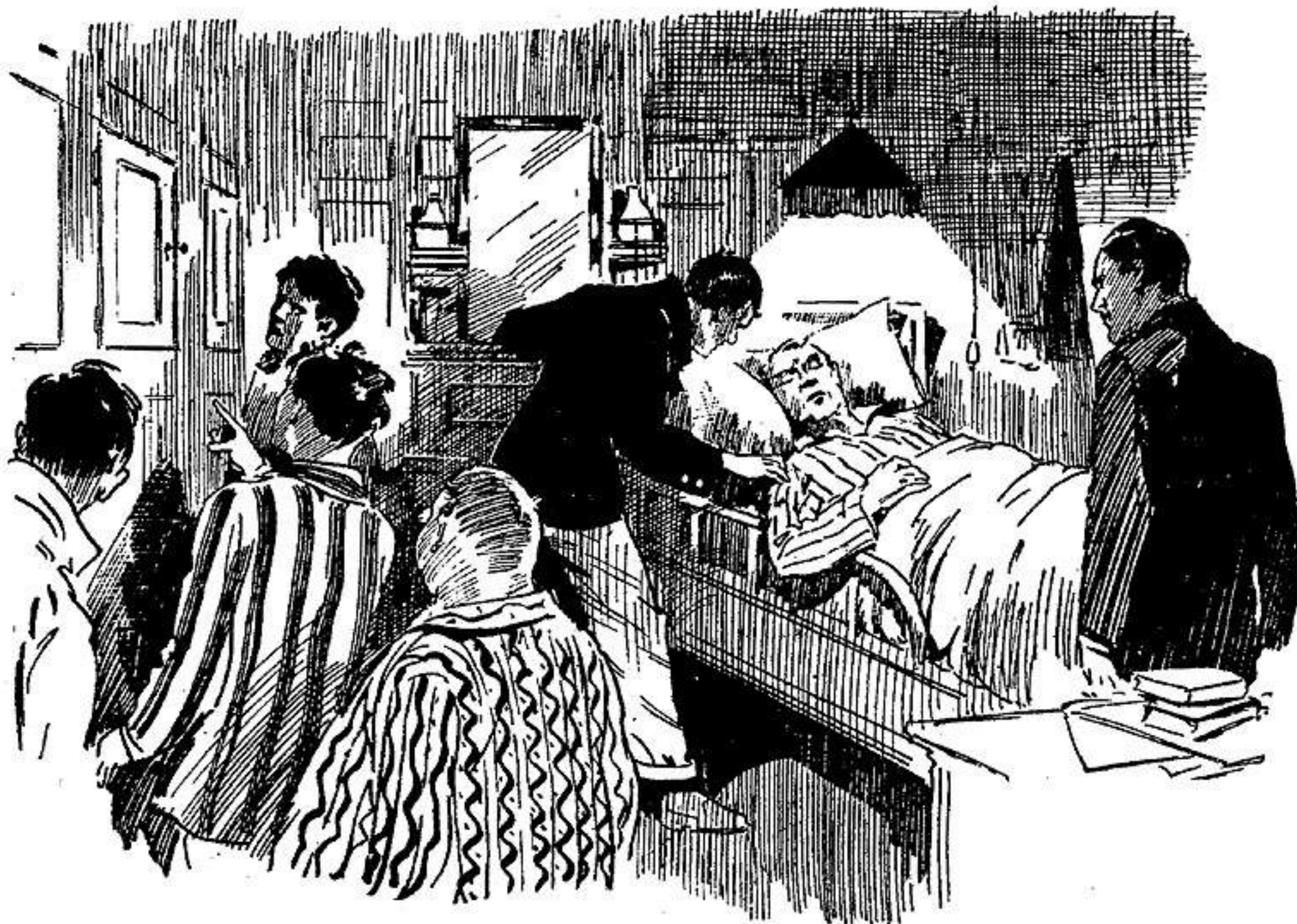
"Is he all right?" panted Tom, at his shoulder.

"Yes!"

"Thank goodness for that. But what—"

The Bounder snapped his teeth.

"That fool Bunter—frightened at nothing, I suppose—the fat funk is scared of a shadow!"



Harry Wharton & Co. stared blankly at the little steel key, in the lock of the safe. "There's something jolly wrong here," said Harry Wharton, in a low voice. "Father!" Vernon-Smith shook his father by the shoulder, but the millionaire did not wake. "What can be the matter with him?" exclaimed the Bounder hoarsely. "He—he can't have been drugged!" (See Chapter 7.)

The Bounder's anxiety had changed to anger. His heart was still throbbing, from the sudden excitement and fear for his father. Now that he saw the millionaire sleeping peacefully, and nothing apparently wrong in the room, his irritation was intense. He had not the slightest doubt that the Owl of the Remove had given a false alarm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was Bob Cherry's voice. "What's the rumpus, Smithy?"

"Nothing!"

"Bunter says——"

"The fat fool!"

"A false alarm?" asked Harry Wharton. All the Famous Five had turned out at once when Bunter gave the alarm.

"Yes," snapped Smithy.

"Just like that fat funk!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The likeness is terrific," remarked Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh. "Where are you, you fat and frabjous fathead?"

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Come here, you fat idiot!" growled the Bounder. "Now tell us what you mean, you dummy."

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"What did you mean?" hissed the Bounder. "Don't make a row—no need to wako up my father."

He turned off the light in the millionaire's room, and drew the door softly shut. Mr. Vernon-Smith had not stirred.

"Well, I like this!" said Bunter, with deep indignation. "I run the risk of being collared by that murderous villain, and this is how you thank a chap. Has he got away?"

"Has who got away?" demanded Nugent.

"That man."

"What man, fathead?"

"The man who was in old—in Mr. Vernon-Smith's room," said Bunter, hastily correcting himself, as he caught a dangerous glitter in the Bounder's eyes.

"Fool!" snapped the Bounder. "Have you been dreaming? What were you doing out of bed? Walking in your sleep?"

"Oh, really, Smithy. If he's gone, I've frightened him away," said the Owl of the Remove. "You see, I tapped at the door to make sure, before I called you fellows."

"There was nobody there!" growled the Bounder.

"There jolly well was."

"Ass!"

"Hold on a minute, Smithy," said Harry Wharton. "If Bunter was out of his room, he can't have been asleep and dreamed it. What do you think you saw, Bunter?"

"I don't think—I know! And if this is what Smithy calls gratitude——" said Bunter bitterly.

"Oh, cut it short!" snapped Smithy.

The door of Soames' room opened and the valet came out, half-dressed. He stared at the juniors with an expression of astonishment.

"Has anything happened, young gentlemen?" he inquired. "I heard your voices, and——"

"Nothing," said the Bounder. "Only Bunter frightened by some shadow."

Soames smiled faintly.

"Nothing of the kind!" howled Bunter. "I tell you——"

"If you will excuse me interrupting you, sir," said Soames smoothly; "you may awaken Mr. Vernon-Smith, talking so near his door. He would be very much displeased."

"Let's get back to bed," grunted Vernon-Smith. "Soames is right; the pater would be waxy, being woke up for nothing at this hour."

"You're sure he's all right, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes. I looked at him; fast asleep."

"There's been row enough to wake him," said Bob. "But if you're sure he's all right."

"I tell you I looked at him."

"Mr. Vernon-Smith sleeps very soundly," said Soames. "But so much talking near his door——" Soames paused with a deprecating gesture.

Redwing eyed him keenly for a moment. No doubt a devoted servant would be anxious that his master should not be awakened at such an untimely hour. But Redwing's old misgivings came into his mind.

"Let's hear what Bunter has to say," said Redwing.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, rot!" said Vernon-Smith angrily.

"The fat fool fancied something."

"Let's hear it, all the same," said Wharton.

"Go it, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter, with an indignant glare at the Bounder, explained what he had seen. Smithy listened with a snort of contemptuous disbelief. Soames' smooth

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face wore a respectfully incredulous expression.

"Bunter can't have imagined all that," said Bob.

"The fat idiot can imagine anything," said Vernon-Smith. "He nearly startled me out of my skin, and all for nothing."

"Let's look in your father's room, Smithy," said Tom Redwing quietly.

"Rot!"

"We can't be too sure, old fellow. We know that that unknown villain is still on board the yacht."

"I know that. But I tell you my father was fast asleep, and looked quite undisturbed. He will be waxy if we wake him up for nothing."

"Bunter says he heard a key—"

"Bunter's a fat fool!"

"Look here, Smithy," said Harry Wharton. "Redwing's right. Let's make absolutely certain that nothing has happened in your father's room. The scoundrel may have sneaked the key without awakening him."

"That's impossible. He would wake if anybody tried to get his bunch of keys from under his pillow."

"I am sure of that, sir," said Soames. "I am sure that Mr. Vernon-Smith would be very cross, sir, if he were disturbed now. Please be guided in this matter by Master Vernon-Smith, young gentlemen."

"And let's get back to bed," said the Bounder gruffly.

Redwing shook his head.

"I'm not satisfied if you are, Smithy," he said.

"Then you're an ass."

Tom smiled faintly.

"Never mind that. Look in your father's room—"

"Rot!"

"Well, that is for you to settle," said Tom. "If you refuse, Smithy, that ends the matter. But I shall not go back to bed."

"What the thump do you mean?"

"I mean that I shall stay here, at your father's door, for the rest of the night," said the sailorman's son quietly. "If Bunter is correct, he interrupted the thief taking the chart from the safe. I shall keep watch here until your father wakes."

"You're a silly ass, Reddy!"

"Possibly. But I mean it."

"And I shall stay with you, Redwing," said Harry Wharton. "I'm certain that even that ass Bunter can't have fancied all he's told us. I'm not at all satisfied that all is well."

"My dear young gentlemen—" urged Soames.

"You needn't stay out of bed, Soames," said Harry. "Nothing for you to worry about."

"You young gentlemen are losing your sleep for nothing—"

"Never mind that," said Wharton, refraining from telling the man to mind his own business, as he was strongly tempted to do.

The Bounder gave an angry grunt.

"I tell you it's nothing, and it's only a false alarm," he said. "But if you're not satisfied we'll look in my father's room. I've looked once, and he was all right. Look again if you choose."

He opened the millionaire's door, with a frowning brow, and switched on the light. All the juniors looked in, and they could see Mr. Vernon-Smith sleeping calmly. But Tom Redwing's keen eye fastened at once on the door of the iron safe let into the wall close by the head of the bunk.

"The key's in the safe!" he said.

"What?" ejaculated the Bounder.

"Look!"

"My hat!"

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There was the little steel key in the lock of the safe. Vernon-Smith stared at it blankly. His father was fast asleep; yet there was the key in the safe door. Obviously, Mr. Vernon-Smith could not have placed it there in his sleep. And it was borne in upon the Bounder's mind that Bunter had not, after all, given a false alarm; and that he had given a much-needed alarm only just in time to save the treasure chart from the unknown thief.

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder.

He strode into the room and touched the sleeping millionaire on the shoulder.

"Father, wake up!"

But Mr. Vernon-Smith did not wake.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Drugged!

"FATHER!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith shook his father by the shoulder. He shook him again and again.

But the millionaire did not wake. He was sleeping heavily, and he continued to sleep, his eyelids never stirring.

There was anxiety in the face of the Bounder now. The heaviest sleeper, in a natural sleep, should have awakened under that vigorous shaking. The millionaire's sleep was not natural.

"Father!" exclaimed the Bounder huskily.

Again he shook the millionaire. But the result was the same; Mr. Vernon-Smith remained in deep slumber.

"There's something jolly wrong here," said Harry Wharton in a low voice.

"What on earth—" muttered Nugent.

"What can be the matter with him?" exclaimed the Bounder hoarsely. "He can't have been drugged!"

The same thought was in the minds of all the juniors. It was the only possible explanation of the millionaire's sleep. There was no sign of injury about him; he had not been hurt by any attack. Yet he remained stonily unconscious. His breathing was regular, his face had a healthy colour; but he was plunged in a deep sleep from which it was impossible to awaken him.

"Good heavens!" breathed the Bounder. His hard face was white and tense now.

"It is the drugfulness," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh quietly. "That is terrifically certain."

"Impossible, sir," said Soames. "Mr. Vernon-Smith sometimes sleeps very soundly—very soundly indeed."

"That is not a natural sleep, Soames," said Harry Wharton rather sharply; "he would not wake if the yacht were going down! He has been drugged."

The Bounder set his teeth.

"He's been drugged, and by the villain who was after the chart," he said. "The key could never have been taken unless my father had been put out of action first. He's been drugged."

"But who, sir—" murmured Soames.

"That's what we've got to find out. Call the captain."

Soames hesitated.

"Do you think, sir, that Mr. Vernon-Smith would care for a fuss to be made on such slight grounds—"

"Call the captain!" repeated the Bounder fiercely. "Are you giving orders to me, confound you?"

"Pray excuse me, sir, I was only suggesting—"

"Well, don't! Call Captain Greene instantly!" snapped the Bounder.

"Very good, sir!"

Soames glided away.

"What about the chart?" asked Bob

Cherry. "It looks as if Bunter interrupted the scoundrel before he could open the safe; but—"

"I'll soon see about that!"

Vernon-Smith turned the key in the safe, and opened the iron door. The treasure-chart lay within, as the juniors had seen it placed by the millionaire long ago. Evidently Bunter's interruption had come in time.

"It's all right."

"Good egg!"

Vernon-Smith closed the safe again, locked it, and took out the key. He secured the key on his own watchchain, for safety, till his father should be in a state to take charge of it again. His face was very grim and serious now. He realised clearly that the South Sea chart had had another narrow escape, the narrowest of all.

But for Billy Bunter having turned out that night, the chart would have been taken, the key returned to its place, and the matter would have remained an utter mystery. For Mr. Vernon-Smith was not likely to suspect in the morning that he had been drugged. Chance—and Billy Bunter—had favoured the schoolboy treasure-seekers once more.

"I say, you fellows, it was rather lucky I turned out, what?" grinned the Owl of the Remove. "Do you believe that it was a false alarm now, Smithy?"

"No!" growled the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith coloured a little. His hasty and irritable temper had very nearly been his undoing again. But for Tom Redwing's insistence, the way would have been left open for the unknown thief to return and complete his work after the juniors had gone back to bed.

"I—I'm sorry, Bunter," added the Bounder, with an effort. "It was lucky, as you say."

"Come to think of it, Bunter's stowing himself away on board has turned out rather a good thing, in some ways," remarked Bob.

"Yes, rather."

Bunter smirked.

"Didn't I tell you fellows from the very beginning, that you couldn't manage without me?" he demanded. "Perhaps you believe me now."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the skipper!"

Captain Greene came into the state-room with a frowning brow. Evidently the message he had received from Soames had not pleased him.

"What is all this disturbance?" he grunted.

Vernon-Smith explained. The captain's brow grew darker and darker as he listened. The mystery of the Golden Arrow was a very sore point with him. He felt that it was a reflection upon him, that a series of outrages had been committed on the vessel he commanded, with the perpetrator still unknown and not brought to justice. And he had a well-grounded apprehension, too, of what Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was likely to say when he came to himself.

The earlier incidents had exasperated the millionaire; but when he learned that he himself had been drugged, and the key of his safe taken during his unconsciousness, his wrath was certain to be unbounded. For that reason, as much as any other, the skipper was rather keen to pooh-pooh the suggestion that the millionaire was drugged at all. But he could not doubt the evidence of his eyes. He made an attempt to awaken Mr. Vernon-Smith, but he made it in vain. It was obvious that a thunderclap would not have awakened the millionaire.

"I think you need not be alarmed about your father, Master Vernon-Smith," he said gruffly. "He has been given some opiate, I imagine. How it was administered, cannot be said at present. Nothing can be done until Mr. Vernon-Smith recovers consciousness."

The Bounder sat down by his father's bunk as Captain Greene returned to the deck. The other fellows returned to their rooms to finish dressing—they did not intend to sleep again. Only Billy Bunter went back to bed. Soames hovered about the millionaire's cabin as the Bounder sat there in silence, with a moody, thoughtful brow.

"You intend to sit up, Master Herbert?" he asked.

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith laconically.

"If you would prefer to return to bed I shall be very pleased to watch over your father, sir."

"Thank you. I'm staying here."

"Mr. Vernon-Smith would hardly wish—"

"That will do, Soames. Leave the door wide open. Leave the light full on. You'd better go back to bed."

Soames seemed to hesitate.

Tom Redwing came back to the room. He had dressed very quickly.

"You'd like me to stay with you, Smithy?"

"Yes, rather, old man!"

"Right!"

Soames retired from the state-room. Smithy and Redwing in the state-room, and Harry Wharton & Co. in the saloon adjoining, remained wide awake and on the watch, till dawn came over the Indian Ocean. But at dawn Mr. Vernon-Smith was still sleeping; and it was not till past nine o'clock that he opened his eyes at last, and blinked in surprise at his son sitting quietly beside the bunk.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Wrathy!

"HERBERT! What—"

Mr. Vernon-Smith sat up, and stared at his son in astonishment.

"What's the matter, Herbert? What are you doing here?"

"Looking after you, dad," answered Smithy. "Feeling all right?"

"Eh, what? Yes! By gad, it's nine o'clock!" said the millionaire, glancing at his watch. "It's late! Why has not Soames brought my coffee and called me, as usual? What does all this mean?"

"Your coffee, sir."

Soames appeared as if by magic with his master's morning coffee on a tray. Mr. Vernon-Smith, who seemed to have awakened in an irritable mood, drank his coffee before asking further questions. Tom Redwing quietly left the state-room.

"Now," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, as he set down his cup, "tell me what this means, Herbert."

Smithy quietly explained. His father stared at him in surprise and incredulity.

"Drugged? Nonsense! Stuff and nonsense! How could I be drugged? Rubbish!"

"We couldn't wake you, dad."

"I dare say I was sleeping soundly. Soames!"

"Sir!"

"Did you think I was drugged?"

"Master Herbert thought so, sir," said Soames deferentially. "You were certainly sleeping very soundly indeed, sir."

"I'm not asking you, what Master

Herbert thought. I'm asking you what you thought!" snapped the millionaire.

"It was not my place, sir, to controvert the opinion of Master Herbert, I considered."

"Yes, yes, yes! But now I'm asking you a question. Did you think I was drugged when you saw me asleep?"

Soames coughed.

"Well, no, sir, I hardly thought so myself. But you were sleeping very soundly indeed, sir."

"I had a whisky-and-soda before I turned in, as usual," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "I generally sleep soundly. As for being drugged, that is nonsense! How could I be drugged?"

"I cannot imagine how it could happen, sir," said Soames. "It seems very improbable to me."

The Bounder gave him a dark look. There was no doubt in his own mind that his father had been drugged, and he could not see how Soames could doubt. Captain Greene had been convinced of it. But Mr. Vernon-Smith was evidently disinclined to believe anything of the sort.

"Improbable?" snorted Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Impossible, you mean! Stuff and nonsense! I slept soundly, that is all. If the key was taken from under my pillow, as you say, Herbert, it does not imply that I was drugged! Rubbish! I slept soundly. Where is the key?"

Smithy handed over the key.

"Give me my dressing-gown, Soames."

Enveloped in a gorgeous dressing-gown, Mr. Vernon-Smith unlocked the safe at once to investigate the interior.

"Nothing has been touched," he said, with great relief.

"The man was interrupted in time," said the Bounder.

His father gave an angry grunt.

"This state of affairs is intolerable! There is a thief on board the yacht. I do not believe for a moment that I was drugged; but someone must have abstracted the key, as you tell me you found it in the lock. Good gad! Am I to be obliged to lock my state-room door on board my own yacht? Scandalous! Infamous! Captain Greene shall hear of this! Soames, is my bath ready?"

The millionaire, in a very disturbed and angry frame of mind, bustled away. Vernon-Smith went back to his own room to finish dressing; he had sat half-dressed through the night, unwilling to leave his father alone for a moment.

He rejoined the chums of the Remove with a gloomy face. The episode of the night was weighing on his mind.

His father did not believe that he had been drugged, chiefly because he did not choose to believe that anyone

could have had the audacity to treat a gentleman of his importance in such a manner. He was angry and disturbed at what had happened, and all the angrier at the suggestion that he had been drugged on board his own yacht. There was a strong similarity in character between father and son, as Smithy realised rather clearly just then. Having formed a hasty opinion, Mr. Vernon-Smith was disinclined to hear it questioned, and argument had the effect of irritating rather than convincing him. That was very like the Bounder.

"The pater's rather in a bato this morning," Smithy remarked to the juniors. "He won't believe he was drugged. Soames doesn't seem to think so, either."

"Then he's a silly ass," said Bob Cherry. "Soames, I mean, of course. He saw that we couldn't wake up your pater, Smithy."

"I suppose he thinks he's bound to agree with him," said Smithy. "The pater doesn't like being argued with. I say, this is getting rather thick. Whatever the pater thinks, we know that he was drugged last night. Who could have done it?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" said the Bounder irritably.

"Oh, really, Smithy! Look here, you heard old-heim—you heard Mr. Vernon-Smith say he takes a whisky-and-soda before going to bed—"

"Well?" grunted Smithy.

"Perhaps he was too liberal with the whisky, and forgot to put in the soda!" grinned Bunter.

"You fat idiot!"

"Look here, you beast—"

(Continued on next page.)



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"I say, though, that may be it!" exclaimed Nugent. "The stuff may have been put in the bottle, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith reflected for a moment, and then nodded.

"That's it! The pater helps himself to a whisky-and-soda in his state-room before turning in, and the bottle is kept in the locker beside his bunk. It's not locked—anybody could get at it. Depend on it, the opiate, or whatever it was, was shoved into the whisky. I'll jolly well get hold of that bottle!"

The Bounder ran to his father's room. Mr. Vernon-Smith was still in the bath-room; but in the state-room Smithy found Soames. The sleek manservant was tidying the room and laying out his master's clothes.

Smithy went at once to the locker and opened it. There were glasses and a soda siphon there, and a full bottle of whisky. As it was full, it was obviously not the one from which Mr. Vernon-Smith had helped himself the night before.

"Where's the other bottle, Soames?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Soames raised his eyebrows, as if in mild surprise at the question.

"If you need an empty bottle for any purpose, Master Herbert, I can obtain one from the steward—"

"I want the bottle that was here last night."

"I am sorry, sir—"

"Where is it?"

"It was empty, sir, and I dropped it overboard when I replaced it with a new one," explained Soames.

"Oh!"

The Bounder bit his lip.

"You are sure it was empty, Soames?"

"Very nearly so, sir, if not quite," said Soames. "Some small quantity of liquor may have remained in it, sir; but my impression was that it was empty."

"Oh! All right."

The Bounder left the state-room.

Soames glanced after him, and for a moment there was a mocking glitter in

his narrow eyes. He smiled softly as he resumed his task of laying out his master's clothes.

"Nothing doing!" growled the Bounder, as he rejoined his friends. "The bottle was empty, and Soames has chucked it away. If the drug was put in that, we shan't find any trace of it now."

Redwing started a little.

"Soames threw it away?" he asked quickly.

"Yes. Nothing doing."

When the millionaire returned to his state-room his voice could be heard through the closed door, grumbling and mumbling, while Soames was helping him to dress. At breakfast, Mr. Vernon-Smith was in a very frowning state. After breakfast, his interview with Captain Greene was extremely unpleasant for that officer. He pointed out that but for an accidental alarm his safe would have been robbed—and there were valuable and important documents in the safe.

As for the South Sea chart, the millionaire either did not or would not believe that the attempt on the safe had been made on account of that. That was, in his opinion, stuff and nonsense. His business documents and securities had been in danger, and the bare idea of that was intensely exasperating to the City gentleman. He declared his intention of "sacking" every man on board, if the unknown marauder was not discovered by the time the yacht dropped anchor at Singapore.

The next night, when Mr. Vernon-Smith turned in, he locked and bolted his state-room door.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In the Eastern Seas!

SINGAPORE at last!

By the time the East Indian port was reached the effect of the mysterious episode had worn off the minds of the Greyfriars party.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had long since recovered his plump good-humour and dismissed the matter from his mind. But the juniors were glad to know that he bolted his door carefully every night. He was not taking any more risks with the safe.

That simple precaution had been too much for the unknown marauder; nothing had been heard of him since. The South Sea chart reposed securely in the safe, now out of the reach of thievish hands. The juniors could afford to dismiss the matter from their minds; and they had plenty of other matters to think about as the yacht glided by strange seas and channels among the East Indian Islands.

Mr. Vernon-Smith seemed to have forgotten his angry intention of sacking the whole ship's company at Singapore; at all events, nothing more was said about it.

The millionaire's business kept the yacht a fortnight at Singapore. Mr. Vernon-Smith being deep in rubber business. While Mr. Vernon-Smith had his days full of business interviews with planters and agents and officials, the Greyfriars fellows found the time pass quickly enough, going about Singapore and seeing its strange sights. All the races of the East were to be seen there, and every Oriental language was heard. Among other sights, the Greyfriars fellows had a look at the immense new naval base under construction, and they found it interesting enough; and as they were not old enough to be taxpayers, they did not bother about the millions that were being flung away in that far corner of the East. Mr. Vernon-Smith explained to them that that immense base was necessary for the security of the Empire, according to the best military and naval intellects available.

"You see, the next war, if it comes at all, will be in the air," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, "so, naturally, they devise a naval base to meet it. But, bless you, they might have made it a cavalry barracks! I'm rather surprised that they didn't, really."

Which the juniors understood to be sarcasm. Mr. Vernon-Smith had the pleasure—or otherwise—of paying away a small fortune every year in the shape of income tax; which doubtless caused him to regard such expensive futilities with a baleful eye.

Singapore was left behind at last, and the Golden Arrow threaded her way amidst the East Indian Archipelago. The Malay Peninsula was behind now, and Java and Sumatra on the starboard, Borneo on the port side. The Greyfriars fellows were in the midst of the great rubber-growing region—and Mr. Vernon-Smith, who knew all about every business in which his extensive fortune was invested, gave them much valuable information about that great British industry. He told them how the first plants had been smuggled out of Brazil, cultivated at Kew, experimented with successfully in the East—how finally a tremendous industry had been built up by British enterprise in half a lifetime.

"Think of that when people tell you that the Old Country is played out, my boys," said the millionaire. "Nine people in ten don't know that the rubber plantations would never have existed at all, but for British enterprise. Those fellows made the plantations, and in doing so made the cheap bicycle and the cheap car. But for them you would have to give a liver for a bicycle tyre—and not such a good one at that. British enterprise did it, but forgot to talk about it. If the

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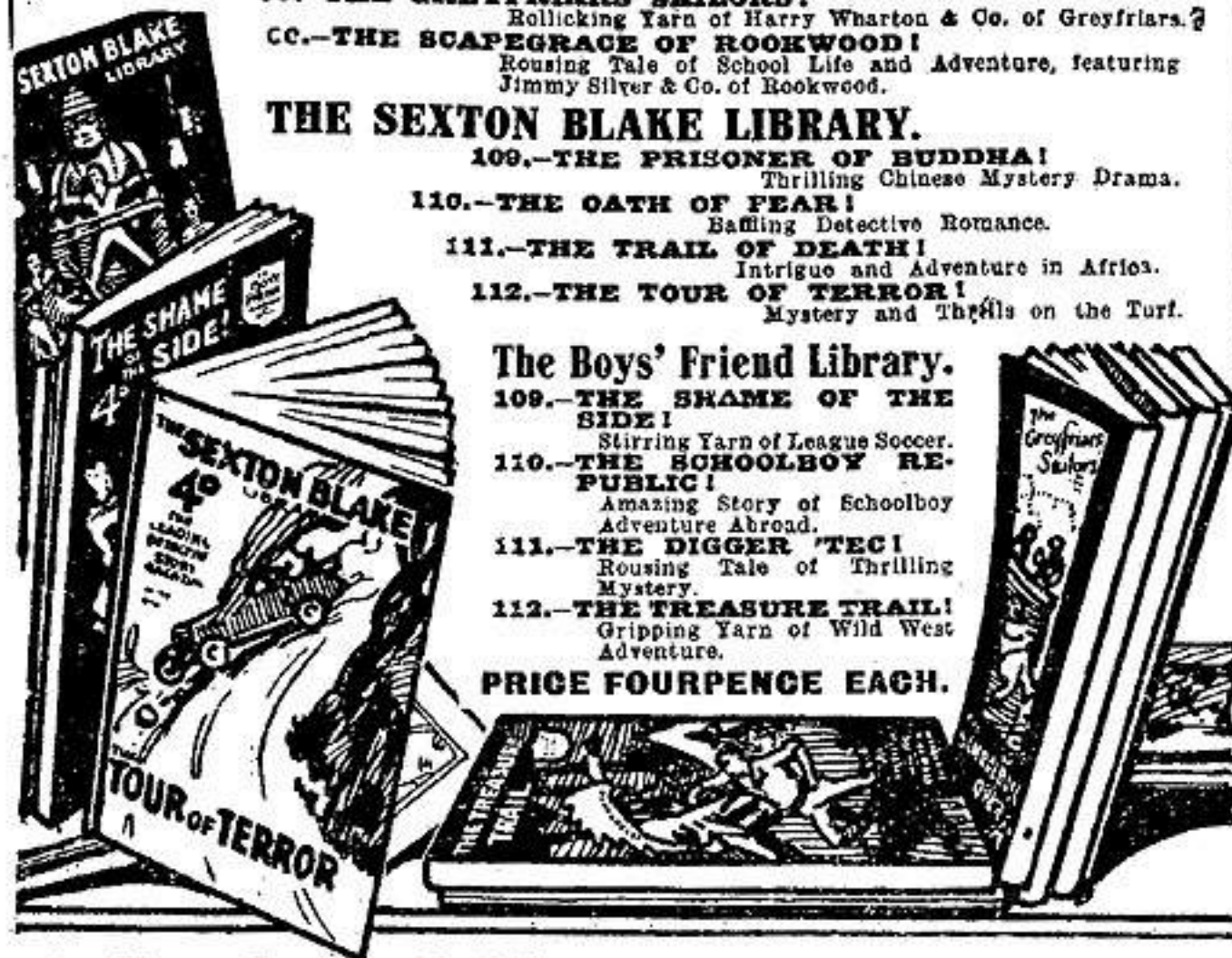
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Americans had done it they would be telling the world at the top of their voices. Now they are raising a howl about what they call the British monopoly of rubber. Why don't they plant rubber themselves? Nothing to stop them—if they care to risk their capital as we did. Why didn't they do it in the first place—what? What was American push-and-go doing, while British enterprise was getting to work?"

Mr. Vernon-Smith blew a big puff of smoke from his cigar.

The millionaire was very emphatic on this subject.

Having a large part of his fortune invested in rubber estates, and having risked the loss of it, Mr. Vernon-Smith rather naturally desired to handle the profits when they came along. He was eloquent upon the subject of the celebrated Restriction Scheme, which had saved the rubber industry from bankruptcy, and from falling ruined into the hands of American speculators.

Harry Wharton & Co. found his talk interesting enough; and they realised that Smithy's father was not merely a money-maker in the City, as they had rather considered him. Without men of Mr. Vernon-Smith's enterprise and breadth of view, the great rubber industry would never have come into being, or grown to such an amazing extent.

The juniors, too, were learning a good deal about a far-off region of the great Empire to which they belonged, a region of great importance, to which they had given little thought hitherto.

From these tropical lands, amid which the Golden Arrow was now threading its way, came the rubber which made the tyres of their bicycles at home. Hundreds of square miles of fetid swamps had been turned into smiling plantations, work provided for thousands of coolies who would certainly not have been so usefully and harmlessly engaged otherwise, and work, too, for thousands of hands in far-off England. The juniors realised, and with good reason, that they had cause to be proud of the race to which they belonged—and that it is a lesson that is always worth while to learn.

The rubber region was left behind, and the yacht glided on by islands British and Dutch. They had many a glimpse of Borneo, once the stronghold of wild Dyak head-hunters, and after that, of Papua, or New Guinea, now under Australian control; and later they sighted the Solomon Islands. The yacht touched at Fiji, and then at Samoa, and then throbbed on over the vast spaces of the Pacific towards the Marquesas.

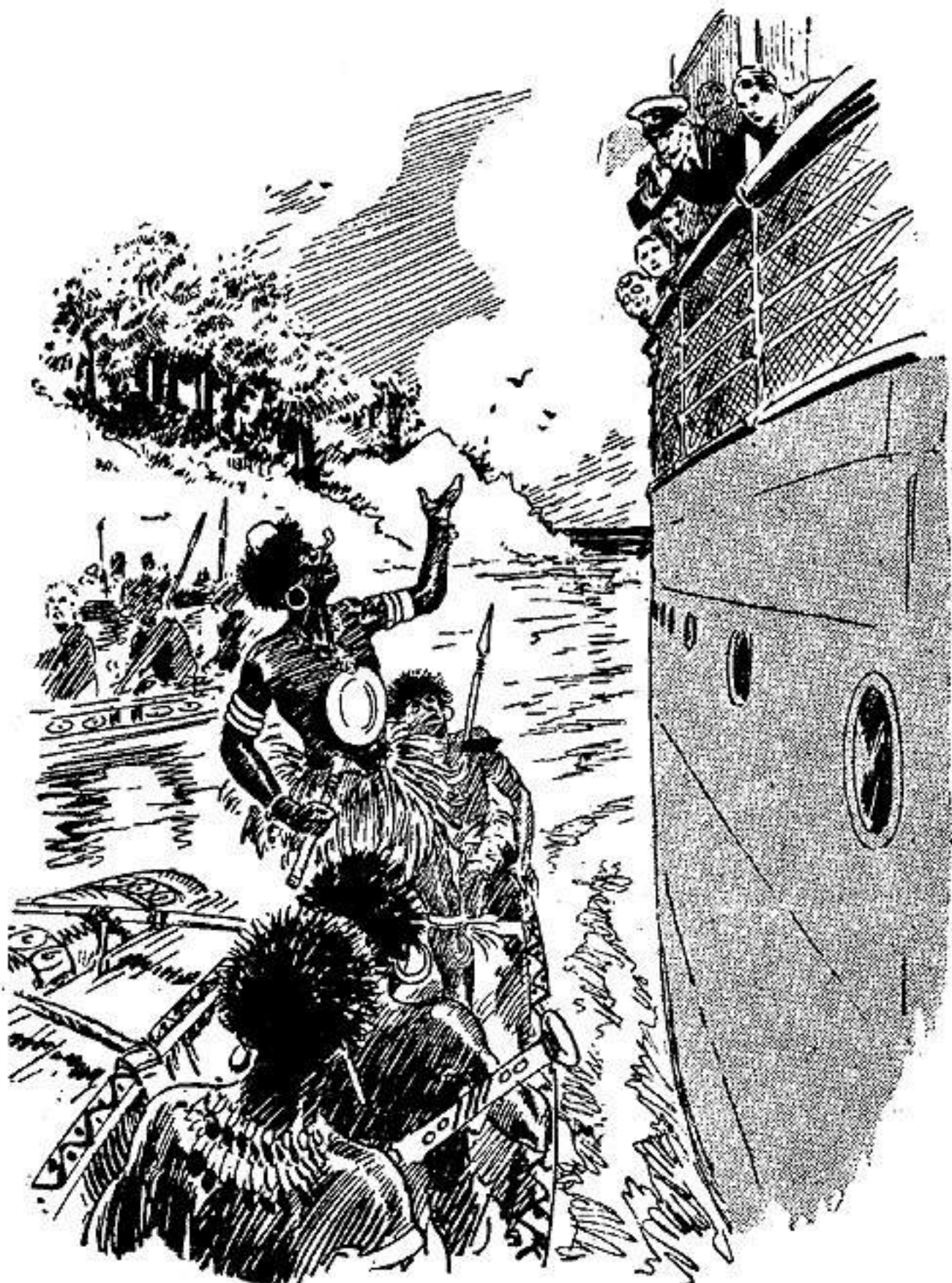
The juniors felt their hearts beating faster as they drew nearer and nearer to their destination.

They were fairly in the vast Pacific now, in the region of the Cannibal Islands, of which they had often read, but had hardly ever hoped to see.

Somewhere, amid the endless islands and vast tracks of sunlit water, lay Caca Island, the coral isle upon which Black Peter had buried his pearls.

The juniors would have been glad enough to begin the search for Caca Island at once, but Mr. Vernon-Smith's business lay at the Marquesas, and it was there that the yacht was to drop anchor. There a craft was to be chartered by the millionaire, for the schoolboy treasure-seekers to explore the sunny seas in search of the treasure.

Mr. Vernon-Smith still retained his own view of the treasure chart, and smiled when the juniors spoke of it;



A tall savage stood up in the leading canoe, and hailed: "Taminabo come ship belong you!" Captain Greene leaned over the rail. "You come one feller on ship." "Taminabo bring coconuts sell white feller," said the chief. "All feller come on ship belong you." "One feller come on ship!" answered the skipper. "Plenty feller come, plenty gun shoot quick!" (See Chapter 9.)

but he had admitted that there might be "something" in it.

Harry Wharton & Co. were of opinion that there was more than "something" in it. The wish was father to the thought, perhaps, but not one of the Greyfriars party doubted that the cache of pearls actually did exist, and that Black Peter's chart gave the clue to the cache.

"You've worked out where the giddy island is, Redwing?" Bob Cherry asked, one day, after the yacht had left Samoa behind.

Redwing nodded.

"Latitude five degrees south, and longitude a hundred and fifty west," he answered. "That's marked on the chart."

"West!" said Bob. "We're going east."

"East and West meet, of course, if you go far enough," said Redwing, with a smile.

"Didn't some jolly old poet say that 'East is east, and west is west, and ne'er the twain shall meet'?" said Bob.

"That doesn't apply to geography," said Redwing, laughing. "at 180

degrees of west longitude, you touch the east, of course, as it is exactly half-way round the world, 180 degrees east, and 180 degrees west, come to the same thing."

"I suppose they do," admitted Bob. "I believe I remember being told that the world was round when I was a kid. Then we're going so far east that we shan't be east at all."

"Just that!" assented Redwing.

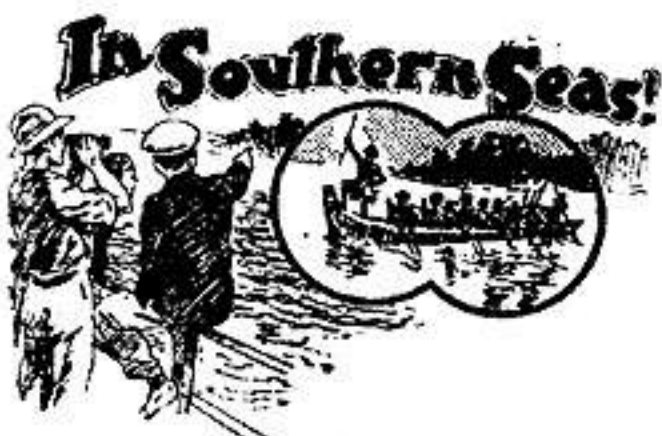
"But it would have been a shorter journey, in that case, to sail west to the Marquesas," said Bob.

"Only America would have been in the way."

"Dear me! Fancy forgetting America!" said Bob, laughing. "But isn't there a Panama Canal we could have squeezed through?"

"Yes; but Mr. Vernon-Smith couldn't have called at Singapore in that case," smiled Redwing.

"It's business as well as pleasure for the pater," remarked the Bounder. "He's going to be busy at the Marquesas for weeks. It was rubber at (Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

Singapore — it's copra at the Marquesas."

"What on earth is copra?" asked Bob.

"The inside of coconuts, used for a dashed lot of things," said Smithy. "That's another big industry you haven't heard much about. The pater owns a good many ships engaged in that business, up and down the Pacific."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter old man, let me give you a tip," said Bob Cherry gravely. "We shall be among the cannibals soon. Have you ever noticed that you are as broad as you are long?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Any cannibal seeing you, old fat bean, simply wouldn't be able to resist the temptation," said Bob. "My advice is, go easy on the grub, and thin down a little. Drop a ton or two of superfluous flesh, and you will have a better chance of saving the rest when we get among the cannibals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, we're close to an island, and I can see coconut palms on shore. We've finished the coconuts we got at Samoa. Suppose we stop for some more? They're good and cheap, you know."

"Next stop the Marquesas," said Nugent.

"Yes; but that's two or three days yet, or a week, or something, and I want some coconuts," explained Bunter.

The juniors gazed at the little coral isle which had caught Bunter's eye—that eye having been attracted by the sight of something eatable.

It was a tiny isle, surrounded by a coral reef, on which the long, sweeping billows of the Pacific broke creaming. Beyond the reef was a lagoon, and beyond that a shelving beach of white sand and coral, and, farther on, groves of tall, graceful coconut palms. Harry Wharton & Co. would have been glad enough to stop at the isle and explore it—every island they passed had an attraction for them.

"A real, jolly old Pacific island!" said Bob Cherry. "It seems almost too good to be true, you fellows. I can't see any cannibals, though."

"Uninhabited, most likely," said Wharton. "I believe there are hundreds, or thousands, of these coral islands uninhabited."

"And all those lovely coconuts running to waste!" said Bunter.

"I'll speak to the pater," said Vernon-Smith. "I'd like to have a look at the place."

"Good!"

The Bounder spoke to his father, who smiled and nodded, and sent a message to Captain Greene. The yacht turned from her course and approached the little island.

As they drew nearer to the reef the juniors could see an opening in it, communicating with the inner lagoon, but

Captain Greene had no intention of risking the yacht in an unknown, uncharted channel among coral reefs as hard as iron and sharp as razors. The yacht slowed down outside the reef, and in the channel there appeared, as if by magic, a large canoe, and it was followed by another and another.

"Inhabited, after all!" said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

"I wonder if they're cannibals?" said Bob.

"Rot!" said Bunter. "There aren't any cannibals nowadays. All that's been put down long ago."

"I hope so for your sake, old fat man. Once a cannibal gets an eye on you we shall lose our Bunter."

The juniors noticed that Captain Greene and the mate had slung revolvers to their belts, and three of the seamen had had rifles served out to them. The sight gave them a thrill. In that lonely spot on the wide Pacific civilisation and barbarism met face to face. The steam yacht, fitted with electric light and wireless, with refrigerators run on electricity produced on board, was the latest thing in modern construction; but the savages who were coming off from the coral isle in their canoes were just the same as their forefathers had been a thousand years ago. It was scarcely possible to believe that if the crew were taken off their guard there might be a terrible massacre, and that the yacht's voyage would end there and then, her fate for ever unknown, save to the brown men of the Pacific. Yet such things had occurred among the scattered islands.

Six large canoes had come out of the lagoon, and each of them had at least a dozen men on board. They did not seem to be armed, but Captain Greene, who knew the Pacific, was well aware that deadly weapons were hidden within reach of the dusky hands. The plunder of such a vessel as the Golden Arrow would have made every savage there a rich man for life, and the temptation would have been too strong for the untutored children of Nature had they found the yacht in their power.

"I say, you fellows, surely they don't think that these niggers might go for us!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Looks like it," grinned Bob.

"I—I say, I'm not very keen on the coconuts, after all——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They won't be allowed on the yacht, fathead!" said the Bounder. "We're not taking chances like that."

"Suppose they jump on——"

"Then there will be some shooting. Captain Greene knows his way about in these seas."

The yacht lay motionless on the calm, shining waters, and the canoes drew alongside, with a plashing of paddles. A tall savage stood up in the leading canoe and hailed. He spoke in the beche-de-mer English, which is the language of the South Seas among natives and traders.

"Taminabo come ship belong you!"

Captain Greene leaned over the rail. "You feller come ship belong me," he answered, in the same "beche-de-mer" English. "You come one feller on ship."

"Taminabo bring coconuts sell white feller," said the chief. "All feller come on ship belong you."

"One feller come on ship," answered the skipper. "Plenty feller come, plenty gun shoot quick!"

Taminabo, the chief, eyed him, and eyed the seamen with the rifles looking over the side. Apparently he decided that there was no chance of rushing the

yacht with his crowd, and he assented to the inevitable, which was trade with the white men, instead of massacre and loot.

"One feller, he come," he answered.

And the chief clambered actively on board, his brown-skinned followers sitting in the canoes and watching him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Wanted!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. looked with great interest at the South Sea chief as he stepped on the deck of the Golden Arrow.

Although capable of the most outrageous treachery himself, the chief came on board with perfect confidence in the good faith of the white men. There was not a hint of uneasiness in his manner. His brown, good-humoured face wore a cheerful grin, and his black eyes twinkled with keen interest as he scanned the yacht and her company. Taminabo wore a grin—but he wore very little else. A loin-cloth was his only article of attire; but to make up for the lack of clothing he had many decorations. A clay pipe was inserted in his nose, through a hole bored in the cartilage, and in his large ears he wore ear-rings which were nothing more or less than large brass curtain-rings. Round his neck was a string of coral beads, which supported a large dinner-plate that hung against his brawny chest. He wore also several strings of spent cartridge clips, which rattled as he moved. In his thick, kinky hair were twisted several feathers and scarlet blossoms of the hibiscus, with a broken tea-cup added by way of special ornament.

Taminabo was evidently something of a dandy in his own way. Probably he was the only chief in the South Seas who could boast a whole, unbroken dinner-plate in the way of decoration. His nose ornament was evidently a matter of some pride also. The other savages had nose ornaments of coral, and pipe-stems, and rings, and all kinds of strange odds and ends; but a clay pipe was something out of the ordinary and extremely "chic."

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That chap is some swell. He looks rather proud of himself."

"The proudfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "After all, he is a king here! We are entertaining royalty, my esteemed friends. Some European customs would seem just as odd to this merchant as his esteemed manners and customs appear to Europeans."

"Oh, draw it mild," said Nugent, laughing.

"I have seen a British admiral, in a cocked hat," said Hurree Singh. "It was interesting and remarkable to view. This gentleman wears a tea-cup in his hair. It is the same thing, but a little different."

Taminabo glanced at the schoolboys with a careless eye. But his glance became fixed as it fell on Billy Bunter.

Bunter arrested his attention immediately.

There was an expression of surprise and pleasure on his brown face as he gazed at the Owl of the Remove, and his look was undoubtedly admiring also.

Bunter began to smirk.

This fellow was a savage, but he was a chief—a king among his own people, as the nabob had remarked. And while he passed the other fellows carelessly by he fixed his royal attention on



Taminabo pointed a brown finger at Bunter, as he talked to the captain. His interest in the fat junior was obviously intense. "My word, good feller kai-kai, that feller," he said. "Plenty fat kai-kai. Captain feller sell um, Taminabo give two fathom shell money." "No trade," said Captain Greene, with a smile. "Nothing doing!" (See Chapter 10.)

Bunter, picking him out instantly for special admiring regard.

That was exactly as it should have been, in Bunter's opinion. Bunter had always been persuaded that he was a distinguished fellow, and that fellows who knew would understand at once that he was a superior sort of chap. This South Seas chief was evidently a fellow who knew! Royal himself, in his own barbarous way, he had recognised Bunter at once as the most distinguished fellow on the ship.

Captain Greene addressed the savage, and Taminabo answered him, but all the time his glance kept wandering to Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, that chap's spotted me!" smirked Bunter. "He's taking no notice at all of you fellows. You see that?"

"Fathead!"

"Well, you can see it if you're not blinded by jealousy," sneered Bunter. "It's plain enough. I shouldn't wonder if he thinks I'm chief here. He would, judging by a fellow's looks you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You fellows never have understood me, or my value," said Bunter loftily. "A South Sea voyage is teaching you a lesson. You can see by his manner that he thinks I'm an awfully important fellow on this vessel. He keeps on looking at me."

The juniors were a little puzzled, for what Bunter stated was quite correct. Taminabo seemed hardly able to tear his eyes away from the Owl of Greyfriars.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's talking about Bunter now," said Bob Cherry.

"Asking if he's king of the yacht, perhaps."

Taminabo was pointing a brown finger at Bunter, as he talked to the captain. His interest in the fat junior was obviously intense.

Captain Greene stared a little, and then smiled and shook his head. The Islander spoke more urgently. He raised his voice in his earnestness, and the Greyfriars fellows heard what he said.

"My word! Good feller kai-kai, that feller!" said Taminabo. "Plenty fat kai-kai! Captain feller sell um, Taminabo give two fathom shell money!"

"No trade!" said Captain Greene.

"Fat feller stop along me, give three fathom shell money!"

"Nothing doing!"

"What you want give for fat feller kai-kai?"

"What on earth does kai-kai mean?" murmured Frank Nugent.

Bunter grinned.

"A word meaning a king, or god, or something, I expect," he said. "You can see what the chap means."

"Blessed if I can!" said Johnny Bull. "What does he mean, then?"

"Plain enough! He wants me to go with him to be his king," said Bunter. "He's asking the captain to let me go ashore with them to be chief. Kai-kai means something of the sort."

"Bow-wow!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"He certainly does seem to want Bunter," said Vernon-Smith, puzzled. "May think he's some sort of an idol, perhaps. What with his circumference,

and his specs, and the rest of him, the chief may think he's our idol."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Well, he can have Bunter, if he likes!" said Bob. "He's offered three fathoms of shell money; I suppose that's some sort of currency here. We'll let Bunter go cheap if they want him for an idol."

"Let's make him a present of Bunter," suggested Nugent.

"Good egg!"

"I expected this envy and jealousy," said Bunter calmly. "They're not likely to offer to make any of you fellows king of their island, and chance it! I say, Soames, does the word kai-kai mean a god or a king?"

Soames was standing back from the group, in his usual quiet way, looking on at the scene.

He glanced at Bunter, with a faint smile.

"Kai-kai?" he repeated.

"Yes. I believe you've been in the South Seas, Soames; you told Redwing so. You know some of their lingo."

"A little, sir," said Soames.

"Well, do you know what kai-kai means?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"What does it mean, then?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Food, sir."

"Food!" ejaculated all the juniors together.

"The word is used both as a noun and a verb in the islands, sir," said Soames. "It means 'to eat,' and also that which is eaten."

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"Great pip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "That's what the giddy savage wants Bunter for! He wants to eat him!"

The juniors shrieked.

Billy Bunter's fat face became almost green.

It was unmistakable that Taminabo regarded him with great admiration, but it had not occurred to Bunter that the chief was looking upon him from an edible point of view.

But that was the case. There was greed as well as admiration in Taminabo's gaze at the fat junior. He looked upon him as a fox might look upon a very fat rabbit.

"The—the—the horrid beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Four fathom shell money, plenty yams, canoe plenty coconut!" Taminabo was saying earnestly. "You sell fat feller kai-kai, my word!"

"No!" said Captain Greene.

"What you want give?" demanded the chief sulkily. "You say what price belong fat feller!"

"He isn't for sale!" gasped the captain. "Nothing doing. Taminabo! Look here, give beads and box make um music for yams and coconuts!"

"Plenty beads and box make um music!" said the chief. "You make price belong fat feller, Taminabo pay um! Plenty feast along fat feller!"

"Can't be done!"

"What does he want, Captain Greene?" asked Mr. Vernon-Smith.

The skipper smiled.

"He wants Master Bunter to make a feast in his village, sir."

"Good gad!" ejaculated the millionaire.

Taminabo rolled his big, black eyes at Bunter again. The Owl of the Remove backed behind the other juniors in alarm.

"Give plenty pig along yams and coconuts!" said the chief. "Give two-three women for kai-kai! Nice young fat women make you plenty kai-kai, you give fat feller!"

The juniors gazed at the South Sea chief.

His offer for Bunter rather took their breath away.

"Is the beast offering women of his tribe to be eaten?" asked Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

"Yes, sir," said Soames. "Quite a common custom among these people, sir. They do not rate women very highly."

"The beast ought to be clucked overboard!" growled Johnny Bull. "If this is a sample of the simple savage, give me civilisation, even in a slum!"

"The simple savage is all bunkum!" said Bob. "A savage is just a white man without a white man's decency!"

"Five-six fat young women!" persisted Taminabo, raising his offer for Bunter. "You trade?"

"No trade!" said the captain.

"My word! Why white feller no trade?" demanded the chief, his black eyes glinting with anger.

"White feller no kai-kai man feller," explained the captain. "Man feller taboo kai-kai!"

"Taboo for white feller, no taboo for island feller!" said Taminabo.

"No trade!" repeated the skipper.

"Excuse me, sir," said Soames softly to the captain. "The canoes are getting in closer, and they are getting out spears from under those piles of yams."

Captain Greene, with a sign to the mate to watch the chief, stepped to the rail. He swung up his revolver.

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"Plenty spear stop along bottom canoe!" he rapped out. "You want see plenty shoot?"

The savages in the canoes grinned sheepishly. Some of them understood the words; all of them understood the captain's revolver. The hidden spears were shoved back quickly into their hiding-place. Evidently the weapons had been concealed there with the idea of making a sudden attack, while Taminabo kept the attention of the white men on himself. The treachery of the islanders was almost infantile.

"Good gad!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "Who'd have believed such things in the twentieth century! I suppose white men have never been to that island, captain?"

"Not unless shipwrecked," said the captain. "It's right off the track of the traders. But I dare say this chief has been all round the islands in his canoe. They travel hundreds of miles in their canoes, and Taminabo has picked up pidgin English somewhere. But he hasn't learned that white men don't kai-kai one another."

"Good gad!" repeated Mr. Vernon-Smith. "I shall feel easier when that feller is gone."

Taminabo, realising that there was nothing doing, gave up his attempt to obtain possession of William George Bunter. He came down to business, and traded a canoe-load of yams and coconuts for a stack of coloured beads and a musical-box. Then he prepared to go over the side, but his lingering glance turned on Bunter again.

"You don't want to go with him, Bunter?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, keep him off!" gasped Bunter. "He makes me feel quite queer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Taminabo had made a step towards the fat junior. Captain Greene promptly headed him off, and gently but firmly shepherded him to the side and over the side to his canoe. Billy Bunter breathed more freely when the kinky head, with its scarlet blossoms and teacup, sank below the rail.

Yams and coconuts and bananas were piled on the deck, but Billy Bunter did not give them a glance. Taminabo seemed to have taken his appetite away. The fat junior's complexion was greenish, and his podgy knees were knocking together. Taminabo stood up in his canoe, evidently loath to go.

"Two-five fat women, three-five fat pig, you sell fat feller kai-kai along me!" he called out persuasively.

"Your price is going up, Bunter!" said Bob.

"Beast! Ow!"

But the yacht was in motion again now, and it glided away from the canoes. The canoes remained in a group on the calm, blue sea, the whole crew of savages staring after the receding vessel.

They grow smaller and smaller in the distance, and the last figure the juniors could make out was the tall Taminabo, still standing up in his canoe and staring after the yacht.

"He's still thinking of Bunter," said Bob. "Though lost to sight, to memory dear, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooo! Grooooh!" Bunter seemed quite ill. "I say, you fellows, the captain ought to have shot that beast while he had a chance. A filthy cannibal!"

"I suppose he knows no better," said Harry.

"Shooting is too good for him; he ought to be boiled in oil," said Bunter.

"They ought to send a warship to blow his beastly village into pieces. They ought to be wiped out like vermin. Grooooh!"

And Bunter shook a fat fist at the canoes, now sinking out of view on the distant blue waters. Then he turned his attention, at last, to the fruits the savages had handed on board, and found comfort in ripe coconuts and bunches of rich bananas.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Met on the Pacific!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" "What is it, Bob?" asked Wharton lazily, from the depths of a comfortable deck-chair.

It was a couple of days later, and the Golden Arrow was steaming on over a sea as smooth as shining glass, under a blue sky without a vestige of a cloud.

The heat was intense. The voyagers were only a few degrees off the Equator now. Harry Wharton & Co. were taking it easy in deck-chairs under a shady awning. Even Bob Cherry was not feeling disposed to exert himself. Billy Bunter, stretched in a long bamboo chair, seemed scarcely to possess sufficient energy to nibble at a banana.

"Something on the sea," said Bob. "Looks like a boat. Castaway, I should think. I believe we're hundreds of miles from land."

"Oh, my hat!"

Hot as it was, the juniors were all on their feet at once, with the exception of Billy Bunter. Any number of castaways in the offing would not have made the Owl of the Remove detach himself from his comfortable chair.

Bob Cherry pointed out the speck on the sea that had caught his attention.

It was little more than a dark spot on the far-stretching blue waters, but it looked like a craft of some kind.

"Might be a giddy porpoise," said Nugent.

"Or a whale," said Johnny Bull.

"Looks to me like a boat of some sort," said Bob. "If it is, it must mean that there has been a shipwreck, I fancy. Where's your glasses, Smithy?"

The Bounder unslung his binoculars and handed them to Bob.

Bob Cherry scanned the sea through the glasses. The distant object rushed into view as soon as he had the binoculars focused upon it.

"It's a canoe!" he exclaimed.

"Niggers in it?" asked Bunter.

"Half a dozen men of some sort."

"Look here, we don't want any more niggers!" exclaimed Bunter. "Give it a miss, you fellows."

The Owl of the Remove had not forgotten Taminabo yet, and he found it quite unpleasant to think of himself as "kai-kai" at a cannibal feast.

"Rot!" said the Bounder. "If they're castaways, we're going to help them. That canoe must be a couple of hundred miles from the nearest land."

He glanced round at the captain. Captain Greene had turned his glasses on the distant object, but he gave no order to change the course of the yacht. Apparently he intended to pass the distant canoe by. That meant, of course, that he did not suppose that the men in it were castaways from a wreck.

"Don't you think they may be castaways, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith.

The captain shook his head.

"It's a native canoe," he answered. "The men in it are all natives or half-castes."

"But they're hundreds of miles from land," said the Bounder.

"These South Sea Islanders make very extensive voyages in their canoes," answered the captain. "They are making no signals of distress. Still, we could run close to them, if you want to look at them."

"I'd like to," said Vernon-Smith.

"Very well."

And the captain rapped out an order, and the course of the yacht changed to bear down on the lonely canoe.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched with keen interest as they drew nearer to the little craft:

They had heard of the long voyages made among the islands by the Kanakas in the flimsy-looking canoes, but they could hardly believe that so slight a craft would venture hundreds of miles from land upon waters so treacherous as those of the Pacific. All was calm and smiling now, but any hour a sudden and terrible tropic storm might have burst. The canoe was travelling swiftly, propelled by six flashing paddles in sinewy hands. Six black men were paddling, and a man sat at the stern of the canoe who looked like a white man. At all events, his face was not black, and he was dressed in white ducks like a South Sea trader, with a Panama hat.

"Not castaways," said Wharton. "Some trader, I should say, going to one of the islands."

"May as well speak to him," said Bob Cherry. "He can't often meet a white man here, and he will be glad of a chance to speak to one."

"Yes, rather!"

The yacht throbbed swiftly on, bearing down on the lonely canoe. Billy Bunter took the trouble to roll as far as the rail and lean upon it, to blink at the canoe when it was near enough. Soames, with his silent footsteps, appeared on deck, standing at a respectful distance, in his deferential way, while he watched the canoe.

"What do you make of it, Soames?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Some trader, sir," said Soames. "A half-caste trader of the islands."

"A half-caste!" repeated Wharton.

The word brought into his mind the memory of Silvio Xero, the desperate half-caste who had followed Ben Dance to England, in an attempt to obtain Black Peter's chart. Silvio had disappeared, and the juniors had supposed that he had gone back to the Pacific. But there were, of course, thousands—if not tens of thousands—of half-castes in the world of islands.

"Not likely to be that chap Silvio," said Bob, with a grin, as he read the thought in Wharton's face.

"I suppose not," said Harry. "We shall fall in with him again when we get to Caca Island, I believe. But we're not there yet."

"I say, there seems to be something familiar about that chap!" said Johnny Bull. "He's got gold ear-rings in his ears."

The juniors stared at the man in the stern of the canoe. He was too far off for recognition, but they could catch the glint of the gold of his ear-rings in the bright sunshine. Well they remembered the gold ear-rings of the half-caste who had pursued the wooden-legged seaman.

Wharton knitted his brows.

"It's possible," he said. "Anyhow, we'll have a look at him. The canoe seems to be trying to edge away."

"They don't want to see us!" said Nugent.

It soon became clear that the canoe was seeking to escape a meeting. The paddlers had changed their course a little, and were paddling faster than

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before. The half-caste was watching the yacht, his olive face half-hidden under the broad brim of his Panama hat. Herbert Vernon-Smith fixed the binoculars on the distant figure, and he uttered a sudden sharp exclamation.

"That's Silvio, you fellows!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry in amazement. "Fancy running into that scoundrel here!"

"Sure, Smithy?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Quite!" said the Bounder decidedly.

"His isn't a face that one would forget in a hurry. It's Silvio Xero."

"Who's Silvio Xero?" drawled Mr. Vernon-Smith from the depths of his chair. "I never knew you lads had any acquaintances in the South Sea."

"I told you about the half-caste, father," said the Bounder. "He was after that wooden-legged sailorman who brought the chart to Redwing."

"Oh! Yes, I remember," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, with a smile. "I remember, Herbert. The fellow who threw a knife at you."

"That's the man."

"I'll have a look at him, then," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, rising from his chair. "I suppose we can't do anything to the rascal, here in the South Seas. There are no policemen handy to take him into custody—what?"

The canoe was still edging away, but it had, of course, no chance of eluding the yacht. The Golden Arrow glided down upon it swiftly. Why the half-caste sought to elude a meeting was rather a puzzle to the juniors. It was impossible that Silvio could know anything about the millionaire's yacht, or that he could even guess that Redwing and the Greyfriars fellows were on board her.

Possibly, now that the yacht was drawing near, the half-caste's keen eyes had recognised the faces looking over the rail. But the canoe had been striving to dodge the yacht, long before Silvio could possibly have seen and recognised the juniors. For some

reason of his own, the half-caste evidently desired to avoid a meeting with any vessel.

"The rotter is up to something," said Bob Cherry, with conviction. "He wants to keep clear of any white man's ship."

"But why?" said Nugent.

"Goodness knows—only he's got lots of things on his conscience, I suppose."

"There's something on board that canoe," said Vernon-Smith quietly. "Look at that canvas—there's something under it that moves."

"My hat! A prisoner, perhaps?"

"He may have been stealing pigs," said Bob. "Anyhow, I think we ought to give him a look in."

The canoe was quite close now. The kinky-haired Solomon Islanders who had been paddling were resting on their paddles now, realising the impossibility of escaping. They sat panting and sweating with their exertions. The half-caste, sitting at the end of the little craft, watched the yacht with glittering black eyes, his lips drawn back from his gleaming white teeth in a snarl.

There was no doubt of his identity now. Here in the trackless waste of waters of the vast Pacific, the Greyfriars fellows had met again the man who had tracked Ben Dance to England, and who had robbed the wooden-legged sailorman of the chart, only to lose it again to the juniors. It was Silvio Xero, with his olive skin and glittering gold earrings, who sat in the canoe, watching the approach of the yacht with hostile eyes.

But the attention of the Greyfriars fellows was fixed less upon the half-caste himself, than upon a mass of loose canvas that lay in the bottom of the canoe, between him and the paddlers.

Many times, while they had observed it, that canvas had stirred, as if it hid something living from sight.

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It was possible, of course, that pigs or dogs, taken for food on the voyage, were sheltered from the blazing sun under the canvas. But it was not like the South Sea savages to show so much consideration to dumb animals. Knowing as they did, the lawless and ferocious character of the half-caste, the juniors were quite prepared to find that he had a prisoner on board the canoe; in which case, it was natural that he should have screened his victim from sight, as soon as he observed the white man's vessel bearing down towards him. That, too, would account for the canoe's attempt to avoid a meeting.

"Excuse me, sir!" It was Soames' soft, sleek voice addressing the millionaire.

Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced round.

"What is it, Soames?"

"You are aware, sir, that I am not unacquainted with these waters," said Soames. "I think it my duty to point out, sir, that there is considerable risk in approaching too near that canoe."

"Eh! Where is the risk?" asked the millionaire.

"These islanders, sir, excel at throwing the knife," said Soames. "It is very likely that any man on that canoe could kill a man at a very considerable distance, by throwing his knife."

"We had a sample of what Silvio could do in that line," said the Bounder. "But he'd better not try it on here."

"The half-caste has a revolver in his hand, sir," said Soames. "Probably he is a lawless character who does not desire to be questioned. I only suggest, sir, that there may be unnecessary risk in approaching the canoe too close."

"By gad, that's true!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "The man appears to be a lawless ruffian, but we do not want to be forced to shoot him! If you lads have seen enough of him, we may as well sheer off."

"Not yet, father," said the Bounder. "We want to see what he's got hidden under that canvas?"

"Pigs, most likely, sir!" said Soames. "There is a considerable trade among the islands in pigs and other livestock."

"Very likely; but we're goin' to make sure," said Vernon-Smith. "That man Silvio isn't a trader, but a cut-throat adventurer. I can't imagine him trading pigs among the islands. Father, if he's got some prisoner hidden there, it's up to us to chip in."

"Certainly, certainly!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "But we don't want to be forced to shoot the man in self-defence. Herbert, and Soames thinks it is only some livestock there. Soames knows these seas."

"I assure you, Master Herbert—" said Soames smoothly.

The Bounder interrupted him.

"That's all very well; but we want to satisfy ourselves. Captain Greene will be able to keep the scoundrel in order, if he dares to cut up rusty."

"Depend on that," said the skipper, with a smile. "If you care to search the canoe, sir, I will post a couple of men with rifles to keep the half-caste

under cover. That will put a stop to any nonsense."

"Good gad!" said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "If you think it possible that that scoundrel has some prisoner on the canoe, captain—"

"I think it is fairly certain, sir—those savages would not take the trouble to screen animals from the sun. Whatever is under that canvas is being deliberately hidden from sight!"

The captain gave Soames a rather sharp glance.

"If you know anything about these seas, my man, you should know that," he added. "If you're nervous of throwing knives, you can go below!"

"Thank you, sir," said Soames smoothly. "With Mr. Vernon-Smith's permission, I will go below."

"Do!" said the millionaire carelessly, and the manservant went quietly down the companion.

He left the juniors smiling. It was possible that there was some risk in dealing with the half-caste, but the Greyfriars fellows gave it little thought, and Soames' evident desire to avoid contact rather entertained them. But Tom Redwing did not smile, and his glance followed Soames, doubtfully. Redwing had almost forgotten his distrust of Mr. Vernon-Smith's "man," but never quite. And it came into his mind now that it was not funk that caused Soames to desire to keep away from the half-caste Silvio.

It came into his mind that possibly Soames and the half-caste were no strangers; that Soames had known the man in his earlier days in the South Seas, and did not desire that fact to be brought to light by a meeting now. Redwing was almost ashamed of his suspicions of the sleek, deferential man-servant; and yet they lingered in his mind, and could not be wholly dismissed.

The yacht was towering over the canoe now, and the engines were stopped. Two seamen, with rifles in their hands, looked down over the rail, the muzzles bearing upon the canoe. Silvio Xero gave them a black look. If he had thought of using his revolver, he gave up the idea now. The rifles would have riddled the canoe with bullets at a word from the captain.

"Canoe ahoy!" the skipper hailed.

Silvio looked at him.

"What have you got on board your canoe?"

"No business of white feller belong ship," answered the half-caste insolently.

"You'd better speak civilly, my man," said Captain Greene, with a gleam in his eyes. "I don't take back-chat from half-castes. Give me any more impudence and I'll swamp your canoe. Answer my question!"

"Yams and sweet potatoes, trade in um islands," answered the half-caste sullenly.

"Yams and sweet potatoes don't kick when they're placed under canvas," said the captain grimly.

"Anything else?"

"Little pigs!"

"Will you trade your pigs?"

Silvio shook his head.

"No trade!" he answered.

"You won't sell your pigs?"

"No can sell. Pig him belong master."

"Let us see them, then," said Captain Greene. "Now, then, shift that canvas aside, and let us see the pigs."

The half-caste's black eyes burned like live coals.

"Why captain feller he want see pigs?" he asked.

"That's my business! Shift that canvas plenty quick," rapped out the captain, and he showed his revolver over the polished rail of the yacht.

"White feller captain he mind um business," said the half-caste.

"I order you to shift that canvas, you impudent yellow-faced scoundrel," shouted Captain Greene angrily.

The half-caste did not stir. Savage ferocity and hate burned in his eyes, and his dusky hand gripped the butt of his revolver almost convulsively. Evidently he did not intend to obey the order.

"That settles it, you fellows," said Redwing. "He dare not let us see what he's got hidden there."

"He's going to, though," said the Bounder.

"Will you shift that canvas?" roared the captain.

The half-caste made no answer, and did not stir.

"Keep those rifles handy," said Captain Greene. "Shoot the man dead if he so much as lifts a finger while I'm boarding him!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And Captain Greene dropped from the yacht's side to the canoe, which was floating alongside and touching the larger vessel. He landed on his feet among the Solomon Islanders, the sudden impact of his weight causing the canoe to rock wildly. The black paddlers scrambled, jabbering, out of his way; and Silvio Xero sprang to his feet, weapon in hand. But the rifles levelled from above daunted him, and he did not raise a hand, though his olive face was almost convulsed with fury. Unheeding him, the captain stooped and dragged aside the loose canvas.

Then there was a shout from the crowd lining the side of the yacht.

For the drawing aside of the canvas revealed a man lying in the bottom of the canoe, bound hand and foot with grass-ropes, with a gag in his mouth. The man was a mahogany-faced seaman with a wooden leg.

"Ben Dance!" shouted Harry Wharton.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Rescue of Ben Dance!

BEN DANCE lay in the bottom of the canoe blinking dazedly in the sudden glare of the sun. The Greyfriars fellows knew him instantly. It was the wooden-legged seaman who had brought the chart from the South Seas, and had vanished after handing it to Harry Wharton in trust for Black Peter's nephew. What had become of him the juniors had not known, though they had guessed that he had gone back to the sea. Evidently he had returned to the Pacific, there to fall into the relentless clutches of the half-caste.

Ben Dance's powerful limbs were bound with strong grass-ropes, and he was cruelly gagged, with grass-ropes drawn round his head tightly in his open jaws. Doubtless he had been bound ever since he had been placed, a prisoner, in the canoe, and the half-caste had gagged him as soon as he sighted the yacht bearing down, to prevent a call for help. The hapless seaman lay and blinked, his mahogany face drawn with pain and terror.

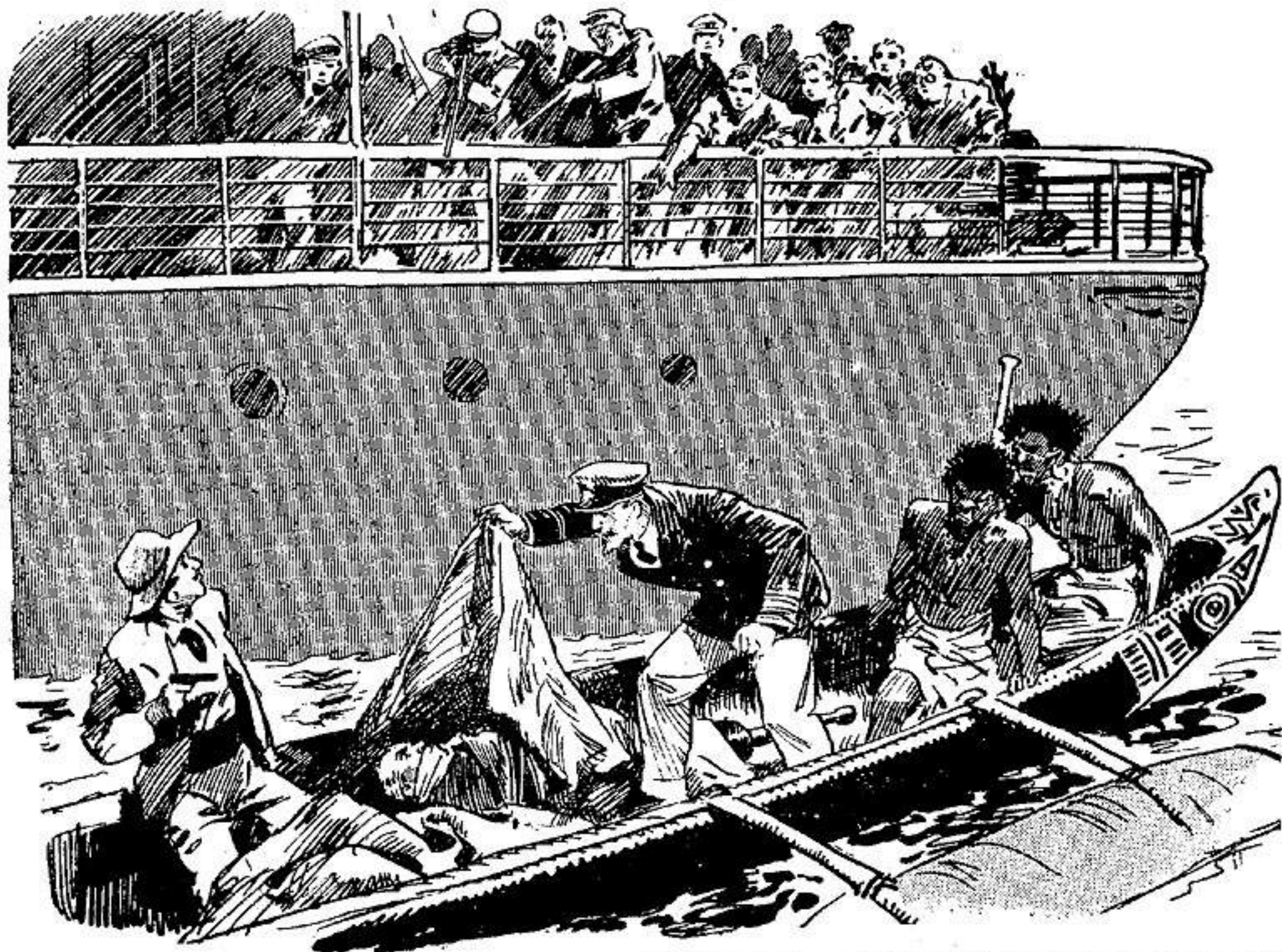
"Ben Dance!"

"So that's Ben Dance!" exclaimed Tom Redwing, who had not seen the man before. "In the hands of that scoundrel Silvio!"

ANSWERS

Every Saturday — PRICE 2.

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Unheeding Silvio Xero, Captain Greene leaped into the canoe among the Solomon Islanders, and dragged aside the loose canvas. As he did so, there came a shout from the crowd lining the side of the yacht. For the drawing aside of the canvas revealed the bound and gagged form of a mahogany-faced seaman with a wooden leg. "Ben Dance!" shouted Harry Wharton.

(See Chapter 11.)

Captain Greene stared down at the man. He had expected to find a prisoner hidden under the canvas, but had hardly expected the prisoner to prove to be a British sailorman.

"You low-down half-caste scoundrel!" exclaimed the captain. "You've got a white man here!"

Silvio eyed him savagely. He eyed the captain and he eyed the many faces looking down from the yacht, and it was plain that the desperate thought was working in his mind of making a fight for it. But it would have been hopeless, and he knew it. The rifles from above were bearing on him, and he would have had time for no more than one shot. As for the Solomon Islanders who manned the canoe, they evidently had no intention of resisting. The canoe men were not even armed—the half-caste could not have trusted his life in their hands had they been allowed to carry weapons. Even with his paddlers unarmed, the desperate man ran the risk of being seized by surprise and turned into "kai-kai" with such a crew.

Captain Greene half raised his revolver.

"Throw that pistol into the sea, plenty quick!" he rapped.

Silvio did not obey.

"You drop pistol belong you in water plenty quick, or——" Captain Greene took aim.

Splash!

The half-caste's pistol dropped into the water.

"That's better!" said the captain. "Now release that man!"

Trembling with rage, Silvio obeyed. Captain Greene was not to be argued with, as the half-caste realised now.

The grass-ropes were unfastened, and Ben Dance was free. He sat up in the bottom of the canoe, mumbling with his aching jaws. His limbs were cramped from the cruel bonds, and he was unable to rise.

"Take your time, my man," said the captain kindly. "I'll have a line rigged to get you aboard."

"Thanky kindly, sir!" mumbled Ben Dance.

Captain Greene called up an order to the mate, and a line was thrown to the canoe. The captain secured it about the seaman, under his brawny arms. Ben Dance was lifted, half clambering, up the side of the Golden Arrow, and landed on the deck.

The half-caste watched the transfer of his prisoner to the yacht with eyes glittering with rage.

But he was powerless to offer resistance to the rescue of the wooden-legged seaman. He gritted his white teeth as Ben Dance disappeared from his sight.

"Now you finish!" he muttered. "You go ship belong you, leave canoe belong me!"

"I've more than half a mind to take you on board and clap you in irons!" snapped Captain Greene.

He turned his back on the scowling half-caste and climbed on the yacht.

In a moment Silvio had muttered a

word to his crew, and the paddles flashed again. Like a frightened bird, the canoe darted away from the Golden Arrow.

The engines throbbed, and the yacht resumed her course. In a few minutes Silvio's canoe was once more a speck on the ocean.

Meanwhile, the Greyfriars juniors had gathered round Ben Dance.

The wooden-legged seaman was sore and cramped from his bonds, but his bronzed face was bright. His rescue from the savage half-caste in mid-ocean when he had given up all hope seemed like a miracle to him. For some time he could hardly speak, his jaws being numbed by the grass-rope gag. Tom Redwing brought him a large pannikin of water, and he swallowed it to the last drop and gasped with relief.

"Thanky, sir!" he panted. "I reckon I was dry, sir. Not a drop of water nor a bite of food have I had since that fiend got me on the canoe! He's gone?"

"Almost out of sight now," said Tom reassuringly. "Not that he could hurt you here."

The seaman shook his head.

"You don't know that demon, sir!" he answered. "He ain't a man; he's jest a demon in the shape of one! It was him that killed Black Peter for his pearls, though he never laid hands on them."

"My uncle!" exclaimed Redwing.

Dance stared at him.

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"You young Redwing, then?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You got the chart?" asked Dance anxiously. "I knowed I could trust the young gentleman I give it to; I know a face I can trust, and you can lay to that. But you got it safe?"

"Quite safe!" said Tom, with a smile. "It's on board this yacht now, locked up in Mr. Vernon-Smith's safe."

"Shiver me!" muttered Dance. "If Silvio had knowed that, I lay that he wouldn't have gone away so peaceful in his canoe!"

The juniors could not help smiling. Evidently the wooden-legged seaman had a deep-seated dread of the half-caste. They could not help smiling at the idea of the half-caste making an attempt to seize the chart on board the yacht single-handed.

"You don't know that man, young gentlemen," said Ben Dance. "You don't know what he's capable of. You won't live to lift them pearls, Tom Redwing, if Silvio can get near you with his knife! You can lay to that!"

Mr. Vernon-Smith was eyeing the wooden-legged seaman curiously.

"You are the man who brought the chart to England?" he asked.

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Dance.

"You believe that it will guide this lad to a treasure that was buried on an island by his uncle?" asked the millionaire, with an amused smile.

"That's so, sir," said Dance. "A cache of pearls—worth a big fortune, sir. Black Peter, he knowed where to lay his hands on the pearls he did, and he knowed where to put them safe. When he was in the recruiting, what some folks call blackbirding, he was getting pearls all the time. I sailed with him then, sir, and I knowed. I knowed that he had his cache on Caca Island, though I never knowed where. But it's all writ in the chart."

"And you brought a chart, which you believe to be worth a fortune, to hand over to this lad?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"I promised Peter Bruce, sir, when he lay on his beam-ends on the beach, arter that demon had put a Malaita knife atween his shoulders," said Ben Dance. "He had made his last voyage, and he reckoned he was going to lift the pearls and sail for England; but Silvio's knife settled that. And then he made me swear on the Good Book to take the chart home to his nevy, so that his sister's son would be a rich man. And I did it, with that murdering half-caste arter me all the time; and at the finish he'd have got the chart but for these young gentlemen."

The millionaire pursed his lips thoughtfully. It was borne in upon his mind that the treasure chart was a matter to be taken more seriously than he had hitherto dreamed of taking it.

"Well, if the pearls are there, Redwing will have no difficulty in taking possession of them," he said. "He will sail from the Marquesas to find them, and care will be taken that the half-caste is not allowed to interfere. But what was the man's object in making you a prisoner? Where was he taking you in that canoe?"

Dance shuddered.

"He got hold of me on the beach at Nuka-hiva, sir," he answered. "Arter I'd got rid of the chart, I never expected to see him again; he knowed that I hadn't got the chart. I came back to the Marquesas on a copra trader, and one night he got me on the beach. They roped me up and got me in the canoe

and put out to sea at once. He was heading for Caca when you came on him, sir.

"For the pearl island?" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Ay, ay, sir! Having lost the chart, Silvio reckoned that I knowed something about where the pearls was hid; he never believed that I'd taken the chart to Black Peter's nevy without looking at it and getting the lay of it in my mind. And he was going to make me guide him to the cache on Caca Island. I couldn't have done it, sir, but he believed that I could; and as soon as we touched Caca it was to be the pearls for him, or kai-kai for me."

"Kai-kai!" repeated the millionaire.

"Yes, sir. Them black villains in his canoe would have cooked and eaten me on the beach at Caca."

"Good gad!"

"That's what you've saved me from, sir," said Ben Dance, shivering. "I'd given myself up, sir; I knowed it was kai-kai for me. 'Cause why, I couldn't have guided him to the cache to save my life!"

"Is it possible that the man has put to sea in a canoe with a crew of cannibals?" exclaimed Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Jest that, sir; and as like as not they may try to make kai-kai of him now that he's lost his gun."

"Good gad!"

"But they won't get the better of Silvio," added Ben Dance. "He ain't a man; he's a demon! He's killed more men than he's got fingers and toes. Even Black Peter couldn't get the better of him, and he got Peter at last. And Black Peter was a hard man to get, sir. I've knowed him hold his whole crew off, sir, when they rose agin him on his ketch, and drive 'em back to order arter shooting three or four and chucking them to the sharks."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom Redwing.

"He was the man to handle them, sir," said Ben Dance. "He didn't vally much a black man's life. What became of the five men who went ashore with him to bury the pearls on Caca? They never came back to the ketch, and nobody ever dared to ask any questions. Black Peter came back in the canoe alone, and there was a look on his face that made every man know that he'd better not ask where the paddlers was!"

"He left them on the island?" asked Redwing.

"Not alive, I reckon."

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Your uncle seems to have been rather a hard nut to crack, Reddy."

Redwing was silent. He hardly remembered his uncle, but he knew that Black Peter was said to have been a hard man. But he had never expected to learn details like these from Peter Bruce's old shipmate.

His sunburnt face was a little pale. A picture was in his mind, called up by Dance's words, of the grim, black-bearded man having cached the treasure of pearls in some hidden spot, turning his revolver, perhaps, upon the wretched blacks who had assisted him, ruthlessly sacrificing their lives to preserve the secret of the cache. The treasure of Caca Island was already stained with blood and crime.

The Bounder pressed his arm, understanding the thoughts that were passing in the mind of the sailorman's son.

"Don't think about it, Reddy," he said. "It's the way of the South Seas. Life is cheap in the Pacific. Uncle Peter seems to have been rather a corker; but there are plenty worse among the islands. No good thinking about what can't be helped."

Redwing nodded, but he did not speak. Ben Dance was taken forward to berth with the crew, and the sailorman's son remained, leaning on the rail, watching the far-stretching blue waters with a thoughtful line in his forehead. What he had learned had been a shock to him, and he could not help thinking that he would learn more now that he was in the waters where Black Peter, in his time, had been a well-known character. Yet the man, hard and desperate as he had evidently been, had had a kind thought for his own kindred in his last hours, and had striven to make his sister's son the heir of the treasure that was stained with blood.

For that reason Redwing could not help feeling some tenderness for his memory, though he now suspected—what he was later to learn with certainty—that Black Peter was remembered among the islands as one of the most reckless and hardy desperadoes that had ever sailed the Pacific.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Halves for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Dear me! Is that Bunter talking again?" yawned Bob Cherry.

"I say—"

"The talkfulness is truly terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Land to-day," said the Bounder. "We shall be at the Marquesas before nightfall, you fellows."

"Good!" said Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—"

"And then the giddy treasure-hunt begins," said Vernon-Smith, ruthlessly heedless of William George Bunter. "The pater is taking it a bit more seriously now. He's going to take no end of trouble, and make no end of arrangements, to see that we're safe while we're looking for the pearls. Of course, we can take care of ourselves—"

"What-ho!"

"But we shall have to give the pater his head," said the Bounder. "He's going to make a big sacrifice on our account."

"What's that?" asked Nugent.

"Soames is to sail with us when we start, and keep a fatherly eye on us and see that we don't get into any mischief."

"My hat! But your father will want Soames," said Bob Cherry. "How will he manage without him?"

"That's where the sacrifice comes in," grinned the Bounder. "He's parting with the invaluable Soames for our sakes. The fact is, we'd rather be excused; but the pater means well. He can trust Soames, you see."

"I'm sure he's trustworthy," said Wharton, laughing. "But we really don't want to be looked after."

"That's what a fellow's pater never can see," answered the Bounder.

"But it's rather hard lines on Soames," said Johnny Bull. "He can't want to go rooting about the islands with a lot of schoolboys."

"One would hardly think so," assented the Bounder. "But the pater says that Soames made the offer, and he was glad to jump at it."

"Well, Soames won't worry us," said Harry.

"I think it's a jolly good idea," said Bunter. "Soames can look after me. I'm not accustomed to travelling without a servant, like you fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can see Soames doing it," grinned the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows—"

(Continued from previous page.)

"Talking again!" said Bob. "What a fellow you are for talking, Bunter! Why don't you try a little thinking, by way of a change?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Nothing to do it with!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Beast! Look here, you fellows—"

"I shall be jolly glad to see land again," remarked Bob. "We may get another offer for Bunter at the Marquesas."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you fellows! Will you listen?" hooted Bunter. "It's important. We're going after the pearls in a few days—"

"We are—w3 is," agreed Bob.

"And we haven't settled yet how the treasure is to be whacked out when we find it," said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles. "That's rather important."

"Blessed if I see it!" said Bob. "The pearls belong to Redwing, as they were left to him by his uncle. We're going to help him find them but we're not going to stick him for any of them, fathead!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter indignantly. "Do you think I'm going to search for a treasure, and risk my life among cannibals and half-castes and things, without getting a whack of the stuff? I can jolly well tell you that I expect a share!"

"That's all right. You won't get it!"

"I'd rather make an arrangement to whack out the treasure, if we find it, you fellows," said Tom Redwing quietly.

"Nothing doing!" said the Bounder.

"We're not going to rob you, Reddy."

"No fear!" said Nugent.

"Utter rot!" said Harry Wharton.

"We've come along to help, but the pearls belong to you, Reddy. You're coming back to Greyfriars with the loot, if we're lucky. We shall be jolly glad to have you there again, and that is where we come in, see?"

"The rewardfulness of seeing the esteemed Redwing's ancient and ludicrous countenance in the execrable school will be sufficient for our worthy selves!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"All the same—" said Redwing, with a smile.

"Can it!" interrupted the Bounder. "It's settled about that, Redwing!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! All very well for you fellows not to share—that's all right, for, of course, you won't be any use; more likely to be a hindrance. But it's different with me. I shall expect to go halves!"

"Blessed are those who don't expect!" yawned Bob. "They never get disappointed."

"Now, we've got to have this plain!" said Bunter, wagging a fat forefinger admonishingly at the juniors. "I shall claim halves! That's got to be agreed to before I consent to come at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"I mean it!" howled Bunter. "Unless that's definitely settled, I shall stay on the yacht, and refuse to come with you at all looking for the treasure."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, unsay those cruel words!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We can't do without you, Bunter. Suppose we run out of grub? You would last us for weeks."

"Beast!"

"Fancy not seeing Bunter all the time we're rooting after the treasure!" sobbed Bob. "Fancy not hearing his

voice all that time! Do you fellows think you could bear it?"

"We'd try," grinned Nugent.

"We would summon all our esteemed fortitude," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We might possibly survive."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" roared Bunter. "But I mean it, every word! I shan't come unless I go halves in the treasure!"

"Good!" said all the juniors together.

"Well, suppose we say a quarter!" said Bunter, relenting. "I never was a greedy chap, as you fellows know. Nothing mean about me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Make it a quarter, and it's a go!" said Bunter.

"Otherwise you won't come?" asked Bob.

"No."

"That settles it. It won't be a quarter—it won't be a millionth part," said Bob, with a chuckle. "I hope you'll have a good time waiting for us at the Marquesas, Bunter. We shall have a good time—if you stay there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I propose a vote of thanks to Bunter," said Bob Cherry.

OUT ON SATURDAY.



One revolver on board, and that deadly weapon in the hands of an unscrupulous ruffian who would just as soon shoot Harry Wharton & Co. and throw them to the sharks as look at them. That's the unenviable position in which the Greyfriars Chums find themselves in next week's absorbing story entitled:

"THE WHIP-HAND!"

Don't miss this "treat of the week" whatever you do, chums.

ORDER YOUR COPY EARLY.

"I second that!" said Johnny Bull.

"Passed unanimously."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared at the chums of the Remove, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Beasts! If you think you're going to leave me behind, you're jolly well mistaken. I'm jolly well coming. Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shout from the man on the look-out, and the Greyfriars fellows bounded to their feet.

"Land!"

"The jolly old Marquesas at last!" exclaimed Bob.

"Land ho!"

And, with beating hearts, Harry Wharton & Co. stood looking across the blue, swelling waters of the Pacific, watching the hills of Nuka-hiva rising clearer and clearer from the waves.

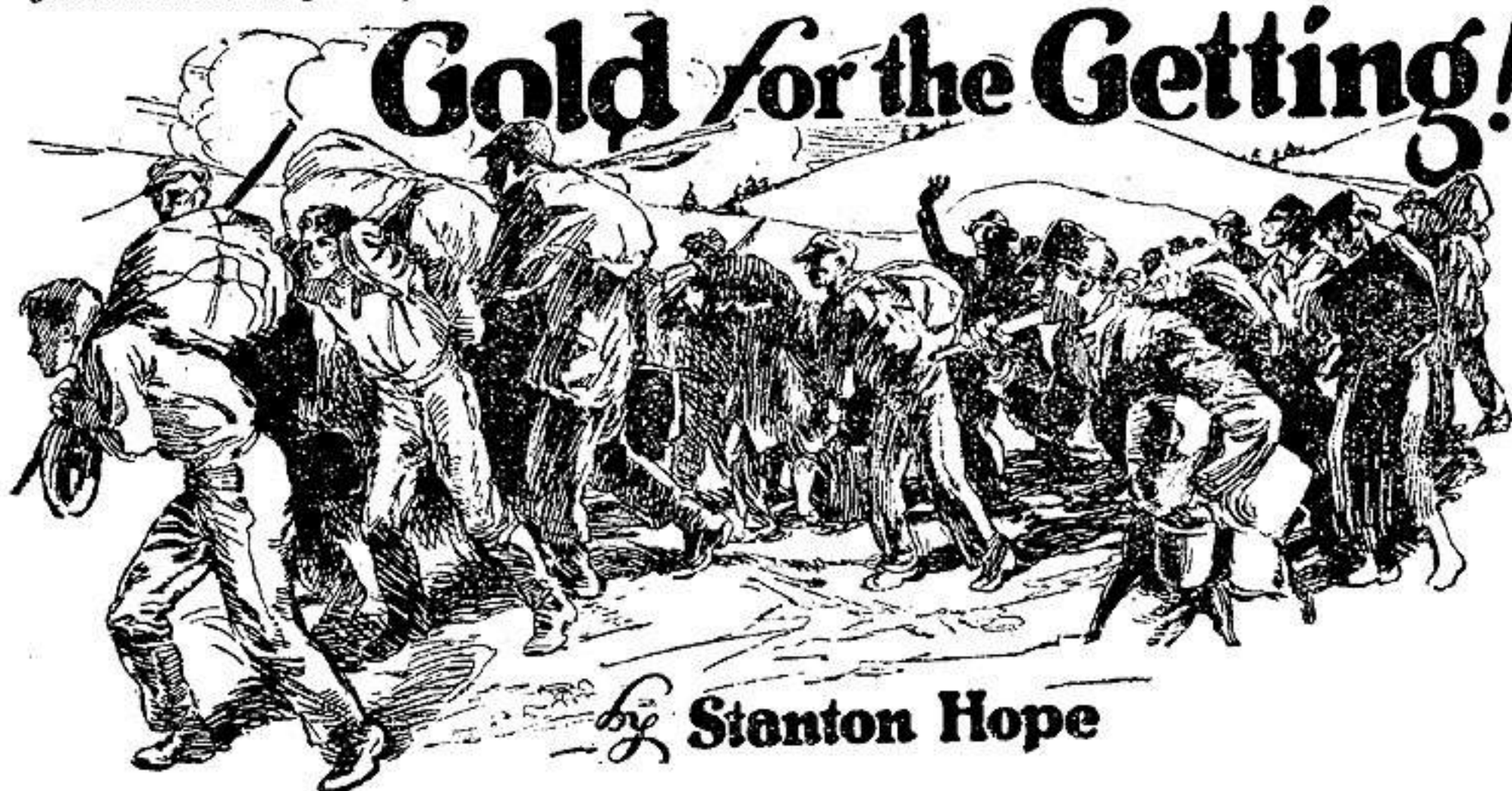
THE END.

(What fresh adventures await Harry Wharton & Co. now that they have arrived at the Marquesas—now that the time has come for them to part company with Mr. Vernon-Smith? Next week's grand story will tell you, chums. Don't miss it on any account.)

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FALLING INTO GOLD! That's the experience of young Terry O'Hara for, by a strange chance, he strikes the precious yellow metal literally head-first!

Gold for the Getting!



By **Stanton Hope**

The Story of a Thrilling Gold Rush to the Land of the Midnight Sun!

(Introduction on page 25.)

The Strike!

WHILE pandemonium reigned, Jack, panting for breath, stood over Morgan with clenched fists, waiting for him to rise. And when, by the aid of Lefty Simons, Bull Morgan did get to his feet, he had no stomach left for further fight. The hammering he had received from those lightning, hardwood fists of the English boy had proved a salutary lesson to him.

Clean-living David had conquered the dissolute Goliath, and the victor was acclaimed boisterously by the rough men of the North as Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons slunk back into the township.

Uncle Clem gave Jack's hand a congratulatory grip, which spoke more than words, and Terry nearly knocked most of Jack's remaining breath out of his body by hearty clumps on the back.

"Well, sonny," grinned Jock McLennan, "you're sure a hundred per cent grit. And as that big stiff don't seem to be offering no more objection to your having Skookum, I guess the dog's yours, as I promised."

"Oh, thanks!" exclaimed Jack. "He'll come in jolly useful, and when we've worked our claim a while we'll buy a few more to make a sled team."

McLennan laughed.

"Say, you're a born optimist, boy!" he remarked. "Pussonally, I reckon you'll find Skookum's a white elephant, and I ain't too sure he'll even tolerate those two pards o' yours. As for buying more dogs—waal, there are a good few fellows with money up hyer who'd jest like to have the chance themselves."

Because Jack did not know what to do with Skookum, the old-timer said that he would keep him around his cabin until the following day. All the savagery had died out of the wolf-dog's eyes and he permitted Jack to give him a parting pat on the head. Clearly, he was not at all anxious to leave his new young master to return with his former owner. However, Jack determined to take the animal up to Starvation Creek with him when he returned.

Hoisting his pack again, Jack accompanied his pards to the Government branch records office, recently established for the convenience of prospectors.

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There the right of Uncle Clem to the Yellow Horseshoe claim was duly established, as required by law.

At Brady's general store in McLennan Crossing, they bought a large strip of canvas, a small pair of scales, and several appliances for use in working their gold claim. Of Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons nothing was seen.

Before hitting the trail back to their claim Jack, Terry, and Uncle Clem called on Jock McLennan and obtained the wolf-dog, Skookum. In handing over the animal Jock cheerfully expressed the hope that Jack's pardners would not be minus any fingers by the next time he saw them.

But whatever treachery was in Skookum's nature, the dog managed to conceal it on his way out to the claim. Possibly his good nature was due partly to the fact that for almost the first time in his life he was freed from the pangs of hunger by a liberal feed of dried salmon which Jack bought for him from some Indians. Any old-timer would have said that Jack and his pals were planting trouble for themselves by so treating a dog of this type. But evidently Skookum had some civilised kink in his nature which made him appreciative of the first real kindness he had ever received.

Back at Starvation Creek, the party erected a rough shelter by the side of the stream and draped it about with mosquito netting. That day they set to work in earnest, panning the dirt from the river bank where they had made their first small strike. Each time the pan showed "colour"—that is, gold after all the sand and gravel had been washed away.

For hours the trio worked with only one break for a midday meal. At last, when the Yukon sky was blood-red in the west at sunset, they took the pair of scales Uncle Clem had bought and weighed out their gold in a cigarette-paper.

"How much do you think we've made, Uncle Clem?" asked Jack eagerly.

With an appraising eye their elderly partner surveyed the tiny heap of gold-dust on the strip of rice-paper.

"Roughly nine dollars," he said. "That's three dollars a day wages for each of us. Not much, considering the long hours and tough work we've had to

put in for it, and a deal less than the prosperous miners are paying for hired help on New Bonanza. Nevertheless, there is gold in the soil here, and I vote we work on in the hope of getting more to the pan in future."

"Indade, 'tis me own idea entoirely!" said Terry.

"Mine, too," agreed Jack.

On the following morning they worked with even greater zest on the Yellow Horseshoe. At midday, while Uncle Clem put a large tin of pork and beans to cook for dinner, Jack took a sample pan of the pay-dirt to test for the proportion of gold. After panning it in the creek, he weighed the residue gold in the small pair of scales. To his disappointment there was twenty cents' worth in the pan. Things did not look too rosy.

Meanwhile, Terry was out looking at some snares he had set, only to find that the wily Yukon rabbits had failed to oblige by trapping themselves.

Disappointed, the Irish boy made his way back towards the tent, and came upon Skookum, the husky, scratching at a hole in the ground just within the north-east corner of the claim.

To the inexperienced Terry the hole appeared to have been made by a badger rather than a rabbit. But for want of something better to do while the beans were cooking, he took a sharp-pointed miner's shovel and dug away the loose earth, while Skookum helped by vigorously scraping with his fore-paws.

Of a sudden the loose earth slipped away beneath Terry's feet, and, with a yelp of surprise, he shot down about five feet into the ground, the startled Skookum coming on top of him.

A squeal which might have been that of a fox or some smaller animal—Terry never knew—broke out close beside him, and some furry object rushed madly up the slope of the cave-in and vanished from view. Skookum leaped up and attempted to follow it, scraping frantically at the loose earth and sending a shower of dirt into Terry's eyes and ears.

"Steady! Steady, me bhoy!" bellowed Terry. "Go aisy, or you'll be burying me alive!"

Giving another great leap, Skookum managed to get out of the big hole, and Terry rose and began shaking the dirt out of his clothes.

The only real hurt he had received was a knock on the nose from the handle of the shovel as he fell, and, grasping the offending implement, he strove to drag it from a small mound of earth and rocky debris. Much of this he had to scrape away with his hands, but he finally wrenched the shovel free and was about to clamber out of the hole, hearing Jack and Uncle Clem calling his name as they approached.

It was then that Terry saw a small dull yellow object at his feet, and he picked it up for closer examination. It was a nugget of gold about an inch in diameter, and obviously worth about a hundred dollars!

Dropping on his knees, Terry excitedly began to scrape with his hands.

"Hallo!" came the cheery voice of Jack from above. "What's up?"

"'Tis meself that's down," replied Terry breathlessly.

Not for an instant did he pause in his task of scraping away the soil from that hole.

"Arrah, there's more of ut!" he whooped wildly. "Gold! Gold! 'Tis here—right at me feet—lashings of ut! Hurroo, we're rich, me bhoy—rich as ould Rockyfeller!"

And only in the nick of time Jack and Uncle Clem, outside the hole, dodged back to avoid a couple of handfuls of shimmering golden nuggets which Terry tossed into the air in his mad excitement!

Gold for the Getting!

"**W**ERE rich—rich as Rockyfeller!"

Terry's voice rose jubilantly from that cave-in by the bank of Starvation Creek, and went echoing through the Yukon hills.

Up came another handful of small nuggets, glinting like a little golden fountain in the sun. And then the amazing truth came home to Jack and Uncle Clem with sledge-hammer force—Terry had made a strike!

Forgetting the beans cooking on the primus stove, they both hurled themselves into the hole in the ground and began scraping wildly, as Terry was doing.

"By the Great Mackinaw!" roared Uncle Clem, as he let some of the gold trickle through his fingers. "This is the real red stuff, sonnies!"

Jack thrust a couple of handfuls of earth and nuggets into his pockets and gave the dirt-covered Terry a hearty clump on the back that bowled him to the ground.

"You're a marvel—a giddy marvel!" he yelled jubilantly. "How did you light on this lot?"

"On me head," replied Terry, sitting up. "Skookum had been scraping in the ground wid his paws, when suddenly the lot caved in and down I came wid the dog on top of me. Some furry animal did a bunk out of here—a fox or something—and ould Skookum has gone chasing after it. Shure it was afterwards that me eyes lit on this gold!"

The three set to work scraping at the earth again, and, in the height of their excitement, Skookum returned after an unsuccessful chase of his quarry. Standing above the hole, he gazed at the feverishly working partners who were giving an excellent imitation of his own efforts of a few short minutes ago. Deciding in his doggy fashion that there must be another fox underground, he gave a joyous bark and leaped in to assist with the good work, bowling over Uncle Clem in his eagerness.

For several minutes the partners were so wild with excitement over this un-

expected strike of gold on their claim, that they did nothing but scrape the biggest nuggets together. Then, the first great wave of gold-madness over, they scrambled out of the hole clutching handfuls of the precious metal.

"It's amazing—amazing!" mumbled Uncle Clem, as though still dazed by the momentous happening. "Can it be that we, of all those who have tried this creek, should be the ones to make a wonderful new strike! It—it all seems too good to be true!"

"To me it's like a glorious dream!" said Jack.

"'Tis no dream at all, at all!" cried Terry. "See, 'tis the real goods, me bhoy! Gold! Gold! Just phwat we came up here for—solid between our fingers! Shure, 'tis a fortune!"

The pork and beans and tea were unheeded while the three took out loose nuggets and coarse gold from the pocket at the bottom of the cave-in to the approximate value of five thousand dollars.

"That's roughly a thousand pounds in English money!" exclaimed Jack, after Uncle Clem had made the calculation.

Uncle Clem said nothing. He was staring northward toward the crest of a rugged hill; and the boys, following the direction of his look, saw a khaki-coated horseman approaching in the distance.

"A member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police," mumbled Uncle Clem. "He's coming here, I think."

There was something in his tone and the dead white of his face that made Jack and Terry regard him anxiously.

"Why, what is the matter, Uncle Clem?" cried Jack. "Are you afraid of our gold discovery becoming known too soon?"

"P-partly that, Jack. I'll take the nuggets into the cabin, and you two boys must scrape some earth over the rest in that excavation. Say nothing about it, and don't invite him to stay. If he asks any questions, tell him you've a pard, Clem Hardy, who's not too well and can't be seen."

He drew a hand wearily over his brow, and, going to the cabin, put the gold in a small moose-skin bag. This he stowed under his pillow, and afterwards turned in between the blankets on his rough bed.

Between them, Jack and Terry hastily shovelled dirt over the rest of the gold in that hole at the north-east corner of the Yellow Horseshoe claim, and were making inroads on the pork and beans when the horseman rode up.

INTRODUCTION.

JACK ORCHARD arrives at San Francisco to find his uncle,

DAVID ORCHARD, missing, having apparently absconded with a bag of gold which had been entrusted to him by an old friend named **SIMPSON**. In consequence of this Jack is forced to apply for a job at the "Red Rat Doss-house," where he falls foul of

"**BULL**" **MORGAN** and his partner,

"**LETTY**" **SIMONS**, two bad characters, who smuggle him aboard the clipper *China Queen*. Jack, however, finds a friend in the clipper's cabin-boy,

TERRY O'HARA, with whom he escapes. Then the two boys join forces with

CLEM HARDY, an old prospector, whom they call Uncle Clem, in a great gold rush up the New Bonanza Creek, where they make their first strike. Shortly after this Jack hears that a fine-looking husky dog is about to be shot for attacking Bull Morgan. Jack takes a liking to the dog, and offers to fight Morgan for it, an offer which is duly accepted. The "scrap" takes place, and after a gruelling ten minutes Morgan is sent crumpling in an ungainly heap to the ground.

(Now read on.)

The familiar uniform of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, though calculated to strike terror into any wrongdoer in the spaces of the Great Lone Land, inspired only admiration in the boys.

The police-officer, who introduced himself as Sergeant Curtis, was a fine figure of a man in his khaki tunic, blue trousers with yellow stripes, leathern riding-boots, and wide-brimmed Stetson hat. He was on his way to Dawson, it appeared, and gladly accepted the boys' invitation to join them at their meal.

With the kindly interest of a father, he asked them how they came to be on that claim alone. When he learnt that they had an older partner who was not well, he offered to take a look at him and prescribe medicine from a small outfit he had with him. To this offer Jack replied that Uncle Clem had got some quinine, and did not wish to be disturbed, and the sergeant changed the subject.

Among many interesting things, Sergeant Curtis told the boys that when he reached Dawson he would be giving up his horse for the season.

"Husky dogs are the only things of any use up here in the cold weather, boys," he said. "They are as necessary to the Yukon and Klondike as camels are to the Sahara Desert. I see you've got one dog yourselves; he's not unlike that he-wolf, Skookum, that gave old Jock McLennan so much trouble."

"Why, he is Skookum!" laughed Jack.

"By heck, then, you've got him tamed!" exclaimed the sergeant. "Scarce anyone dare go near the animal when Jock had him. You'll have to get a whole team of dogs when you can, for they'll prove mighty useful to you. Are you doing any good here, by the way?"

"Shure and we're not doing so badly," answered Terry discreetly.

"Well, I'm surprised to hear it," said Sergeant Curtis; "for this Starvation Creek's got a bad name, and if you've been able to take anything worth while out of these parts, you're the first who ever have!"

Till the end of the homely meal he talked about dogs again, and set the boys aflame with wonderful tales of the great Dog Derby of the North, which takes place from Nome to Candle Creek and back annually in April.

"Well, cheerio, boys!" he said at last. "Maybe if you're coming to Dawson we shall meet again. And who knows that perhaps one day I shall see you driving your teams in the Dog Derby!"

"My hat, wouldn't I like to!" exclaimed Jack.

"Me, too!" piped Terry, his eyes dancing.

Not until the "khaki coat" was below the far horizon did Uncle Clem rise from his bed. Both boys were concerned to notice that he seemed, in a short hour or so, to have grown years older, but after a good meal he began to recover his health and spirits.

"There's nothing to worry about, sonnies," he said. "I—I get these attacks sometimes, but they soon pass. That khaki coat didn't ask you any—any queer questions, did he?"

"Why, no, Uncle Clem," Jack said, surprised. "He talked about gold and dogs—the usual topics of the country. But why on earth—"

"Oh, it's nothing—nothing!" interrupted Uncle Clem, almost testily. "I'm feeling quite all right again now and we've much work to do before night-fall."

When the trio returned to the cave-in they took with them the pouch of moose-

skin and several empty salmon cans and pork-and-bean tins, in which to put their gold. Uncle Clem worked silently, collecting the precious nuggets, but the two boys talked eagerly of the future.

"Faith, I'm thinking I may go back to Oireland, Jack," said Terry. "Shure I'll buy a foine farm and grow 'taters that the squire himself will envy."

"I'll bet you'll be richer than the squire, too, Terry!" laughed Jack. "For myself, I shall buy up all the finest dogs in the Klondike and run 'em in that big race the sergeant was telling us about. And afterwards I shall buy myself a jolly fine steam yacht and go cruising down to the South Sea Islands."

His tone became more serious as he added:

"But before I bought that steam yacht, Terry, I should hire a bunch of private 'tecs to try and ferret out the mystery of my uncle's disappearance from San Francisco. If that prospector, Simpson, gave him the big Bear Claw nugget to look after, you can bet your bottom dollar that my Uncle Dave never waltzed off with it. There's something behind it all, and now we've struck it rich and I shall have the money to make the great effort, I'm going all out to clear my uncle's name."

"Shpoken like an English gentleman!" cried Terry. "And shure you can rely on me, Jack, to help you wid me own wealth to find that uncle of yours and prove him an innocent man." He turned to Uncle Clem, still scratching about in the ground. "Now, tell us, Uncle Clem," he cried, "phwat are you going to do wid your share of the spoils?"

The face of their old pard was very serious as he looked up at them.

"I'm going to stay up here, boys," he said quietly, "and perhaps make a few more excavations like this one to see if there are any more pockets of gold."

"Begorra," cried Terry. "If you do you'll be able to buy up half the United States—and the whole of Oireland, too, though, not being an Oirishman, I don't suppose you'd want the bother."

Uncle Clem shook his head.

"No, it's not mere greed, Terry," he said. "The fact is, boys, that I rather fancy this pocket has petered out."

"Petered out?"

The youngsters gazed at him in stupefaction.

"I'm afraid that's the bald truth," muttered Uncle Clem. "There doesn't seem to be another sign of gold in the soft earth, except in just this one particular piece, and now I've secured the last of that."

Blank dismay was written on the faces of the two chums. They had imagined themselves becoming millionaires, but now it seemed as though they had merely got a few hundred pounds each. And though this would have seemed a fortune a few hours before, they were filled with disappointment.

Soon it became only too apparent that Uncle Clem was right. There was gold to the value of about thirteen thousand dollars, but not a sign of any more, although they dug around in all directions.

"This type of pocket is fairly common in the Yukon," stated Uncle Clem. "Probably by some movement of a glacier at a distant age, the gold among the rocks was crushed, and a little of it has found its way down here. Already we may have made the only really lucky strike on the whole claim,

or possibly for miles around. However, all said and done, it's a wonderful bit of luck, and we shall be able to buy many things for the winter that we couldn't have dreamed of before."

The spirits of the boys quickly rose again. They felt they had been ungrateful to a kind Providence for not having been more content with what was an excellent strike. So they celebrated right royally that evening in two brimming cups of cocoa apiece.

Afterwards, they had an impromptu concert. Jack obliged with a step-dance, Terry sang some Irish songs, and Uncle Clem recited all the bits of the Yukon poems of Robert W. Service which he could recollect. Tired out, they turned in early, and the boys were soon sleeping soundly.

But Uncle Clem, despite the hard day's work, remained restlessly awake in his shallow bunk. And of the deep, anxious thoughts that assailed his harassed mind, his two young partners knew nothing.

Skookum Repays!

THE next two or three weeks were busy ones for the partners on Starvation Creek. Although the small pocket of gold had petered out entirely, they worked manfully to



JACK ORCHARD.

wrest more of the precious metal from the soil along the edge of the creek.

The gold they had found they buried under the cabin floor. Few men came their way, and those who did were passing to what they considered more lucrative fields. No one, therefore, suspected that the partners had made a strike, nor did anyone stake a claim within miles of their own.

From one man they learned that their enemies, Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons, had trekked to Dawson, and had opened up a pool saloon. And they guessed that the two rascals were up to their old dirty game of fleecing money from their more honest and less astute fellow men.

For a time Jack, Terry, and Uncle Clem panned the dirt from the river bank, though each time the pan showed "colour"—that is, gold, after all the sand and gravel had been washed away—the most they got out of it was less than a dollar's worth. It was the custom of Uncle Clem to weigh out their daily taking of gold in a cigarette-paper in a pair of scales they had bought in McLennan Crossing. But the most the partners ever made by panning the gold in this primitive way in one day was

nine dollars' worth each. On the average they barely made Yukon wages.

"It would be worth while," remarked Uncle Clem one evening, "to build ourselves some sluices. There's a good run of water down the creek and plenty of timber about here. By means of some sluice-boxes we could get on with the job much faster, though it'll take time to make them in the first place."

The method which Uncle Clem adopted on the Yellow Horseshoe claim was simple and effective. With the help of Jack and Terry he cut down and trimmed some saplings and made them into the form of a long, narrow box, or sluice, low at one end and raised at the other, to make a slope of about one foot in five. Then a number of slips of iron were clamped together at intervals inside the narrow box. Some of the water of the creek was diverted so as to flow through the sluice-box into which the partners shovelled the "pay-dirt."

As gold is eighteen or nineteen times heavier than water and more than seven times heavier than rock, it can easily be seen that the sand and gravel were swept away while the heavy gold, moving more slowly in the water, collected at the iron barriers.

Because most of the gold was very fine, Uncle Clem sometimes put mercury about the iron "riffles," or slats, to attract and mingle with the tiny particles. The mixture of gold and mercury, called amalgam, had a value of its own, though not as much as the gold alone.

At the end of a week's work, the partners had what is known as a "clean-up." The water was diverted from the sluice box, the iron riffles were unclamped, and the gold collected. To their disappointment, however, they found that even with the sluice box their hard work was bringing them in nothing more than ordinary wages.

The following week it was worse, and it seemed as though by sheer luck they had managed to take all the cream there was on their claim and only the skimmed milk remained.

They were making their second clean-up when the barking of Skookum rang out sharply on the clear evening air.

"I wonder what that dog's up to?" Jack remarked.

"Shure, maybe, he's found a hedgehog," answered Terry. "He's had prickles in his nose half a dozen times since he's been up here wid us."

"Anyway he can be trusted to look after himself," said Uncle Clem. "Now what do you say to going along and catching a few trout for supper. Jack? Terry and I can get on with the clean-up!"

"Right-ho!" cried Jack cheerily. "I'll go down to the rapids near the mouth of the creek and see what's exciting Skookum at the same time."

He obtained his fishing tackle and home-made rod and collected some grasshoppers for bait—an easy thing for there were a few millions of them in the vicinity of the cabin. And away he tramped through the crisp, fresh air, keen for a bit of sport and with a hearty appetite for the deliciously fried trout which he hoped would follow it.

(The chums are involved in more thrilling adventures in next week's instalment of this powerful North-Western story. Tell all your pals about this yarn, chaps!)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR

A WINNER!

MAGNETITES will agree, unless I'm mightily mistaken, that the railway game included in this week's bumper issue is a winner. There are hours of fun and amusement to be got from it, without a doubt. And the grown-ups can join in, too. If you fellows don't want to spoil your copies of the MAGNET by tearing out the centre pages, which contain the game, you can leave those pages where they are and still make use of the game, for the rest of the book will serve as a table and a "stiffener" just as well as a piece of cardboard. Got the idea? Good!

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

All Magnetites should hurry up and book their orders for the "Holiday Annual" at once, for this splendid book is now on sale, and there will be a record rush. There is no slogan quite so excellent as "Do it now!" I recommend its application in the case of making sure of the "Holiday Annual." In the new volume, which is packed with prime features, you will meet all the old Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood friends. Bunter is there, as large as life. Gussy and Tom Merry carry on in good style, likewise "Uncle James" of Rookwood. Besides these school favourites, there is a rare budget of adventure yarns of the toppingest sort, and the coloured plates beat anything yet.

THE "HOBBY ANNUAL."

Just one word about this fine book for the hobbyist. As I am busy answering questions all the year round about

hobbies, I know how keen Magnetites are on all manner of pursuits. That's why I urge them to get this fine book, "Every Boy's Hobby Annual." It gives a deeper insight into all manner of subjects which appeal to the collector, the inventor, and the fellow who is making himself an expert in wireless, or chemistry. The "Hobby Annual" is splendidly illustrated with pictures and diagrams, and it shows you how to make boats, model engines, and useful things about the house and garden at the least expense. All the trained writers who deal with hobbies do so with a keen eye on the pocket-money budget. See that you get a copy of this Annual this year.

Next Saturday's Programme:

"THE WHIP-HAND!"

By Frank Richards.

This is a masterpiece of a story, boys, that will send up the reputation of Frank Richards to a dizzy height. You can guess, perhaps, that the whip-hand is held by Soames—that rascally, suave manservant. I'll say no more except—read this yarn, or you'll be missing the treat of your lives!

"GOLD FOR THE GETTING!"

By Stanton Hope.

There's another rattling fine instalment of this gold rush serial in next week's issue which everyone must read, and we mustn't forget that juvenile genius Dicky Nugent, either, for he has turned up trumps with

"DUKE'S SON AND DUSTMAN'S SON!"

a unique piece of work in Dicky's inimitable style. A good programme, chums, you will agree. Order your copies early. Chin, chin!

YOUR EDITOR.

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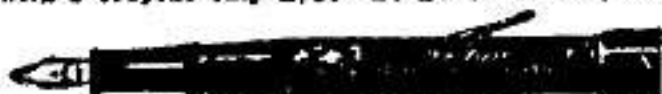
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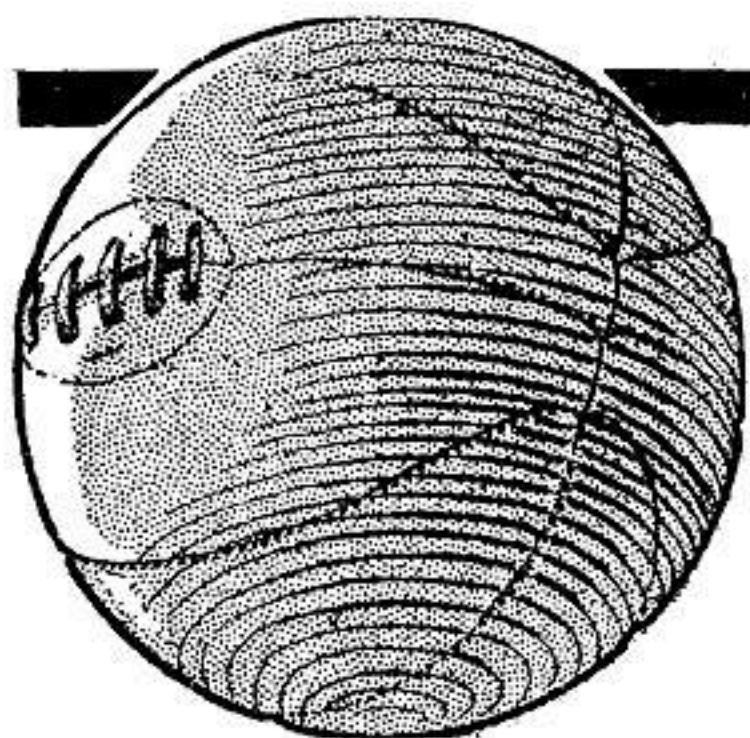
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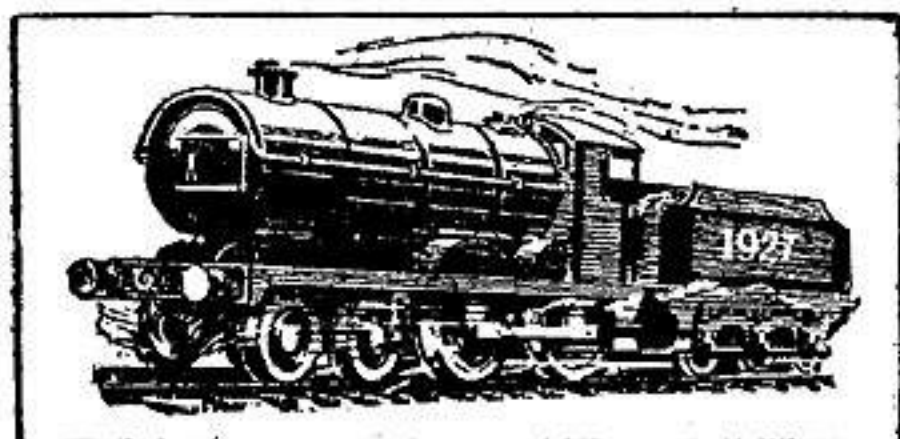
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