

"BLACK PETER'S TREASURE!" Topping Long Story of
Harry Wharton & Co. inside

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THE TREASURE AT LAST!

Harry Wharton & Co.'s sensational discovery of a hidden treasure on Caca Island! (See this week's fine story of the Greyfriar chums.)



An Interesting and
Informative Article
about

ARSENAL

Runners-up in the
F.A. Cup Competition
Last Season.

NONE of you remember when Woolwich Arsenal first started as a football club. It is too long ago. They were the first London side to join the Football League. They played at Woolwich then—the place where guns are made. Now, of course, they play at Highbury; but they are still gunners.

One funny thing is that no sooner had these gunners decided to move from one part of London to the other than the Big War broke out. Now, of course, the Woolwich part of the title has been dropped. But don't refer to them as "The Arsenal." They are not. The name of the club is Arsenal without any "the" in front. There is a reason for this which few people know. When any alphabetical list of football clubs is published, Arsenal always come first.

The club hasn't come first in any competition recently, but they have been very good seconds. In the year before last they were second to Huddersfield Town in the League championship race. Last season they finished second to Cardiff City in the Football Association Cup fight, beaten at the last lap. That was hard luck. They ought to have won. Manager Herbert Chapman is at the head of them: as 'cute a fellow as you ever came across. It is necessary to get up very early in the morning to catch Mr. Chapman asleep. He has gathered round him a fine set of gunners, many young, but some experienced to show the others the target.

The Brains of the Team!

Charlie Buchan is the star turn—and what a star! Can anything new be said of Arsenal's captain? I doubt it. He is one of the game's greatest thinkers. Manager Chapman and Charlie Buchan always put their heads together before a match. The manager has ideas as to what shall be done. He is the guide off the field, and Charlie is the guide on the field.

Strangely, the first thing of importance which Mr. Chapman did when he got to Highbury was to sign on Buchan, and the terms of the transfer of this player were unique—so much down, and a hundred pounds to Sunderland for every goal scored by Buchan during his first season with Arsenal. In that season Charlie scored nineteen League goals, and so many hundred pounds had to be sent to the Sunderland club; but Charlie was worth every penny. What the amount would have been if Arsenal had had to pay a hundred pounds for every goal manœuvred by Buchan is altogether different—the club would probably have gone bankrupt!

What busy bees they have in the Arsenal side! Buchan is the busiest of all. Then in the centre they have a Brain, and a very real gunner, too. Gosh, he can shoot when in the mood! He is still quite young, but he came near to playing for England at centre-forward last season, and may yet have a "Cap" for his wardrobe.

Then there is a doubly busy bee in Billy Blyth, the inside-left. Billy is the optimist of the party. It doesn't matter by how many goals Arsenal are beaten, you will always see Billy smiling a cheery smile. One day last season Arsenal were five goals to the bad, and only a quarter of an hour remained for play. As the ball was being kicked off from the centre after the fifth goal had been scored against them, Billy made this remark: "Come on, lads; we only want six to win!" That's the spirit.

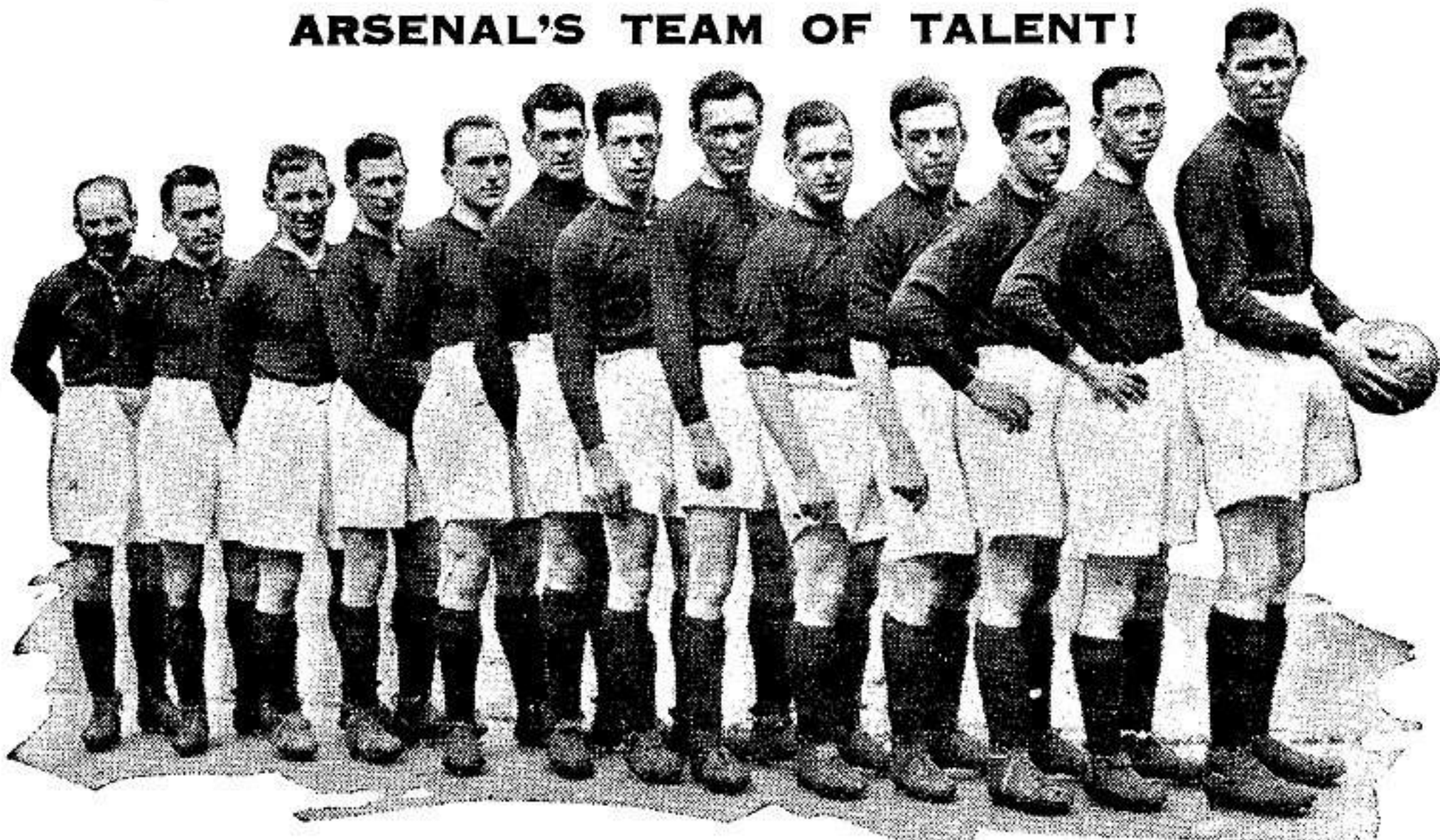
Men of Valour!

Though these bees do the inside forward work, Arsenal have outside forwards of note, too. Take Joe Hulme, the outside-right—played for England against Scotland last season. See him flying down the wing; see him cutting in; and see the goalkeeper shiver in his shoes as Hulme takes the final shot. Joe came from Blackburn Rovers.

It is not only in the forward line that Arsenal have busy bees, both by name and nature. There is centre-half Butler. They call him "Battling Butler." That isn't his name, but it is a good one. I have heard opponents say that Butler has the longest legs of any living footballer. He looks like that on the field; regular telescope affairs. One minute he is up with the forwards, sometimes heading a dramatic winning goal,

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ARSENAL'S TEAM OF TALENT!



Right to left:—BUCHAN (captain), HOAR, BRAIN, HULME, BAKER, BUTLER, SEDDON, LEWIS, PARKER, KENNEDY, COPE, JOHN and BLYTH.

SOAMES' LAST CARD! Having successfully overcome the dangers which have beset them at every step in their quest of the treasure of Caca Island, Harry Wharton & Co. at last have the satisfaction of unearthing Black Peter's wondrous treasure. But still another setback awaits them, for the wily Soames brings his trump card into play!

Black Peter's Treasure!



A Magnificent School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with their Thrilling Treasure-seeking Adventures in Southern Seas. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Voice of the Volcano!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Is that thunder?"

A deep, rumbling sound echoed over the island of Caca, and over the shining waters of the lagoon.

The morning was fine and sunny; the sun a golden ball in a sky of unclouded blue.

From the deck of the schooner Aloha, riding at her anchor in the lagoon, the whole island was spread before the eyes of the Greyfriars juniors, as far as the line of hills that barred the horizon from north to south of the Pacific isle.

The Kanaka seamen were lowering the whaleboat, to take Harry Wharton & Co. ashore, when that strange rumbling sound broke dully on the quiet of the solitary island.

The lagoon, which had looked as smooth as a mirror a few moments before, was stirred to its depths. The fish-sharks, groping along the coral for their prey. Ashore, the chorus of the wild birds, innumerable in the coconut woods, ceased as if by magic. The Kanaka seamen halted in the lowering of the boat, and stood staring towards the island with startled faces.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

He glanced at the sky. It was cloudless blue, with never a sign of bad weather.

The rumble died away, echoing in ten thousand echoes from the hills.

"That was not thunder," said Harry.

"But what the thump—" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton called to one of the Kanakas, who stood grasping a rope, about to lower the whaleboat.

"Kalashti."

The Kanaka looked round.

"What name that feller noise um island?" asked Wharton, in the

beche-de-mer English of the South Seas.

"Him fire-mountain; him wake up bineby," said Kalashti.

"The volcano!" exclaimed Bob.

The juniors turned their gaze upon the volcano at the south-western end of the island.

Ever since they had reached the treasure island they had seen the thin column of smoke that rose from the volcano, which showed that the "fire-mountain," though inactive, was by no means extinct. They had become used to it, and ceased to give it any attention.

Now they observed that the smoke, which had been thin and bluish, was thicker and blacker than they had noticed it before.

"Him wake up, sar," said Kalashti.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

The juniors stood staring at the distant volcano. Through the black smoke that rose in a column against the sky, they could detect a glimmer here and there of red. There was fire in the heart of the mountain; once active, as the juniors knew, from the masses of lava and tufa they had seen on the island. In past days, floods of burning lava had rolled down the slopes, burning up coconut woods and bush and grass. It was a startling thought, that an eruption might occur again, covering the fertile island with ashes and desolation.

They listened; but the rumble was not repeated. From the island burst out again the chorus of wild birds' notes from the woods. The disturbance in the lagoon died away, and the ripples faded out on the coral beach.

It was as if the fire-mountain had given warning of what might come, and then had fallen silent again—silent but menacing.

The Kanakas, for a moment spell-bound and awed recovered their light spirits immediately. Nothing could

impress the child-like minds of the islanders for long. Kalashti grinned.

"Him go sleep again," he said.

"Him sleepy, and him no wake."

"My hat! I hope the jolly old mountain will keep dozing while we're here," said Bob Cherry. "It would be no joke to have a giddy eruption while we're exploring the island."

"The jokefulness would not be terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman, was staring at the mountain with anxiety in his mahogany face.

"I reckon the sooner we up anchor and get away the better it will be for all hands," he said.

"An eruption wouldn't hurt us on the schooner," said Johnny Bull.

"Like enough to get a tidal wave along with the eruption," answered Dance. "I've seen a whole island washed bare in my time, and vessels larger than this carried and landed in the middle of a forest."

Harry Wharton gave a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"We came here for the treasure, and we're not going without it," he said.

"And, more important than that, we've got to find Bunter and Smithy—eruption or no eruption. You feller Kanaka lower um boat."

The whaleboat dropped into the water.

"You'll stay on board and keep guard, Dance," said Harry. "I'll send back the whaleboat—we can't risk leaving it on the beach, now that we know that that villain Soames is hanging about. He's not likely to show up here, I think; but if he does, you've got a revolver, and you know what to do."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Dance.

The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove, and Tom Redwing, stepped into the whaleboat.

The lagoon was as smooth as glass as the Kanakas rowed them ashore.

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But the echo of that deep, terrible rumble from the burning mountain seemed still to linger in the ears of the Greyfriars juniors, and they watched the volcano as the whaleboat was pulled to the dazzling white beach.

Against the blue sky the column of smoke from the mountain rose black and threatening, spreading out fan-like high up in the heavens. But there came no sound, and the gleam of flame in the midst of the smoke had died away.

"The old joker's snoozing again," said Bob cheerily. "After all, he's been asleep for donkeys' years—very likely half a century since there was an eruption. No reason why he should wake up now. I dare say he was only grunting in his sleep, like Bunter."

The juniors laughed.

But they were glad that there was no further sound from the volcano. An eruption, if one was coming, was not likely to come without a warning; and the mountain was silent.

The whaleboat grounded on the white beach. Harry Wharton & Co. stepped ashore on the treasure island.

"You feller Kanaka washy-washy back to ship," said Harry.

And the Kanakas rowed the whaleboat back to the schooner, leaving the Greyfriars juniors on the island.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Prisoners of the Cave!

"O H dear!" Billy Bunter groaned. "I wish I was at home!" Groan!

"I wish I was at Greyfriars!"

Groan!

"I wish——"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter blinked at Herbert Vernon-Smith. If blinks could have slain, the Bounder of Greyfriars would have been in serious danger at that moment. Fortunately, blinks couldn't.

Vernon-Smith was scowling savagely, and he seemed in no mood to listen to the complaints of William George Bunter. Bunter, as usual, found relief in grouching; but grouching was of no use to the Bounder.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"Fool!"

"It's all your fault!"

"Shut up!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "It's all your fault, and you know it. Bringing a fellow to these filthy South Seas for a holiday—precious holiday I've had, haven't I? I'd rather be at home with Bessie and Sammy; though Bessie's a cat, and Sammy's a little beast! Nice time I've had! I'm hungry."

"Good!" said the Bounder.

"Starving!" said Bunter.

"Glad to hear it!"

"Ravenous!" moaned Bunter.

"Fine!"

"Oh, you beast!"

Bunter groaned in anguish of spirit. He was hungry; and when Bunter was hungry, things were serious. Nothing else that was going on in the wide universe was of any consequence, in comparison.

"You should have stayed at Bunter Court," said Vernon-Smith sardonically.

"Nobody asked you to stow your fat

carcase away on my father's yacht. I'd have kicked you off it if I'd known."

"Beast!"

"Nobody asked you to come on the Aloha; you could have stayed at Nuka-Hiva while we were looking for the pearls. You had to butt in. Serve you jolly well right!"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"Now shut up!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith turned his back on the groaning Owl of the Remove, and stared away from the cave, deep in the basaltic cliffs, across the lapping water. A narrow "finger" of the lagoon penetrated the steep, dark cliffs, and ended at the mouth of the cave. At the other end of the finger of glimmering water the open lagoon could be seen, shining in the blaze of the tropical sun. The Bounder, a splendid swimmer, could have reached the open lagoon easily enough, and left behind him the shadowy cave that was his prison and Bunter's. But he did not think of making the attempt. Gliding in the water he could see, from where he stood, the hideous forms of the "tiger" sharks, waiting and watching for their prey. From the rocky edge where the Bounder stood scowling, there was a depth of fifty feet. And he could have tossed a pebble upon the nearest of the gliding sharks.

Stone walls do not a prison make; but the sharks barred off the prisoners of the cave from any attempt at escape. Iron bars could not have imprisoned them so effectually.

"I say, Smithy——"

"Shut up!"

"How are we going to get out of this?" groaned Bunter.

The Bounder laughed sardonically.

"That question's easily answered. We're not."

"We can't stay here."

"Can't we? Try swimming, then," said Vernon-Smith savagely. "It will put an end to your grouching, at any rate."

"Beast!"

There was the splash of a paddle in the water. Through the narrow channel in the shadow of the high basaltic cliffs a canoe glided. It was a long canoe, such as is used in the Pacific for a crew of a dozen men. But a single man sat in it, a paddle in either hand, handling the long canoe with masterly skill.

The Bounder's eyes blazed at Soames. This man, who had been his father's valet, who had made a desperate bid to seize the Aloha and failed; this man was now his captor and gaoler. The Bounder's hands clenched hard, and his teeth gritted. He was no match for Soames, and he knew it. But he was determined to spring at the man as soon as he set foot in the cave, and risk all in a desperate struggle. He turned back to Bunter, and spoke in a low, tense voice.

"Bunter, you fat fool——"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Soames is coming back."

Bunter's fat face brightened.

"I hope he's brought us some grub!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "After all, even that beast can't want us to starve."

"You—you——" The Bounder looked for a moment as if he would have struck the fat junior, and Bunter jumped away in alarm. "You fat idiot! Never mind grub now——"

"Never mind it?" repeated Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles. "Have you gone potty, Smithy? I'm hungry."

The Bounder suppressed his rage.

"He will be here in a minute or two," he muttered. "We've got to collar him

and down him somehow. Do you understand? You're not much good in a scrap, but you can help. See?"

"I—I——" stammered Bunter.

"Get hold of a lump of coral!" hissed the Bounder. "I'm going to collar him as soon as he lands. Back me up, and we've got a chance."

Bunter blinked at him, and then blinked at the canoe gliding between the basaltic cliffs. His fat knees knocked together.

The bare thought of a struggle with the desperate sea-lawyer made Billy Bunter shudder. He was not made of the same stuff as the Bounder.

"You—you mad idiot, Smithy," he stammered. "Why, he might throw us to the sharks if we made him waxy. You know he shot the captain and mate and bosun of the Aloha. Catch me touching him!"

"Oh, you rotten funk!" hissed the Bounder. "Can't you get it into your thick head that we're done for if we can't get the upper hand of that villain? We may be left here to starve. Do you think the other fellows will ever find us in this hole? Back me up, and it's a chance at least."

"Shut up, or he'll hear you!" gasped Bunter.

The Bounder turned savagely away from him. There was no help to be expected from Bunter; but Herbert Vernon-Smith was game. He grasped in his hand a rugged lump of coral to use as a weapon, and waited, with beating heart and glittering eyes, for the canoe to reach the cave.

Soames came paddling on calmly.

In the canoe were piled great bunches of bananas and plantains, and a stack of coconuts. Apparently the sea-lawyer was bringing food for his prisoners. The food provided by Nature on the fertile island was all that he could give them, but there was plenty of that.

Bunter's eyes fixed on the pile of fruits, while the Bounder's gleaming gaze was on Soames.

The sea-lawyer ceased to paddle when the canoe was six or seven yards from the sheer edge of rock.

"Not this time, Master Herbert," he said smoothly; as smoothly as he had addressed the millionaire's son in the old days when he was the obsequious valet of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder panted. The canoe, motionless on the placid water, was out of his reach. He was tempted to make a desperate spring; but a push of the paddle, he knew, would send him into the water, and then—the sharks. With his hands clenched in passionate disappointment, the Bounder stood eyeing his enemy almost wolfishly.

Soames smiled.

"Keep your temper, Master Herbert," he said. "Your temper has always been your enemy. It made trouble between you and your friends on the yacht; it was the cause of your leaving them last night, and placing yourself in my power. A waste of energy, Master Herbert."

"You hound!" muttered the Bounder.

"I advise you, for your own sake, to measure your words," said Soames calmly. "If I landed in the cave and you laid hands on me, Master Herbert, I should toss you to the sharks. Remember that you and your companion would perish of hunger in the cave if I did not bring you food. You are a thankless young rascal, Master Herbert."

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"How long are you going to keep me here, you villain?" he muttered.

"Until the game is played out for Black Peter's treasure," said Soames.



"If you don't get into the canoe," said Soames, "I shall throw you to the sharks!" As Hurree Singh hesitated, a grim dogged, savage look came over Soames' face, and he pointed to the water. "Look!" he cried. In the deep water, clear as glass, a hideous form moved. Hurree Singh drew in a deep breath, as he recognised it to be that of a shark.

(See Chapter 4.)

"Until your companions have joined you here, and I am once more master of the Aloha. When I sail away from Caca in the schooner with the treasure, I shall leave you the canoe, and you will have the whole island to choose from for a residence—a permanent residence. Until then, you must be content with the cave."

"You fool!" hissed the Bounder. "Do you think you will get the upper hand of Wharton and the rest?"

Soames nodded.

"I hope so, at least," he answered coolly. "Two of you are in my hands, and there remain six—schoolboys!"

"They are armed, and they will shoot you like a dog."

"You were armed, Master Herbert, yet you fell into my hands," said Soames, unmoved. "Unfortunately, your revolver dropped into the river when I struck it from your hand, or the contest would be settled much more speedily. But I am not without hope. I may tell you that it will be better for you, and better for your friends, if I gain the upper hand, as I propose doing. For, as a last resource, if all else fails, I shall call in the aid of the cannibal tribes on the other side of the island. I am known to some of them—there are chiefs on Caca who have not yet forgotten 'Aitoo,' as they called me in the old days. But that is a last resource; South Sea cannibals are very unreliable

allies, and I have no desire to run the risk of the cooking-oven. We shall see."

He stood up in the canoe, and tossed armfuls of bananas and coconuts to the cave. The fruit fell round the enraged Bounder unheeded, but not unheeded by William George Bunter.

In a moment Bunter was busy with a bunch of ripe bananas, and they disappeared under his attack as if by magic. Soames smiled slightly as he glanced at him.

"Follow your fat friend's example, and make the best of it, Master Herbert," he said. "You will find water in pools back in the cavern—the rains percolate through fissures in the basalt. Eat, drink, and be as merry as you can. If you are lonely, you will soon have more company—at least, so I trust."

The paddle plashed in the water again. The Bounder, breathing hard, stood and watched the man in the canoe. He was tempted to hurl the fragment of coral grasped in his hand; but it was futile. The canoe glided away down the long sinuous "finger" of the sea, but it did not go as far as the open lagoon.

The Bounder watched it turn and disappear into a narrow opening of the high basaltic cliffs. He could guess that from the little gully there was some path to the island shore, and that Soames left the canoe hidden there when he ventured upon the island. Fifteen or

twenty yards of glimmering water; but it might as well have been a thousand miles, for the sharks were between. The Bounder turned back into the cave, gritting his teeth. Bunter was guzzling bananas at a terrific rate, and did not heed him.

And the Bounder, seating himself on the rock, followed the fat Owl's example. He was hungry, and needed food. But as he ate and the heat of the sea-cave grew more intense he was thinking—thinking, with knitted brows and glinting eyes. What was happening on the Treasure Island while he was a helpless prisoner in the cave amid the basaltic cliffs?

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Search!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. tramped up the beach, over dazzling white sand and powdered coral. It was not for seeking the treasure of Black Peter that the chums of Greyfriars had landed that morning. It was of the two missing members of the party that they were thinking.

Somewhere on the island lurked Soames—a disarmed fugitive, but still dangerous, as he had proved. And they were certain that the Bounder had

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fallen into Soames' hands. Somewhere in the wild recesses of Caca, Herbert Vernon-Smith was a prisoner, along with Billy Bunter—but where? Silvio Xero, the half-caste, the bitter enemy of the treasure-seekers, had gone to his account. But the juniors knew that they had a more dangerous enemy to deal with in the man who had once been the obsequious valet of Smithy's father. They could guess easily enough what was the game of the defeated sea-lawyer—to watch and wait and spy, taking advantage of his thorough knowledge of the island, and deal with the Greyfriars party one at a time when his chance came. That was evidently Soames' plan, and so far he had scored a success.

"We've got to keep together," said Harry. "Remember that, you fellows. Soames may be watching us at this minute, from the wood or among those ridges of lava. If one fellow gets out of sight of the rest he will be in danger. He dare not tackle us in a bunch, now we are armed, but if he catches one fellow by himself, as he did Smithy, there will be another missing!"

"He won't get another chance!" said Johnny Bull. "Smithy asked for it, and got it. It was his own fault!"

"We've got to find Smithy!" said Tom Redwing abruptly.

"We'll find him all right!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "First of all, we've got to find the place where Soames collared him last night. We can't find it in the dark, but we'll find it all right now."

Bob Cherry was right; as the juniors moved up the bank of the sandy stream they soon found the spot where Vernon-Smith had struggled with Soames.

There were plenty of traces left on the margin of the stream where the struggle had taken place.

The Bounder, who had left his comrades in an irritable temper, had fairly walked into the hands of the lurking sea-lawyer.

"Smithy had a popgun," said Bob Cherry. "I fancy Soames never got hold of it, though."

"Why?" asked Nugent.

"Because we should have heard it pop before this," answered Bob. "I don't think Soames would be dodging us if he were armed."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That is so," he said. "It was dark when Soames got him, and Smithy may have dropped the revolver in the struggle, or thrown it out of reach. If Soames had had it, I don't think we should have got clear last night without a scrap. Let's look for it."

The juniors searched up and down the bank.

In the thick grass they picked up easily enough the tracks of the sea-lawyer, deeply imprinted, where he had carried the Bounder down to the beach. But there was no sign of the revolver.

"In the water, most likely," said Wharton at last. "Soames would not have missed it if he could have helped it. He got Smithy on the edge of the stream, and the revolver must have gone into the water. It must have sunk into the sand in the stream bed; we shall never find it. It doesn't matter much, so long as that scoundrel never got hold of it. But Smithy—"

For some distance the juniors were able to follow where Soames had gone when he had taken the Bounder away a prisoner. From the grassy bank of the stream the track led down to the beach, and here and there in the sand and powdered coral they were able to pick it up again. All it told the juniors was

that Soames had gone on the water, and the lapping sea had no trace for them to follow.

"It's clear enough what happened," said Harry. "We know that Soames had the canoe in which Silvio came to the island. He got Smithy away in the canoe. But where?"

"Echo answers where?" said Bob.

"The wherefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, staring along the coral shore of the lagoon.

"He can't have left the island," said Redwing. "We know that. There's no other land for hundreds of miles. He's hidden somewhere on Caca."

"He went off in the canoe, and landed somewhere else, of course," said Nugent. "We've got to find where he landed."

"Some job," said Bob Cherry. "But, after all, the island is only a few miles round. We're going to find him. Follow the shore of the lagoon, and sooner or later—"

"Rather later than sooner, I think," observed Johnny Bull. "We don't even know which way to start. But it's no good wasting time; let's get going, and keep that gun handy, Wharton."

"You bet!"

Harry Wharton, who was acknowledged to be the best shot in the Greyfriars party, carried the magazine rifle that had been taken from Silvio. Tom Redwing had the automatic. The other fellows had bush-knives; there were no more firearms in the party. The juniors followed the shore of the lagoon, keeping their eyes well about them. Somewhere or other Soames must have landed, they knew that, and they hoped to pick up footprints in the soft sand to guide them.

But at a distance of a mile from the mouth of the stream, north of the lagoon, the sand failed. The shore at this point was of hard rock, with great cliffs of black basalt standing out in the sea. The rocky shore was wild and broken, rocks and boulders piled in vast irregular masses, evidently the result of ancient volcanic action. In that wilderness of rock it was hopeless to think of picking up a trace of the man they sought.

Harry Wharton & Co. had started the search with high hopes; but they felt their hope die away now. Small as the island was, it held a thousand, or ten thousand recesses, any one of which might have been a secure hiding-place. Among the basaltic cliffs there were a hundred sea-caves, in which they could hear the hollow booming of the waters. It was possible that Soames and his prisoners were still in the canoe, hidden from sight somewhere among the great cliffs that jutted from the water. It was possible that he had not fled in this direction at all, but had gone through the channel among the reefs to the north, or round to Shark Bay on the south.

The hours were passing as the juniors searched along the broken shore, and the sun rose higher and higher in a cloudless sky. Caca Island, only a few degrees from the Equator, was hot at all times of the year, and it seemed to the Greyfriars fellows like an oven now. Even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh wiped the perspiration from his dusky brow, and admitted that the warmth was terrific.

Among the rocks and cliffs, broken up in narrow ravines and gullies, the juniors could hardly avoid separating at times, but they called to one another continually, incessantly on their guard against a lurking foe.

Harry Wharton stopped at last. It was high noon, and time to take a rest.

"Chuck it for a bit, you fellows!" he called out. "We want a rest. I think we'd better get back and get the whale-boat out, and follow the shore by water. We've got no chance here."

"True, O king!" said Bob.

Wharton sat down on a boulder, and opened his wallet for his lunch of ship's bread and bully beef. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull joined him, and Tom Redwing came reluctantly to a halt. All the juniors were keen on the search, but the sailorman's son was keenest of all. He seemed tireless in the quest of his chum. Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were out of sight at the moment among the rugged rocks.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Franky! Inky! We're taking a rest. All hands roll up for lunch!"

"Right-ho!" called back Nugent's voice, and he came scrambling out of a gully and joined his comrades.

"Inky!" roared Bob.

The nabob's voice did not answer.

"Hurree Singh!" shouted Wharton.

But there was no answer.

Wharton leaped to his feet with sudden anxiety. Not one of the party had gone out of hearing of the rest, he was sure of that. Why did not Hurree Singh call back?

"Inky!" yelled Johnny Bull.

Nugent caught his breath.

"Surely nothing can have happened—" he began. "I saw Inky not three minutes ago, yonder by that cliff."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Come on!" he muttered.

Lunch was forgotten and fatigue. The juniors scrambled away to the spot where Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had last been seen. They searched for him among the wild rocks and boulders.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry picked up a squashed bunch of bananas. They remembered that Hurree Singh had carried the bananas for his lunch. But of the nabob there was no sign, and the iron-hard rocks gave no trace. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another, breathing hard, the same conviction forcing itself into every mind. They were on the track of the sea-lawyer. He had been there, hidden among the rocks, and he had found his chance and taken it. One more of the Greyfriars party had fallen into the hands of the sea-lawyer.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Secret of the Cliffs!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH'S black eyes were burning, but he made no sound, he made no struggle.

A gag was thrust into his mouth, his hands were bound, and the sinewy grip of the sea-lawyer held him fast. Scarce a dozen feet away the nabob could hear the voices of his chums, calling, calling. He could not answer. He could only bite on the gag in helpless rage.

"Inky!" came Bob Cherry's powerful voice. "Hurree Singh, old chap! Inky!"

Bob's voice echoed through the hollow of the rock, where the nabob lay helpless in Soames' grip.

It died away.

A murmuring followed, the murmur of the Greyfriars juniors' troubled voices close at hand.

Hurree Singh quivered with rage. One word would have called his comrades to his rescue, one cry would have saved him. And he could utter no

sound. The sea-lawyer had taken care of that.

The attack had happened so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that Hurree Singh could scarcely blame himself for having been taken by surprise. He had explored a gully in the cliffs, scarce a dozen yards from the other fellows; but for the moment he had been out of their sight among the rugged rocks. The gully ended in a wall of black basalt, sprinkled with boulders, and the nabob, seeing no way farther, had turned back. And then he had felt the grasp of the enemy upon him from behind. Sturdy schoolboy as he was, he was an infant in Soames' powerful grip. In a moment, or little more, he had been crushed down, the gag driven into his mouth, his hands dragged together and tied. And Soames had dragged him into a narrow fissure of the basalt, scarcely wide enough to allow a passage for a body, a fissure which the nabob had glanced at a few minutes earlier and passed. But deeper in the cliff the fissure widened to several feet, and Soames had thrown the helpless junior to the ground and rolled a large, loose rock across. Now, anyone looking in from without could only see a fissure closed by rock. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh knew that chance had directed the steps of the searchers fairly to the threshold of the sea-lawyer's hiding-place, but it was a hiding-place so well concealed that no eye was likely to discover it.

The rock closed the fissure, but not entirely. Through tiny openings that were left, light glimmered into the hollow cliff, and the voices of the searchers came. Harry Wharton & Co. had stopped not six or seven feet from the fissure in the basalt, little dreaming how close at hand was their lost chum.

"The hound has got him!" It was Johnny Bull's voice, plain to Hurree Singh, plain to Soames. In the gloom Hurree Singh saw a mocking smile glide over Soames' face. At the same moment the sea-lawyer's grip tightened on him. A movement might have betrayed them.

"Inky!" came Bob Cherry's shout again.

The nabob's eyes burned. Soames grasped the heavy bush-knife he had taken from Hurree Singh with his free hand. If the chums of the Greyfriars Remove found him, they would find a dangerous enemy. But they were not likely to find him.

"How could the villain get him away?" came Harry Wharton's voice. "We must have seen him—"

"There's some hiding-place in the rocks," said Nugent.

"We've got to find it!" said Tom Redwing. "The place is honeycombed with fissures, and any one of them may hide Soames."

The footsteps of the juniors were heard as they searched among the rocks. Hurree Singh, with beating heart, heard a sound in the fissure through which Soames had dragged him. One of the juniors was groping there. Soames' eyes glinted, and the bush-knife was pressed to the throat of the nabob, the keen edge almost cutting his skin. Soames' look said "Silence!" but he did not venture to whisper. The nabob lay still.

Hurree Singh heard a hand groping over the rock that closed the fissure. But the great rock did not stir. It had taxed the strength of Soames to roll it where it lay, and it was not likely to shift under a schoolboy's hand. "Anything there, Bob?" called Wharton's voice.

Obviously, it was Bob Cherry who was searching the fissure.

"No." His voice was almost in Hurree Singh's ears. "It's only a hole in the cliff, stopped up by rocks. Nothing here."

"Come on!" Bob's footsteps were heard retreating.

Hurree Singh heard the sea-lawyer pant for breath. The strain upon Soames had been great. Had the juniors suspected how matters lay their united strength would have shifted the rock, and they would have come to close quarters. But the fissure was only one of hundreds that pierced the masses of basalt, and ended in solid rock. The juniors passed on without dreaming how near they had been to him they sought.

The footsteps died away among the cliffs.

There was silence. But for long minutes Soames did not move, and the keen edge of the bush-knife still touched the skin of the nabob's throat. But the sea-lawyer stirred at last, rose to his feet, and thrust the knife into his belt.

"You have had a narrow escape, Hurree Singh," he said quietly. "As narrow as mine. Had they found me—"

He broke off, and tapped the bush-knife.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's eyes gleamed at him, but he could not speak. Soames lifted him to his feet.

"Come!" he said briefly.

His grip on the nabob's shoulder guided the junior.

Through the heart of the basalt cliff the fissure extended, now wide by several yards, now so narrow that two could not walk abreast. Some ancient volcanic shock had split the great cliff, leaving that passage through the basalt. Onwards and downwards the fissure

ran. Once Hurree Singh had to stoop, with the basalt close over him; and again, the top of the irregular fissure was so high that it was beyond his ken. Deeper and deeper into the cliff Soames forced him on, yet all the way the air was fresh, showing that the fissure had an opening at both ends.

Light came to the nabob's eyes at last. That strange passage through the cliff opened into a rocky gully shut in on all sides by steep cliffs, lapped by a "finger" of the lagoon. The sky was over his head once again, the blaze of the tropic sunshine on his face. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh blinked round him in the light with dazzled eyes. At the bottom of the rocky gully lay a canoe moored to a rock. Soames untied his arms now, and removed the gag from his mouth.

"You may shout here if you like," he said. "The caves are full of noises, and one more voice will make no difference. Struggle, too, if you choose—and in that case I shall throw you to the sharks."

"You esteemed and execrable scoundrel!" gasped Hurree Singh.

"Get into the canoe."

The nabob hesitated for a moment.

A grim, dogged, savage look came over Soames' face, and his narrow eyes glinted. He pointed to the water.

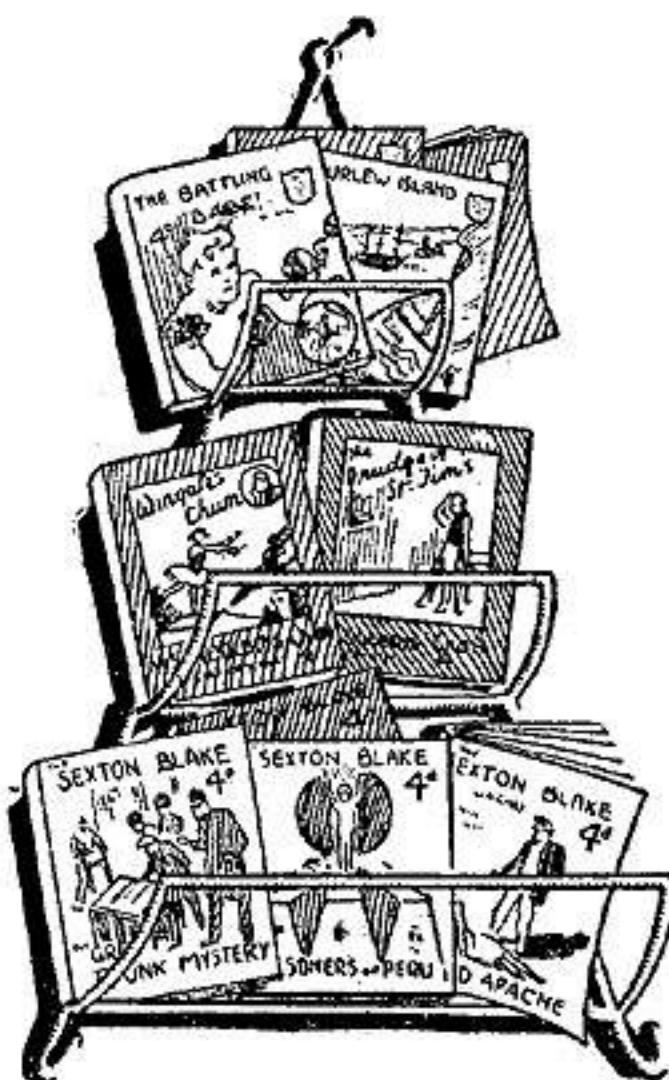
"Look!" he said.

In the deep water, clear as glass, a dozen feet below the surface a hideous form moved. Hurree Singh drew in his breath. A glimpse of the watchful shark was enough for him. He stepped into the canoe.

Soames followed him in and picked up a paddle.

The narrow strip of water between the high rocks ran into a broader strip, but still narrow. Hurree Singh looked round him as the canoe was paddled round a water-worn cliff into the outer "finger." He caught a glimpse of the

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lagoon at the end of the channel. But it was in the other direction that the canoe turned, and Soames paddled up the narrow strip to the end, hidden among overhanging cliffs, where a cave opened in the basalt. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh knew that the secret den of the sea-lawyer was reached at last, and he could guess that he was about to see the other prisoners.

The canoe stopped three feet off the shelf of rock at the opening of the sea-cave.

"Jump!" said Soames.

Again the nabob hesitated, and again it was only for a moment. He jumped from the canoe into the cave, and Soames paddled away instantly, and the canoe vanished among the windings of the cliffs.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Held by the Enemy!

"INKY!"

From the shadows of the sea-cave a figure came running as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh landed in the cave.

"My esteemed Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith's face was bright as he ran towards the nabob. But it clouded again at once as he saw Soames in the canoe paddling away. For the moment the Bounder had fancied that it was rescue, but he quickly realised his mistake.

"He's got you!" exclaimed Smithy.

"The gotfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh ruefully. "I am an esteemed and fat-headed prisoner like your excellent self, my worthy Smithy."

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"I thought—when I saw you—"

He broke off: "Where are the others?"

"Searching for me on the other side of those esteemed and detestable cliffs," said Hurree Singh. "The execrable Soames caught me nappingly."

"They might be near enough to hear us shout," said the Bounder hopefully.

Hurree Singh shook his dusky head.

"I think notfully, or the execrable Soames would not leave us the possibility of shouting," he said. "But while there is life there is hopefulness."

"You must have been a silly ass to let him catch you napping," growled the Bounder.

Hurree Singh smiled.

"The samefulness applies to you, my worthy and ridiculous Smithy. Is the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter here?"

"Can't you hear him?" growled Smithy.

From the interior of the cave came a rumbling sound, which had been familiar enough in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. It was the snore of William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was curled up in a corner in peaceful slumber. Having eaten as much as he could contain of bananas and coconuts, Billy Bunter had gone to sleep in the heat of the day. The Bounder, roaming about the cave like a caged tiger, thinking incessantly of escape, almost tempted to risk the sharks rather than remain a prisoner, had given himself no rest. William George Bunter was taking it out in sleep.

"It looks as if that scoundrel is going to score after all," said the Bounder between his teeth. "He's got you and me now, and if he gets the others he will get the schooner, too. The Kanakas will knuckle under fast enough. Looks to me as if we're done."

"The donefulness will not arrive

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before the finish, my esteemed Smithy. We are not done yet."

Hurree Singh stared into the shadowy depths of the sea-cave.

"Nothing doing there," growled Vernon-Smith. "I've searched every inch of the place, while Bunter's been snoring. There are cracks in the rock, where the rain comes in when it's rainy, but nothing big enough for a bird to get through. We might as well be in a cell. I've a jolly good mind to swim and chance the sharks."

"It would not be a chance, Smithy, it would be a certainty—for the sharks," said the nabob.

"I'm not going to stand this much longer," muttered the Bounder desperately.

"What cannot be endured must go longest to the well, like a stitch in time, as the proverb says," answered Hurree Singh.

"You silly ass!"

"My esteemed Smithy—"

"How did that bound get you here without the other fellows seeing? Are they walking about with their eyes shut?" snarled the Bounder.

Hurree Singh told him of the hidden fissure through the heart of the basaltic cliff. Vernon-Smith listened, with a savage face.

"He knows this island like a book," he said. "He was here before, of course. I wish the cannibals had got him when he was here. We thought all the danger would be from that rascally half-caste, and all the while—I suppose you got Silvio safe?"

The nabob's dusky face clouded a little.

"There is no more danger from Silvio, my esteemed Smithy," he said.

"He got loose on the schooner last night, and Ben Dance shot him."

"Ca!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"The esteemed half-caste will not trouble us again," said the nabob. "But—the execrable Soames is a tougher proposition. But I have no doubt that our friends will handle him terrifically."

A deep and prolonged yawn echoed through the sea-cave. Billy Bunter had awakened.

The Owl of the Remove sat up, and jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose, and blinked at Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That you, Inky?" he exclaimed.

"My esteemed self," said the nabob.

"Oh, good!" Bunter scrambled up.

"Where are the other fellows? Have they got the boat? Let's get out of this. I'm hungry."

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"Where are they?" exclaimed Bunter, blinking round peevishly through his spectacles. "I can tell you I'm jolly hungry. I've had nothing but coconuts and bananas—all very well for dessert, but I want a meal. I feel as if I haven't eaten anything solid for weeks. Pretty thick, I call it, leaving me here all this time; I really think you might have found me a bit sooner than this. But some fellows are so selfish. Where's the boat?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

"I am a prisoner, like your esteemed, and ridiculous self," he answered.

Bunter stared at him.

"A—a—a prisoner!" he stuttered.

"Exactly."

"You haven't come here to get me away?"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, but the answer is in the esteemed negative."

"Well, you silly idiot!"

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter—"

"You burbling chump!"

William George Bunter seemed indignant.

"You footling fathead!" he roared. "Mean to say I've got to stick here? What are the fellows doing? Don't they know that I'm famished? What do they think I've got to eat here?"

"It is terrifically probable that they have not thought about that at all, my esteemed idiotic Bunter," chuckled the nabob.

"Kick him!" grunted the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Well, shut up, or I'll kick you myself!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Yah! Look here, Inky, have you got anything to eat about you?"

"Nothing."

"Not even a bit of chocolate?"

Hurree Singh grinned and shook his head.

"Well, of all the blinking idiots!" said Bunter, in disgust. "You go and let yourself be caught, like a footling dummy, and you haven't even any grub about you. Yah!"

And Bunter, finding that the nabob's presence did not mean rescue, and that there was no grub about, settled down to sleep again. Fortunately, he was a good sleeper.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat down and ate bananas. With his Oriental calmness, he took the situation much more philosophically than the enraged Bounder. He had faith in his chums and in their efforts to find him, and so long as there was nothing doing, he was prepared to do nothing quietly. Not so the Bounder. He seemed unable to rest for a moment. If he sat down, he jumped up again at once. Already he had explored every recess of the deep sea-cave, but he explored every recess again. Many times the nabob saw him pause at the mouth of the cave and scan the waters with a desperate expression on his face. But even the reckless Bounder was not desperate enough to plunge in among the sharks. He groped round the rocks at the cave mouth—but they were steep, almost perpendicular, and worn smooth by lapping tides; there was no foothold for anything without wings. The long, hot day wore wearily away, while Bunter alternately yawned and snored, and the nabob sat and rested, and the infuriated Bounder roamed about like a caged animal, wasting his energy in unavailing rage.

It was late in the hot afternoon, when the plash of a paddle was heard in the narrow strip of water among the cliffs. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was alert at once, the Bounder stopped his restless roving, and stood with gleaming eyes and clenched hands. Soames was returning to the sea-cave again.

"If he comes in our reach—" the Bounder whispered.

Hurree Singh nodded, with a glitter in his black eyes. Cool and quiet as the nabob was, he was prepared to take any desperate chance.

But the sea-lawyer did not come within reach.

The juniors watched the canoe gliding among the perpendicular cliffs, that rose from the water like walls of rock. Soames was not alone in it. A figure was huddled at the bottom of the canoe. Several feet from the landing-place Soames stopped. A quiver ran through the Bounder's limbs, but Hurree Singh grasped his arm. Soames stood ready with the paddle, and a desperate spring at the canoe only meant a blow and a fall into the water—and death in the jaws of the sharks.

The huddled figure in the bottom of the canoe staggered up. Frank Nugent, his face white, a black bruise on his



The whizzing lump of coral struck Soames on the head, and knocked him backwards, with a yell of pain and rage, in the canoe. Vernon-Smith's eyes flashed. "Go it, you fellows!" he gritted between his teeth. "Give it him!" breathed Nugent. "We've got to keep him off now!" (See Chapter 8.)

forehead, stared almost haggardly at the two juniors in the mouth of the cave.

"Jump ashore!" rapped out Soames. Nugent put his hand to his head. Vernon-Smith and the nabob could see that he had had a cruel blow. He gave the sea-lawyer a bitter look, and jumped from the canoe to the rock. Hurree Singh caught him as he staggered there.

"My esteemed Franky—" he murmured.

"So he's got you, too!" said the Bounder, with savage rage and derision.

"I—I was knocked down from behind," muttered Nugent. "A lump of coral, I think, in that villain's hand. I was stunned." He sank down on a boulder, holding his head in his hands.

The canoe glided away. The Bounder burst into a bitter, scolding laugh.

"The game's up!" he said.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Signal!

HARRY WHARTON set his teeth. Hot and fatigued, in the blaze of the tropic sun, the Greyfriars chums had searched and searched, rooting among the gullies and crannies of the cliffs, without picking up a trace of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. They were vigilant, watchful, and every minute they called to one another; but their vigilance had not saved another member of the party

from falling into the hands of their cunning enemy. Frank Nugent's voice was no longer heard in answer to the calling of his comrades, and when they sought him they did not find him. Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Tom Redwing gathered together, with set faces. Again and again they had shouted to Nugent, and no answer had come, and they knew what must have happened.

"He's got him!" said Bob, between his set lips.

Wharton gripped the magazine-rifle and stared round. Had he caught a glimpse of Soames at that moment, the sea-lawyer would have paid dearly for his villainy.

But there was no sign of Soames. Not a sign of him had the juniors seen that day; it was almost as if a spectre haunted the treasure island, dogging the juniors' footsteps. First the nabob, and now Nugent, had been taken in an unguarded moment, and they were gone. Even at that moment, as they gathered together with enraged faces, the juniors knew that their unseen enemy might be watching them from a hidden lair among the rocks.

"This is getting rather thick," said Johnny Bull.

"But how—" muttered Bob.

"These cliffs are full of fissures and caves," said Redwing. "Soames knows the place, and we do not. But—but we shall find him."

"The villain!" muttered Wharton. "If one could only catch sight of him for a moment—"

"Let's get on."

The search seemed hopeless. On the broken shore, amid masses of irregularly piled rocks, yawning gullies, towering cliffs, there was no clue to guide them. It was scarcely possible to search the crannies of the shore without separating, but the four juniors did not separate again. Only too well they knew that their enemy, unseen, silent, stealthy, was dogging them, ready to pounce upon anyone who strayed from the rest, ready to strike from behind. Amid the rugged rocks there was cover for a hundred enemies, and it was easy enough for the stealthy Soames to dog their footsteps unseen and unheard.

The sun was sloping in the west now; over the hills of Caca the sky was a blaze of purple gold. The long, hot day was waning. When night came, the juniors knew that they would have to give up the search, and the thought of giving it up, with their friends still in the hands of the enemy, was bitter.

"We've got to find them," said Bob Cherry desperately. "They mayn't be more than a few hundred yards away all the time in this dashed wilderness of rocks. Only—where?"

"In some hidden cave," said Redwing.

"Then we've got to find it."

Harry Wharton stopped. His eyes were fixed on the sky over the great basaltic cliffs that rose from the sea. Against the sky, from the top of the cliffs, rose a thin, bluish cloud.

It was smoke.

"What's that?" asked Bob, stopping, and following Wharton's gaze.

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"Smoke!" said Redwing.

"Somebody camping on top of the cliffs," said Bob, puzzled. "Can't be Soames—he wouldn't want to climb up there. He's jolly well nearer to us than that."

The four juniors stared at the thin, wavering column of smoke, puzzled and perplexed.

It was impossible that Soames had climbed to the top of the cliffs and there lighted a camp-fire, as if to guide his enemies. Neither was there any sign of a fire to be seen. So far as the juniors could observe, the smoke rose from the cliff itself.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Bob. "Can't be another volcano here, just starting in business, I suppose?"

Wharton shook his head.

"It's not that," he said. "The volcano's almost at the other end of the island. I can't make it out."

"May be those giddy Malaitas, who came to the island with Silvio," said Johnny Bull. "Three or four of them are about the island somewhere."

Wharton did not answer.

He stood staring at the thin column of smoke with corrugated brows.

Somewhere on the island were the survivors of Silvio's crew of Solomon Islanders; the juniors had given them no thought and no heed. They were keeping out of the way of the "white marsters."

But it was scarcely possible that the Solomon Islanders had clambered to the summit of a steep, barren cliff to make their camp. They were much more likely to have camped where food was at hand.

"Can it be a signal?" asked Wharton at last.

"A signal?" repeated Redwing, with a start.

"I should say, can it be anything else?" said Harry. "It's not a camp-fire, we can see that. The fire is hidden out of sight, and we can only see the smoke. It's exactly like the smoke-signals that savages make."

Bob gave a whistle.

"We've seen nothing of the savages so far," he said. "They're on the other side of the island, beyond the hills. No reason to suppose they know that anyone has arrived here at all."

"It's not the natives of Caca," said Harry. "I don't mean that. It looks like a smoke-signal. Can it be our friends trying to signal to us?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But they're not on the cliff," said Johnny Bull. "We should be able to see them if they were there."

"I know. But—"

Wharton fell into silence again, watching the smoke. Obviously it proceeded from some sort of a fire; but there was no sign to be seen of the fire. The smoke rose, apparently, from some cranny in the rugged top of the cliff. It was possible that it was due to some volcanic action, that some subterranean fire-channel of the volcano extended as far as the basaltic cliffs. But it was not likely—it was very unlikely. The smoke was a signal—but from whom—and to whom?

Some savage from the other side of the island, perhaps, might have rounded Caca in his canoe, and sent up the signal as a warning to his tribesmen that white men were on the island, that there was a white man's ship to be attacked and plundered. But that, again, was unlikely; the smoke was too slight to be seen miles away, from the other side of the hills.

The conviction grew in Wharton's

mind that the signal was from his friends. It was, at least, possible.

"Let's get to it," he said. "It's a pretty stiff climb up there, but—if there's the remotest chance that it's from our friends, we want to look into it."

"I don't see how it could be," said Bob soberly. "We can see that there's nobody on the cliff. But let's, all the same. Any chance is better than none, and we're doing no good rooting about here."

"Let's," assented Johnny Bull, and Redwing nodded.

And the juniors, seeking the easiest way up the great cliff, began to climb the steep ascent. It was a wild and rugged way, amid gullies and great boulders, and a hard climb in the blaze of the sun. But the signal—if signal it was—was still before their eyes—the thin spiral of smoke rising from the summit of the cliff, spreading out and fading away in the sky far above as the breeze drifted it out to sea.

Harry Wharton glanced back a good many times, as the juniors tramped on. If Soames was lurking among the rocks, as he was assured, the signal would catch his eyes also, that was certain. Would he follow on the track of the juniors, or hurry back to the hidden spot where he had left his prisoners? No sign was to be seen of the man following. But suddenly, from a point where the cliff fell away sheer a hundred feet to the water, Harry Wharton caught sight of a canoe.

"Stop!" he panted.

The four juniors halted, staring down from the cliff at the canoe gliding below. Soames was in it, paddling fast, with a paddle in either hand.

"There's the villain!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Wharton's eyes gloamed.

He threw himself down, and crawled to the very verge of the dizzy precipice. A hundred feet below was a "finger" of the lagoon, and between high walls of rock Soames was paddling rapidly, evidently unconscious that eyes had seen him from above. Wharton lowered the muzzle of the rifle over the edge of the cliff, and took aim at the canoe. His comrades watched him in silence.

Crack!

The report of the rifle rang among the cliffs, startling a thousand seabirds from the crannies.

The juniors, staring down from the dizzy verge, saw Soames start, and glance up. The bullet had gone close, even at the difficult range; it had struck the canon a foot from Soames, and glanced away.

With a startled face, the sea-lawyer stared up, and caught sight of the four faces staring down from the edge of the precipice. His eyes blazed at them for a second, and then he was desperately paddling again.

Crack!

Wharton fired a second shot; it dropped behind the canoe as Soames raced onward.

A moment more, and the canoe had vanished round a bulging cliff, and was lost to sight.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"He's got away. But it's plain enough, you chaps. He's seen the signal, same as we have, and he knows it's from our friends, and he's hurrying back to put a stop to it. Isn't that clear?"

"Looks like it," said Bob. "Come on!"

And the juniors, with renewed hope

now, clambered fast to the summit of the cliff, guided by the spiral of dark smoke that rose before them.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Chance!

"MY esteemed Smithy!" Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rose from the boulder at the mouth of the sea-cave, where he had long been sitting. The nabob had been thinking hard, while the Bounder roamed about restlessly, and Nugent sat with his bruised head resting in his hands.

Vernon-Smith stopped his savage roaming, and turned to the nabob almost with a snarl.

"Well?"

"I have been thinking terrifically—" "What's the use, you dummy?" snarled the Bounder. "Can you think us out of this cave, you ass?"

Nugent looked up hopefully. His head was aching from the blow he had received, which had stunned him and placed him in the hands of the sea-lawyer, and his face was white. But there was a tone in the nabob's voice that brought hope back to his heart.

"I hope so, my esteemed Smithy," said Hurree Singh gently. "We cannot swim away because of the esteemed sharks, and the climbfulness is impossible. But there are more ways of killing an excellent cat than the chokefulness with cream."

"What do you mean, if you mean anything?" grunted the Bounder. "If you've thought of anything, get it off your chest."

"There are pools of water in the cave," said Hurree Singh, with a nod towards the dusky interior of the sea-cave. "We have quenched our esteemed thirst there, and the water is fresh. It is rain-water which percolates through the basalt over our excellent heads. Where there is a way in, there must be a way out."

"You silly owl!" said Vernon-Smith savagely. "Do you think I haven't thought of that long ago? I've spotted every hole in the basalt where the water trickles in when it rains. The largest of them is not large enough for a rabbit to get through."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh nodded.

"Quitefully so," he agreed. "We cannot get out the way the esteemed rain trickles in. But where we cannot go, something else may go."

"And what?" demanded the Bounder. "Have you a carrier pigeon in your pocket, you dummy?"

"No. But smoke—"

"Smoke?" repeated the Bounder, staring.

"Common or garden smoke," said Hurree Singh mildly. "Smoke, as you must be aware, travels upwards, and will find its way through the narrowest cranny. If we light a fire in the cave, underneath one of the crevices where the esteemed rain trickles in—"

The Bounder gave a jump.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "There's lots of driftwood here, and we've got matches."

"That is the esteemed idea," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Bounder's face had brightened for a moment, but it darkened again, hopelessly.

"Nothing in it," he said, with a grunt. "Suppose we get smoke out through the cliff, are the fellows likely to see it, or to understand what it means, if they do see it?"

"The certainfulness is not terrific, but the chancefulness is great," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If our esteemed friends see the smoke they will wonder what it means, and the thinkfulness will follow. I am sure that they are searching for us among the cliffs, and they cannot be far away. They will see the smoke, and soonerfully or laterfully they will guess that it is a signal."

"Not likely," growled the Bounder. "But it's a chance, anyhow, and better than doing nothing. Let's get to it."

Nugent rose to his feet and groaned as he did so. His head was aching severely.

Hurree Singh pushed him back to his seat.

"You take a rest, my esteemed Franky," he said. "Smithy and Bunter and my esteemed self can do the work."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Come on, Bunter!" snapped the Bounder. "We've got to gather up a stack of driftwood. Get a move on."

"I'm tired," answered Bunter.

"What?"

"Tired."

Vernon-Smith gave him a look.

Looks had no effect on William George Bunter. He leaned back against a rock and rested there peacefully. His peaceful rest did not last long, however. It was interrupted by the Bounder's boot, planted forcibly in his fat ribs.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"Tired now?" asked Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Yow-ow! Ow-woop!"

"Do you want another?"

"Yow-ow! I'm coming!" howled Bunter. "I—I want to help! Beast!"

And Bunter helped. Along the mouth of the cave was driftwood in great quantities, left there by a thousand tides. In the heat of the tropic day, the prisoners of the sea-cave had not thought of a camp-fire, but the materials were ample. They gathered up armfuls of the driftwood and carried them up the cave into the dusky interior.

At the back of the cave, far from the sea, there were several pools of fresh water in hollows of the basalt. Here and there in the rocky arches high over their heads, fissures yawned in the rock, and in one place a tiny glimpse of light could be discerned. The opening was scarcely enough for a bird to have found passage through it, even if it could have been reached from below, which was impossible without a forty-foot ladder. But it was more than wide enough to allow the passage of smoke.

The Bounder had declared that there was "nothing in it," but his eyes were gleaming now, and he worked hard at carrying driftwood up the cave and piling it under the fissure in the arched roof. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh worked as hard, and Billy Bunter, much against the grain, slaved at the task, helped on by a drive of the Bounder's boot whenever he slacked. As Bunter had been resting all day, there really seemed no reason why he should not exert himself a little. The Owl of the Remove seemed to see plenty of reasons, but his views were not regarded. He fagged and panted up and down the cave, with an occasional kick to keep him going.

A stack of dry wood was soon reared, and a match was set to it. In a few minutes the fire was crackling and blazing.

"The smokefulness will be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with great satisfaction.

"Grooogh!" spluttered Bunter.

"What is the matterfulness, my esteemed fat Bunter?"

"Oooch! Atchoo!"

Billy Bunter had caught some of the smoke that eddied through the cave. He coughed and sneezed and spluttered. The Bounder came up with fresh armfuls of driftwood and tossed them on the fire.

"Go it, Bunter!" he snapped.

"Grooogh! Atchoo! Beast!" gasped Bunter. "I'm sn-sn-sneezing! Oooch!"

"Work while you sneeze, my esteemed lazy Bunter," suggested the nabob.

"Oooch! I can't! Atchooh!"

"Can't?" asked the Bounder. His foot flew out.

"Yaroooh! Yow-ow-ow! Grooogh! Atchooh! Oooch!" Bunter sneezed, and found that he could work while he sneezed.

More and more fuel was tossed on the fire, and the heat at the back of the cave was soon great. Smoke eddied along the rugged arches of the roof, and crawled along the sides of the cave, and eddied out of the cavern-mouth over the sunny water. The juniors had to retreat at last from the heat of the fire and the suffocating smoke. They retreated to the very edge of the rock lip over the deep water, and even there eddies of smoke curled round them and floated away.

The interior of the sea-cave was thick with it. There was no doubt whatever that the smoke, rising thick and black, searched out every cranny in the roof of the cave, and streamed out by every opening, however slight. Some of it, at least, escaped by the rain-holes in the basalt and floated away skyward, the prisoners knew that. If Harry Wharton & Co. saw it—if they understood when they saw it—

They were bound to see it, if they were anywhere near the basalt cliffs at all; and it was certain that they were still seeking their lost comrades and could not be far away. The only question was, would they understand? Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was confident. Frank Nugent was hopeful, and even the Bounder admitted that there was a chance. As for Bunter, he did not offer an opinion at all; all he offered was a series of exasperated complaints, because some of the smoke got into his eyes and nose.

"Our esteemed friends will see it," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The seefulness is certain, and the understandfulness will be terrific. They will find out where we are, and if they cannot reach us landfully, they will get the whaleboat and reach us waterfully. It is a stitch in time that will save the esteemed nine-pence."

"Whether they see it or not, Soames

will see it and understand it," said the Bounder, struck by that sudden thought. "He knows where we are, and so soon as he spots the smoke he will spot that it is just over this cave."

Hurree Singh nodded.

"He will come!" said Nugent.

"Let him come!" said the Bounder, with glinting eyes. "There are three of us, without that fat funk Bunter. We'll have a try at handling him; he's got a bush knife, but we shan't have empty hands." The Bounder picked up a jagged lump of coral. "Get hold of something, you fellows!"

Plash, plash!

It was the sound of a paddle in the strip of sea between the cliffs. The sea-lawyer was coming!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

SOAMES paddled towards the sea-cave, white with rage. Only too well the sea-lawyer had known what the smoke-signal meant when he saw the spiral of vapour rising from the cliff-top against the blue sky. He had ceased at once to stalk the Greyfriars party, and hurried back to his canoe to return to the sea-cave. Twice Wharton's bullet, from the high cliffs, had narrowly missed him. Soames realised very keenly how narrow his escape had been.

He realised, too, that he had roused a fierce and implacable spirit in his rivals for the treasure; the captain of the Greyfriars Remove had intended both bullets to hit, and only the difficulty of the range had saved Soames. He knew what the smoke-signal meant;

(Continued on next page.)



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BLACK PETER'S TREASURE!

(Continued from previous page.)

he knew that Harry Wharton & Co. guessed, or they would not have been clambering over the high cliffs at all; and his face was white with rage as he paddled back to the cave. The rescue of his prisoners meant the undoing of all that he had done—the destruction of all his plans. And once the Greyfriars party located the sea-cave, rescue was certain. Soames paddled furiously up the narrow channel to the cave. There was time yet—ample time—to stamp out the fire, to stop the smoke-signal, before Harry Wharton & Co. reached the top of the cliffs. When they finished their long climb they should not find even a wisp of smoke as a clue, if Soames could help it. And he did not yet doubt that he could help it.

The canoe came fairly whizzing towards the cave as Soames plied a paddle in either hand. He could see three figures at the mouth of the cave—Hurree Singh, Nugent, and the Bounder. William George Bunter had prudently retired into obscurity.

Whiz!

Soames, for once giving way to fierce rage, had perhaps forgotten his usual cunning and caution. Certainly it did not seem to have crossed his mind that he had resistance to expect when he reached the cave. Three schoolboys were there, unarmed, and in the canoe were the heavy, keen bush-knives he had taken from Nugent and Hurree Singh. Even without weapons the sinewy sea-lawyer was probably a match for the three schoolboys, but with a knife in his hand he was not to be resisted. At least, that had seemed certain to him—so certain that he had not thought about it. The whizzing lump of coral was rather a startling awakening to him.

It came from the hand of the Bounder, and never had the Bounder bowled so surely on the cricket pitch at Greyfriars. The missile struck Soames on the head, and knocked him backwards in the canoe.

The paddles flew from his hands and Soames sprawled backwards, with a yell of pain and rage in the bottom of the canoe.

The Bounder's eyes flashed.

"Go it, you fellows!" he gritted between his teeth.

"Give it him!" breathed Nugent. "We've got to keep him off now!"

The floor of the cavern was strewn with fragments of hard coral, washed up by many a tide. The juniors had already gathered a heap of them, to use as missiles, or as weapons if the struggle came to closer quarters. Their faces were set and determined.

Whiz, whiz! Crash!

Soames struggled up, with demoniac rage in his face. All his silky coolness was gone now. He grabbed at the paddles, and as he did so a chunk of coral, weighing over a pound, with rugged sharp edges, crashed on his chest. He spun back again in the canoe. Missile after missile rained at him, and struck him on all sides.

The canoe danced and rocked, and shipped water.

Close beside it, as it danced, a black fin rose over the sea, and a shark touched it as it glided by. Another and another fin rose to view, more and more gliding shapes were seen in the clear water, as if the hideous creatures knew that there was a chance of a morsel falling into their jaws.

Soames sat up in the canoe again, breathing fury. The canoe had lost

way, and was floating a dozen feet from the cavern mouth, broadside on. The sea-lawyer grasped one of the heavy bush-knives. In his old days in the South Seas, the man, who had been called "Aitoo," had learned the Pacific savage's trick of throwing the knife. There was murder in the sea-lawyer's blazing eyes now as his hand jerked, and the knife flew like a gleam of light.

A second more, and Herbert Vernon-Smith would have dropped, with the knife in his heart.

But a dusky hand dragged him aside in time. Soames' action had been swift—swift almost as lightning; but the wary nabob had seen it, and his grasp was on the Bounder as the knife flew.

By an inch or less the deadly missile missed Vernon-Smith, and flew past him and dropped in the cave.

"Oh!" panted the Bounder.

His eyes blazed as he grasped another chunk of broken coral and hurled it at the canoe. Soames barely dodged it, and as he dodged it another jagged lump from Nugent struck him on the side of the head, and it was instantly followed by another from the nabob, crashing on his neck. The sea-lawyer sprawled in the bottom of the long canoe, dazed and bleeding. The canoe rocked dangerously, and floated, wildly oscillating, away from the cave, sucked away by the outgoing tide.

"Keep it up!" panted the Bounder.

He plunged into the smoke behind him, groping over the floor of the cave for the bush-knife that had so narrowly missed him.

It was soon in his grasp, and he rejoined his comrades. The long, heavy knife, almost as heavy as an axe, gleamed in his hand.

"Let him come now, if he likes," said the Bounder, between his teeth. "I'll be glad if he does! Let him come."

The canoe was floating farther away on the receding tide. Soames' head did not show over the side till it was a distance too great for accurate throwing of rocks.

Then his face was seen again, white with rage, streaked with blood from half a dozen cuts.

His eyes burned at the prisoners of the cave.

Vernon-Smith waved the bush-knife.

"Come back, you scoundrel!" he shouted. "Come as soon as you like!"

Whiz, whiz! A couple of lumps of coral dropped a few feet short of the canoe.

But Soames did not paddle towards the cave again. A well-aimed rock might have stunned him, and he knew it. He shook a clenched fist at the juniors, and then, seizing a paddle, he tooled the canoe away among the tall cliffs, and vanished from their sight.

"Our win!" murmured the nabob.

Nugent sank almost exhausted on a boulder. The Bounder's eyes glittered after the sea-lawyer as he disappeared. He was sorry that Soames had not sought to push matters to a conclusion.

"We can keep him off," said Vernon-Smith. "But this means, of course, that he will not come again—there will be no more food for us. All depends now on the fellows seeing the smoke-signal and understanding it."

"They will see, and they will understand," said Hurree Singh.

"If they don't, we die of hunger here," said the Bounder grimly. "But I'm glad we've taken the chance. We've given that hound something to remember us by, at least!"

"I say, you fellows"—Bunter came

out of a crevice into which he had crammed his fat person—"is—is—is he gone?"

"Yes, you fat funk!"

"Oh, really Smithy—" Bunter blinked at the Bounder. "I—I should have handled him, of course, if he'd come into the cave. I—I was just ready for him! I say, I'm hungry!"

"Oh, my hat! That's jolly important, isn't it?" growled the Bounder.

"Eh! I should jolly well say it is!" said Bunter. "I'm getting sick of these bananas and coconuts, I can tell you! They're not real food—they don't fill a fellow. A bunch of bananas makes hardly any difference to me. I dare say that's why the natives are cannibals, you know; they've got no cattle, and they can't be expected to live on bananas and yams and things. Muck!"

Bunter picked up a bunch of bananas. Vernon-Smith promptly knocked it out of his hand.

"Let the grub alone, you fat rotter!" he snapped.

Bunter glared at him.

"Why, you—you—you cheeky beast!" he gasped. "There isn't anything but this muck, but it just keeps a fellow going. I'm going to fill up on bananas, as there isn't anything else."

"You're not going to touch a banana or a coconut again to-day," said the Bounder coolly. "We've got to make that grub last."

"Eh?"

"Do you think Soames will bring us any more, after the way we've handled him?" snapped Vernon-Smith. "He won't come near the cave again."

Billy Bunter's eyes grew large and round behind his spectacles.

"Why, you—you—you priceless idiot!" he gasped. "You've driven Soames off, when we're depending on him for food to keep us alive!"

"Just that!" assented the Bounder.

"You must be potty!" gasped Bunter.

"Our esteemed friends will save us, my worthy fat Bunter," murmured the nabob. "The chancefulness is great. The esteemed Soames must have thought it probable, as he came back to put out the smoke-signal."

"Probable!" hooted Bunter. "What's the good of that? Suppose they don't find us?"

"Then the esteemed game will be up for our excellent selves," answered the nabob calmly. "We perish here hungerfully."

"You—you—you potty idiots!" gasped Bunter. "Why couldn't you leave Soames alone? I'm frightfully hungry now!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Smithy.

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "You've cut off supplies when you know we can't get away! I'm not going to starve to please you! The least you can do, after that, is to leave this grub to me, what there is of it!"

"You'll have your whack, and nothing more," said the Bounder. "Not another bite to-day, my fat tulip."

"Beast!"

"Let me catch you at the grub, and look out for squalls. You'd better try to make it last as long as you can. When it's all gone, you may go next."

"Eh?"

"You're the fattest, and the least use," said the Bounder sardonically. "It will be your turn after the grub is gone, if we don't get out of this. There's enough of you to last us a week."

Bunter blinked at the Bounder.

"Why, you—you—you beast!" he gasped.

"Plenty of you to make kai-kai," said the Bounder.

"Grooogh!"

Billy Bunter's fat little legs seemed to refuse to support him, and he sank down on a boulder, blinking at the Bounder in horror. The idea of making kai-kai when the food ran out seemed to disconcert the fat junior.

"So the longer the grub lasts, the safer you will be, my fat tulip," said the Bounder. "Take that as a tip."

"Beast!" said Bunter faintly.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at what remained of the bananas and coconuts, but he did not offer to touch them again. Vernon-Smith's grim jest seemed to have taken even Bunter's appetite away.

The fire was sinking now in the interior of the cave, and the juniors piled more driftwood on it. Smoke thickened again round the rugged roof of the basaltic cavern. They returned to the cave-mouth to breathe the fresh air there, and to watch and wait. Lower sank the sun over the tropic island, and in the narrow sea-channel between the high cliffs the shadows lengthened and darkened.

With grim faces they watched the fall of night. The signal had been seen—it must have been seen—but had it been understood—would it guide their friends to the rescue? Upon that depended the lives of the prisoners in the cave. From Soames there was nothing more to be expected. They knew that. It was rescue, or death by hunger in the cavern or by the jaws of the sharks. They had set their lives upon a cast, and had to stand the hazard of the die. But—with the exception of Billy Bunter—the prisoners of the basalt cave did not repent that they had taken the chance.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On the Track!

HARRY WHARTON and his companions were breathing hard and deep when they reached at last the summit of the basaltic cliff. The distance was not great in itself; but the way up the cliff was broken by endless gullies and fissures, which had to be clambered through; here and there by deep channels into which fingers of the lagoon penetrated, and which had to be gone round. But at long last they stood on the summit of the great mass of black basalt, where the smoke signal ascended.

Unceasingly before their eyes the spiral of smoke had risen as a guide, and they could see that it escaped from some cleft in the rock, and as they drew nearer they made out thinner and slighter spirals of smoke that escaped from other crevices. It was as if a fire burned in the hollow interior of the cliff, every crevice in the basalt serving as a chimney, as was indeed the case. Where the thickest smoke rose, the four juniors halted, breathless with their exertions, but with hope in their faces.

That the fire was no result of volcanic action within the cliffs they knew now for certain. The unmistakable smell of wood-smoke was in their nostrils as they came up. There was no mistaking it.

"We're on the right track now," said Johnny Bull. "It's a fire in a cave somewhere under this thumping cliff—either a camp-fire, or intended as a signal."

"Nobody's likely to want a camp-fire on a day like this," said Bob Cherry, fanning his crimson face with his hat.



Fifty feet above the water, Soames stood, looking down at the whaleboat, his white, set face and burning eyes clear to the view of the Greyfriars juniors below. As the whaleboat drifted across the narrow channel, a heavy rock hurtled down. Splash! It dropped a couple of yards away from the whaleboat. (See Chapter 10.)

"It's a signal all right. The fellows are shut up in a cave as we supposed, and the cave is under this cliff. One of them has thought out this dodge for letting us know."

"It seems clear enough to me," said Harry Wharton.

"We ought to be able to work out the position of the cave from here," Redwing observed quietly. "It must have an opening, and, from the position, the opening must be towards the sea. We saw Soames hurrying in the canoe, clearly going back to the cave by water to stop the signalling. We've got to search the face of the cliff towards the sea."

"Some job!" said Bob. "It seems to drop as sheer as the wall of a house."

"Not quite," said Redwing, with a smile. "I'm used to cliff climbing, and you can leave it to me."

The sailorman's son moved towards the verge of the great basalt cliff that overlooked the lagoon.

Below the verge, the cliff bulged out steeply, and then dropped sheer to the water far below.

"Careful, Reddy," called out Wharton anxiously.

"All serene!"

The sailorman's son, accustomed to the steep cliffs at Hawkscliff from his childhood, was sure-footed as a mountain goat. The other three fellows watched him with beating hearts, as he

worked his way over the steep verge of the basalt, finding hand and foothold as if by magic.

A fall from the cliff meant a drop of at least seventy feet, upon hard rocks, or into shark-infested waters.

But Redwing's nerve was of iron.

For twenty feet or more the basalt bulged outwards in a steep slope, cutting off the view below from those who stood on the summit. Redwing worked his way down the rugged slope, towards a jutting spur of rock that fairly overhung the abyss below.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched him in silence, their hearts almost in their mouths.

Redwing reached the jutting spur, and crawled out on it, and then, with steady eye, looked down.

Beneath him, the precipice dropped away like a wall to the water seventy feet below.

It seemed scarcely possible that the sailorman's son could hang there on the dizzy verge and look below without his senses swimming. But his sunburnt face was calm and undisturbed as he looked. And now, with a steady and observant eye, he could see the channel that ran from the lagoon between the high walls of rock, and ended at the mouth of the sea-cave. The cave itself he could not see, as the basalt bulged

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(Continued from page 13.)

over the opening. But from the face of the cliff, over the lapping water, he detected wisps of smoke that floated out and curled up towards him.

Redwing's eyes gleamed.

He knew now what he wanted to know. Those faint wisps of smoke curling out from the face of the cliff, indicated where the cave must be, in which the prisoners had lighted the signal-fire.

He turned back, to crawl up the bulging cliff again.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not speak. They watched him tensely, as he came working his way slowly and steadily up the steep slope.

He was breathing hard with exertion as he reached them at last, and Bob Cherry gripped his shoulder and drew him up to safety.

"You ass, Reddy!" murmured Bob. "I thought every minute you were going—" He shuddered.

Redwing smiled.

"I've climbed cliffs as steep as this at home lots of times," he answered. "It was only a matter of nerve, and being used to it. It's all right."

"All right now, anyhow," said Bob. "Thank goodness you've got back safe! See anything?"

"Yes, rather!"

Redwing explained what he had seen, and the faces of his comrades brightened.

"It's clear enough," said Harry. "There's a sea-cave, and we can reach it only by water. The fellows are there."

"Then we've got to get back to the Aloha as fast as we can, and get out the whaleboat," said Bob.

"That's it."

"And the sooner the better," said Johnny Bull. "We want to get out of this before dark. We should jolly well break our necks scrambling among these rocks in the dark."

The juniors lost no time.

They were aching with fatigue; but already the rim of the blazing sun was almost touching the hill tops to the west. They had made the ascent with difficulty enough in the light; they could not have made the descent again after nightfall without incessant danger to limb and life. Weary as they were, they hurried on their way, to get out of the wilderness of broken, rugged rocks before the sudden tropical sunset left them in darkness.

They had reached the sandy shore of the lagoon by the time the sun had disappeared. There they sat down to snatch a few minutes' rest, while darkness thickened over the treasure island.

But their repose was short.

They had discovered the location of the sea-cave where their comrades were held prisoners; they were certain on that point now. But there was no time to be lost; there was still Soames to be reckoned with. What the sea-lawyer might do, they did not know, and could not guess; but they knew that he would prevent the rescue if he could. After a few minutes' rest, they rose again from the sand, and tramped

along the shore towards the stream. The riding-light of the Aloha glimmered out on the lagoon. Bob Cherry put his hands to his mouth and hailed.

"Ahoy, the schooner!"

Ben Dance's deep voice came back.

"Ahoy!"

"Send the boat."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

A few minutes later the whaleboat manned by four Kanakas, glided through the shadows to the shore. The sun was long gone now, and the darkness lay thick on the Treasure Island. But in the velvety sky more and more stars were coming out, glistening like points of fire, reflected in the still waters of the lagoon. The whaleboat bumped on the soft sand, and the juniors clambered into it.

"And now for the cave," said Redwing, as he took the lines.

"You think you can find it, in the dark?" asked Wharton doubtfully.

"I hope so; anyhow, we can try. The moon will be up soon," answered Redwing.

"Go ahead!" said Bob Cherry, sinking down with a grunt of satisfaction. "Blessed if I think I could walk another yard! You feller Kanakas washy-washy plenty quick."

The Kanakas put out the oars again, and with Redwing steering, the whaleboat glided northward over the starlit lagoon, heading for the great masses of the basalt cliffs that rose against the sky.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Rescue!

A SILVER crescent of moon rose from the sea, and sailed among fleecy clouds in a sky of deep dark blue. In the clear, bright moonlight of the South, the sea shone like a flood of silver, and the great cliffs and rocks stood out as plain as by day.

A mile from the anchorage of the Aloha, the northern shore of the lagoon was a wilderness of wild, twisted masses of basalt, rising from the water steeply, split with a thousand fissures and gullies, into which "fingers" of the lagoon flowed and murmured and lapped. To the Greyfriars juniors, it was an almost trackless wilderness; but the sailorman's son was their guide, and Redwing had a seaman's eye for observation. He had noted every sign that was needed to guide him to the narrow channel between the high walls of rock, that led to the sea-cave; and as the moonlight strengthened, he picked up every sign that he had noted from the cliff-top.

The Kanakas, surprised but unquestioning, pulled at the oars, as the whaleboat was steered into the rocky channel. Tom Redwing's unerring sense of direction was never once at fault. Harry Wharton and Bob and Johnny Bull sat in silence, glad of the rest, and more than willing to leave the guidance to the sailorman's son.

"Back water!" rapped out Redwing suddenly. "You feller Kanakas, stop washy-washy, plenty quick!"

"What—" began Bob.

"Look!"

Redwing made a gesture upward.

The juniors glanced up.

High on the rocky wall that shut in the channel, clear against the moonlight, appeared the figure of Soames. Fifty feet above the water, the sea-lawyer stood, looking down at the whaleboat. His white, set face and

burning eyes were clear to the view; and even as the whaleboat lost way, and a turn of the lines twisted her across the narrow channel, a heavy rock hurtled down.

Splash!

The whaleboat danced, as the great rock dropped into the water a couple of yards away.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, gripping the gunwale.

There was a howl of alarm from the Kanakas, as they stared up at the threatening figure outlined against the moonlit sky.

Wharton's eyes glinted.

His rifle was between his knees; in an instant, he had lifted it and fired. Crack!

It was a hasty shot, but it went very close. The figure in the moonlight disappeared from the edge of the high cliff.

"Washy-washy quick!" rapped out Redwing.

The oars dashed into the water again, and the whaleboat shot onwards, past the danger-point.

The juniors breathed hard.

They had had a terribly narrow escape; for had the falling rock struck the whaleboat, it would have been stove in instantly, and the whole crew would have been left in the water. What that would have meant, they did not need to surmise; for the splashing rock had disturbed the hideous denizens of the lagoon, and three or four black fins had glided into view on the water round the boat.

"The villain!" breathed Johnny Bull.

"A miss is as good as a mile!" said Bob Cherry, but his ruddy face had gone white.

Wharton, rifle in hand, watched the line of the cliffs for a chance of another shot. But the black figure against the moonlight was not seen again. Soames had made his attempt—and failed.

The whaleboat, propelled by the four sturdy Kanakas at the oars, shot along the narrow channel.

Before the boat rose the great face of the cliff at the end of the channel; in which, unless Redwing was mistaken, opened the sea-cave where were the prisoners. But Redwing was not mistaken.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry.

His voice rang and echoed with a thousand reverberations among the basalt cliffs. It rang and echoed in the sea-cave, and brought hope and joy to the weary watchers there. A voice shouted back:

"You fellows—here we are!"

It was Frank Nugent's voice.

"The herefulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous chums!" came the well-known tones of the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Bravo!" roared Bob. "You feller Kanakas, you washy-washy debblish quick, washy-washy like thunder, you savvy?"

The boat shot on to the cave.

A minute more, and it bumped on the rocky shelf at the mouth of the cave, under the beetling brow of the cliff. Wisps of smoke were still curling out of the opening, with the penetrating smell of wood-smoke. From the gloom, three faces looked, two white and one dusky, with shining eyes. Harry Wharton & Co. clambered out of the boat.

"Franky!"

"Smithy!"

"Inky, old bean!"

"Hurrah!"

"So you've found us!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Did you see the smoke signal?"

"Didn't we?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We did, just a few! And you didn't hear us treading over the roof of your desirable residence—the roof's a bit too thick!"

"Well, we ought to have heard your feet, anyhow," said the Bounder.

"Fathead!"

"Oh, Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing, his eyes shining. "Smithy, old man! You're all right!"

"Right as rain," grinned the Bounder. "Never so jolly glad to see anybody in my life."

"I'm all right," said Nugent, with a faint smile in answer to Wharton's anxious look. "Only a bump on my napper—that beast Soames got me with a rock. A bit of a headache now—nothing!"

"All serene, and the serenity is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram

"I fancy he would have, only we had an argument about that," chuckled the Bounder. "He came back for us, and we shifted him by heaving rocks at him. He was glad to go."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry. He stirred a sleeping figure with his boot.

"Grooogh!"

"Wake up, fatty!"

"Mmm! 'Tain't rising-bell!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I'm not getting up yet!" roared Bunter. "I've hardly slept a wink! Grooogh! Oh!" Bunter sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Which of you beasts is that? I say, you fellows, I'm hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Are you ever anything else?" roared Bob.

"Famished!" gasped Bunter. He scrambled to his feet and blinked at the shadowy figures round the mouth of the cave. It dawned upon Billy Bunter's

kept me short of them. Sure you fellows haven't got any real food about you?"

Tom Redwing laughed, and produced a bully beef sandwich left over from his lunch. Bunter fairly clutched it, and it performed the vanishing trick with wonderful celerity.

"That's good!" gasped Bunter. "Got any more?"

"Sorry—no."

"You must be a silly idiot! I say, you fellows—"

"Are you coming, my esteemed fat Bunter?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, from the whaleboat. "Do you wish to be left behindfully?"

Bunter made a jump into the boat. The rest of the party embarked with cheery faces. Bob Cherry pushed off from the rocky mouth of the cave.

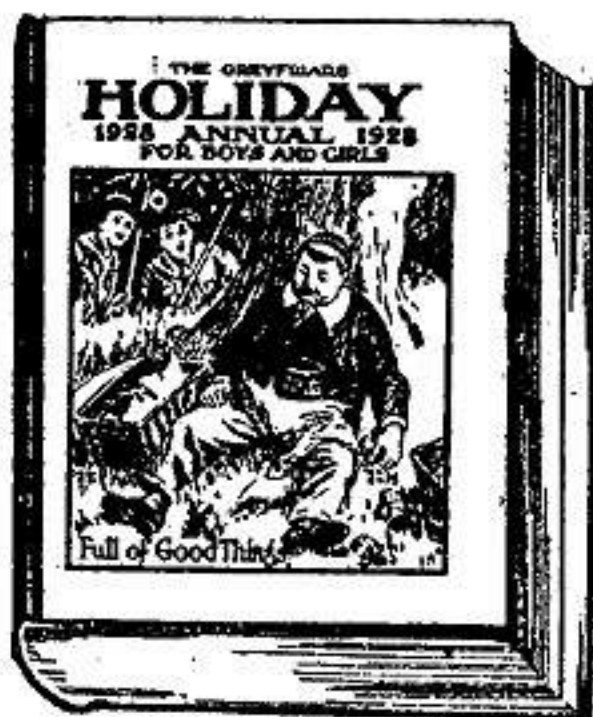
"Hold on!" exclaimed Bunter excitedly.

"What for, fathead?"

"You've forgotten something—left in the cave!" gasped Bunter.

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Singh joyously. "We have won the last round, and it is the esteemed knock-out for the excellent and execrable Soames."

"It seems almost too jolly good to be true," said the Bounder. "I feel as if I've been here for years. We heard a shot—did you get that villain?"

"Not quite; but bother him now," said Wharton. "Soames won't get another chance to play this game."

"No fear!" said Johnny Bull. "But, I say, isn't Bunter with you?"

From the darkness of the cave came a deep and resonant snore.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Good old Bunter—going strong!"

The juniors chuckled. While three of the prisoners had been watching and waiting anxiously for the hoped-for rescue, William George Bunter had evidently not been watching. As he could not eat, he was sleeping.

"Then we're all together again—Bunter and all," said Harry Wharton. "We shall be glad to see even Bunter again. I was afraid that villain Soames might have shifted you somewhere else before we got to you."

fat intellect that help had arrived, and that it was rescue. "I say, is that you, Bob Cherry?"

"Yes, old fat bean! Glad to see me?" grinned Bob.

"I think you might have come before."

"Eh?"

"Leaving a fellow here famished," grunted Bunter. "But you always were selfish, Cherry!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Same with Wharton. Is he here? I say, Wharton, have you got any grub with you?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Well, of all the silly idiots!" said Bunter in disgust. "Mean to say you've woke me up when there's nothing to eat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Plenty to eat on the schooner," chuckled Johnny Bull. "We're going back to the Aloha now, Bunter. Roll into the boat."

"That's all very well," grunted Bunter. "But I'm hungry—famished—ravenous! I've had nothing here but fruits and stuff, and that beast Smithy

"Well, what, ass?" demanded Bob.

"The bananas! There were some bananas left and a few coconuts."

"You howling ass!" roared Bob. "There's plenty on the Aloha."

"You burbling chump!" retorted Bunter, "we're not on the Aloha yet; and I told you distinctly I was hungry."

"Give way!" rapped out Wharton. "You feller washy-washy for ship."

"Those bananas—" shrieked Bunter. "Fathead!"

"And coconuts—"

"Ass!"

"I'm hungry!" yelled Bunter wrathfully.

"Go hon!"

"Famished—"

"Cheese it!"

"Beast!"

The juniors were not likely to turn back in order that William George Bunter might guzzle bananas and coconuts on his way to the schooner.

The whaleboat glided down the narrow waterway, all the juniors keeping a keen look-out on the high rocks on either side for Soames. A rifle and an

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automatic were ready for him, if he showed up against the sky-line on the summit of the rocky wall of the channel. But he did not show up, and the boat, with the Kanaka seaman pulling strongly, glided out of the channel at last into the open lagoon.

"Now for the Aloha!" said the Bounder, with deep satisfaction.

"And something to eat!" said Bunter feelingly. "Did you fellows tell that black beast Talupa to have something ready?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Well, of all the selfish beasts—"

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

Crack!

It was the sound of a revolver across the silent lagoon.

"That's Ben Dance!" exclaimed Wharton. "Pull, you men, pull!"

"Soames!" said the Bounder between his teeth. "Soames, at the schooner!"

"Washy-washy, plenty quick, debblish quick, you feller Kanakas!" shouted Wharton, gripping the magazine-rifle and staring ahead.

And the whaleboat shot across the lagoon towards the distant schooner.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Soames' Last Throw!

BEN DANCE stood on the deck of the Aloha staring with uneasy eyes and puckered brows into the moonlight. He had sent the whaleboat to the shore for the juniors, expecting them to come on board, but they had not come. He had heard, echoing faintly from afar in the still night, the report of Wharton's rifle, but of where the juniors were, or what had happened, he knew nothing. He was deeply uneasy as he watched the silvery lagoon, his hand on the revolver in his belt.

Since Ben Dance had learned that Soames was the man who had once been known as "Aitoo" in the South Seas, he had feared the worst; he knew now that Soames was a more dangerous enemy than even Silvio, the half-caste, had been. In anxiety that grew more intense every moment, the wooden-legged seaman waited and watched on the Aloha's deck, while the moon rose higher in the fleecy heavens, shedding clear silvery light on land and sea. Out of the shadows of the sea a gliding craft emerged to his view at last, and for a moment he fancied that it was the whaleboat. Then he recognised the long, low shape of the canoe, and caught the flash of a paddle that touched the water with scarcely a sound.

"Shiver me!" muttered the seaman, setting his teeth.

He jerked the revolver from his belt.

He knew who was coming; he knew that Soames was in possession of the long canoe that had brought Silvio and the Malaitas to the island. It was the sea-lawyer who was coming, either victorious over the Greyfriars party, or defeated and desperate, to make a bid for the possession of the Aloha. Dance could not tell which. But his mahogany face set grimly and his grip closed hard on the butt of the revolver. He was there to guard the schooner, and to defend it, even against so dangerous an enemy as the man who had been called "Aitoo," or "Devil," by the natives in the old days.

The canoe glided closer on the seaward side.

It was, though Dance did not know it, a defeated and desperate man who was in the Malaita canoe.

Soames had lost in his struggle with the Greyfriars party; he knew that the prisoners of the cave would be rescued now, and he was powerless to prevent it. He knew that the treasure-seekers, once re-united, would be too many to give him a chance of playing his cunning game again; he had no hope of that. He fully expected, indeed, that the Greyfriars party would become, in their turn, the hunters, and that he would be driven to flee and hide for his liberty, if not for his life. In his savage desperation he had resolved to make an attempt upon the schooner. If fortune favoured him, he would again be master of the situation, with the Aloha in his hands. It was a desperate chance, and he knew it. But he was desperate now.

He knew that all the Greyfriars party were away from the schooner—only Dance and the Kanaka crew remained on board. To the Kanakas he gave little thought; if he could deal with Dance, he had little doubt of being able to deal with the Kanakas afterwards. Desperate as was the chance he was taking, he was cool, collected, iron-nerved, as he ran the canoe towards the Aloha on the seaward side. If Dance was careless in his watch—if he was looking towards the shore instead of the sea—if he could be caught napping. Once on the Aloha, the bush-knife in his belt would settle the matter. If only the wooden-legged seaman was off his guard for a matter of seconds.

But Ben Dance was not off his guard.

Keeping in the shadow of the deck-house, the wooden-legged seaman watched the canoe creeping nearer and nearer. The Kanakas forward, jabbering and chewing betel-nut, had no eyes for the sea—they did not observe or hear the approaching canoe. Dance scarcely heard it, for Soames was paddling softly with great caution; but he saw. His mahogany face grew harder and grimmer as he watched, finger on trigger. Soames' hope grew that he was approaching unobserved, that he was catching the wooden-legged seaman napping—while all the time Dance was quietly waiting for him to come within nearer and surer range.

The canoe rocked under the rail of the Aloha at last.

Soames stood up, and laid down the paddle, steadying himself in the canoe with his hand against the hull of the schooner. There was no Jacob's-ladder, no loose rope, to aid his ascent, but he was active as a cat—he could climb on board. But in doing so he had to abandon the canoe—and once the canoe was abandoned there was no retreat. Once Soames had swum in the lagoon, avoiding as if by a miracle the jaws of the tiger sharks. Such luck was not likely to be his a second time. At that moment, standing in the canoe with his hand on the schooner's hull, even the desperate iron-nerved sea-lawyer hesitated.

But he had not taken such fearful risks to hesitate long at the finish. He set his teeth, and made an upward spring, and caught hold; and with the backward drive of his foot as he sprang, the canoe was sent rocking over the water. When Soames' grasp closed on the timbers of the Aloha, the canoe was already a dozen feet away, and floating out towards the reefs.

A moment more, his grip was on the rail, and then the wooden-legged seaman loomed before his eyes, and the muzzle of a revolver was thrust fairly into his face as the trigger was pulled.

Crack!

That was the shot that reached the ears of the juniors in the whaleboat, and brought them speeding towards the

schooner as fast as the brawny Kanaka oarsmen could pull.

It seemed a miracle that the sea-lawyer's brains were not blown out over the schooner's rail, as Ben Dance fully intended. But, swift and sudden as Dance's movements were, the sea-lawyer was as swift; his head dodged aside as the trigger was pulled, and the bullet grazed along his cheek, drawing a streak of blood as it grazed.

Soames panted.

He knew that all was up now; he had played for his last desperate stake, and lost.

Dance's trigger was moving for a second shot, his eyes gleaming vengefully on the sea-lawyer; and there was only one way of escaping that shot. Soames let go his hold and dropped into the sea, and only in time, for the bullet tore the hat from his head as he dropped.

Splash!

Dance leaned over the rail, revolver in hand, finger on trigger, watching for the sea-lawyer to rise. The canoe was floating now twenty feet distant, rocking away on the tide towards the reef. Soames did not think of attempting to reach it. He knew that as soon as his head showed over the water within range it would be riddled with bullets. His fall had taken him deep; and even at that fearful moment he did not lose his cool judgment, though his very flesh was creeping with the knowledge that the tiger sharks were round him. He struck out under water, swimming strongly, and when he rose he was on the landward side of the schooner.

His head bobbed out of the water, and he dashed the spray from his eyes, and stared wildly round, as he panted for breath, his lungs almost bursting with the need of air.

He was safe, for the moment, from Dance, who was watching the seaward side of the schooner. But in the bright moonlight he glimpsed the whaleboat speeding up, and he heard the splashing of rapid oars. Bob Cherry's voice rang across the water.

"There he is—look!"

"Soames," said the Bounder between his teeth—"shoot! Wharton, you fool, fire on him!"

Wharton stood up in the whaleboat, the rifle in his grasp.

He could see the bobbing head on the silver-lit waters, he could see the white, drawn face with a crimson streak across it. It was Soames, the desperate scoundrel, whose evil-doing had brought so much disaster in its train, the man who had betrayed his trust, the mutineer who had stained his hands with blood, the plotting enemy whose presence on the treasure island made it a place of ceaseless peril for the schoolboy treasure-seekers. Wharton half raised the rifle.

But he lowered the muzzle again.

He could not shoot a man struggling for his life in the water, and he knew that he could not.

"Pull for him, you men!" he rapped out. "Washy-washy for pick up white feller marster in um sea, quick!"

"Shoot!" roared the Bounder.

Wharton shook his head.

"You fool!" The Bounder gritted his teeth. "After what he's done—shoot, I tell you!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Smithy!" snapped Bob Cherry. "The man's a villain, but he's down now."

"After what he's done to us!" hissed the Bounder.

"Well, he could have knocked you on the head when he had you!" said Bob. "He made you a prisoner instead. We're not going to do worse by him."

"One good turn deserves a stitch in time, my esteemed Smithy!" murmured



The shark was turning over close to the swimmer for the shearing bite that was to tear him to fragments, when—Bang! Harry Wharton fired! The bullet crashed into the throat of the hideous monster—which rose sheer from the water, and came down again with a thunderous splash like a gigantic flail.

(See Chapter 11.)

Hurree Janset Ram Singh. The Nabob of Bhanipur was great on proverbs, though he generally got them a little mixed.

Soames was swimming for the shore.

From the cut across his cheek, the blood was flowing. It was a mere scratch, considered as a wound; but the flow of blood stained the water, and he knew that even if the sharks had missed him otherwise, that would draw them to him. His hope of escape was the very faintest; but he was a man to fight to the last. Coolly, steadily, as if he were in a swimming-bath or a quiet reach of an English river, instead of a shark-infested lagoon in the South Seas, Soames swam for the beach. After him came the whaleboat, though still at a distance. Fire on the defenceless man Wharton would not and could not, but he had no intention of letting Soames escape if he could help it. The Kanaka oarsmen pulled hard at the oars.

From the schooner came the shouting of the Kanakas on board the Aloha. They lined the side in great excitement, watching the strange scene in the bright moonlight. Dance, warned by their shouting that the sea-lawyer was on the landward side of the anchorage, rushed across the deck, and stared over the lagoon. He had no such hesitation as Harry Wharton felt, and he pumped out bullets at the distant bobbing head of the swimmer. But the range was too great now, in the uncertain light, for a revolver, and the pistol-bullets missed Soames by yards.

And the man swam on.

Against his leg, as he swam, he felt a rasping, and he knew that the blood was flowing from the broken skin, from knee to thigh. The rush of a shark had barely missed him, and the skin of the terrible brute, rough as sand-paper, had rasped along his limb, drawing

blood. A shudder ran through the swimmer, but he went on with steady strokes, though black despair was in his heart now.

"Oh, Heaven!" breathed Nugent, his face white as death.

He was not more than a dozen yards from the beach now, and the pursuing whaleboat was an equal distance behind him. But that gleam of white was the belly of a shark, turning over close to the swimmer for the shearing bite that was to tear him to fragments.

Bang!

Harry Wharton fired; but not at Soames. The bullet crashed into the throat of the hideous monster of the deep.

The sea was thrashed up as if by a tempest; the tail of the wounded shark rose sheer from the water, and came down again with a thunderous splash like a gigantic flail.

Five or six hideous snouts were thrust up round Soames.

But Wharton's shot had saved him.

The sharks turned with one accord upon the wounded brute thrashing the sea, tearing great lumps from it with their shearing jaws. In little more than a minute the wounded shark was torn to pieces by its fellows; and the swimmer staggered panting and exhausted upon the beach. He sank down there, breathing in great gasps, streaming with water, shuddering from head to foot. Even the iron nerve of the sea-lawyer had been shaken at last.

But, exhausted as he was, Soames remained only a few seconds panting on the sand. The whale-boat was rushing on, and it was a matter of a few minutes before he would be seized. He rose to his feet, and, without even a look at the juniors, staggered up the beach.

The whale-boat grounded.

"After him!" snarled the Bounder.

Soames, gathering all that remained of his strength, rushed up the shelving beach and disappeared into the palms.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Justice for Two!

"BACK to the Aloha!" said Harry. Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"And let him get clear?"

"He's clear already," answered Wharton. "Washy-washy, you feller Kanakas, um schooner."

Soames had vanished into the darkness of the coconut woods. Dangerous as he might yet prove to the treasure-seekers, there was not a fellow in the whale-boat who was not glad that he had escaped the sharks—even the Bounder.

The whaleboat pulled out to the schooner. Ben Dance's grim face looked down over the rail.

"He got away?"

"Yes."

"Shiver me! No wonder the niggers called him Aitoo—he has the devil's own luck," growled the wooden-legged seaman. "I gave it him point-blank, and he got clear. Why didn't you shoot him in the water, or let the sharks get him?"

Wharton smiled.

"Because I never sailed with Black Peter, I suppose," he answered. "Give us the ladder, Dance."

The juniors clambered on board, and the whaleboat was swung up. Glad enough were the Greyfriars fellows to tread the deck of the Aloha again. Billy Bunter blinked round him, and shouted for the Tonga Island cook.

"You feller Talupa!"

"Yes, sar."

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"You bring plenty grub, debblish quick, or I knock seven bells out of you, you black beast."

"Yes, sar."

Plenty of "grub" was speedily forthcoming. All the juniors were hungry, and they made an extensive supper on deck in the moonlight. Talupa the cook served them with obsequious assiduity, with a rather uneasy eye on Bunter. He had never expected to see the fat junior alive again after he had gone adrift in the schooner's gig—and he was in a state of considerable alarm. Bunter, however, seemed to have forgotten that his wreck in the gig was partly due to the cook; when Bunter was hungry he remembered only that he was hungry. Long after the other fellows had finished their supper, the Owl of the Remove was still going strong.

But even William George Bunter was finished at last.

In a state of fullness which was extremely satisfactory but a little uncomfortable, William George Bunter leaned against the cabin skylight and panted for breath after his great exertions. For some time Bunter was silent, while the enormous cargo he had taken on board settled down. But he found his voice at last.

"I say, you fellows."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You're not eating, Bunter," said Bob Cherry, in a tone of solicitude. "Anything wrong?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lost your appetite?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Nugent sympathetically. "He's only eaten enough for a dozen fellows. Can't you manage another tin of beef, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Or a few pounds of yams?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Not even room for a dozen coconuts or a bunch of bananas?" asked Wharton.

"I've had enough," said Bunter with dignity. "I never was a fellow for eating—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you fellows, chuck up cackling and listen to me," said Bunter. "You don't know how I came to get adrift in the gig and fall into the hands of those beasts. I ordered that cheeky nigger Talupa to row me ashore, and instead of obeying orders, he shoved me off in the gig by myself, and I was caught in the tide and wrecked."

"Serve you right," remarked the Bounder.

"I might have been drowned!" roared Bunter.

"Pity you weren't."

"I might have been gobbled up by those cannibals," howled Bunter. "I might have perished of hunger in that beastly cave. I'm going to punish that black beast. I think we had better hang him."

"Will you take his place as cook if we hang him?" asked Bob.

"No, I jolly well won't."

"Then we'll cut out the hanging, old fat man."

"Well, perhaps hanging would be rather strong, as he's only an ignorant beast of a nigger," admitted Bunter. "Perhaps a thousand lashes would meet the case."

"The perhapsfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You shouldn't have left the schooner, Bunter," said Wharton. "You asked for trouble, and you lost the gig for us. Still, if Talupa played such a trick, he

shall have a lesson. Here, you feller Talupa."

"Yes, sar."

The Tonga Islander came up cringing. "What name you push off fat feller in gig day before?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Feller Talupa no could help," said the cook. "Fat feller white marster him go plenty quick, leave Talupa behind."

"Gammon!" roared Bunter. "You shoved the gig off with your beastly feet and sent me adrift."

"Talupa plenty sorry," said the cook. "No could help."

"He's lying, you fellows," said Bunter indignantly. "My belief is that he wanted me to be drowned."

"And you're such a nice chap!" said the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I daresay he's lying," said Harry Wharton; "but very likely you are lying, too, Bunter."

"Why, you beast—"

"Anyhow, you ought not to have gone ashore, and you had no right to order the cook to row you ashore, and you're a fat, worrying fathoad anyhow. You can give Talupa six with a bamboo."

"That's all right," said Bunter.

And he scrambled up from the deck. "You feller Talupa, you bend over skylight," he snorted, as he grasped a thick bamboo.

"Yes, sar."

The Tonga Islander bent over the skylight obediently, and the bamboo fairly rang on his loin-cloth. Billy Bunter put all his beef into it, and Talupa howled under the castigation.

"That's enough," said Wharton, when six strokes had been delivered. "Chuck it, Bunter."

"Better let him have a few more," panted Bunter.

"It's your turn now."

"Eh?"

"You're going to have the same as Talupa, for going ashore without leave and taking the gig and getting it wrecked."

"Hear, hear!" roared Bob Cherry.

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

"Why, you—you—you cheeky beast!" he stuttered.

"You can give Talupa a dozen if you like; but remember that Talupa is going to give you exactly the same number that you give him."

"Look here—" roared Bunter.

"Are you giving him any more?" chortled Bob.

"I—I think perhaps he's had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your turn, Talupa," said Wharton. "You takey bamboo and give fat feller Bunter six whacky."

"Yes, sar," grinned the Tonga Islander in great glee.

"Keep him off!" roared Bunter in great alarm. "I say, you fellows, keep that black beast off! Yaroooooh!"

Bunter dodged round the skylight.

"You feller Talupa, you give Bunter six whacky, or me knock seven bells out of you," said Wharton. "You give him more than six, and me knock seven bells and a dog-watch out of you—you savvy?"

"Savvy plenty, sar," grinned the black cook.

And he started round the skylight after Bunter, his black eyes rolling and gleaming.

"Yaroooooh! Help! I say, you fellows—Whoooooop!" roared Bunter, as he caught the first lick of the bamboo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Owl of the Remove bolted across the deck, and caught the second lick as he went, and roared. He dodged round the deckhouse, and for several minutes the Tonga Islander was kept busy dodging round and round after him, amid roars of laughter. With the bamboo swishing behind him, Billy Bunter showed an extraordinary activity. But Talupa settled the matter at last by sprawling across the roof of the deckhouse and coming down on Bunter.

Whack, whack!

"Yaroooooooh!"

Bunter fled forward among the grinning Kanakas.

Kalashti put out a foot, and Bunter measured his length on the deck. Talupa came up with brandished bamboo.

Whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-woooooop!"

Talupa reluctantly stopped at the sixth stroke. He did not want to have seven bells and a dog-watch knocked out of him.

Billy Bunter crawled back aft and glared ferociously at the grinning juniors.

"Look here, you beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you think you can treat a fellow like this—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've a jolly good mind to mop up the deck with the lot of you!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

"If you're not satisfied, Bunter, we'll have the performance over again from the beginning," chortled Bob Cherry. "Here, you feller Talupa!"

"Yes, sar."

"I—I—I'm satisfied!" hooted Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I'm satisfied—more than satisfied."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter, in great wrath and indignation, rolled down the companion to his bunk, and found solace in slumber.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Second Sign!

HARRY WHARTON, sleeping through the hot night on the deck of the Aloha, started into wakefulness suddenly, and rubbed his eyes and looked round him. Ben Dance, with the rifle under his arm, was pacing to and fro, keeping watch. In the deep, dark sky the stars gleamed like diamonds. Something had awakened the captain of the Remove; and as he sat up and listened, he knew what it was. The silence of the tropic night was broken by a deep, heavy rumbling sound, like that which the juniors had heard once before. Wharton started to his feet and stared across the lagoon towards the island and the volcano.

Like a cloud against the stars, the smoke hung over the volcano, and in the midst of the black pail of smoke Wharton detected glimmering yellow tongues of flame. From the deep heart of the volcano that echoing, murmuring rumble had come, sending, as it seemed to Wharton, a tremble through land and sea. The lagoon stirred uneasily, and he heard a wave break on the coral shore.

Ben Dance stopped his pacing and stood staring at the island. He shook his head seriously.

"The mountain doesn't seem to be restful to-night, Dance," said the captain of the Remove, with a faint smile.

Dance shook his head again.

"No, sir. That's the second warning

we've heard, and, to my mind, it means trouble. I don't like anchoring in the offing of that volcano, sir, and you can lay to that."

"We may finish here to-morrow and sail," said Harry.

"Ay, ay, sir; and I tell you I shall be glad when we up anchor and get the bows of the schooner into the deep water."

Wharton stood for some time watching the distant mountain and listening. But, as before, the volcano was silent after that one deep, prolonged rumble. His comrades had not awakened, and Wharton lay down to sleep again at last.

When the sun climbed over the sea again, and another day dawned on Caca, the chums of Greyfriars were early astir. Wharton's first glance was towards the volcano; but the mountain was silent, blue against the sky, only the pall of smoke rising from it and floating above it seemed thicker and darker than heretofore.

After breakfast the whaleboat was lowered, and the juniors were rowed to the beach. Bunter was left snoring in his bunk; but on this occasion it was not likely that the fat junior would seek to leave the Aloha "on his own." His previous experience had been warning enough even for the obtuse Owl of the Remove, to say nothing of the lesson he had received from the bamboo.

The juniors landed, and the Kanakas were sent back to the schooner with the whaleboat.

"Now, you fellows," said Wharton, "we've got the chart, and we're going after Black Peter's pearls, and we've got to keep together. Whether Soames is hanging about or not I don't know; but we're not taking any chances. Not a fellow is to get out of sight of the rest. We can't land in trouble again unless we ask for it."

"True, O king!" said Bob.

The Boulder stared up the sandy stream, and round over the coconut woods and the scattered banyans and hibiscus.

There was no sign of an enemy in sight, but not one of the party believed that they were done with the sea-lawyer.

"I'd better tell you," said the Boulder, "Soames told me, in the cave, that if he failed in his scheme—as he has failed—he would bring the cannibals on to us. According to what he says, he has acquaintances among the tribes across the hills, on the other side of the island. It may have been gas, but—"

"He would be villain enough," said Redwing. "And it's likely enough he has had dealings with the savages, as we know he has been at the island before. It was a long time ago, though."

Wharton knitted his brows.

"More likely to be killed and eaten, if he goes among them," he said. "But there's no doubt that the natives would come round the island if they knew there was a white man's ship anchored on this side, and if they get the news from Soames we shall have trouble. All the more reason why we should buck up and get clear."

"Yes, rather."

"Now that we have Black Peter's chart again, it should be a clear course to the cache," said Redwing.

"Come on, then; and keep your eyes open."

"The openfulness of the eye will be terrific," declared Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

The juniors tramped up the bank of the sandy stream, and reached the spot where the skeleton had been discovered—the first "sign" on the path to the treasure buried by the old South Seas desperadoes.

According to the chart, there were five signs in succession that led to the cache, marked by the five crosses on the disc of toak.

From the first sign the juniors had made further search in vain, till the treasure-hunt had been interrupted, first by the half-caste, Silvio, and then by the struggle with the sea-lawyer.

Now, however, that the original chart was once more in their hands, the course was, as Redwing said, clear.

The sailorman's son took from his pocket the chart, engraved long years since on the disc of toak by the knife of Black Peter Bruce.

The juniors gathered round it, scanning it eagerly.

Along the winding course of the snaky river marked on the chart sprawled the word "cache," with a cross dotted over each letter. Each cross indicated a sign on the way, and the juniors had already discovered what those signs were. Five black men had landed from Black Peter's ketch with him when the old ruffian had buried the pearls, and not one of them had returned to the vessel. The first sign—the skeleton of a slain man, with the hands pointing—the juniors had found. And they had little doubt—or rather none—that when they found the other signs, they would have found all that remained of the wretched blacks who had landed on the island with Peter Bruce.

Redwing drew his forefinger across the chart, from the Kanaka's Head to the Peak. His finger-tip passed along the line of crosses.

"That's the line to follow," he said. "Keep your backs to the Kanaka's Head—that queer-shaped knoll yonder—and face the Peak at the north of the island. It's a straight course, and that's what I missed a little when I made the copy of the chart. We should have hit on the clues sooner or later, I think, with patience; but now I believe it is a clear course."

"Let's try it, anyhow," said Nugent.

It was easy enough to follow the line indicated by Redwing. In the north of the island rose the great Peak, at the end of the chain of hills, at the southern end of which smoked the volcano.

Keeping the head-shaped rock—which in the chart was named the Kanaka's Head—directly behind them, the juniors pressed on towards the distant Peak.

The course took them sometimes close by the stream, sometimes far from it, as the stream wound with incessant bends and windings.

They stopped at a thicket of trees, hung with lianas as thick as their arms, with the scarlet blossoms of hibiscus peeping out among the foliage. Redwing looked back. The Kanaka's Head was in a direct line behind, and ahead rose the great Peak against the sky.

"We shall have to get through this," he said.

And the juniors hacked a way through with their bush-knives.

"Stop!" said Redwing suddenly.

He dragged away masses of fallen foliage and rotted vegetation. From the evil-smelling mass a white skull grinned out hideously. The juniors caught their breath.

It was the second "sign!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Third Sign—and Soames!

DEEP in the thicket, buried under leaves that had fallen, and fallen, during long years, the skeleton lay. The skeleton's arms were drawn above the head, pointing towards the distant Peak. The

juniors gazed at it, their faces growing a little pale in spite of themselves, and though this was what they had expected to find. Tom Redwing's face was dark. The man who had buried the pearls, the man who had slain the wretched blacks who had landed with him and carried the burden ashore, was a man of his own blood, and, iron-handed desperado as he must have been, he had remembered Tom in his last hours and sent him the treasure chart.

Black Peter had been a strange mixture of good and evil, and, as Dance had told the juniors, he had counted very lightly the life of a black man. To keep the secret of the cache he had slain the blacks who had landed with him; no doubt it was a grim afterthought, the jest of a hardened desperado, to leave their bones as a guide to the treasure.

In silence the juniors backed out of the thicket and resumed their way, leaving it behind them. There remained no doubt now that they were on the right track; the finding of the second "sign" was a proof of that.

They pressed on in silence.

The way led now through a shadowy coconut wood, amid which the stream rippled and wandered on its downward way to the lagoon. The juniors kept carefully together, and on the watch, thinking of Soames. They had seen nothing, heard nothing, of the sea-lawyer since they had landed, but they knew it was likely enough that he was dogging their steps, watching them from a distance, patient as a cat, savage as a tiger, watchful for his chance. But Harry Wharton & Co. were not likely to give him a chance again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"Look!" muttered Bob.

The juniors passing through the coconut wood, had crossed a loop of the winding stream, and now they came in sight of the water again. It flowed and rippled between shelving, sandy banks that sloped away gently from the wood. White against the yellow sand, a skeleton lay extended, the sightless skull staring upwards at the blue arch of the sky and the dazzling sunshine. And by the side of the skeleton stood—Soames!

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped.

They were still among the trees, and the man by the open stream had not yet seen them.

Soames was scarcely a dozen yards away, but his back was to the juniors, and they had only a glimpse of his profile as he stood, his arms folded, staring down at the skeleton with a thoughtful brow.

It was the third "sign."

Wharton smiled grimly.

Soames had been watching, and from his cover he had noted the direction taken by the Greyfriars party, and knew that they were heading for the cache, guided by the chart. Evidently he had made a detour and got ahead of them.

No doubt some thought was working in his desperate mind of finding the cache before they could reach it. He had seen only a copy of the treasure chart, and that copy had not been wholly accurate. How much he knew or surmised the juniors could not guess, but they were certain that it was not in his power to trace out the hiding-place of the treasure. But from what they could see of his face, and the expression on it, they knew that he was struck by the sight of the skeleton on the sand beside the stream, with its bony hands pointing to the north.

He knew the story of the five black men who had landed with the old desperado and had never returned to the ketch; and he had in other days known Black Peter himself. Staring at the stretched skeleton that had lain for long years bleaching in the tropical sun, Soames was thinking hard, and no doubt a glimmering of the meaning of the ghastly sign flashed upon him, for the juniors saw him start and nod his head, as if in answer to some thought.

Harry Wharton lifted the magazine-rifle to his shoulder.

He could have shot Soames down like a rabbit, and the look of the Bounder urged him to do so. But the captain of the Remove did not pull trigger.

He advanced quietly towards the stream, his comrades following him in silence.

"Soames!"

Wharton rapped out the name.

The sea-lawyer started violently.

In his keen interest in Black Peter's sign, and with thoughts of the treasure running in his head, he had forgotten caution.

He spun round as Wharton called and stared at the levelled barrel of the rifle.

"You!" he breathed.

"You are a prisoner, Soames!" said Wharton steadily. The sea-lawyer's hand was at the bush-knife in his belt. "Touch that knife, and I will put a bullet through you, you scoundrel!"

Soames breathed hard. His hand withdrew from the knife.

"Mind, we're not standing on ceremony with you," said Wharton coldly and quietly. "Surrender, and you will be taken a prisoner to the schooner. But I warn you that if you resist I will shoot you down like a mad dog!"

Soames smiled bitterly.

"I am in your hands," he said.

"Collar him, you fellows, while I keep him covered," said the captain of the Remove.

The juniors hurried forward. The rifle at Wharton's shoulder was as steady as a rock, and his eye gleamed along the barrel. He was unwilling to pull trigger, if he could help it; but he meant every word he uttered, and the sea-lawyer's life hung on a thread. Soames, standing motionless, seemed to have accepted his fate. But as the juniors had almost reached him he made a sudden backward spring, splashing backwards into the river.

Bang!

The rifle rang out, but so sudden was the sea-lawyer's action that the bullet missed him by inches.

The water closed over his head.

"Fire!" yelled the Bounder. "Shoot him, you fool!"

Wharton, with a knitted brow, ran towards the stream. Vernon-Smith snatched the automatic from Tom Redwing's hand, and ran forward at the same time, blazing away at the stream, pumping out rapid bullets. The shots splashed into the water, dashing up spouts of spray in the sunshine.

But when Soames rose he was a dozen yards down the stream, and only for an instant the juniors had a glimpse of his head as he swept round a curve of the winding river.

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"He's gone!" said Nugent.

"If Wharton had shot at sight——" growled the Bounder.

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Bob Cherry. "He's gone; let's get on!"

"I'm keeping this automatic, Reddy!" grunted the Bounder. "If we sight him again he won't get away, I

promise you! I'm not going to leave my bones on this island if I can help it, like the men who landed with your uncle!"

"Oh, come on!" said Bob.

The juniors paused only a moment or two by the skeleton on the sand. Then they pressed on.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Treasure—and the Cannibals!

HIGH against the blue sky rose the great Peak, like a giant sentinel keeping watch and ward over the northern shore of the Treasure Island. The juniors had left the grassy valley and the coconut woods behind them now, and were entering the lower slopes of the hills. The Kanaka's Head had dropped from sight, but Redwing easily kept the course with his compass. The way lay up a rugged valley in the rocky hills, and the juniors were treading on a thick crust of lava left by some ancient outbreak of the volcano.

Through the lava-beds the stream—a mere rivulet now—rippled on its way down. The noontide sun was blazing overhead, the lava upon which the juniors trod was hot to the touch. They camped at last for rest and lunch in the shadow of a great cliff that overhung the stream.

The fourth "sign" of the old South Sea rover had not yet been found, but they were assured that it was not far away. Lunch was disposed of, and the schoolboy treasure-seekers rested in the shade, keeping watch in turns, on the alert for Soames. But there was no hint now that the sea lawyer was following on their traces.

For two hours, in the heat of the tropic day, the juniors rested, and then they resumed their way. They were in a wilderness now of narrow valleys and ravines, with hardly a shrub growing amid the ancient lava, and progress was slow. Certainly, without a clue to the

cache, the most determined treasure-seeker would have been hopelessly baffled.

Black Peter had evidently chosen carefully the hiding-place of the pearls. They stopped at last at a point where two deep ravines were divided by a rocky ridge. By one of them the path lay, they were sure of that, but both led towards the towering Peak, and it was a matter of choice.

Bob Cherry fanned his crimson face with his hat.

"Which way now, Reddy?" he asked.

The sailorman's son did not reply immediately. He had stopped and was looking about him.

"We've got to take one way," said the Bounder. "If it's wrong we'll come back and try the other. No good wasting time."

"Hold on!" said Redwing.

"Well?"

"I think we shall find the sign we want here; it's where it's most needed, at any rate."

"That's so," said Wharton.

And, instead of proceeding by either of the ways, the juniors hunted among the lava rocks for the "sign" of Black Peter.

There was a shout from Bob Cherry a few minutes later:

"This way!"

He had gone a dozen yards up the right-hand ravine. He stopped and called to his comrades.

They hurried on and joined him.

"Look!"

Bob Cherry pointed into a niche of the lava rocks. A skeleton lay there, gleaming white in the burning rays of the sun. The bony hands were pointing towards the Peak.

"That settles it!" said Harry.

"Come on!" said Redwing, in a low voice.

It was the fourth sign, there was no doubt about that, and the juniors knew now which way to follow.

They tramped up the rocky ravine.

The tropic heat was intense, in the unshaded ravine, amid the lava rocks that reflected the blaze and heat of the sun. The juniors panted as they tramped doggedly on. But they never thought of halting. They knew that they were close to the goal; the treasure of Black Peter, if it existed, was at hand now. Only one "sign" remained to be discovered, and that would locate the cache.

Their hearts were beating fast. It was strange enough, eerie enough, to be treading in the track of the dead-and-gone desperado, who had left so fearful a trail to his buried treasure.

Doubtless Black Peter had hoped and intended to return to Caca to lift the treasure himself, when his wild voyaging was over and the time came for him to give up the sea and return to his native land. That time had never come—the knife of the half-caste had sent him to his account, and Silvio, the half-caste, himself had perished in the quest of the treasure for which he had slain Black Peter.

Lives had been spent like water for the pearls that lay hidden somewhere in the recesses of the lava below the Peak. The juniors could not help the thought coming into their minds that, perhaps, their lives were to be spent, also—that they might be fated to leave their bones on that lonely isle of the Pacific, as so many had done. Danger dogged every step in the quest of the treasure of Caca.

NEXT MONDAY'S BUMPER PROGRAMME!

"THE GREYFRIARS CASTAWAYS!"

By Frank Richards.

The concluding story in the remarkable Treasure-seeking series, featuring Harry Wharton & Co. in Southern Seas.

"GOLD FOR THE GETTING!"

By Stanton Hope.

Another long instalment of this popular "gold rush" serial.

"THE PRISONER OF THE COAL-HOLE!"

By Dicky Nugent.

A rousing yarn of fun and frolic at St. Sam's; and another interesting footer article, which this week deals with

MIDDLESBROUGH,

the Second Division League Champions of 1926-7.

Order your MAGNET early, chums.—ED.

The ravine narrowed and narrowed as they followed it up. They had left the stream now, whose murmuring had been in their ears all the way until they had entered the ravine. Round them was the hard, dry lava, crusting the earth, where it had hardened and dried after some ancient eruption, when almost the whole island, probably, had been covered by the burning flood.

Narrower, and narrower grew the way, till it was a mere passage between great barren rocks, and at last they had to halt. It was the end of the ravine, closed in now by impassable rocks.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Looks like the finish!" he said.

"We can't have made a mistake," said Harry, looking about him with knitted brows. "The last sign was plain enough."

"We're on the right track," answered Redwing.

"Only we can't get any farther," remarked Johnny Bull.

"That means——"

"That we have reached the cache, I think," answered the sailorman's son quietly.

"Oh!"

The juniors stared about them eagerly. Only the hard lava met their eyes. There was yet the fifth "sign" to be found, and, unless they had mistaken the clues left by Black Peter, it should have been at hand. But it was not to be seen.

"We've got to find it," said the Bounder. "My hat, it's hot here! But we're on the last lap now."

"The warmfulness is truly terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, fanning his dusky face.

"Let's get to it!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "We can't have far to look, anyhow."

And the juniors searched eagerly among the lava rocks.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry, peering into a deep fissure between two great boulders, uttered that exclamation, and started back. From the shadow of the rocks a skull grinned at him.

"Here!" he called out.

The treasure-seekers hurried up. Between the two great rocks was a space not more than four feet in width, and in that narrow space lay the skeleton—the last of the terrible signs left by the savage old sea-rover. The juniors stood in a silent group, staring at it.

There was no doubt in their minds now.

Before their eyes was the last sign, and, unless their reading of the chart was wholly mistaken, it could only indicate the buried treasure. Before them was the very spot where Black Peter had cached the pearls—the treasure gathered during a long lawless career in the South Seas. But they hesitated to approach nearer the grisly relic.



Whack! Whack! "Yaroooooh!" Billy Bunter was dodging round the deck-house with Talupa hard on his heels, and the bamboo swishing behind him, when Kalashtl put out a foot. The Owl of the Remove stumbled over it, and measured his length on the deck. (See Chapter 12.)

"We—we've got to shift it!" muttered Bob.

"We didn't come all this way to be squeamish at the finish," said Vernon-Smith.

And the Bounder stepped into the fissure.

"Give me the spade!"

A light spade and pick had been brought from the schooner. Vernon-Smith took the spade and moved the bones aside. Even the Bounder did not care to touch them with his hands.

Then they gathered again at the spot which the skeleton had indicated. To all appearance, the ground there was as hard and rocky as elsewhere. But as Wharton wielded the pick he found that the lava came loose in lumps. There had been digging before in that spot, and afterwards the lava had been stamped down into its place by heavy sea-boots.

Clang! Clink! Clang!

The pick rang on the lava, loosening and shifting it in chunks. Harry Wharton stepped back at last, panting and perspiring from his exertions, and the Bounder took his place with the spade.

He shovelled out the broken lava, and the excavation grew deeper and deeper. The juniors looked on in breathless silence, their expectations at the highest pitch now.

Thud!

The spade struck upon something solid, with a metallic clang. With eager face the Bounder shovelled, and a strip of rusty iron was revealed. He plied the spade faster and faster with tireless hands. The rusty iron was the edge of an oaken lid—evidently the lid of a strong, iron-bound sea-chest.

The chest was buried two feet deep, and the closely-packed lava had preserved the wood; the oak was as stout and strong as ever.

Almost feverishly the Bounder shovelled away; but it was no light task to dig out the great chest.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

From the distance, ringing faintly

across the island from the lagoon, came the sudden report of a revolver, once—twice—thrice!

Crack, crack, crack!

The Bounder stopped. The firing came from the schooner. It was Ben Dance who was firing. Those three sudden shots were the signal of danger. The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"Soames——"

"Or——" muttered Bob.

"The cannibals!" said Nugent, finishing the sentence for him.

Wharton compressed his lips. It was danger—the signal meant that the schooner was being attacked. With the treasure under their very eyes the blow had fallen.

Vernon-Smith threw down the spade.

Hardly a word was spoken; it was not necessary to discuss. The thought was in every mind that the sea-lawyer had carried out his threat—that he was attacking the schooner with a swarm of savage allies from the cannibal tribes on the western side of the island, and if that was the case not a moment was to be lost.

Heedless of the treasure, now within their grasp, leaving the sea-chest of Black Peter where it lay, the juniors raced down the ravine, pausing not a moment till they reached the open hill-side, whence a view could be obtained of the lagoon and the anchored schooner.

Blue under the burning sun, the shining lagoon burst upon their sight—the Aloha riding at anchor, the sea screaming over the coral reefs, and from the coral channel four long canoes, packed with savages paddling swiftly towards the schooner.

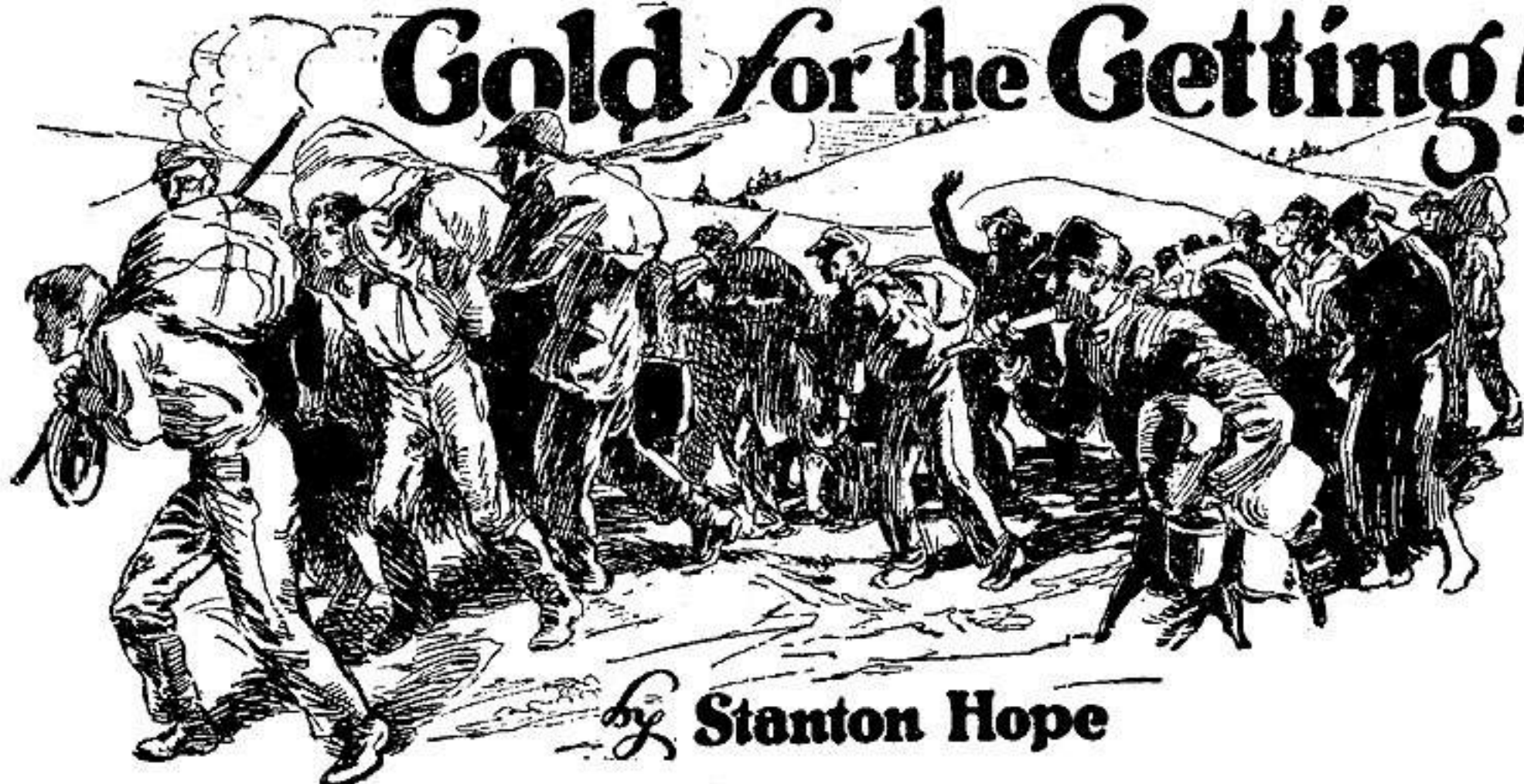
THE END.

(The odds are against Harry Wharton & Co. ever seeing Greyfriars again, but they are game to the last. See what show they put up against the cannibals in next week's thrilling story, entitled: "The Greyfriars Castaways!")

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,025.

A REAL PLUCKED 'UN! To secure the salvation of his pardners, Terry O'Hara is gallantly offering himself as a sacrifice to the ravenous wolves that dog their footsteps when help arrives in the nick of time!

Gold for the Getting!



By **Stanton Hope**

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

Up Against the Wolf Pack!

SKOOKUM bared his fangs and yapped loudly in protest, as much as to say, "Why don't you let me have a go at them?" But seeing that his human companions were anxious to hit the trail, and quickly, he put his best foot forward, hauling at the sledge at a good clip close behind the fast-moving Terry.

There was little doubt now that the wolves would not lightly be beaten off. They had tasted blood, but their grisly meal had not been sufficient to satisfy their long-felt hunger. If anything, it had proved an appetiser, and, maddened for more, they swiftly drew nearer their intended prey.

"On! On!" yelled Uncle Clem. "Keep going, boys! I'll give 'em another shot or two."

He swung round and fired two shots in swift succession, bringing down two more of the pack. Scarce had the shaggy bodies crumpled in the snow than several of the other brutes were ripping at them with their teeth. To Uncle Clem's dismay, the rest of the pack surged onwards, yapping savagely and temporarily heedless even of a rifle in their hunger-madness.

Another shot sent the leading wolf stumbling lifeless in its tracks, and, with a choking sob of relief, Uncle Clem saw the rest of the pack surge round the carcass, fighting tooth and claw among themselves.

"Boys," he panted, as he plodded swiftly after the sledge, "get your rifles loaded. There's little hope now of reaching Bear Creek Camp without first having a stand-up fight with those howling brutes."

Jack came up level with the sledge and Terry dropped back, and they reached for their rifles under the waterproof canvas which covered them. At that precise moment Skookum, who had got up a fair speed going down a slope, gave a sudden swerve to avoid an up-jutting rock, and the sledge gave a sharp upward lift on to one of its steel runners, shooting most of its contents into the snow.

"Great Mackinaw! That's done it!" cried Uncle Clem in dismay. "Pick up

those rifles and the ammunition, boys. Never mind about anything else!"

As though the wolves understood and exulted in the mishap, their howls burst full-throated upon the icy wind, indicating only too plainly the tragedy of the overturned sledge. When every minute was precious and fraught with the possibilities of life and death, it was fierce luck that Fate should have played such a scurvy trick. This delay in the mad race of Jack, Terry, and Uncle Clem against the famished wolves might well prove fatal.

"Skookum! Skookum!" howled Jack.

The big, grey husky raced round in a wide semi-circle, the snow bursting up like spray from the overturned sledge behind him. His angry barking hurled defiance at those lean, sinister beasts loping over the snow wastes towards the stranded wayfarers.

Stepping among the scattered rolls of blankets, tinned provisions, salted salmon, and other articles in the snow, Jack gripped the waterproof cover of the rifles. In his over-eagerness, however, he dragged the cover away, and the firearms slipped back into the deep, soft snow.

"More poisonous luck!" he muttered in annoyance.

Terry snatched up one of the rifles and peered into the muzzle.

"Bad cess to ut!" he grunted. "'Tis choked wid snow. Ut will do for a club, though; but I wish I had a shillelagh."

This last minor accident was the crowning piece of misfortune, for snow was packed in the muzzles of the rifles and adhered to the sights, breech, and magazine, rendering the guns of both boys useless for firing.

"Take these cartridges, Jack," cried Uncle Clem, "and stow 'em in your pocket. Terry, never mind about getting anything back on to the sledge; just smash open that box of ammunition!"

He fired his remaining cartridges among the wolves, killing one and injuring another, and again saving precious minutes. Jack, to handle his rifle, had to take off his thick mitts, and the cold steel of the weapon was curiously like the touch of a hot iron to his fingers. Before he could hope to use it he had to clear it of snow, and his hands were so numb by the time he had done this

that he found he could not even fumble a cartridge into the breech.

Meanwhile, Terry was having difficulties with the ammunition-box. He thumped his rifle-butt at the centre of the heavy hardwood lid, which was meant to slide out, but it refused to budge.

In desperation Uncle Clem snatched the remaining cartridges out of Jack's pocket, and, with half-frozen fingers, managed to cram them into his magazine. His rifle spoke thrice more, but his hands were so cold, in spite of his exertions, that all three bullets thudded harmlessly into the snow among the swiftly oncoming wolves, merely causing them to scatter and check for a brief moment or two.

"Too late!" gasped Uncle Clem. "Quit trying to open that box, Terry!"

Both boys followed Uncle Clem's example and faced the wolves, gripping their rifles by the muzzle. Skookum dragged the sledge forward into the face of the howling pack, his frost-rimed fur bristling, and giving tongue as savagely as any of those other maddened creatures of the wild. His own sire had been a wolf, and the doggy part of Skookum's nature was submerged in a fierce, wolfish lust for battle.

The dozen wolves which remained of the pack scattered and swerved as they came loping through the soft snow. The dire necessity for securing the food which the cold snap had denied them had obliterated, for the time being, the cowardice in their nature. It was eat or die, and the instinct for survival so ingrained in the wild creatures of the restless White North urged them to fray which normally they would have avoided.

A great grey wolf, almost as many hands high as Skookum himself, launched himself out of the snow straight at Jack. Jack's rifle-butt came down like a hammer between the beast's red-gleaming eyes, and, emitting a curious cough, the wolf rolled upon its side.

The fangs of two of its companions ripped through its grey fur for the sparse meal of flesh on its lean, scraggy frame. The rest, heedless of their leader's fate, threw themselves furiously into the fight against the dauntless man and boys who confronted them.

The next swift-moving seconds were over afterwards like some grim nightmare to the pardners. Lean, grey shapes, like were-wolves of a dreadful dream, came plunging up out of the whiteness. Madly the chums struck again and again with their rifles among the melee of black, vulpine muzzles, gloating red eyes, and snapping, yellow fangs that dripped saliva.

Uncle Clem's fur coat was ripped from armpit to waist by the tearing fangs. And only by crashing his rifle-butt straight downwards on the head of one beast which had fixed his teeth in his boot did Jack prevent himself from being dragged over into the snow.

Skookum yapped furiously as he gamely struggled forward against the pack, though hampered by the sledge. Jack saw his plight, and, turning from Terry and Uncle Clem, who at that moment were bearing the brunt of the battle, whipped out his hunting-knife from his belt and slashed through the sledge traces. And, giving tongue to a fresh exultant battle-cry, Skookum launched his ninety pounds of bone, sinew, and muscle in the midst of the wolves.

Uttering wild Irish warcries, Terry swung his rifle with the fury of a savage using his native club. Two wolves went limping and yapping away under his blows, and were set on immediately by stronger members of the pack. Then another great beast sprang up beneath Terry's uplifted arms, and its teeth snapped to like a steel trap through jacket of fur, underclothes, and then into the bare flesh of his arm.

Vainly Terry tried to beat it off, but almost instantly he was hurled down, his rifle hurtling into the snow. The hot, acrid breath of the wolf fanned his cheek, and his right hand vainly strove to grip the shaggy grey fur of the brute's throat as it tore at his left arm above the elbow.

Instantly other wolves leaped yapping upon the prostrate boy, and, bellowing with a terrible fear, Jack and Uncle Clem, though almost breathless from their exertions, smashed blows with fresh vigour among the fighting pack to drive them off.

Amid the babel, two words escaped the lips of the heroic Terry in a hoarse gasp:

"Leave-me!"

It was the attempt of a gallant soul believing itself doomed, to secure the salvation of others, and Terry, in that moment when grey, tearing death seemed to have claimed him, could, with a smile, have crossed the Great Divide if by passing he could have saved his pards.

Not for a moment did the thought of leaving Terry to the wolves enter the minds of Jack and Uncle Clem. Both fought tigerishly, beating away the snarling beasts from the prostrate body of the Irish boy. And then into the fray leaped Skookum again, his fangs gleaming red, fresh from the kill of one of the biggest wolves of the pack.

First he flung himself at the wolf which had dragged down Terry, and was still mauling his arm. A snap of steel fangs, a wrench of the husky's powerful neck, and the wolf kicked its last in the crimsoned snow.

With lightning swiftness the husky next launched his irresistible attack on another of the scrawny wolves, fixing his long ivory fangs firmly in the beast's shoulder. The wolf yapped, bit furiously, and then went rolling over and over in a welter of snow. Skookum released his grip to deal terrifically with three others of the pack which were snapping

at his flanks, and the wolf dragged itself into the untrodden whiteness beyond the battle area, a red trail marking its retreat.

But a few moments sufficed after Skookum's full-blooded intervention in the fray to reduce the number of the attackers. And the sight of the magnificent fighting of the husky put fresh hope into the hearts of Jack and Uncle Clem, who beat off other animals from the prone body of Terry.

The breath of Uncle Clem was coming like sharp jets of white steam on the icy air, and his strength was failing. His face was rimed with the frost of his own frozen breath, and a haze was falling over his eyes.

In sheer weakness he dropped to his knees in the yielding snow, now torn by the marks of many boot-prints and the lean, frantic paws of the wolves. But still, with the last remaining ounce of his strength, he strove to shield Terry's body with his own.

In a red mist he saw the lithe-limbed husky somersaulting in a life-and-death struggle among the snarling, biting pack. He saw one savage beast hurl itself at Jack as the boy gave battle with his rifle-butt, and the wolf spin strangely in the air and drop dead in its tracks. Simultaneously, a report like a whip-crack cut into the chorus of snarlings and yappings, and echoed and re-echoed through the Yukon ranges.

A rifle shot! There could only be one cause for what had happened. Someone was firing into the wolf-pack.

Another and yet another wolf went bowling over in the snow, to the accompaniment of shattering rifle reports. A fresh excited yapping arose in crescendo, and there, coming across the snow wastes from the direction of Bear Creek Camp, was a team of dogs.

The fur-clad driver of the team fired three more shots in swift succession high into the air, and the last of the wolf-pack, beaten of their prey, scampered madly away from the death that threatened, while Skookum scampered madly at their heels.

With a choking sob of relief, Jack took one glance at that dog team and

INTRODUCTION

JACK ORCHARD arrives at San Francisco to find that his uncle,

DAVID ORCHARD, is 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. In the city he falls in with a cheery Irish boy,

TERRY O'HARA, and later the two new chums decide to join in a great gold rush up the Yukon. On the way north they join forces with

CLEM HARDY, an old prospector, whom they come to call Uncle Clem. At times during their rough journey the three have trouble with a pair of bullies named Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons, and on one occasion Jack sees a gold nugget, shaped like a bear's claw, hanging round the neck of Morgan. He recognises it as part of the gold his uncle is supposed to have stolen.

Luck comes to the three "pardners," when they peg out a claim at Starvation Creek and make a great "strike." The gold they scoop amounts to something over a thousand pounds.

Winter draws its cloak over the Yukon at last, and one day the three "pardners" decide to visit the town of Dawson to deposit their gold at the bank.

The trail is frozen and covered with snow when the journey is commenced. It is the boys' first winter in the North, and they find the going very hard.

One day, when they are nearing Dawson they sight a pack of wolves bearing down on them, and it is obvious that escape is out of the question, although the pards make a desperate bid for it.

(Now read on.)

its driver, racing onwards through the snow. Then he staggered between the bodies of two slain wolves to where Uncle Clem, with weak, half-frozen fingers, was trying to tend Terry's hurts.

Terry's face, except for the red, angry scratch of a claw, was the colour of old parchment against the snow, and his eyes were staring fixedly into the lead-blue of the Yukon sky. In an agony of dread, Jack dropped on his knees in the beaten snow and slipped his arms about Terry's neck.

At Bear Creek!

TO the accompaniment of much shouting and wild barking, the dog team, driven by the man whose rifle-shots had finally beaten off the wolves, came swinging up through the snow. Jack and Uncle Clem, who had lifted Terry on to the sledge, did not at first recognise this prospector of the mahogany face and frost-rimmed furs, who had appeared at so opportune a time. It was Skookum, excited and panting from a hard chase after the survivors of the wolf-pack, who first knew the man, and gave tongue to breathless little yaps of greeting as he swiftly loped back.

"By heck!" ejaculated the prospector, gazing at the crimsoning snow and the dead bodies of the wolves, "this is sure some battle-ground!"

"Why, it's Jock McLennan!" exclaimed Jack. "Skookum! Skookum, come here!"

The big grey husky had swerved to face the madly-snarling dog team, and another royal scrap might have broken out but for Jack calling off his dog.

The old prospector, whose lucky strike near the Stewart River had started the new gold rush, gave a short nod of approval. This boy, to whom he had given Skookum was able to do more with the husky by a word of command than he had ever been able to do with the whip.

His own dogs were bristling with eagerness to tackle the strange husky, and, incidentally, to get their teeth into the carcasses of the wolves, and especially that dried salmon, which, among other things, had been spread upon the snow from the small sledge.

Striding to them, John McLennan lashed the team, with a raw-hide whip, into submission, and when they were crouched, savage and growling, deep in the snow, he strode back to Jack and Uncle Clem.

"Say, that youngster looks in a bad way to me," he said, gazing down at Terry. "Better get him to Bear Creek Camp pretty quick."

Already Uncle Clem had roughly bound up Terry's left arm, which had been badly torn above the elbow by the wolf's fangs. His furs were ripped, and even his boots, and only the thickness of his clothes had saved him from further severe hurt. He was barely conscious, but a faint smile wreathed his leaden lips as Uncle Clem, after bandaging his arm, rubbed his face and hands with snow to combat the frost-bite, which again had attacked him.

"Here, take a spot o' this, son!" grunted Jock McLennan, pressing a flask to Terry's lips. "I'll personally see you safe to Bear Creek Camp."

"That's real good of you, Jock," said Uncle Clem. "I'm afraid, as we haven't a dog team, we should take much longer, and the boy ought to be got to a settlement quickly. Is there anyone at the creek you know of who could look after him for the time being?"

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Glad to turn their backs on that area of snow where they had so nearly met a grim end, the exhausted Uncle Clem and Jack battled against the keen head wind. (See this page.)

"I'll put him in the care o' Danny Kearney, who runs the general stores," answered McLennan. "He used to have a drug store outside—in Seattle, I think—and he'll fix up the lad until you can get him to hospital in Dawson."

"It's jolly decent of you!" mumbled Jack.

And Terry, though unable to speak, showed his gratitude with his eyes, at which Jock McLennan gave a grunt like a surly bear.

This big, raw-boned, surly prospector, with face indelibly scarred by the searing Yukon frosts, presented an exterior tough as hardwood to the world. Yet, as those who knew him best were aware there was still a soft spot in his heart, and he was always willing, in his bluff, gruff way, to lend a hand to the needy.

His offer to take Terry to the nearest settlement at Bear Creek was big and generous. For Jock McLennan had been on his way to one of his claims, where several men worked for him, and he, who disliked intensely the "mushing" through the snow wastes, would have at least another day of it.

As tenderly as a woman he helped Jack and Uncle Clem to put Terry on his own sledge. The Irish boy had revived somewhat, and was suffering severely. His wonderful spirit, however, was undaunted, and his teeth were set hard into his underlip to prevent any expression of pain escaping him.

"Good luck to you, Terry, old man!" whispered Jack, as he helped to swathe the thick Hudson Bay blankets about his chum. "We'll see you soon down at the camp."

Terry faintly nodded, and then Jock McLennan sent the lash of his raw-hide whip cracking in the air about the ears of his huskies, and bellowed: "Mush, y' sons o' guns, mush!" It was the order understood by every dog team of the Northland—a corruption of the French "marche."

For a few moments Jack and Uncle Clem stood gazing through the snow-spray whipped up by the icy wind at the receding dog team, the sledge with Terry on it, and old Jock McLennan, cracking his whip and staggering along-side.

"You—you think he'll pull through all right, Uncle Clem?"

Jack's earnest question roused his elderly partner with a start.

"He's young, and has a good fighting chance," was the reply. "We've all had a providential escape, son, and it was the arrival of old Jock in the nick of time that turned the battle."

Both of them had sustained minor wounds in the scrap with the wolves, but their thoughts were too full of Terry's more desperate plight to heed their own hurts. The keen tooth of the wind biting into these injuries was agonising, but out of sheer necessity they began the task of re-loading the sledge.

Hitching Skookum to it was a feat almost beyond their powers, owing to their half-frozen fingers, but after much pain and difficulty they finally put a hitch in the cut leathern traces. At last, when McLennan's team was a good mile ahead and travelling fast, they got on the move, glad to turn their backs on that red, churned-up area of snow where they had so nearly met a grim end.

So exhausted were they that they could scarce battle against the keen head wind, and often they were forced to stop and deal with the frost-bite that threatened their noses and cheeks.

Despite the wind, which sometimes whipped the powdered snow in clouds from the hillsides, it was easy enough to follow McLennan's trail. It led through one of the gulches, and Uncle Clem admitted that probably the old "sourdough" knew of a better route to Bear Creek Camp than he did himself. Yet Jack, he, and Skookum, endured five terrible hours on the trail ere they came in sight of that collection of shacks by the frozen tributary of the Klondike River, which went by the name of Bear Creek Camp.

Jock, with his fast-travelling team of huskies had got there long before, and had told the story of the parads' gallant fight against the wolf-pack, and had given the injured Terry into the rough and not too capable hands of the former druggist, Dan Kearney.

There were no women at all in the camp, but many of the rough miners turned out to receive Jack and Uncle

Clem, and offer them shelter, in their big-hearted way. The two parads decided, however, to accept the offer of Jock McLennan himself, who owned a small shack here, as he did in three or four other places. There they repaired with the sledge, and after throwing Skookum a feed of dried salmon, made their way to Dan Kearney's general store.

The ex-druggist had done his best, but the attention he was able to give Terry was necessarily rough-and-ready.

"I've been over him with iodine, and got him bound up with good fresh lint," he stated. "Of course, I gave him a drop of dope first—not too much—and, even so, that iodine must have been fire to the kid. I'll tell the world, though, he's a real plucked 'un. He's in my bunk, at the back, and you'd better not go into him now, for I reckon he's sleeping."

"It's mighty kind of you," returned Uncle Clem. "Of course, whatever expense there is to meet—"

"Shucks!" ejaculated Dan Kearney. "I'm only too willing to do my bit towards pulling the youngster round."

"Thank you, Mr. Kearney," said Jack quietly. "You think, then, that he—he'll pull round all right?"

The store-keeper shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I'll allow he's got a good chance, being young," he answered cautiously. "Really, he ought to be in the hospital at Dawson, and you fellows will have to take him there as soon as he can be moved. The lad had a fever when he was brought here, but I reckon he's developing a bit of bronchial trouble through exposure following his hurts. Directly we can get his fever down and this darn cold snap lets up, you better hit the trail with him."

Again thanking Kearney for what he was doing, Jack and Uncle Clem returned tired and heavy-hearted between the wind-swept rows of shacks to the ramshackle shelter where they had made their temporary home.

(There are more thrills in next week's grand instalment of this story, boys. Don't miss them whatever you do.)

FAMOUS FOOTER CLUBS.

(Continued from page 2.)

as he did against the Wolves in the Cup last season, and before you have noticed that he has moved, his long legs have carried him back among the defenders. On his right is Alf Baker, a little fellow—but what a big heart! He was literally patched and padded for the Cup Final at Wembley last April, but nobody who saw him play would have suspected it. He is the Tom Thumb acrobat of the side; can play anywhere, and is ready to play at any time so long as he has one leg to stand on.

The other half-back is Robert Frederick John. I have put it down like that just to emphasise that John is his last name. At one time last season he was a full-back, and a very good full-back, too. But he is better at half-back, and good enough to play for Wales in the future, as he has done in the past.

Sound in Defence.

In every League match and every Cup-

tie in which Arsenal played last season, Tom Parker was in his place at right-back. Some said he was slow. No man is slow, though, who is always in the right place at the right time, and that's Parker, you can take it from me. Horace Cope couldn't play in the Final-tie, so Andrew Kennedy stepped into the side; a fellow who fears no foe in any sort of armour.

Now a word about goalkeeper Lewis. I could fill this issue of the "Magnet" with stuff about him. In the first place, he is Welsh. His name is Daniel, and when you see him coming through a lot of worrying forwards with the ball in his hands you realise that the name was well chosen. He it was, though, who made the tragic mistake in the last Cup Final, when he let a ball slip out of his grasp and into the net. I never felt so sorry for a fellow in my life. But the rest of the Arsenal players were even more sorry for him, and Manager Chapman paid him this tribute: "He made a mistake, but if we had to play the Final-tie again to-morrow, Dan would be my goalkeeper." Surely a worthy compliment to a dashing goalkeeper.

As to the tactics of the Arsenal, it has been said that they are better finishers than starters. That is true. It is also a

compliment to their trainer, Tom Whittaker. I can't describe their training methods fully; I haven't the space. But they were the first to adopt a new system of individual practice. This system helps them to be experts at trapping, to be quick on their feet, and smart with their heads. And Arsenal are all that. Then the players have to play golf twice a week, whether they like it or not. But they like it.

The colour of the shirts Arsenal players wear is red, and that stands for danger. They are a dangerous side always, and it is quite possible that in the near future they will remove the reproach that they have never yet won the championship of the First Division.

Their supporters are justified in believing in them, because they are not only strong so far as the players who have been mentioned in these notes are concerned, but they are also strong in reserve—and that tells. Last season the second string of the Arsenal simply walked away with the championship of the London Combination, and the men in the first team know they have to play hard for their places because there are fellows ready to step into their shoes, and capable of filling them, too.

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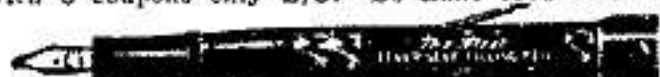
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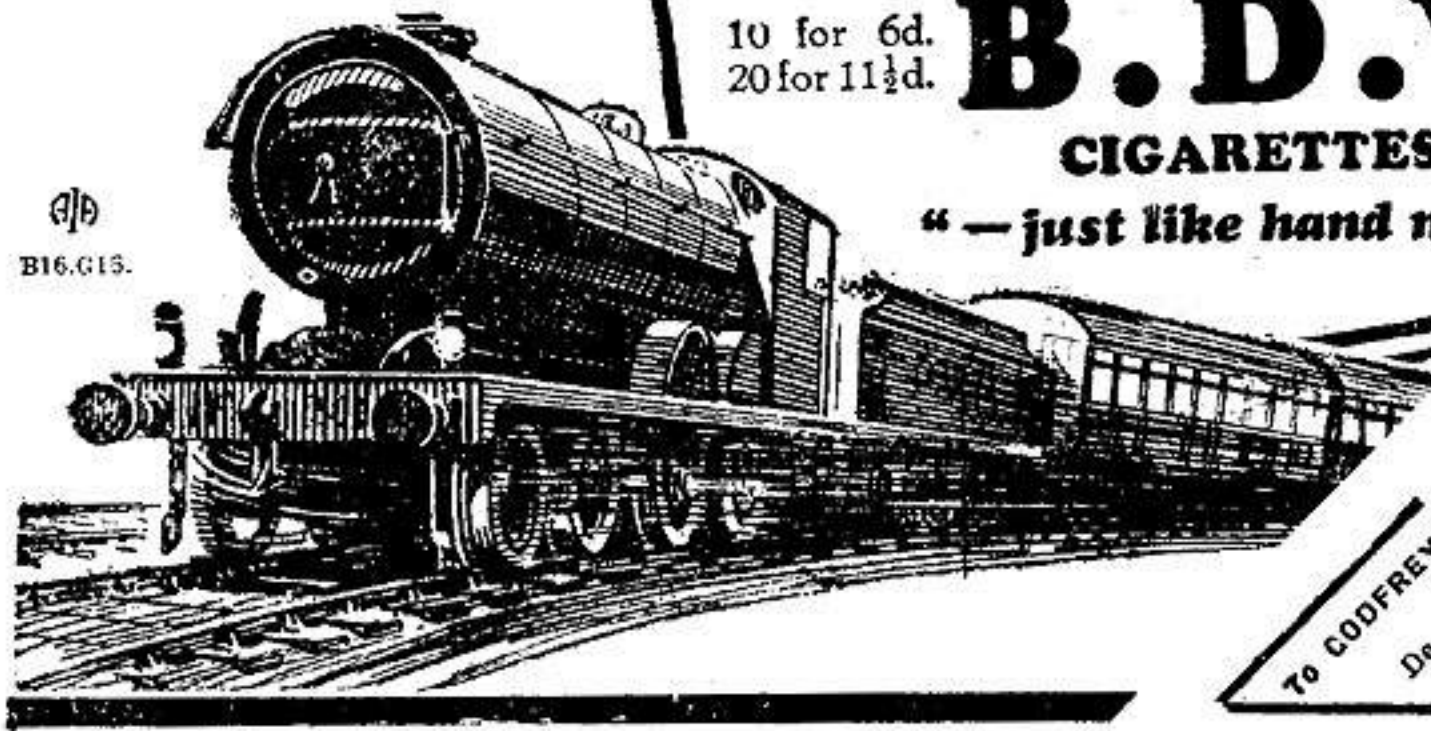
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1.

"G RATE jumping crackers!" Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, made that ejaculation, as he opened the door of the Head's study, and peered within. Mr. Lickham blinked through his spectacles at an amazing spectacle. To say that he was surprised, was to put it mildly. He was astonished; he was thunderstruck; he was fairly flapper-gasted!

Doctor Birchmell, the Headmaster of St. Sam's, was kneeling on the carpet. He was bent almost double over a pale of water, into which he kept plunging his long beard.

As the Head felt thus, with his body awaying backwards and forwards, he reminded Mr. Lickham of a Fakir performing some mystic rite.

The water splashed and swamped over the carpet, and the Head was so immersed in his immersions, that he was not aware of Mr. Lickham's presence, until the Form-master spoke again.

"Bless my hart and sole! Whatever are you doing of, sir?"

The Head gave an angry snort. "Washing my beard, Lickham!" he snarled. "Getting this die out of it. Two nights ago, as you will remember, I was the victim of a dastardly and diabolical outrage! A number of young rascals paid a visit to my bed-room, and while I was sleeping the sleep of the just, they transformed me into a Red Indian. They painted my face, and stuck a band of feathers on my pole, and died my beard. Since that outrage, I have been unable to show myself in public, because of my appearance."

Mr. Lickham nodded sympathetically. "It was a shameful outrage, sir—"

"Shameful?" cried the Head. "It was scandalous—unheard of—altogether without precedent! It has taken me the better part of two days to remove the stains of red ocker from my face, and restore my netheral pink-and-rose complexion. By dint of much rubbing and scrubbing, I have at last succeeded. And now I am endeavoring to undo my beard; but it is a very slow job. I was told that a solution of soda would do the trick, and I must perforce."

So saying, the Head again plunged his head into the brimming pale.

Mr. Lickham looked on, with twirling lips and twinkling eyes. Such a spectacle as this was not to be seen every day.

"Ah!" cried the Head presently. "The water is beginning to turn a gingery hue. The die is coming out! Soon my beard will be restored to its snowy whiteness. What does it look like, my dear Lickham?"

Mr. Lickham gazed at the Head's beard, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he was able to convert a larf into a scoff.

"Aleni! The die is certainly coming out, sir, but it is causing your beard to go a pale-greenish color. There are patches of green, and patches of red, and it looks decidedly comical. Ha, ha, ha! Scuse me laughing, sir!"

The Head leapt to his feet, his face livid with rage, and with the remains of the red ocker, which he had not wholly removed, as he thought.

"Lickham!" he roared. "How dare you indulge in caustic remarks of merryment at my expense?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I simply can't help it, sir!" gurgled Mr. Lickham. "I'm tickled to death!"

"Stop laughing, you rotter!" snarled the Head.

And he gave Mr. Lickham a savidige push, which caused the Form-master to The Maligner Library—No. 1,025.



Dr. Birchmell in difficulties!

sit down suddenly and violently in the pale of water.

"Crash! Splash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Head. "It's my turn to larf now, I think. He who larfs last larfs loudest! Ho, ho, ho!"

Mr. Lickham staggered to his feet, with the water streaming from his trousers, and trickling down his legs with an icy trickle. He glared at the Head, and never in his life had he come so near committing assault and battery upon Doctor Birchmell.

But he restrained himself with a grate effort, and with a choking cry, he rushed from the study, to go and change his trousers.

Half an hour later, Mr. Lickham was in the Fourth Form-room, taking mourning lessons. He was busily engaged in teaching his pupils the alfabet, and their twicetimes table, when suddenly the door opened, and Doctor Birchmell made his first public appearance for two days.

Jack Jolly & Co., and the rest of the Fourth-Formers, tried hard to keep their faces straight; but the Head's comical appearance was too much for them.

A number of bright-red patches still lingered on Doctor Birchmell's die; while his beard was a sight for gods and men and little fishes. The Head thought he had undied it, but he had only succeeded in making it look more absurd than ever. For it was red, white, and green!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Form-room fairly rang with larfing, and even Mr. Lickham had to turn his face in order to keep it straight.

Doctor Birchmell glared at the class. "What are you larfing at, you young rascals?" he demanded, sharply. "Jolly! You are the head boy of the class. Answer me!"

"Ahem! Your beard tickled us, sir," said Jack Jolly.

"And my birch-rod will tickle you, if I strike me pink—"

Another Sparkling Story of Jack Jolly & Co., the Cheery Laughter Merchants of St. Sam's.

Porting Out the Plotters!

By Dicky Nugent.

"You don't dry up!" snapped the Head.

Instantly a solemn hush fell upon the class. For the Head's birch-rod, which he carried under his arm, was a thing to be feared.

Doctor Birchmell's shifty, ferrety eyes were fixed on the Fourth.

"A few nights ago," he said, "a dastardly outrage was committed upon my sacred person! Among other things, my beard was died, and the boys who died it are not fit to live! I have come hither to ascertain who the culprits are, so that I may birch them black and blue! I now call upon the delinquents to stand fourth!"

Nobody stirred.

"You here me?" thundered the Head. "Nobody budged."

"Own up, you young skoundrels, who- over you are!"

Nobody shifted.

The Head's eyes scanned the juniors from head to foot, as if he would read their very soles.

"I am convinced," he said, "that the culprits belong to the Fourth Form. The Fourth is the most undisciplined and unruly Form at St. Sam's. I have called upon the others of this outrage to stand fourth, but they won't. Very well! I will proceed to question each boy in turn; and we-beide him if he fails to tell me the truth, the hole trooth, and nothing but the trooth!"

It was a tense, dramatic moment. The Fourth-Formers quaked in their seats, and cold shivers chased each other down their spines.

"I will begin with Barrell," said Doctor Birchmell.

"Barrell! Roll out before the class!"

Tubby Barrell obeyed. And the Head's peering eyes bored him so much that he yawned.

"Barrell!" cried the Head, sternly. "Were you one of the boys concerned in this outrage?"

"No, sir!" said Tubby, promptly. "You swore it?"

"Honest Injun, sir!"

"Place your hand on your hart and solemnly repeat after me these words: 'Strike me pink—'"



Paying the Penalty!

"Now," he said grimly, "we will get at the trooth!"

And the silence in the Fourth Form-room was so intense that you could have heard a pear-drop.

"CONFESS!" cried the Head, giving the riot of Herbert Binns a crool rench. "Confess that you paid a visit to my bedroom at dead of night, and painted my face, and died my beard, and stuck feathers on my head, and turned me into a Red Indian! Confess at once your complicity in this outrage! Silence!"

Binns had opened his mouth to speak, but at the Head's command he promptly closed it again.

"Will you confess, you young rascal?" hooted the Head, giving another painful twist to his victim's rib. "Will you own up at once, instead of standing there like a dumb mute? Be silent, sir!" he added.

Doctor Birchmell breathed hard.

"For the last time," he cried, "I call upon you to confess your guilt! Did you, or did you not perpetrate this outrage on my sacred person? Answer me! Silence!"

For the third time the unhappy Binns strove to speak, but the Head promptly clapped his hand over the junior's mouth. Then he turned to Mr. Lickham.

"You see, Lickham," he said triumphantly, "I have bowled out the culprit! By his very silence he has betrayed his guilt. He is condemned out of his own mouth!"

"But—but you didn't give him a chance to speak, sir!" cried Mr. Lickham, agast.

And there was a loud member of "Shame" from the class.

"Silence!" roared the Head, with a fierce frown. "I am satisfied that this boy Binns is at the bottom of this business. Didn't you hear him own up by remaining

silent? He paid a sgruppitious visit to my bedroom in the night, and transformed me into a Red Indian. For that outrage he shall be punished as no boy has ever yet been punished! I shall have to think out something lingering, with boiling oil in it."

Suddenly there was a commotion in the Form-room, and four juniors, their faces taught and tense, stepped out from their places. They were Jack Jolly, and Merry, and Bright, and Frank Fearless.

The Head glared at the quartet.

"What the merry dickens—" he began in dishonishment.

"We're all in this, sir!" cried Jack Jolly. "It isn't fair that Binns should have to face the rascal alone. All of us were in the plot, and we're ready to stand the racket."

"Here, here!" muttered Frank Fearless. The Head's eyes travelled over the four culprits.

"Ho, ho!" he eggshelained. "We are beginning to get at the trooth, with a vengeance! So there were five of you in the plot, eh? But I'll bet my bottom dollar that Binns was the ringleader, and that you four boys were merely catpaws."

"Not at all, sir—" began Jack Jolly. "Silence, Jolly! So you admit that you played this wanton and malicious prank upon your Headmaster? Very well! I will now proceed to give each of you a birching."

Jack Jolly, and Merry, and Bright, and Frank Fearless went through the mill in turn. And the Head was quite limp by the time the execution was over.

As for "Dusky"—as Binns had come to be called—the Head appeared to have overlooked him. But he hadn't, really.

"Binns!" he said, when he had pumped in breath. "I have not birched you, because I feel that a birching would not meet the case. And I cannot sack you from St. Sam's, because I have arranged with the local council to keep you at this school so long as my rates remain unpaid. And I see no prospect of being able to pay them for the next twenty years or so. The manner and method of your punishment is a matter that calls for careful cogitation. I must think it over. Have you any suggestion to make, Lickham?"

"Me, sir?" said the Form-master. "Oh, I should say that a hundred lines would meet the case."

"Wh-a-at?" shouted the Head. "A paltry hundred lines, for an outrage which is without precedent in the history of St. Sam's!"

"Well, if that does not satisfy your thirst for vengeance, why not detain Binns for the next half-holiday, sir?"

Doctor Birchmell gave an angry snort. "I declare, Lickham, you are getting soft in your old age! You have a jump of butter where your hart ought to be. Lines or detention will not meet the case—not by long chalks! I must put on my thinking-cap, and devise some form of torcher, like the rack or the thumb-screw which they used in older days!"

Come with me, you young reprobate!" So saying, the Head seized "Dusky" Binns by the scarf of his neck, and marched him out of the Form-room.

They left a scared and startled class behind them.

Everybody felt sorry for poor old "Dusky," who was an awfully decent sort; and everybody wondered what gruesome and gasty fate was in store for him. Doctor Birchmell meant business; there was no doubt about that. But there was no doubt, also, that "Dusky" Binns, whether he was called upon to face the torchers of the rack, the thumb-screw, or the pillery, would meet his fate like a true Briton!

THE END.

"There are lively times in store for poor old 'Dusky'! Don't miss next week's tit-bit! The Prisoner of the Goal-Hole!"