

"THE GREYFRIARS CASTAWAYS!"

This week's amazing story of Harry Wharton & Co. in Southern Seas.

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RAMMING THE CANNIBALS CANOE!

(A thrilling incident in the long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co.—inside.)



This Week:

MIDDLESBROUGH

Second Division League
Champions of 1926-7

MANY of the honours of football have dribbled continuously past the Middlesbrough club. For instance, they have never won the championship of the First Division, and they have never got as far as the Final Tie for the Cup. But they jumped right into the limelight last season with no end of a leap. Often there is difference of opinion as to which team should be labelled the side of the season, but everybody agreed last term. Middlesbrough were it—all of it, and then some in addition. These men who played for the Tees-side club just picked up existing records one by one and smashed them to smithereens without the slightest compunction.

In the first place, they scored 122 goals in League games alone, which was nearly 20 more than had ever previously been scored by any one club in one season. Then they got 62 points, a total which had only once previously been exceeded in a single season; and they had in George Camsell an individual player who got 59 goals off his own boot—that being in the tens better than the previous best. As they say in America, these Middlesbrough boys went it some.

In doing these things, of course, they just walked off with the championship of the Second Division—won it in a canter, as it were, with the rest very much "also rans." Perhaps it will be said that the performance of the Middlesbrough team was not so outstanding because they were in the Second Division. But believe me, the fighting in that section is pretty severe. In fact, it is the hardest football of all, and the other clubs at times showed desperate anxiety to take a rise out of the top-notchers. And don't forget, my lads, that in winning the championship of the Second Division, Middlesbrough played real football. There wasn't anything of the mere biff and bang stuff about them. They were scientists—playing with intensive and applied science behind them.

As a fitting reward Middlesbrough are now

In the Top Class

and they have already shown that they can hold their own in Company No. 1. Let us just look what sort of fellows these are who wear the colours of the Middlesbrough club.

We simply must start with Camsell, because he was the record-maker who set the Tees alight. A strange experience he had last season, too. At the start, this North-Country lad—he was only twenty-two years of age then—was not considered good enough for a place

in the first team. He was playing in the reserves, with McClelland as first team centre-forward. Then, after Middlesbrough had lost three matches by way of a start, McClelland was hurt. George of the blue eyes was brought in. From that moment to the end of the season Middlesbrough only lost three matches, and the figures 5, 6, and 7 appeared in their goals scored per match quite frequently.

But, of course, Camsell doesn't even want to take credit for the score of 59 League goals in that season all to himself. He's much too modest for that.

"I got my goals because they were made for me by the other fellows," he told me, when I asked him how it was done.

On his immediate left he had Jacky Carr—seventeen seasons in first-class football, a member of a famous family, but still going strong and the brains of the side. On his immediate right he had William Birrell, skipper of the side, and a worker nearly as canny as Carr.

These two fellows formed the bottom part of the "W" formation in the Middlesbrough attack, which was a distinctive feature of their tactics. And I would have you note that "W" is the first letter in winning. At outside-right there is Billy Pease, who certainly gave opponents no peace. In fact, he makes them feel much more like pease-pudding before he has finished with them. Pease swings the ball over perfectly when he sees his centre-forward with a chance; but he also cuts in and gets goals—23 of them last season. That is another record—more goals than any outside wing man has ever scored in a

season before. No wonder he got caps before the end of last season!

At outside-left there is Owen Williams. You will remember him as an International when he played with Clapton Orient. And when Owen can't play there is another man named Williams—Jesse. A scheming reserve inside forward is Jock McKay. Yes, you are quite right. He is Scotch—all of him.

The Middlesbrough half-backs are, perhaps, not so brilliant as the forwards; but they are workers—

Terriers Every One.

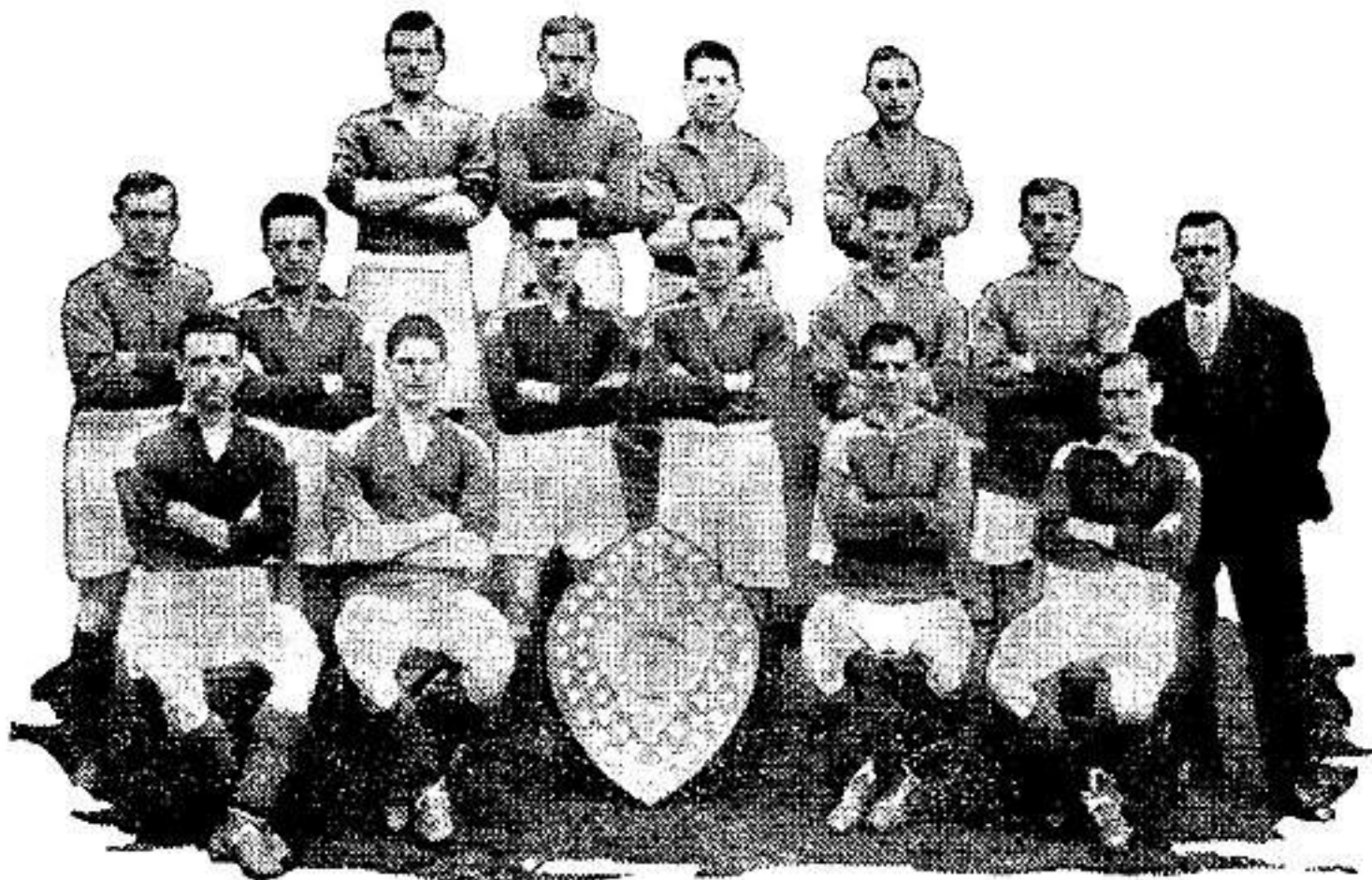
Miller came from Aberdare; Bob Ferguson, the centre-half, was previously with Sunderland; and Ashman, the left-half, is a North Country lad, who hasn't played for any other first-class side. But he is first-class now.

The defensive work of the Middlesbrough team falls mainly on three full-backs, but Twine and Smith are the first choice. Twine played for the club as an amateur part of last season while he was in the Army—a sergeant—and he drills them well. He finished his Army career at midnight on March 25th last year. At five minutes past twelve he had signed a "pro" form for Middlesbrough. Jock Smith went to Tees-side from Ayr, where Scotland gave him an International cap; and Reg Freeman previously saw service with Oldham Athletic.

Yet another Scot is in the defence—Mathieson—a six-feet-and-a-bit goal-keeper, who can punch 'em out, throw

(Continued on page 28.)

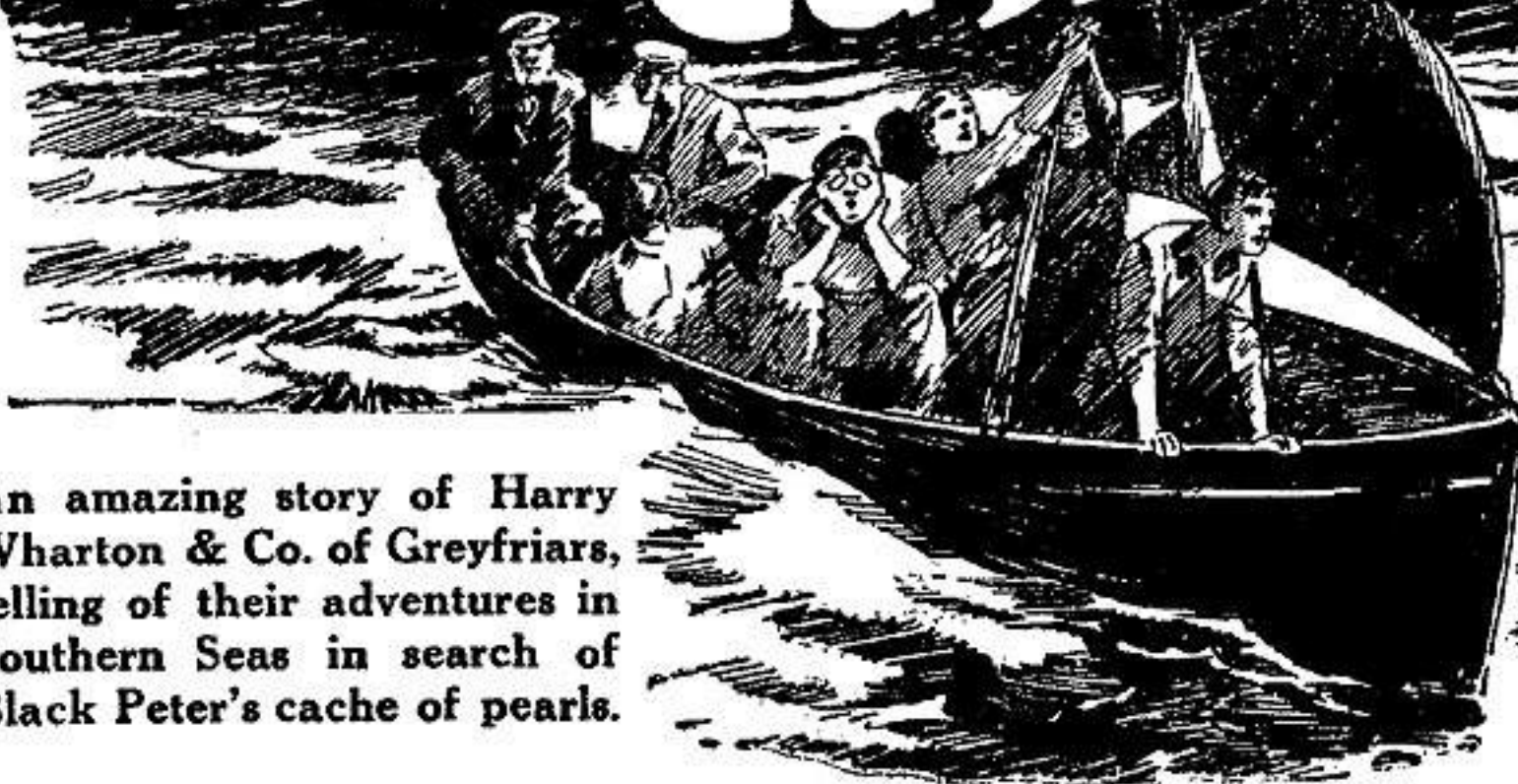
MEN WHO MADE MIDDLESBROUGH!



Left to right (back row): F. Twine, J. Mathieson, J. Smith, R. V. Freeman. Left to right (middle row): R. G. Ferguson, J. McKay, J. Miller, W. Birrell (Captain), D. Ashman, J. McClelland, and the trainer. Left to right (front): W. Pease, G. H. Camsell, J. Carr, and O. Williams.

GRIT TELLS! Alone on the vast Pacific in an open boat, with the dread of a torturing death from hunger and thirst constantly in their minds, Harry Wharton & Co. still manage to keep smiling. And their cheerfulness and grit pulls them through!

The Greyfriars Castaways



An amazing story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, telling of their adventures in Southern Seas in search of Black Peter's cache of pearls.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Alarm!

BILLY BUNTER awoke.

Bunter had been taking a nap in the heat of the tropical day.

A canvas awning sheltered the deck of the schooner Aloha from the blaze of the sun, and under the awning swung a hammock, and in the hammock reposed the fat person of William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

Somewhere ashore, on the island of Caca, were Harry Wharton & Co., seeking treasure. Bunter was rather keen on the treasure, but he was not keen on tramping over lava rocks in the heat of the sun. Bunter had had quite a happy day while the chums of the Remove were ashore. A late and very large breakfast had been followed by a nap. The nap had been followed by a substantial snack, and another nap. Then came lunch, which was quite an extensive affair. After lunch the Owl of the Remove disposed himself in the hammock for a third nap.

This was, in Bunter's opinion, something like life!

For the first time he was really enjoying his holiday in the South Seas.

Bunter was prepared to lead this happy existence indefinitely. He was not at all anxious to return to Greyfriars. The fact that the new term was now beginning at Greyfriars School, made him anxious to stay in the Pacific as long as he possibly could. Mr. Quelch and the Form-room had no attractions for him whatever. So long as the search for the treasure occupied Harry Wharton & Co. on the lonely Pacific island, Bunter was prepared to spend his happy days on the schooner, eating and sleeping and snoring. It was settled that the Greyfriars party would not leave the island till the treasure was found. So Bunter hoped that it would be a long, long time before the juniors unearthed the pearls buried on Caca by Black Peter.

Bunter had slept most of the afternoon, and he had intended to sleep till sunset. But he awoke suddenly.

Something had awakened him.

He raised his head peevishly, jammed his big spectacles on his fat little nose, and blinked round him. He was annoyed. It was hard lines if a fellow couldn't have his nap out in peace—only his third nap that day.

There was a jabber of excited voices on the deck of the Aloha.

The Kanaka crew, whom Bunter had last seen lolling idly in the sunshine, were all on their feet, staring out to sea towards the coral reefs that shut in the lagoon, jabbering and gesticulating excitedly. Something, evidently, had happened, to startle the native crew out of their accustomed idle indifference. Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman, was staring in the same direction, with a deep cloud on his mahogany face.

Bunter sat up.

So far as he could see—which was not very far—everything was the same as usual. The Pacific rollers creamed on the coral reefs, gleaming in the tropical sun. The lagoon, calm and shining, stretched peacefully shoreward to the dazzling beach of white sand and coral. The tall coconut palms swayed and nodded beyond the beach. The column of smoke rose from the volcano at the south-western extremity of the island, spreading out fanlike against the dazzling blue of the sky. Nothing had changed in the aspect of Caca, since the Aloha had dropped anchor in the shining lagoon.

But something, evidently, was going on. Billy Bunter blinked about him peevishly.

"Dance!" he called out.

Ben Dance did not answer or heed. He had raised the binoculars to his eyes, and was staring seaward through the glasses.

"Dance!" roared Bunter.

The wooden-legged seaman did not turn his head.

"Cheeky beast!" murmured Bunter.

He blinked round at the Kanaka

crew. It was their excited jabbering that had awakened him. Talupa, the Tonga Island cook, was near at hand, and Bunter called to him.

"Here, you feller Talupa!"

Even the Tonga cook did not heed.

"You feller Talupa!" howled Bunter angrily. It was really too thick for his commanding voice to be unheeded by a black cook.

Talupa, staring seaward, no doubt heard, but he heeded not. Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles, and he blinked round for a missile, to attract the Tonga Islander's attention. Getting out of the hammock was much too much trouble. Fortunately, he had a bunch of bananas at hand.

Whiz!

Talupa gave a howl as the bunch of bananas bumped on the back of his kinky head. He spun round.

"You cheeky black beast!" roared Bunter. "Do you want me to knock seven bells out of you?"

"What name you trow banana at head belong me?" growled Talupa.

He rubbed his kinky head and scowled.

"Do you want me to get out of this hammock and kick you?" demanded Bunter wrathfully.

"Fat feller no kick any more," said Talupa. "Fat feller him make kai-kai along black man."

"What?"

Talupa grinned and pointed to the sea.

"Black feller he come in canoe. Makee kai-kai of fat feller Bunter. Me glad."

"Why, you—you—you cheeky, ungrateful beast!" gasped Bunter.

If Bunter had expected to inspire attachment in the black cook by kicking and cuffing him, he was doomed to disappointment. Talupa was obviously ungrateful.

The Owl of the Remove rolled out of the hammock. He was alarmed now.

He did not even pause to pick up a

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bamboo and knock "seven bells" out of the cheeky cook. He rolled across the deck to Dance, who was staring at the reefs through the binoculars, with a grim face. The news that blacks were coming in canoes was very disturbing to William George Bunter. He blinked seaward, but could see nothing but the long lines of coral reefs, with the Pacific rollers creaming over them. He jerked the wooden-legged seaman by the arm.

"What's up, Dance?" he snapped.

Ben Dance lowered the glasses.

"They're coming!" he answered.

"Who are coming?" gasped Bunter.

"The blacks."

"What blacks?" hooted Bunter.

"We haven't seen any natives on the island so far."

"They're from the other side," answered Dance. "That sea-lawyer Soames must have taken them word, as he threatened. They know the schooner's here now, and they're coming—a crowd of them in four canoes. We're in a tight corner now, and you can lay to that."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

From an opening of the coral reefs four long, low, dark shapes glided into view.

Four long canoes, packed with black savages, slipped into the lagoon, the sun gleaming on wild, rolling eyes and clusters of spears. Bunter could see them now, and he blinked at them in horror.

"C-e-cannibals!" he stuttered.

Dance nodded.

"You can lay to that," he answered.

"Ow!"

Dance turned to the jabbering Kanakas.

"You feller Kanakas, you lay hold belaying-pins, you stand ready knock seven bells outter them feller cannibals."

"I—I say, we'd better get ashore!" stuttered Bunter. "We can get away in the whaleboat before they come up."

Ben Dance did not heed him.

He drew the revolver from his belt and fired three shots into the air in quick succession. It was the signal agreed upon with the juniors on shore to tell them that the schooner was in danger.

"I—I say—" babbled Bunter.

"Get hold of something, sir, and stand ready to lend a hand!" snapped Dance.

"If those demons get on board, it's the cooking-oven for every soul on the schooner!"

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter tottered away.

He did not return to his hammock; neither did he seek a weapon to join in the impending conflict. He tottered down the companion to hide his fat person in the deepest, darkest recess of the schooner that he could find.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Attack on the Schooner!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Look!"

"The cannibals!"

High up on the lava-crusted hillside, far from the shore of the island lagoon, Harry Wharton & Co. stood and stared across the intervening space.

Faintly, but clearly, the three rapid shots had reached their ears as they sought the cache in the island hills, warning them that it was time to return. With the buried sea-chest of the old South Sea desperado lying at their

feet, the juniors had turned away from the discovered treasure, without opening the old chest, without another look at it, after the signal had reached their ears. The Aloha, at anchor in the lagoon, was their only link with the outer world; and danger to the Aloha meant danger of being marooned on the solitary isle of the Pacific.

On the high hillside, the Famous Five and Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing stood and stared down at the distant lagoon. Small in the distance, the Aloha rode at anchor; smaller still, like busy ants, moved the alarmed figures on her deck. And away across the wide lagoon, in the direction of the creaming coral-reefs, crept the four long canoes—war-canoes of the South Sea Islanders, crammed with fighting-men. Tiny, ant-like as the black warriors looked in the distance, the juniors could see that they were brawny men, with fierce black faces, kinky hair, great muscular limbs, armed with long spears, and probably other weapons that could not be seen.

Dozens of paddles flashed in the red sunlight of late afternoon. The sun was sinking behind the juniors; the quest of Black Peter's treasure had taken up the long tropic day. Behind them, as they stared down at the lagoon, the round red sun almost touched the hills and threw their shadows before them—gigantic, immense, like the shadows of giants.

"The cannibals!" repeated Harry Wharton, between his teeth. "They know that we are here at last!"

"Soames!" muttered Vernon-Smith.

"I cannot see a white man among them," said Tom Redwing.

"He is there—at least, this is his work!" said the Bounder savagely.

"He threatened that he would bring the cannibals down on us, and he has done it!"

Wharton nodded.

He had little doubt that the attack was due to Soames, the desperate sea-lawyer, who had been defeated by the Greyfriars party in the long struggle for the buried pearls.

During the long days that the juniors had been at the treasure island they had hitherto seen and heard nothing of the black tribes that inhabited the western side of the island. From north to south of Caca ran the line of hills like a great backbone, the towering peak at the northern end, the smoking volcano at the southern.

Seldom or never the inhabitants of the western side came round the island to the uninhabited eastern shore; there was nothing to induce them to undertake a long and dangerous navigation among the coral-reefs. Only the news that a white man's ship was in the lagoon was certain to draw them to the spot. But since the old days when the lawless "blackbirders" had cleared off the population of the eastern side, seldom or never had a vessel touched at that solitary isle, far out of the track of trade and shipping, lonely amid the boundless spaces of the Pacific. But the news had evidently reached the savages at last—and the juniors did not doubt that it had reached them through Soames.

It was the sea-lawyer's last bid for the buried treasure of Caca Island. He had taken his life in his hand in penetrating into the territory of the cannibal tribes.

Eager enough as the savages would be to be led to the plunder of a white man's ship, they were likely to turn upon their ally at any moment. To the savage, treachery was as natural as the air he breathed.

Soames did not doubt that he had brought destruction upon the treasure-seekers; but he could not be sure that he had not also brought destruction upon himself. He was almost as much in danger of the cooking-oven as his enemies.

"One—two—three—four canoes!" said Frank Nugent, counting. "And at least twenty men in each."

"Long odds!" said Bob Cherry.

"The oddfulness is terrific," remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "We are up against it, my esteemed chums!"

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"But for Soames—" he muttered.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "They've got a long pull to reach the schooner from the reefs, and we shall get there first. But we've got no time to lose!"

The juniors hurried down the hill into the green and fertile valley of the stream that flowed into the lagoon.

There was no hesitation among the Greyfriars party, though they knew well enough that the situation was desperate now.

When Mr. Vernon-Smith had fitted out the Aloha at Nuka-Hiva, in the Marquesas, for the schoolboy treasure-hunters, there had seemed little or no danger in the cruise. But the treachery of Soames had changed all that. Captain and mate and boatswain had gone down in the Pacific, and the case of rifles had been dropped overboard. The Greyfriars fellows were "on their own" now, with only Dance to help; for the Kanakas, unarmed, were of little use. A revolver, the automatic taken from Soames, and the magazine rifle captured from Silvio, the half-caste, were all the firearms in the party. There were plenty of cartridges, but only the three firearms to use them. Had the Aloha still been as she had been when she sailed out of Taio-hae at Nuka-Hiva, the crew of savages in the canoes would have had little chance of success. But now—

Breathless with haste, Harry Wharton & Co. reached the dazzling beach of white sand and coral.

The deep voice of Ben Dance hailed them from the schooner; he had watched their arrival, with one eye on the advancing canoes seaward.

"Ahoy, the shore!"

"Ahoy! Send the whaleboat!" shouted Wharton.

"Coming, sir!"

The whaleboat was dropping into the water, and six Kanakas bent to the oars.

The schooner was anchored only fifty feet out, and almost in a twinkling the whaleboat was grounding on the sand.

Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into the boat.

"You feller Kanaka, washy-washy plenty quick!" panted Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you going?" roared Bob Cherry.

The Kanakas, instead of pulling for the schooner, were trampling out of the whaleboat upon the sand. Almost before the juniors knew what was happening, they were left alone in the boat.

"Stop!" shouted Wharton.

One of the seamen turned back. With rolling eyes, he pointed to the canoes across the lagoon.

"Caca man ho make kai-kai uo Kanaka!" he gasped.

And he rushed on up the beach after the others.

The Bounder lifted the automatic, with a savage face.

"Stop that, Smithy!" rapped out



Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles, and he blinked round for a missile to attract the Tonga Islander's attention. Fortunately he had a bunch of bananas at hand. Whiz! Talupa gave a howl as the bunch of bananas bumped on his kinky head. (See Chapter 1.)

Wharton. "No good wasting a shot. Get at the oars, you fellows!"

"They wouldn't be any use in the scrap, anyhow," said Bob Cherry, as he grasped an oar.

"Give way—quick!"

The whaleboat shot out towards the schooner, the juniors pulling. The fleeing boat's crew were already vanishing into the palms beyond the beach. The desertion mattered little, so far as the impending conflict was concerned; the terrified Kanakas would have been of little use.

The juniors, pulling hard, made the whaleboat fairly fly.

It bumped against the hull of the Aloha, and Dance was ready with rope.

A few moments more and Harry Wharton & Co. were on board. Ben Dance shouted to the Kanakas—of whom there were still eight on the schooner—to swing the boat up to the davits.

But the native seamen, generally obedient on the instant to the voice of a "white marster," had lost their obedience now. They crowded the side in terror, evidently with the intention of seizing the boat and fleeing to the shore, to seek safety from the enemy in the woods.

"Back, you black scum!" roared Dance.

"Caca man him makee kai-kai" panted Kalashti.

"Get back!"

Dance clubbed his revolver and rushed in among the Kanakas, hitting out right and left. Kalashti went over, half-stunned; Talupa, the Tonga Island cook, dropped on the deck yelling; and

the rest retreated forward, jabbering and gesticulating. Harry Wharton & Co. swung up the boat, and swung it inboard.

"Fat lot of use they will be in a scrap!" growled the Bounder.

"We can't spare the boat, though," said Bob. "And they'll fight rather than go to the cooking-pot."

"You feller Kanaka!" roared Dance. "You get belaying-pin, you crack um head Caca man, you no want make kai-kai along of Caca cooking-oven, you savvee."

Harry Wharton crossed the deck and stood looking at the advancing canoes, rifle in hand. They were close now, and every man in them could be distinctly seen—big, brawny men, dressed in loin-cloths, with coral necklaces, and grotesque ornaments fastened in ears and noses. Four abreast, the canoes paddled on towards the schooner. Every dusky face was eager with savage anticipation.

Wharton lifted the rifle over the rail of the Aloha. In a cool, clear voice he hailed the savages. There was little doubt that some of them, at least, understood the "beche-de-mer" English of the South Seas.

"You feller black man, you stop washy-washy plenty quick! You no come white man's ship or plenty shoot."

A yell answered him, and the canoes came on without pause. One of them, larger than the rest, surged a little ahead. In that canoe a tall savage stood up, evidently a chief. He wore the tapa loin-cloth like the others, but his decorations were more distinctive—

necklaces of coral and spent cartridge-clips, which supported an earthenware jug, a tobacco box and a human thigh bone. In his nose was a brass-bound match box so large it was amazing that the cartilage could support it; and in his great ears hung strings of cartridge clips. It was evident, from those rare and tasteful decorations, that he was "some" chief.

He called back to Wharton.

"Caca man he takee ship, all things belong Caca man. White marster him no shoot, Caca man he no kill."

"He's lying, sir!" said Ben Dance hastily. "If they once get on board they won't leave a soul alive!"

Harry Wharton did not need telling that. The treachery of the savage was too transparent to have taken in an infant.

"Keep back!" shouted Wharton. "If you come nearer we shall fire! You feller black man washy-washy other way debblish quick!"

For answer, a spear flew from one of the canoes, and Wharton dodged below the rail just in time. The spear dropped on the deck and stood quivering in the wood.

"Fire!" breathed Ben Dance.

The canoes came swiftly on. Harry Wharton & Co. hesitated no longer. It was for life or death now. The captain of the Remove lifted the rifle and fired, and the chief in the leading canoe reeled and fell over the side, headlong into the water.

A terrible yell rang out from the savages, and the canoes shot on.

"Fire!" shouted Wharton.

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Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Round the canoes rose the hideous snouts and black fins of the "tiger" sharks, already scenting their prey. The wounded chief, struggling in the water, was sheared limb from limb as the canoes dashed on, and bullets pumped from the Aloha into the yelling savages.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Boarded by Cannibals!

CRACK, crack, crack!

Wild yell upon yell answered the firing.

Wharton rained bullets from the magazine-rifle, and at the close range it was scarcely possible to miss. The hot lead tore through the savages in the leading canoe, and they reeled right and left, some falling into the water, and into the shearing jaws of the tiger-sharks. The Bounder was firing into the next canoe, and Ben Dance into the third, as fast as they could pull trigger.

The fourth canoe separated from the others, paddling round the schooner to attack on the other side. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, Nugent and Hurree Singh and Tom Redwing lined the rail with belaying-pins in their grip, and fierce blows rang on thick skulls as the savages clambered up like monkeys. Savage after savage on that side dropped back into the canoe or into the lagoon, and no man who fell into the water had a moment more to live. Round the schooner the sharks were now almost in a shoal.

The Kanaka seamen had fled into the fore-castle in terror. The fo'c'sle would not have sheltered them long had the cannibals gained possession of the Aloha. But the fighting was left to the "white marsters."

Fortunately, they were equal to it.

It seemed like some terrible nightmare to the Greyfriars fellows, as they fired and struck, and struck and fired, and yelling savages rolled into the water under their blows and bullets.

Wharton had emptied the magazine-rifle into the nearest canoe, and with half its crew disabled or overboard the canoe drifted past the schooner, and was out of the combat for the time. But two canoes bumped against the port side of the Aloha, and one against the starboard side, and desperate savages clambered up, active as monkeys, savage as sharks, seemingly indifferent to death.

Had the mob of cannibals gained a footing nothing could have saved the handful of whites from the overwhelming odds. But the firing at such close range took terrible toll of the islanders, and as fast as a savage, escaping the bullets, clambered up, a crashing belaying-pin or a thrusting bush-knife hurled him off into the sea.

Under the crimson blaze of the tropical sunset the struggle went on, wildly, desperately.

The fonga Island cook—the only native on board who joined in the fighting—came panting from below with a heavy pig of lead in his sinewy black hands. It crashed over the rail into one of the canoes close alongside and stove a hole through the bottom instantly. In a moment the canoe was filling, and its crew struggling in the water.

"Oh, good man!" panted the Bounder. Talupa grinned.

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"Plenty kai-kai um shark!" he gasped.

The juniors had no time to regard what was happening to the crew of the sunken canoe, and it was as well. The tiger-sharks were gliding among them, shearing right and left with their huge jaws. Round the Aloha the sea gleamed red, and more and more of the monsters of the deep were speeding up from all sides.

"Look out!" roared Bob Cherry suddenly.

A brawny savage had leaped and caught hold, and was clambering over the taffrail. He landed on the deck and rushed on, his spear whirling aloft. He was the first of the enemy to gain a footing on the Aloha.

Harry Wharton turned at Bob's shout, and found the thrusting spear almost upon him. More by good fortune than design, he parried the thrust with the barrel of the rifle, but the next instant the rush of the savage bore him to the deck, and he was down under the brawny islander.

Nugent came across the deck with a spring, and a heavy bush-knife rose and fell like an axe.

Wharton found himself suddenly freed.

He leaped to his feet, panting. The islander lay where Nugent had struck him down. He did not stir again.

The next moment Wharton was firing over the port side again, and Frank was at the starboard side, slashing at another clambering islander.

As fast as they could load Wharton and the Bounder and Ben Dance pumped out bullets. It seemed to all the juniors that the fearful scene had lasted for hours, yet it was barely ten minutes that had elapsed, when the attack suddenly ceased. The fierce resistance of the Aloha's defenders had been too much for the savages, of whom more than half were killed or wounded. One of the canoes suddenly detached itself from the side of the schooner and paddled away, unreasoning ferocity suddenly changing to unreasoning panic, as is the way of savages. And as one gave the example of flight, the other two followed.

The change was startling; at one moment the Aloha had been surrounded by yelling, clambering savages, desperate and reckless—the next, the yells were silent, the enemy were gone, the canoes were paddling away desperately for the channel through the reefs.

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "They're going!"

"They're gone!" panted Nugent.

Ben Dance hurriedly shoved fresh cartridges into his revolver, and fired steadily at the retreating canoes. The wooden-legged seaman was a good shot, and paddler after paddler dropped his paddle and rolled over among his associates.

"Dance!" shouted Wharton. "Stop, now they're going."

"Let him alone!" snapped the Bounder, and he started with the automatic again, blazing away fiercely at the fleeing enemy.

Dance did not heed.

He emptied his revolver at the retreating savages, and almost every bullet dropped a cannibal in one of the canoes.

"Better give 'em a lesson, sir, while we've got the chance," said the wooden-legged seaman grimly.

The three canoes were quickly out of effective range, however.

Harry Wharton glanced over the reddened sea, and shuddered. A terrible toll had been taken of the islanders;

but it was scarcely possible to feel pity for the wretches who had destined their intended victims for the cooking-oven.

Bob Cherry wiped his streaming brow. "Some scrap!" he murmured.

"Thank goodness they're gone!" said Frank Nugent. "My hat! If this is the way of the Pacific, give me Greyfriars."

"We have beaten off the esteemed and disgusting villains," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But the touch-and-gofulness was terrific, my worthy and ridiculous chums."

All the juniors knew that it had been "touch-and-go." Only one savage had gained the deck, and he lay where he had been struck down; but the escape of the Greyfriars party had been narrow. Had the islanders pushed the attack to a resolute finish, they would have lost heavily, but they could scarcely have failed to rush the schooner. The fate of every man on board had hung in the balance for those terrible minutes.

Ben Dance dragged the dead savage to the side and hurled the body into the water. There was a snapping of jaws below the rail.

The retreating canoes had disappeared now beyond the coral reefs. Whether they were paddling back to their own side of the island, or whether they were lurking among the reefs, the juniors could not tell. Some of the rocks rose high enough from the water to conceal the low craft from view.

The red sun plunged behind the hills of Caca. Darkness rolled over the sea and the island.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

After the Fight!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter put a fat face and a pair of glimmering spectacles out of the companion and blinked round him.

The juniors hardly glanced at him.

They had forgotten Bunter's existence.

Spent and exhausted by the struggle, the defenders of the Aloha sat about the deck, resting, as the stars came out in the dark blue, velvety sky. After the heat of the day, a cool breeze came off from the hills on the island. The Aloha rocked gently at her cable; all was quiet and peaceful round the schooner now, save that the water was alive with sharks, seeking for further prey.

Bunter blinked out, and saw that all was quiet, and rolled out on the deck. He blinked at the juniors. In his hiding-place below, the Owl of the Remove had heard the din of the conflict, and lain quaking; and long after the din had ceased, he had lain and quaked. But it dawned upon his fat brain at last that the enemy must have been driven off, and he crawled out and came on deck.

"I say, you fellows, is it all right?" he asked cautiously.

Nobody troubled to answer.

"Deaf?" hooted Bunter.

"Fathead!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Can't you see it's all right? You'd have been stuck like a fat pig by this time if we hadn't driven the brutes off. Shut up and go back to your funk-hole!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Where have you been hiding, you fat funk?" growled the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"They're gone, Bunter," said Nugent. "Nothing to be afraid of now."

"If you think I was afraid Frank Nugent—"

"Oh, my hat! Weren't you?"

"Nothing of the kind, of course," said Bunter. "I went down to look for—for a gun or something. I—I couldn't find one. I say, you fellows, you look like a lot of moulting fowls, sitting around like that!"

"Do we?" asked Johnny Bull, in a deep, growling voice, not unlike that of the Great Huge Bear.

"You do," said Bunter. "For goodness' sake, pull yourselves together! Don't slack about!"

"Dear old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

"You've had a bit of a scrap," said Bunter. "Well, we didn't expect to root about the South Seas without a bit of a scrap now and then. It was only to be expected. Don't let it knock you out like this. Pull yourselves together! Be men, you know!"

The juniors gazed at Bunter. But they were too tired to get up and kick him. So the fat Owl of the Remove rattled cheerily on.

"They're gone now, you know. Nothing to be nervy about. Keep a stiff upper lip. I say, I'm hungry!"

Bunter blinked round at the silent juniors, as if expecting that important announcement to excite a general movement of activity. But it did not produce that effect. Harry Wharton & Co. only gazed at him.

"Like a lot of moulting fowls!" said Bunter, in disgust. "Fat lot of good you fellows will be if any real danger comes along! Luckily you've got me with you. Where's that black beast Talupa? I'm not going to wait for my supper, I can tell you, while you fellows sit around mooning! For goodness' sake, buck up! The niggers are gone."

"If we hadn't known that, we should have known it when you showed up!" said Bob, with sarcasm.

"I disdain to answer that, Cherry! Where's that black beast of a cook? You feller Talupa!"

"Talupa!" called out the Bounder.

"Yes, sar!"

"You kick that feller Bunter plenty hard."

"Yes, sar!"

"Oh, really, Smithy! Oh—ow—yow—keep off, you black beast!" roared Billy Bunter, as the Tonga Islander bore down on him.

"Kicky good and plenty!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yes, sar!"

William George Bunter plunged back into the companion, forgetting even that he was hungry. Talupa's foot caught him as he went, and it caught him hard. There was a sound of rolling on the stairs, and a bump at the foot, and a roar. Bunter had reached the cuddy in a hurry.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "Look here, you rotters, you order that black brute to hand out my supper!"

"Don't you worry about supper, Bunter," chuckled Bob. "The niggers will be coming back soon, and they'll want you for supper!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Billy Bunter crawled up the companion stairs again and blinked out on deck.

"I—I say, you fellows, d-d-do you think the cannibals will be coming here again?" he gasped.

"Sure to," answered Bob.

"The surefulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh crikey!"

"Caca man soon comee makey kai-kai of fat feller Bunter!" grinned Talupa.

"I say, you fellows, we've got to get

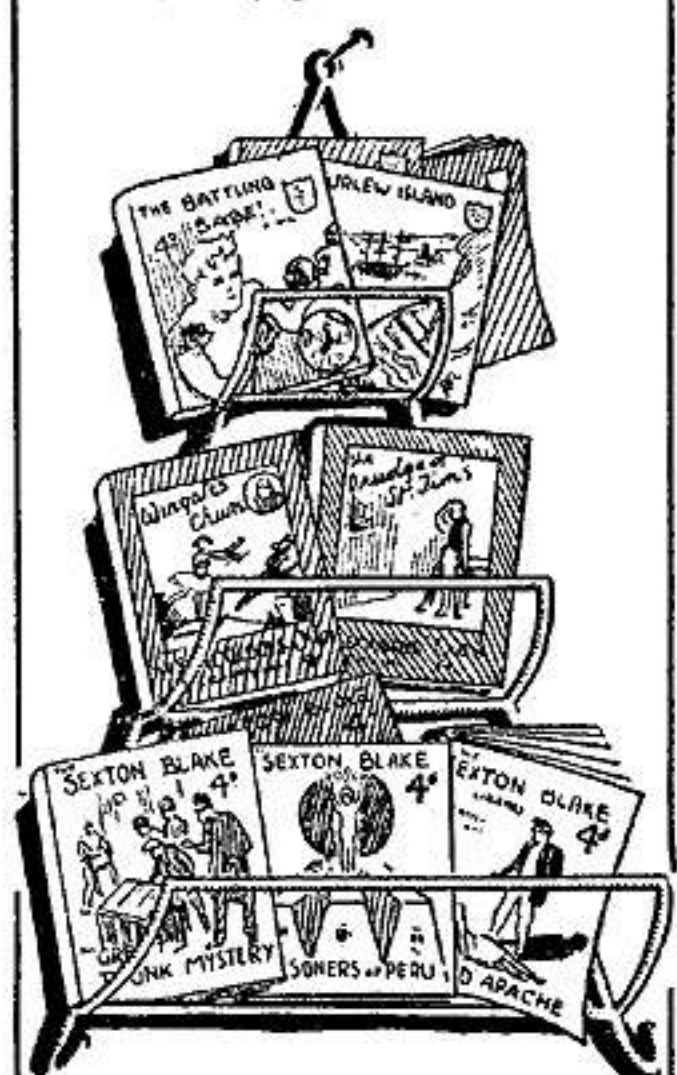
out of this!" gasped Bunter, in great alarm.

"How are we to get out of it, fat-head?" asked Bob Cherry. "If you can show us a way out we'll be obliged!"

"Up anchor at once and get to sea!" howled Bunter. "We're not going to stay here for that rotten treasure! I don't believe there's a treasure, anyhow—and we're not staying for it if there is! We're not going to be wolfed by a lot of hungry cannibals to please you, Redwing!"

Tom Redwing looked at him, but did not answer.

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"What are you sitting around for, doing nothing?" roared Bunter, in great exasperation. "There may not be a moment to lose. Dance, you wooden-legged dummy, tell the Kanakas to get the anchor up!"

Dance turned his quid in his cheek and did not answer.

"Hoist the sails, you idiots!" went on Bunter. "What are we hanging about here for, when the niggers may come back any minute?"

Bunter glared round angrily.

"Talupa!" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, sar?"

"Fat feller Bunter speak any more you kicky down to cuddy!"

"Yes, sar!"

"Look here, you fellows—" roared Bunter. "Look here, I— Yaroooh! Yooop! Whooooop!"

For the second time, William George Bunter descended the companion ladder in a great hurry, helped by the hefty foot of the Tonga Islander.

After which Bunter did not return to the deck.

Alarmed as he was, he had had enough of Talupa's huge and heavy foot—and perhaps it dawned, too, upon his fat brain that the schooner could not get to sea until daylight, even if the chums of the Remove thought of abandoning the treasure quest. Bunter comforted himself with provisions—of which, fortunately, there were plenty. His snore should naturally have followed; but, for once, Billy Bunter could not plunge into immediate balmy slumber after a Gargantuan meal. The thought of crowded canoes swarming into the lagoon to attack the schooner, the bare idea of what would follow in case of defeat, sufficed to keep even William George Bunter awake.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Sea-Lawyer's Last Word!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. munched their supper on deck in the starlight while they rested, and after supper they discussed the situation. Since Ben Dance had given the signal of danger, and the juniors had rushed back from the island to defend the schooner, they had had no time for thinking until the conflict was over; they had had to fight for their lives, and the desperate struggle had tired them out. Now, however, they discussed the new situation—new and full of terrible peril for them.

Hitherto they had had nothing to fear from the natives of Caca, shut off by the barrier of hills that divided the island, and by the dangerous reefs that ran out into the sea from the shores. Had not the natives learned that a white man's ship had come to the lagoon on the eastern side, doubtless nothing would have been seen of them at all. But now they knew; Soames had taken word to them in his last desperate bid for the treasure of Black Peter. The situation was now completely altered, and every moment that the treasure-seekers lingered on the island was fraught with fearful peril.

The Caca cannibals had been defeated and driven off; but that they would return with swarming reinforcements was a certainty. The plunder of a vessel like the Aloha was inestimable wealth to the savage islanders. More than one tribe dwelt on the western side of Caca, at war with one another; probably there were five or six hundred of the savages altogether, if not a thousand or more. Soames had taken the

news to the tribe he knew, and where he had old acquaintances; but the news was sure to spread, bringing every savage on the island to the lagoon in the hope of loot.

Such odds as would be brought sooner or later could not possibly be resisted by the handful of whites; it was certain death to keep the Aloha anchored in the lagoon. The only question was whether the savages would return that night or on the morrow. That they would return, and in much greater numbers, was assured. At any moment the lagoon might be swarming with ten, twenty, or thirty war-canoes packed with ferocious cannibals.

To abandon the treasure, which the Greyfriars fellows had already discovered, and which only remained to be lifted from its hiding-place, was hardly to be thought of. Neither was it possible to take the schooner out to sea. The passage through the reefs was narrow and tortuous. Soames, who knew the channel, had brought the schooner in; but all on board knew how dangerous the passage had been, with a skilled navigator in command of a numerous crew and in the broad daylight. To take the schooner into the channel among the reefs after dark was to invite shipwreck. Until the sun rose again the Aloha could not stir from her anchorage. Of all the party, only Ben Dance had visited the island before, and he knew little of the channel through the reefs. The mahogany face of the seaman was dark with thought, and the juniors could see that he had little hope of ever finding himself on the open sea again.

"You see, sir," said Dance, "that Soames is a sea-lawyer and a shark, but he knows how to sail a ship. He knows the channel like a book. But it was dangerous work getting through, all the same. I reckon that we should tow the schooner out with the whaleboat; but even in the daylight it would be dangerous work. If we get among them reefs in the dark we're done for—it's the schooner for the rocks, and us for the sharks. We can't stir till sun-up."

The juniors were already aware of that.

"And there's the treasure," said Vernon-Smith. "We're not leaving that behind, even if we could clear now!"

Dance grunted.

"The treasure won't be much use, sir, when two or three hundred of them niggers are swarming round us."

"Never mind the treasure, Smithy," said Tom Redwing quietly. "Lives come before that."

"We've beaten them off," went on the wooden-legged seaman; "but they'll come back, that's certain, and they'll bring swarms with them."

"You know these seas better than we do, Dance," said Harry. "Do you think it likely that they'll return before morning?"

"In some of the islands, sir, the niggers wouldn't dream of making a night attack; they're feared of devils in the dark—aitoos, as they call them. But it ain't the same in all the islands, and I can't say about Caca. But I reckon it's most likely we shan't see them till morning."

"Anyhow, we can't shift till morning, even if we want to," said Harry.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"We've located Black Peter's treasure now," said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. "It's only a question of getting it on board. We can do that easily enough before morning. Then, as soon as it's daylight, we can

try getting the schooner out to sea. We get the anchor up at the first gleam of dawn."

"That's all we can do," said Bob.

"What about the Kanakas who scuttled ashore—the boat's crew?" asked Nugent.

Ben Dance gave an angry snort.

"We can't hang about for deserters—it will be touch and go, anyhow. They will have to take their chance."

"That cannot be helped," said Wharton. "But hark!"

There was a splash of a paddle on the lagoon.

In an instant the juniors were on their feet, grasping their weapons and looking out over the starlit waters. The moon was not yet up, and the wide lagoon was dim in the starlight. In the distance a single small canoe could be seen gliding on the water. A tall bamboo was fixed upright in the canoe, and from its top fluttered a white cloth.

"Is that a flag of truce?" asked Johnny Bull.

"It's a trick, if it is!" grunted Ben Dance. "Fire on the canoe if it comes near enough!"

Wharton rested the magazine-rifle on the rail.

"There's only one canoe, and only one man in it," he said. "His life is in our hands; we can let him speak."

"Keep him covered, then, sir."

"That's all right."

The canoe floated closer. Evidently the white cloth was a flag of truce, and the juniors guessed that the man in the canoe was Soames. They were soon assured of it, as a voice hailed them from the dusky lagoon.

"Ahoy, aboard there!"

"Soames!" said the Bounder between his teeth. He gripped the automatic.

"Respect the white flag, Smithy," said Wharton quietly; and he called back to the sea-lawyer: "Ahoy, the canoe!"

"Is that Master Wharton?"

The voice of Soames was as sleek and soft and deferential as ever it had been when, on the millionaire's yacht, he had been the obsequious valet of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith.

"Yes."

"A word with you, sir. Will you promise not to fire if I come nearer?"

"Yes, if you try no tricks."

"Thank you, sir!"

The paddle plashed again, and the little canoe glided nearer to the Aloha. The juniors could see Soames clearly now, and they gave him grim looks. Yet they could not help admiring the man's nerve. He knew what their feelings must be towards the mutineer, the traitor, the enemy who had brought the swarm of cannibals down upon them. But he paddled within easy point-blank range with perfect coolness. He ceased to paddle only a few yards from the schooner's side, and his pale, clear-cut, impassive face expressed no sign of uneasiness as he looked up at the grim faces lining the rail.

"I thought I could trust you, sir," said Soames smoothly.

"More than we can you, you scoundrel!" said the Bounder. "If there's any trickery, look out for a bullet through your head!"

"No trickery is intended, Master Herbert," answered Soames calmly. "It is for your sakes that I have come."

"Liar!" said the Bounder.

"We need not handy words," said Soames. "I will say what I have come to say to you, Master Wharton."

"You can go ahead!" said Harry, with the muzzle of the rifle bearing full upon the man in the canoe. "But if

your cannibal friends show up while you are here, I warn you that I shall shoot you dead!"

Soames smiled faintly.

"You will not see them till the sun rises, Master Wharton; they are more afraid of a night attack than you can be. If I could induce them to attack in the dark they would be here now."

"And why do you tell us so?" asked Harry suspiciously.

"Because I know that you cannot get the schooner through the channel after nightfall," answered Soames. "I doubt whether you can get the vessel safely out to sea at all without assistance; but in any case, to attempt it in the dark is suicide. You will not be fools enough for that! I should be very glad to make terms with you!"

"What terms?"

"We're not making terms with that scoundrel!" growled the Bounder.

"Let him speak."

"There is no harm in hearing my terms, at any rate, Master Herbert," said Soames.

"Oh, get on with it!"

"I was very reluctant to call in the savages to my aid," went on Soames. "I could have done so earlier, as you know; but I tried other methods first. Those methods failed, and I was driven to my last resource. Your destruction is now certain, unless I save you. I am willing, indeed eager, to save you. I may be all that you think me, but I am a white man, and unwilling to hand you over to man-eating savages. Agree to my terms, and I will come on board, trusting to your word of honour, and I guarantee that I will take the schooner out in safety to sea."

"And your terms?" asked Harry, eyeing the man very curiously.

"The treasure of Black Peter," answered Soames briefly.

"Is that all?" sneered the Bounder.

"You have found the treasure—the pearls that Black Peter Bruce buried on Caca long ago," said Soames; "I am assured of that!"

"That's true" assented Wharton.

He saw the sea-lawyer's eyes glint in the starlight.

"The pearls will be of little use to you when you are in the cooking-ovens," said Soames.

"We are not there yet," said Nugent.

"I fear that it is inevitable, if you refuse my terms," said Soames. "The blacks will not attack in the dark; but at the first gleam of dawn you will see their canoes swarming among the reefs. You will have hundreds of enemies to face. If you remain in the lagoon, they will surround you and attack in swarms. If you enter the channel, they will attack you there. If you attempt to tow out the schooner with the whaleboat, the whaleboat will be overwhelmed at once by the savages. You will have to depend upon the sails; and you will remember that it was a difficult passage when I brought the schooner in. How will you make it, with swarms of savages attacking you on all sides? The schooner will go on the reefs, and those of you who escape the sharks will go to the cooking-ovens."

The juniors did not answer.

They realised very clearly that Soames spoke the truth. The passage of the reefs, narrow and tortuous, difficult enough at the best of times, was hopeless when the war-canoes swarmed there, manned by hundreds of savages. Missiles would rain upon the schooner, striking down the crew as they hauled at rope and sheet; and a moment's loss



Harry Wharton & Co. lined the rail with belaying-pins in their grip, and fierce blows rang on thick black skulls as the savager clambered up, active as monkeys, savage as sharks, and seemingly indifferent to death. It seemed like a terrible nightmare to the Greyfriars fellows as they fired and struck, and yelling savages rolled into the water under their blows and bullets. (See Chapter 3.)

of control would be enough to send the Aloha grinding on the rocks.

Soames sat silent in the canoe for some moments, as if to let the effect of his words sink in.

"Well," said Wharton at last, "is that all?"

"Is not that enough?" asked Soames. "Your escape is cut off; you are doomed to leave your bones on the treasure island, as so many others have done, and your heads will be smoked by the devil-doctors. Let me come aboard, and I will undertake to get the schooner out to sea as soon as the moon rises. It will be a great risk, but I will take the risk with you. All I ask is your promise to land me afterwards where I choose, with the pearls that Black Peter buried on the island. The treasure is useless to you, as matters stand; let it serve as a ransom for your lives."

He paused again.

"Master Redwing!"

"Well?" said Tom Redwing quietly.

"The treasure is yours. I am aware that your comrades take no share in it. Will you sacrifice their lives to save it?"

"I would throw the treasure into the sea to save any one of them from the slightest injury," answered Tom. "But I will make no terms with a pirate and a murderer!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"Wharton is our captain here," went on Tom Redwing. "I leave it to him to decide. The treasure does not matter one straw. If Wharton will trust

you and accept your offer, I shall not say a word."

"That's soon answered," said Harry. "I do not trust you, Soames, and I will make no terms with you."

Soames set his lips.

"Your lives will pay for it!" he said. "At the moment I can save you—let this moment pass, and it will be out of my power!"

"We can save ourselves, I hope!" said Harry contemptuously. "We have nothing to say to you. Go while you are safe!"

"For the last time——"

"Get out!"

"Your blood be on your own heads!" said Soames, as he took up the paddle again.

The canoe glided away, and vanished into the dusk of the reefs.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Night!

"HARK!"

A deep, echoing, threatening rumble, like the growl of distant thunder, came eerily through the night, as the juniors stood staring after the vanishing canoe.

"The volcano!" exclaimed Bob.

Forgetting Soames, the Greyfriars fellows spun round, staring across the lagoon to the island, to the volcano at the south-western extremity of Caca.

Several times before had that deep, warning growl been heard from the fire-mountain, each time accompanied by the glimmer of flame amid the smoke that rose from the old crater.

"He's going it to-night!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Against the dark, velvety sky there was a blaze of flame. Flame leaped up from the volcano in a blinding sheet, and for a few seconds the dark island was irradiated with a strange and eerie illumination.

The flame died down, and darkness enwrapped the treasure-island again. But still, amid the thick black smoke that poured from the volcano, tongues of flame darted and twined without ceasing.

Again the rumble was heard, but more faintly. It was followed by silence.

"The old joker's waking up," said Johnny Bull. "I don't think I shall be sorry to say good-bye to Caca—if we get a chance of saying good-bye."

"Same here," said Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed volcano has gone to sleep again."

The volcano was silent now, only the darting tongues of flame amid the smoke giving evidence of unusual activity in its fiery depths.

"Him grumble," said Kalashti. "Him grumble plenty, but him no wake. Plenty sleep."

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And the Kanakas, who had been staring at the volcano in momentary terror, gave it no further attention.

"There's an eruption coming afore long, sir," said Ben Dance, shaking his head. "But that ain't what we've got to be feared of. Look!"

The moon was coming up over the sea. Silvery light glimmered on the wide lagoon, and on the beach of white sand and powdered coral.

The wooden-legged seaman pointed towards the beach.

In the distance, the juniors made out dim, moving forms—twenty or thirty of them, on the beach, between the sea and the palm-trees.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"The cannibals!"

"They've landed, then," said Nugent.

"A crowd of them has, sir," said Dance. "You can put that down to Soames. He knows you've found Black Peter's cache, but he don't know whether you've got it on board. If you ain't, he don't mean to give you a chance to get it on the Aloha, and sink it when the schooner goes down on the reefs. You're cut off from the island now, sir."

Wharton set his lips.

The plan of getting the buried treasure on board during the hours of darkness had to be abandoned now.

It was impossible to land on the island with the shadowy beach swarming with the cannibals.

"The hound!" muttered the Bounder.

"He wasn't named Aitoo, which means devil, by the natives for nothing," said Dance. "He's more dangerous than ever Silvio, the half-caste, was."

The juniors stood looking in silence towards the beach.

Evidently a crowd of the savages had landed from the canoes, farther along the lagoon, and tramped along the shore to a spot opposite the anchorage of the Aloha.

"We can't land," said Bob at last. "No good thinking of going back for the treasure now."

"No good at all," said Tom Redwing quietly. "The treasure can wait. Soames will not find it in a hurry. We uncovered Black Peter's chest; but it is buried in a niche of the rocks at the end of a steep ravine, and he has no clue to the place. Without the chart he may hunt for it for weeks without a chance of finding it. We must try to get out to sea at dawn, and if we succeed—"

"We must succeed," said Harry.

"Well, if we succeed, we can stand out to sea and return to the island after a few days to lift the treasure," said Tom. "We need not return to this lagoon at all. Now that we know exactly where to pick up Black Peter's chest, a trip ashore in the whaleboat will do it, the schooner standing out to sea. This lagoon is the only anchorage for ships; but on a calm day the whaleboat can land us at half a dozen different points. Once we get out to sea we can snap our fingers at Soames and the savages."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Dance.

"We'll try it at dawn, then," said Harry; "and now we'd better try to get some sleep."

The juniors were in little mood for sleep, but they were fatigued, and they realised how necessary it was to obtain rest while they could. At dawn their fate was to be put to the test.

Billy Bunter had succeeded in composing himself to slumber at last. His deep snore could be heard rumbling below in the cuddy.

The chums of the Remove followed his example, taking turns at watching through the hot, tropical night.

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It was an anxious night. In spite of what Soames had said, the juniors were prepared for a night attack; and a careful watch was kept. But there was no alarm.

The long hours wore away, without a sign or a sound from the savages. But on the shore they knew that a mob of the blacks were camped; and that the canoes were lurking among the tortuous channels of the coral reefs. And they could guess that more and more canoes were coming round the island under the moon, to join in the attack that was to take place when a new day dawned on the Pacific.

When the first glimmer of dawn showed in the sky, the juniors turned out. Their faces were very grave. Their lives depended on the next hour. If they succeeded in running the schooner out to sea, all was plain sailing. It would be easy to remain at sea for a week, out of reach of the cannibals, and to land a party in the whaleboat at some distant point along the shore when opportunity served, and get the treasure on board, and then sail away from the treasure island for ever. But they knew that the chances were against a safe passage of the channel through the reefs. It was the last throw of the dice for the treasure-seekers, and the dice were weighted against them. But they were cool and steady, and there was no sign of funk in the Greyfriars party till Billy Bunter came up. The clatter of the cable awakened the fat junior, and he rolled on deck, his little round eyes wide with apprehension behind his big glasses.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't bother now, Bunter," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Ben Dance was shouting orders to the Kanaka seamen. Only the topsail and foresail were set. A light breeze was blowing off shore, favourable to the passage, so far as that went. The schooner was short-handed now, owing to the desertion of the boat's crew the day before; but the juniors were ready to pull and haul with the seamen.

"I—I say, you fellows, the ship's moving!" stuttered Bunter.

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry.

"Are we going?" gasped the Owl of the Remove.

"Yes, ass!"

"I—I say, you fellows, don't you think it would be safer to get ashore and—hide somewhere?" stuttered Bunter.

"Look at the shore and see for yourself," answered Wharton.

Billy Bunter blinked shoreward.

In the glimmering light of dawn, even the short-sighted Owl of the Remove could see twenty or thirty savages on the beach, all wide awake now, watching the schooner.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Buck up, old fat bean!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We've got a chance yet; while there's life there's hope."

"The hopefulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Oh dear! You awful beasts to bring me to a place like this!" groaned Bunter. "Nice sort of a vacation I'm having! I'd rather be doing irregular verbs with Quelch in the Form-room at Greyfriars! Oh dear!"

"I think we'd all rather be doing irregular verbs, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, with a faint smile. "But keep your perker up."

"Oh dear!"

"Shut up, anyhow!" growled the Bounder.

"Beast!"

The schooner was under way now.

The brown canvas filled out under the breeze off shore, and Ben Dance was at the helm. The Kanakas and the juniors stood by the sheets, ready to obey orders in an instant. All hearts were beating fast as the schooner glided through the glimmering waters of the lagoon in the rays of the rising sun, and entered the rocky channel.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Neck or Nothing!

"THERE they are!"

Harry Wharton stood in the bows of the little schooner, the magazine rifle in his hands, ready to fire.

His face was grim.

Ahead of the Aloha, seven large war-canoes occupied the channel, crowded with fuzzy-haired blacks. The sun gleamed on the points of innumerable spears.

The tide was low, and many of the great coral reefs that were covered at high water were now two or three feet out of the sea. In several places it would have been possible to reach the island dry-shod, across the reefs. A yell from the savages greeted the sight of the schooner threading the channel, and scores of paddles flashed immediately into activity.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Wharton, with a steady hand, fired into the canoes.

Among the crowded savages every bullet told, and wild yells answered the shots.

Crunch!

A shiver ran through the Aloha from stem to stern.

For a second the hearts of all on board stood still. The schooner was scraping on a hidden reef.

But she glided on.

On the port side a great shelf of coral rose from the water, left high by the tide. On the starboard side, half-hidden reefs stretched endlessly out into the ocean.

"Feller ship him sink!" yelled Kalashti.

And he abandoned his rope and leaped from the schooner's side to the reef to port.

His example was followed by the other Kanakas.

Almost in an instant the native crew had abandoned the schooner, and were fleeing wildly across the reef on the port side towards the island.

Ben Dance ground his teeth.

"That does it!" he muttered.

Billy Bunter blinked after the running Kanakas.

"I say, you fellows," he gasped, "we can get ashore here! Let's run for it!"

"Stay where you are, you fool!" snapped Redwing.

Leaping from rock to rock, across broken gullies and channels in the great reef, the Kanakas fled towards the shore. The grinding of the Aloha's hull on a sunken rock, and the array of war-canoes waiting ahead, had been too much for them, and they had taken their chance of escape. But it was a remote chance. Along the shore of the lagoon a crowd of cannibals were following the course of the schooner, and a score or more of them rushed to intercept the fugitives on the reef.

The schooner glided on.

Harry Wharton ceased to fire, and slung the rifle over his shoulder. Every hand was wanted at the ropes now if the schooner was not to go helplessly on the rocks.

In the twists and turns of the tortuous channel the schooner had to twist and turn, and on every side razor-edged rocks waited for her.

Crunch!

The schooner scraped again, but again she glided on, and came into the broader channel where the war-canoes were gathered.

A moment more and the canoes were round her.

Still another moment and the Aloha would have been assailed by swarming savages on both sides, in a swarming, overwhelming attack that the handful of defenders could never have hoped to drive off.

Ben Dance gritted his teeth, and put the schooner before the wind. It was neck or nothing now.

The Aloha rushed on, and the nearest canoe was crunched under her bows, sinking and leaving the occupants in the water. Fearful cries came from the savages struggling in the sea. The tiger sharks were already among them.

"It's touch and go now!" said the Bounder, between his teeth, his eyes gleaming with wild excitement. "Neck or nothing!"

fellows were willing to take the chance. But at every moment they were looking death in the face.

Crunch, crunch!

Crash!

The foremast snapped like a stick and trailed overboard by the rigging, the sail wallowing in the sea.

The schooner lost way at once.

Harry Wharton glanced back:

The war-canoes were out of sight among the intricacies of the reefs. And the reefs were falling behind. Ahead of the schooner lay the open ocean. There was a sound below which the juniors knew was water pouring into the hold. But the reefs were behind now, and the Aloha, with her main topsail still drawing, dragging the wreck of the foremast and foresail, surged on into the open Pacific.

"We're clear!" said Bob Cherry, his face white as chalk. "Clear of the reefs, clear of the cannibals!"

"But the Aloha—" muttered Wharton.

The schooner lurched drunkenly in the sea.

"She's sinking!"

Ben Dance, with the sweat running

reefs had wrecked the schooner, coral rock after rock had torn her hull like the teeth of giant beasts. But to lose the schooner and save their lives was more than the treasure-seekers could have hoped. Had the Aloha piled up on a rock in the tortuous channel nothing could have saved them. The savages and the sharks would have known of the fate of the Greyfriars party, the outside world never. But the gallant little schooner had still floated, still driven before the wind till she was well out into the open ocean. The juniors had time to man the boat and a free sea to sail her in. The cannibals, if they were in pursuit of the Aloha, were not yet in sight. The rapid sweep of the schooner had left the canoes hopelessly behind.

"Man the whaleboat!"

Not a moment was lost.

Weapons first, and then provisions, were stacked in the boat. It was necessary to get clear before the Aloha made her final plunge, and the moment was fast drawing near. Not a man of the native crew was now on board to help, and the juniors fairly slaved at



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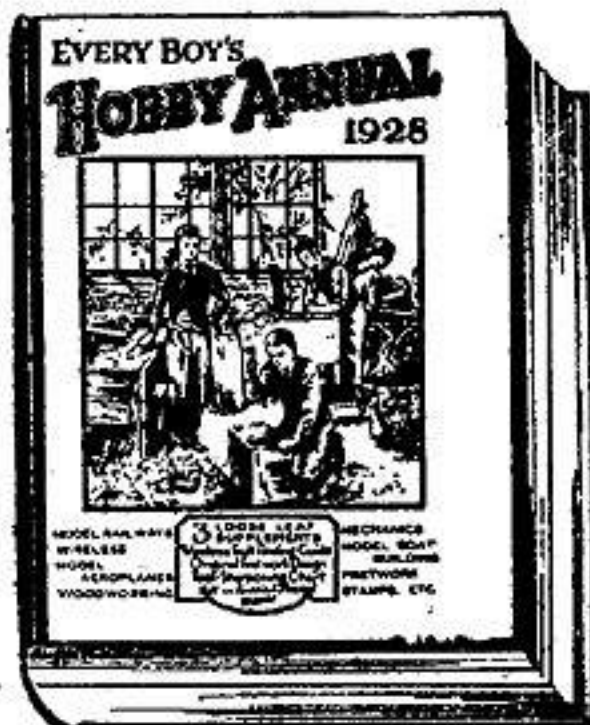
ANNUALS!

They are selling like hot
cakes, and soon there
won't be any left!

SO TAKE THE TIP!

PRICE 6/- EACH.

OR BOTH!



It seemed certain to the juniors now that the game was up. Only by creeping cautiously through the channel had they hoped to reach the open sea, and now the Aloha was speeding on with the wind full in the sails. It had been the only way to elude the swarming attack from the canoes, which were left behind now, paddling vainly in pursuit. But it was taking the most desperate of chances.

Crunch!

A terrible shock ran through the schooner.

Crunch!

"I say, you fellows, we're sinking!" shrieked Bunter.

No one heeded him.

The schooner tore off the reef and rushed on. Ben Dance stood like a graven image at the wheel, his mahogany face set like granite, though he expected at every moment to feel the schooner sinking under his feet.

The dangerous channel, through which Soames had tooled the schooner so cautiously when she arrived at the island, was taken at a rush. It seemed a miracle to the juniors that the Aloha did not pile up on the reefs at every yard of the way.

It was that or falling into the hands of the cannibals, and the Greyfriars

down his face, left the wheel. The stern of the schooner was dipping perilously.

"She's sinking, sir!" said Dance. "We had to take the chance, sir; but the schooner's going down, and I reckon she ain't ten minutes to live. Get out the whaleboat."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Castaways!

"SINKING!"

It was a dismaying word. The handsome little schooner, the home for many days of the treasure-seekers, graceful as a swan, light on the waves as a seabird—sinking, almost water-logged already; sinking under the feet of her crew!

Only the whaleboat stood between the juniors and following the schooner to her last home at the bottom of the Pacific.

The trim little vessel which had been their secure home was about to disappear from their sight. A few minutes more and the vast rollers of the Pacific would be passing over her mast-head and strange fish would be swimming in her cuddy and about her deck.

But repining was useless. Indeed, the juniors knew well that they had escaped cheaply. The passage of the

the task as rapid minute followed minute.

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry stood in the boat floating alongside the Aloha, and received the goods passed down to them by the other fellows. Billy Bunter, however, was first in the boat. He rolled in hurriedly and stowed himself there as comfortably as possible. It did not seem to occur to his fat mind to lend a hand. But no one heeded Bunter. The seven fellows worked hard, and Ben Dance worked with them, and provisions were broken out and handed into the boat at a great rate.

Not till the deck of the sinking schooner was on a level with the boat alongside did the juniors desert her.

It was high time. As the last of the juniors scrambled into the boat a Pacific roller washed right across the Aloha, and the schooner rolled almost on her beam-ends.

"Push off!" panted Dance.

He drove an oar against the reeling hull of the Aloha, and the whaleboat floated off.

"Give way!"

The juniors bent to the oars.

Six sturdy fellows, pulling hard, drove the whaleboat across the rolling

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water, away from the lurching schooner.

Another roller washed across the Aloha.

Bob Cherry gave an exclamation.

"She's going!"

And the oarsmen rested for a moment, on their oars, to look. The stern of the schooner was below the Pacific now, and the bows heaved high into the air for a moment, and then the Aloha shot downward, stern foremost. A long, sullen plunge, and the schooner was gone.

But the whaleboat was far enough away now to be safe from the suction of the sinking schooner.

The water closed over the Aloha, and a few spars and gratings, tossing on the sea, alone remained to tell that a vessel had sunk there.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"She's gone!"

Never had the ocean seemed so vast, so blank to the eyes of the juniors, as now, with only a boat between them and destruction, a tiny speck on the mighty waste of waters.

To the west the hills of Caca rose against the sky; further away, now the juniors looked in that direction, than they had deemed.

But there was a comfort in seeing land, though it was only the island where the hungry cannibals swarmed, the island now of peril and terror.

There had not been a second to spare for discussion or consideration; but now that the Aloha was gone, now that they were alone on the wide sea in the whaleboat, the Greyfriars fellows had to decide upon their course of action.

So far, there was no sign of the war-canoes in pursuit; but they had little doubt that the cannibals would follow the Aloha out to sea, in the hope of yet capturing her, probably in the expectation of finding her piled up somewhere among the reefs.

If the crowd of canoes came in sight of the whaleboat all was lost; the fight against such odds would be over almost before it was begun.

"What's the order, skipper?" asked Bob Cherry, resting on his oar. "Whatever we're going to do, we'd better do it quick!"

Wharton knitted his brows in anxious thought.

"We'd better make the island," he said.

There was a howl from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "Look here, we've got to get to land. We've got to get back to Nuka-hiva, where we left Mr. Vernon-Smith and the yacht. We've got to get into the track of ships, and be picked up. Blow the island! Blow the treasure! I'm not going to be gobbled up by cannibals, I can tell you!"

"Shut up!" roared the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy— Yaroooh!" yelled Bunter, as the Bounder gave him a shove with his oar.

Bunter rolled in the bottom of the boat.

"If you're thinking of the treasure, Wharton, better cut it out," said Tom Redwing quietly. "We can't afford to think of that now."

"It's not only that," said Harry. "Let's look at the matter as it stands. If we'd saved the schooner, we could have stood out to sea, and returned to Caca whenever we pleased. But we've lost the schooner. In the Aloha we could have walked away from the canoes. In the whaleboat, we haven't a

dog's chance if they once spot us. A canoe with twenty paddlers can go three lengths to our one, at least."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Ben Dance, with a nod.

"The question is, are they after us?" said Harry. "I don't think there's much question about it. They're following."

"That's a cert," said Bob.

"Soames does not know whether the treasure was on board the Aloha or not. He is certain to follow, and even without Soames the cannibals would be sure to do so. Once they get out of the reefs, they will see our boat, and run us down. That will be the finish."

"The finishfulness would be terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I think, then, that the best thing we can do—in fact, the only thing—is to make the island as fast as we can and lie doggo for a bit," said Harry.

"And I think, too, that we haven't a minute to spare."

"Passed unanimously," said Bob.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Give way, then," said Harry.

Dance sat at the lines, and six sturdy juniors tugged at the oars. No more was said; it was obvious to all that the island was their only refuge, and that they would be fortunate if they made it before the pursuing canoes came speeding into sight.

The whaleboat fairly flew over the water. Fast as it was, the juniors knew that its speed was nothing like that of a native canoe propelled by a crowd of brawny paddlers. All depended on getting clear before they were sighted. And if they had remained on the open sea it was only a question of time—a short time—before the pursuers sighted them.

Between the open sea and the island, all up the eastern shore, lay the lines of reefs, with the Pacific creaming over them. In the reefs there was but the one channel that led to the lagoon—where, of course, the fugitive treasure-seekers could not return. But on Redwing's chart no reefs were marked on the northern side of Caca; and though there was no safe anchorage there for a ship, it was a different matter landing in a boat, which could be pulled up high and dry from the water. With Dance steering, the juniors rowed hard round the northern shore, guided by a great high cliff, which, on the chart, was marked Pirate Point.

Here, where no reefs broke the rollers of the Pacific, the sea dashed on the coast in lines of foam. It was a rocky, barren shore, very different in aspect from the fertile, smiling shores of the lagoon. On Pirate Point the surf roared and thundered, dashing up spray high into the air, and the whaleboat was forced to give the Point a wide offing.

Beyond the high Point a bay opened into the northern shore of the island, and there the water was calmer.

Leaving the rocky, dangerous Point in a wide offing to port, the whaleboat ran into the bay.

High cliffs surrounded the bay, and shut it off from the island.

They were out of sight from the open sea now, but the boat did not pause. The juniors rowed steadily on to the shore of the bay, where, at its southern extremity, a beach of shelving sand intervened between the water and the high cliffs.

The boat grounded at last, on the soft sand and powdered coral of the shore.

The juniors scrambled out, and dragged the boat up out of the water. Heavily loaded as it was, that was not

an easy task, but the Greyfriars fellows accomplished it.

Harry Wharton had mentally placed himself, so far as he was able, in Soames' place, and he had little doubt of the sea-lawyer's course of action. Soames would pursue the fleeing Aloha, and discover that the schooner had gone down. He could not be certain whether there were any survivors of the wreck; but undoubtedly he would seek to ascertain, and the whole shore of the island would be searched. As the bay under Pirate Point was the nearest refuge for a boat, it was likely to be searched first. Some time during the day Wharton fully expected to see canoes searching the bay. If the whaleboat was in sight then, all was lost. It was necessary to get it out of sight, and the juniors lost no time.

Ropes were rigged to the boat, and with some of the juniors pulling, and others pushing, the whaleboat was drawn up the sandy shore. Billy Bunter, much to his indignation, was compelled to lend his weight to a rope. Slowly but steadily the whaleboat was drawn up the beach, into an opening of the cliffs, where great rocks hid her from sight from the bay.

Bob Cherry sank down on a boulder and fanned his scarlet face with his hat.

"Hard work, skipper!" he gasped.

"We're not finished yet," said Harry.

"Oh, my hat! What next?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You shut up, Bunter! Squat where you are, and don't bother! You fellows, we've left a track across the sand that a blind man could see from the bay. We've got to blot it out."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Ben Dance.

And the juniors hurried out of the gully in the cliffs, back to the water's margin. Billy Bunter sat and gasped for breath after his exertions; but the other fellows were busy for some time, raking up the heavy track in the sand, leaving, so far as they could, no sign of their passage.

Then they gathered in the gully again, and sat down to rest.

The rocks hid them and the whaleboat from the sea, and only a close scrutiny of the sand would have revealed that the party had landed there. They had done all that they could, and could only hope for the best. Billy Bunter, having recovered at last from his uncommon exertions, sat up and took notice again, as it were.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Well?" grunted Bob.

"I think this is all rot!" said Bunter. "I don't believe the niggers were after us at all, and we ought to have stayed on the sea and headed for Nuka-Hiva. We're wasting time. You've landed in a rotten place—there are no coconuts here. You've mucked up the whole thing. My idea is that we'd better put to sea at once. Got that?"

Tom Redwing was watching the bay, keeping carefully in cover as he watched. He interrupted Bunter:

"Hush!"

"Shan't!" snorted Bunter. "I think—"

"You fat fool! They're in sight!" breathed Redwing.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove collapsed like a punctured bladder. Harry Wharton & Co. joined Redwing, and peered out of the gully through an opening of the rocks, keeping in cover with great care. Fifty yards away, the waters lapped on the sandy shores of the bay. In the bay, gliding in from the open sea, was a large, long canoe, propelled by twenty paddles that flashed in the sun.



As the whaleboat moved across the rolling water and another roller washed across the Aloha, Bob Cherry gave an exclamation. "She's going!" As the oarsmen looked, the bows heaved high into the air for a moment, and then the Aloha shot downward. A long, sullen plunge, and the schooner was gone. (See Chapter 8.)

In the bow of the canoe stood a figure that the juniors knew well—that of Soames.

The canoe paddled round the bay, following the shore, and all the time Soames stood erect, scanning the sands, his keen eyes watchful for a sign of survivors of the Aloha.

The juniors, deep in cover, scarcely breathed as they watched him.

That Soames knew that the schooner had sunk was certain. Doubtless the sea-lawyer had found the floating wreckage. But he could not know whether she had gone down with the whaleboat and all hands, or whether survivors had escaped in the boat. That was what he was now seeking to discover. The juniors could see, even at the distance, that his face was dark and bitter and unquiet. He knew that the juniors had found the buried treasure. He did not know whether it had been on board the Aloha or not; but if it had, and if the schooner had gone down with all hands, the treasure was lost—and all the sea-lawyer's crimes had been for nothing. Soames' frame of mind just then could not have been pleasant.

The Bounder gripped the automatic. "A fellow could get him from here!" he muttered.

"And bring the cannibals down on us!" said Redwing. "Don't be an ass, Smithy!"

The juniors watched in silence, their hearts beating. But the canoe glided on. Round the bay it went, Soames' keen eyes scanning every foot of the shore, evidently for a beached boat.

The circuit of the bay was made at last, and the canoe glided out to sea again to search farther along the northern shore.

"Gone!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath.

He gave Bunter a thump on his fat shoulder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Do you still think we'd better put to sea at once, fatty?" he inquired.

"Ow! Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "We're done for! Ow!"

Evidently the Owl of the Remove did not still think that it was a favourable moment for putting to sea.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Treasure Chest!

HARRY WHARTON watched the canoe out of sight, and breathed more freely when it was gone. The juniors had had a faint hope that Soames and the savages might believe that the Aloha had cleared the reefs in safety and put to sea, taking the treasure-seekers far beyond their reach. But the hope had been faint, and the sight of the searching canoe showed that it was unfounded. It was possible that Soames had seen the sinking of the Aloha from the high cliffs of the island; and, in any case, enough wreckage remained floating on the sea to indicate what had happened, and innumerable fragments were likely to be rolled on the reefs. The meticulous search that Soames was making of the northern shore of the island was proof that he had a pretty clear idea of what had happened, and that he expected—or at least hoped—to get on the track of survivors of the wreck. It was probable that a dozen canoes—perhaps a score or more—were searching the sea

and the island coasts, and, obviously, it was impossible for the castaways to put to sea while the search was going on under the tropical sunshine.

"After sundown, sir!" said Ben Dance.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"After sundown we'll try our luck," he said. "If they don't find us before dark, I fancy we shall be safe enough in putting to sea. We shall have to wait for night. And in the meantime—" He paused. "There's the treasure, you fellows. We've got to get it to the boat. We're not going to leave Caca and leave it behind."

"No fear!" agreed Bob.

"The no-fearfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "While the esteemed and ridiculous cannibals are searching the shores in their canoes we can cut across to the hills from here."

"That's it," said Harry. "So long as we keep out of sight from the lagoon, we're not likely to be spotted by the natives. Most of them are in the canoes, and those who landed are on the shore of the lagoon. But we'd better not all go. Three will be enough. Redwing had better go, as the treasure belongs to him—and two more."

"Waiting for orders, skipper!" said Bob.

Wharton smiled.

"Well, I'll go with Redwing—and you'd better come, Smithy. The others will stay here and look after the boat and lie doggo. For goodness' sake don't show yourselves over the rocks."

"The showfulness will not be terrific," assured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"It's settled, then," said Harry.

"I say, you fellows, I think you'd better not go," said Billy Bunter. "If you get spotted you'll bring the niggers down on us again!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Well, look here, bring back some bananas and coconuts, anyhow," said Bunter. "That's important!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was past noon now, and the island was in a haze of heat. The three juniors who were to make the expedition prepared to start. In the blaze of the noontide, exertion was not welcome; but it was very probable that the lazy natives would be lying in the shade till the heat of the day had passed, which made it all the safer for the treasure-seekers.

Wharton had brought away the Aloha's binoculars, and he swept the shore of the bay through the glasses before venturing out. But the bay was solitary, and no sign of a canoe was to be seen. The juniors had no doubt that Soames and his savage crew were searching the further inlets along the northern shore of Caca.

Harry Wharton and Tom Redwing and the Bounder emerged from the rocky gully in the cliffs and followed the sandy shore till they were able to strike inland through the cliffs.

The great peak that rose on the northern extremity of the island was their guide. In the lower hills, on the eastern slope of the peak, lay the ravine where the juniors had discovered the sea-chest, buried by Black Peter so long ago.

Beyond the cliffs, high bush lay before them—a cover that screened them from all possible observation, but which made the finding of their way somewhat difficult.

Tom Redwing was their guide, and he led them, compass in hand.

Hitherto, all the juniors' excursions on the treasure-island had been made from the lagoon, on the eastern side, and so they were in entirely new country now.

It was after three hours' weary tramp in the oven-like heat of the high bush, guided only by Redwing's compass and by glimpses of the peak, that they suddenly sighted a gleam of water ahead in the sunshine.

"The river!" said Redwing.

All was plain sailing now. The sandy stream was before them, that was familiar enough to their eyes. The high bush was left behind them, and they passed on through open coconut woods to the bank of the stream. They followed the course of the stream into the hills that lay on the eastern side of the peak, treading in their own footsteps of the day before. But now they were no longer seeking for signs on the path to the treasure as on their previous expedition into the hills. The treasure had been found, and it remained only to lift it.

Weary, but not thinking of a rest, the three juniors tramped up the rocky,

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sun-baked ravine, where Black Peter so long ago had left the skeleton marking the cache. They reached the upper end of the ravine, where they had stood the previous day when Ben Dance's signal had called them back to the defence of the schooner.

Eagerly they looked into the fissure between two great rocks, where the skeleton sign had indicated the burial place of the treasure. All was as they had left it—the open cavity dug in the lava, the pick and spade on the sea-chest half revealed by the excavation.

"All serene!" said the Bounder, with a breath of relief. "Soames has not been here yet."

"He would not be likely to find the place without the chart," said Wharton. "I fancy he believes, too, that we had the treasure on the Aloha. He knows that we had found it."

The Bounder picked up the spade.

"We'll soon have it out now."

Clink, clink, clink!

The loose lava was rapidly shovelled away, and the entire lid of the old iron-bound oak chest revealed.

"No need to lift out the chest," said Harry. "We could not carry it to the boat, anyhow. Get off the lid."

The lava, packed and tramped down over the chest, had preserved the wood. But the lock was eaten by rust, and broke under a blow of the pick. The Bounder stepped out of the excavation.

"You open it, Reddy!"

Redwing smiled and bent over the great chest and raised the heavy lid.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Pearls of Price!

THE three juniors stared eagerly into the chest.

Many a long year had passed since Black Peter had buried the chest in that remote recess of Caca, and since the grim old South Sea rover had slain the hapless blacks who had gone ashore with him and left their whitening bones as a clue to the treasure. For long years the chest had lain hidden from all eyes, never again to be beheld by the eyes of Black Peter himself. On a distant beach Black Peter had fallen under the knife of Silvio, the half-caste, and Silvio, in his turn, had perished at the treasure island. Soames, the mutineer and sea-lawyer, had come near to success in his bid for the treasure, but, at long last, it was Tom Redwing, the nephew of the old rover, and his friends who were destined to "lift" it. With eager eyes the juniors examined their prize.

According to what Ben Dance had told them, who had had it from the lips of Black Peter himself, the treasure consisted of pearls, the collection of a long and lawless life in the South Seas. The pearls, doubtless, had been come by honestly, for Black Peter had been a trader and a pearler, as well as a "black-bird" and many other things. But from what they knew of the old desperado, the juniors would not have been surprised to learn that he had been a pirate as well. And they had little doubt, when they looked into the chest, that Black Peter had, at least, dabbled in piracy when he was not trading or pearling or kidnapping blacks for the island plantations.

The chest, large as it was, was crammed to the lid, and the contents were many and various. The juniors turned out the contents on the rocks. There were many South Sea curiosities, which, no doubt, Black Peter had intended to take home with him when he

sailed for his native land had he lived. There were strings of old beads, strangely woven, much prized by the South Sea natives; strange and curious shells, corals of all colours and shapes, many of them valuable, as the juniors could see, though they did not know the value. There were curious weapons from widely-separated islands of the Pacific, carved ivory ornaments that must have come from China, a pair of old Spanish pistols richly inlaid, and a number of gold and silver ornaments which it was scarcely possible that Black Peter had obtained in the way of trade.

Tom Redwing's face set as he handled them. It was to him that his grim old uncle had left the treasure, remembering, in his last moments, the nephew whom he had not seen since Tom was an infant. And Tom thought kindly of him for that kindly thought. But the sailorman's son had no intention of touching valuables which plainly had never belonged to Black Peter. What he could honestly take he would take, and no more. Wharton read that in his face and gave a nod of approval, and the Bounder, if he thought differently, said nothing.

It was almost at the bottom of the packed chest that Tom turned out at last a little sandalwood box.

It had a sliding lid, and he slid back the lid. The box was packed with softest down, and in the down gleamed and glimmered more than fifty pearls.

The juniors caught their breath as they looked at them.

Of the price of pearls they knew little, but they could see that these were wonderful specimens, and evidently of great value.

"My hat!" murmured the Bounder.

He picked out the largest pearl and lifted it to the sunlight, and examined it closely.

He drew in a deep breath as he did so.

"Do you know, Reddy, that this pearl alone must be worth more than five hundred pounds?" he said.

"So much as that?" said Tom, with a smile.

"As much, or more!"

"We're in luck," said Tom.

"You're in luck, you mean," said the Bounder, with emphasis. "It's settled long ago that nobody else touches the treasure."

"Quite settled!" said Harry. "Once we get this stuff safe away, Redwing, you'll be a rich man. And you'll come back to Greyfriars."

Tom Redwing's eyes danced.

To return to Greyfriars School, to share a study with the Bounder as of old, to be once more a Greyfriars man—that had been his dream. He had not allowed himself to hope too much, but it had been a happy thought to him all through the perilous voyaging of the treasure-seekers. And now it was to be realised.

"It seems too jolly good to be true," he said.

"The truefulness is terrific, as Inky would say," answered Harry Wharton, with a smile. "If Smithy is right about the value—"

"It's worth more than that, that one pearl!" said Vernon-Smith. "And there are a dozen nearly as good, and the others are all valuable. You're provided for life, Reddy. You'll be able to stand your own fees at Greyfriars without missing the money."

"I'd rather all the fellows took a share," said Tom.

"Rubbish!"

"Rot!"

"My pater will get the stuff sold for you. It's in his line," said the Bounder.

"My hat! He will open his eyes wide when he sees this lot. Thousands of pounds, old chap, and all yours!"

"Not all mine," said Tom. "The Aloha has been lost, and it was lost in finding the treasure. I shall insist on your father taking the value of the schooner, Smithy."

The Bounder nodded.

"Well, that's fair," he agreed. "The pater will see that, as a business man. But the rest—"

"And I shall provide for Ben Dance. I owe it all to his good faith," said Redwing.

"That's so, too. But there will be enough left to make you rich."

The Bounder replaced the pearl in the box and closed it. He handed the sandalwood box to Redwing, who slipped it into his wallet. The most valuable part of the contents of the great sea-chest was easily carried.

"And the rest?" said Wharton.

"We can take a few of the corals as curiosities," said Redwing. "But the other stuff must be left. We can't carry it. As for those gold and silver things we couldn't touch them." He flushed. "How my uncle came by them I can't say, and I think I'd rather not know. But I cannot touch them."

"I think you're right," said Harry quietly.

The Bounder opened his lips to speak, but closed them again. Tom Redwing heaped the contents back into the chest and dropped the heavy lid.

The loose lava was packed back into the cavity, and stamped down. Little remained to indicate that the cache had ever been opened, or that it was there at all. If Soames sought the treasure, what remained of it in the chest was never likely to reward him.

The Greyfriars treasure-seekers turned away from the spot. They had been successful—the pearls had been lifted. It remained only to escape from the island and return to civilisation. They tramped away cheerfully down the rocky ravine, under the slanting rays of the western sun, leaving behind them for ever the treasure-chest of Black Peter, hidden for all time among the lava rocks.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In the High Bush!

TOM REDWING halted, and held up his hand for silence.

Harry Wharton and the Bounder stopped in their tracks.

Redwing, compass in hand, was the guide through the high bush that lay between the sandy stream and the bay under Pirate Point. In the high bush the shadows were thickening as the juniors tramped back towards the northern shore.

On their left the great Peak was a blaze of gold and purple in the sunset; of other landmarks they could see nothing—the bush hid everything. Weary as they were, the three juniors tramped on resolutely, anxious to get out of the bush before nightfall. But Redwing's comrades halted at once when he gave the sign.

The sailorman's son had bent his head to listen. Some sound had come to his ears through the bush; and a moment or two later it reached the ears of his companions. It was the sound of a man running.

"Cover!" breathed Redwing.

The sound came rapidly nearer—the sound of a desperate man running hard in the bush, trampling down the undergrowth, tearing through thick lianas, stumbling, and rising again—a man running for his life!

The three juniors backed among the thickets, wary and watchful. The running feet were behind them, as if the man, whoever he was, had found their track through the tangled bush, and was taking advantage of it for his flight. In the high bush the light was dim; but hidden from sight, the juniors saw the runner at last, staggering now with fatigue, but still running on. They recognised Talupa, the Tonga Island cook of the Aloha.

He paused a moment, within sight of the juniors, breathing in great gulps and looking back. The sound of running feet was still heard, but it was from other feet. Pursuers were on the track of the Tonga Islander in the bush.

The juniors heard the black cook give a low groan of despair. They could guess that the wretched man had been

eluding the hunting cannibals all the hot day, and was exhausted. They had not expected to see again any of the native crew of the Aloha. It was almost certain that the Kanakas, escaping across the reef, had been intercepted by the natives, and speared as they fled. But Talupa, evidently, had escaped so far.

He seemed at the end of his tether now. After that brief pause he ran on again, but his steps were faltering and uncertain. Behind him came the steady, rapid tread of active pursuers.

Wharton gripped the rifle.

He hesitated.

To fire on the cannibals was to betray the juniors to the enemy; a rifle-shot would ring far and wide, and it would be an infallible guide to Soames. The position of the treasure-seekers was already perilous enough; the report of a firearm, echoing over the island, would make it immensely more perilous.

The Bounder caught his arm.

"Don't be a fool!" he breathed. "Do you want to bring those fiends down on us?"

"No. But they will run him down in a few minutes!" muttered Wharton.

"Let them!" snapped the Bounder. "The black brute deserted the schooner. We might have saved the Aloha if the crew had stuck to her. We're not throwing our lives away for a deserter!"

Wharton did not reply. The running feet of pursuing savages were close at hand now, and it was not safe to speak. Along the trampled track left by the Tonga man three brawny blacks came speeding, spear in hand, their harsh, savage faces full of murderous eagerness. Like dim spectres they flitted by the bush that hid the juniors, and rushed on after the fleeing Tonga man, their spears raised in readiness to strike.

A yell sounded at a little distance; for a moment the juniors fancied that it was the death-yell of Talupa. Wharton's face was white and set. He repented now that he had not fired on the cannibals now as they passed, risk or no risk.

But a moment later there was a fresh trampling in the high bush. Evidently

(Continued on next page.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

A SMALL METAL BADGE.

A L. writes from South Croydon to say that he would like every supporter of the MAGNET to wear a metal button to show to the world that he read the famous paper. This is the MAGNET League idea again. A. L.'s "suggestive remark" is that readers should send in a small sum in stamps to pay for the badge. But I do not want to run my chums into expense. Is it not enough that fellows appreciate the MAGNET? Once they get together the fact soon comes out. Many thanks, all the same.

ROBERT DONALD OGILVY.

R. R., of Sparkhill, has read the MAGNET for years, and he is disappointed at the scant notice taken of Ogilvy. Cannot this Removite have a yarn to himself? I am turning the suggestion over to Mr. Frank Richards.

"THE TEN-THIRTY LIMITED."

This is the title of a railway book published by the Great Western Railway Company, and obtainable through any bookseller for a shilling. I advise A. C. (Walsall) who asks where he can obtain a book about the railway, to order a copy. The Great Western Railway occupies a position second to none. It has a tremendous mileage, and its lines cover half England, while linked up in its history are such men as Isambard Brunel, and Sir Daniel Gooch.

A POOR SORT OF PAL.

A Magnetite up north writes of trouble in the family. He was asked to go on a holiday with a chum and his people. What happened? No sooner had he and his chum reached the sea than this strange kind of pal went off with somebody else. Result, the fellow who had accepted the invitation found himself adrift; most of the time he was on his own. Downright shabby treatment this. To make the thing worse, the disloyal ex-chum is huffy and standoffish. That may be his conscience giving him a high old time. He has

nothing to complain about. My correspondent asks what he is to do. The advice is nothing. Just leave his former friend alone. No use throwing away good friendship on one who doesn't appreciate it.

Next Saturday's Programme:

"SKINNER TRIES IT ON!"

By Frank Richards.

A novel long complete story of the chums of Greyfriars.

"GOLD FOR THE GETTING!"

By Stanton Hope.

Another exciting instalment of our popular serial.

"TURNING THE TABLES!"

By Dicky Nugent.

The laugh of the week.

"PORTSMOUTH."

An interesting article dealing with the Portsmouth footer club. Order early, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE GREYFRIARS CASTAWAYS!

(Continued from previous page.)

The trampling feet came back towards the juniors. Talupa had doubled the liana-laced trees, and escaped the thrust of the spears. The juniors could not see him, but they heard him stumbling only a few yards away. There was another yell—this time unmistakably the triumphant yell of the savages who had sighted their prey again, and were rushing down on the wretched fugitive.

Wharton could stand no more. The Tonga Islander was himself little better than a faithless savage; but to let him be murdered almost under his eyes was too much for Wharton. He gripped the rifle, and pushed through the bush, heedless of the Bounder's detaining hand. In a minute or less he came on Talupa; the black cook was sprawling helplessly, exhausted, on the ground, and the three Caca Islanders were speeding down on him, their spears raised for the thrust that Talupa had no chance of escaping this time.

Wharton raised the rifle to his shoulder.

Crack, crack!

Two swift shots and two of the cannibals rolled over, screaming, in the bush. The third barely escaped a third shot as he turned and raced away in panic-stricken flight.

Talupa sat up dazedly in the grass.

He stared at Wharton like a man in a dream.

"You white marster!" he stuttered.

"You've done it now!" said the Bounder bitterly, as the fleeing footsteps of the escaping cannibal died away. "There'll be a swarm of them here soon."

Wharton did not answer.

He knew that as well as Vernon-Smith knew it, but he did not regret that he had intervened. And he could see that Redwing, at least, approved.

"You feller Talupa, you come 'long white marster!" said Harry.

"Yes, sar."

Talupa staggered to his feet.

"White marster, him got ship?" he asked.

"Ship him go bottom sea; got boat," said Harry. "You come 'long!"

"Yes, sar. Come plenty quick!"

"We'd better put it on!" said the Bounder sardonically. "We've got a chance of joining the other fellows before we're found by Soames and his gang, and we may as well all be done in together!"

"Oh, rats! Get on!" said Harry.

The juniors hurried on through the bush, Talupa keeping pace with them. Fatigue was almost forgotten now, with death at their very heels. Panting for breath in the oven-like heat of the bush, streaming with perspiration, the juniors tramped on as fast as their legs would carry them, and they came out of the high bush at last, and reached the sandy shore of the bay. They tramped along the cliffs to the rocky gully where the rest of the party had been left with the whaleboat.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry greeted them with a rather anxious face as they tramped into the gully and sank down almost exhausted on the boulders.

"We heard a shot," said Ben Dance.

"Are they after you?" asked Johnny Bull.

The Bounder gave a mocking laugh.

"Wharton had to chip in to save that

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black rascal Talupa from the cannibals," he said. "It will bring the whole horde of them down on us. The game's up now!"

"Then Wharton did quite right," said Frank Nugent quietly.

"The rightfulness was terrific!" concurred Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Caca man wantee make kai-kai of Talupa," said the black cook. "White marster him shootee Caca man!"

"Good!" said Nugent.

"It's the finish for us," said the Bounder. "Soames knows now for certain that we're on the island, and those black brutes will follow our track through the bush easily enough. Look out for the cooking-ovens."

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"What about the treasure?" asked Nugent.

"We've got the pearls," said Redwing.

He opened the sandalwood box, and there was a general exclamation from the juniors as they gazed at the glowing pearls.

"It will be dark soon," said Harry Wharton quietly. "Soames will not find us before dark. As soon as the sun's gone we'll run the boat down into the bay and take our chance."

The last rays of the sun lingered in the rocky gully. But the tropic night came suddenly and with startling swiftness, land and sea were blotted from sight.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

No Escape!

HARRY WHARTON stood at the opening of the rocky gully in the cliffs and looked out over the sandy shore and the bay.

All was dark.

The sun had disappeared behind the hills of Caca, and the few stars that glimmered in the sky served only to make darkness visible.

Wharton could hear the wash of the sea in the bay, but hardly a glimmer of the water could be seen.

He turned back to his comrades.

"All seems to be clear," he said. "Anyhow, we've got to take the chance. If we stay another day on the island we're pretty certain to be rooted out. You fellows agree?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry.

"We've got to take the chance," growled the Bounder. "There's nothing else to be done. But—"

"No good grousing, anyhow!" interrupted Wharton. "You can leave that to Bunter."

"Oh, really, Wharton!" came the voice of the Owl of the Remove from the darkness.

"Get going!" said Tom Redwing quietly.

Talupa was staring from the gully at the blackness of the bay. As the juniors gathered round the whaleboat the Tonga Islander came over to them.

"White marster him takey out boat?" asked Talupa.

"Yes," said Harry. "Lend a hand with it, Talupa."

"White marster no sayvee canoe plenty watchee."

"What?" exclaimed Wharton.

The Tonga man pointed towards the bay.

"Plenty canoe watchee" he said.

"Oh, shut up, you!" growled the Bounder. "You can't see in the dark, I suppose?"

"Tonga man him see canoe on water," said Talupa. "You waitee more light bimeby, you see."

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"We'd better make sure about that before we run out the boat, you fellows," he said. "We don't want to run right into the hands of the niggers. If it comes to a scrap we can put up a better fight here."

"Much better!" said Harry. "We should have no chance at all in an open boat with the canoes round us. Are you sure, Talupa?"

"Plenty sayvee."

Wharton went back to the mouth of the gully. In the darkness that enveloped sea and land he could see nothing, only here and there a gleam of rippling water met his eyes. The Tonga man by his side pointed.

"Canoe him wait," he said.

Wharton's sight was quite good, but it was not equal to that of the islander. He could see nothing, but he had no doubt that the Tonga man could see some sign of the enemy. More and more stars were coming out in the sky now, and in a short time it would be possible for the juniors to ascertain whether the bay was watched.

"We'd better wait a little and make sure," said Harry.

"And lose time!" grunted the Bounder.

"Wait!" grunted Ben Dance.

"Half an hour will not make much difference," answered Wharton. "Soames must know that we landed somewhere on the northern side of the island, and unless he's a fool he can guess that we shall try to make a break for the open sea after dark. He knows as well as we do that it's our only chance. It would be like the cunning villain to keep on the watch out of sight, waiting for us to run into his hands. We've got to make sure before we put out the boat."

The juniors waited.

As a matter of fact, not one of them doubted that the Tonga man was right, and that he had discerned some sign of the watching canoe that was invisible to their eyes. Even the Bounder did not doubt it, though he was reckless enough to have taken the chance.

In tense anxiety the juniors waited and watched from the rocks. More and more stars came out, till the heavens were sown with gleaming points of fire. Clearer and clearer the starlight grew on the bay and the shelving sands. The sands, the surrounding cliffs, the wide stretch of water came more clearly into sight. And far out on the water, under the shadow of Pirate Point, a drifting shadow was seen at last. Even then the juniors would not have known that it was a canoe, but for the Tonga man's warning. But they knew it now.

Of what Soames had discovered, or surmised, the juniors knew nothing; but they knew now that he, at least, considered it likely that they had taken refuge in the bay. A war-canoe, crowded with savages, lay under the shadow of Pirate Point, watching. Had the whaleboat put to sea nothing could have saved the Greyfriars party.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We should have run right into the brutes!"

"That's a canoe, right enough!" said Harry. "They would have heard our oars and closed in on us in the dark, and—"

He broke off. All the fellows knew what would have happened then—the boarding of the whaleboat by a rush of savages, with thrusting spears, defeat and massacre, and the cooking-oven for the survivors—and the treasure of Black Peter rewarding Soames for his treachery.



Crack ! Crack ! The last shot had been fired ; there was no time now to slip in a cartridge. Harry Wharton clubbed his rifle and crashed the butt upon the kinky heads that swarmed up the barricade. The Greyfriars juniors knew that it was the finish, and that they were fighting a lost fight against overwhelming numbers. (See Chapter 13.)

"White marster him savvee now?" said Talupa.

"Yes," said Harry. "I saved your life, Talupa, and you have saved ours. We should have run right into the trap."

The Bounder was silent. Even he had to admit that the saving of the black cook had been the saving of the treasure-seekers.

"Um boat no washy-washy now?" asked the Tonga Islander.

"No."

It was evidently useless to attempt to put to sea with the cannibals on the watch at the mouth of the bay. Even if the juniors could have handled the savage crew, the first sounds of strife would have brought swarms of others to the spot. But in a hand-to-hand fight in an open boat the juniors would have had no chance against twice or thrice their number of blacks.

"We've got to stick it out here," said Harry, after a long pause. "If we've got to fight we've got a strong position here, and can put up a scrap. It would be throwing our lives away to take out the boat now."

The moon came up at last over Caca.

Then the bay was turned into a sheet of molten silver, and the long black canoe in the distance was plain to all eyes, even to Billy Bunter as he blinked out of the cliffs.

Every face in the Greyfriars party was serious now. Escape from the island was cut off for the present, at least. It was likely enough that the

Caca savages, with the impatience natural to the savage, the irresponsibility of the untutored mind, would tire of the whole affair, and return to their homes; but the juniors knew that Soames would not tire. How strong his influence might be with the savages, by what devices or promises he was keeping them under his lead, they could not tell; but so long as Soames could help it, at all events, the Caca natives would not abandon the contest. To venture out of the gully in the cliffs was to invite destruction; to remain was to risk being hemmed in by the blacks. It was a choice of evils, and the juniors chose the lesser.

But it was a night of tense anxiety. The treasure was in their hands which had lured them to that lonely isle of the Pacific; but they could not help thinking that the treasure, which had been so fatal to others, seemed destined now to be fatal to themselves.

Slowly the night wore away. The juniors watched and slept alternately.

They were glad to see the sun rise on the sea once more.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Eruption !

"LOOK out!"

The Greyfriars party had eaten their breakfast in grim silence. Herbert Vernon-Smith, lying among the rocks, was watching the sandy beach and the bay,

glowing again in the tropical sunshine. It was about the middle of the morning that he called out softly.

"They're coming?" asked Wharton.

"Yes."

"Now for the last round," muttered Bob Cherry.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

"Better get hold of a bush knife, you fat funk!" said the Bounder. "Put up a fight at the finish."

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter was not likely to be of much use in the coming struggle. But all the other fellows grasped their weapons, including Talupa. If it came to selling their lives, they meant to sell them dearly.

The gully in which the juniors had camped was merely a split in the great cliffs that enclosed the bay. High cliffs closed it in on either side, and at the end, the only opening being to the sands. There the ground was rugged and broken, with scattered boulders; and during the morning the juniors had piled up rocks to make a barricade. It was a flimsy enough defence, but at least it would stop a rush of the savages.

Behind the rocks they gathered with grim faces, and waited, keeping out of sight behind the boulders as they watched the shore.

There were half a dozen canoes to be seen in the bay now, but only two or three blacks were in each; they had

handed their crews. More than twenty savages were in sight on the beach, and the juniors could hear sounds of others out of sight beyond the cliffs. It was easy enough to guess that their track had been followed through the high bush, leading their enemies to the bay on the northern shore of Caca—though that Soames already suspected them to be there was certain from the fact that an incessant watch had been kept on the bay.

The enemy were at hand now.

Some of the blacks were searching along the sands, as if for traces of foot-prints, others were staring at the circling cliffs in a way that demonstrated that they were assured that the "white marsters" were hidden in some rocky recess there.

So far, nothing had been seen of Soames; but it was certain that he was not far away.

The Bounder uttered a sudden, suppressed exclamation.

"Look!"

It was Soames!

Round a bulging cliff the sea-lawyer came in sight, in the midst of a crowd of blacks, of whom there were now fifty or sixty to be seen.

Soames was not thirty yards away from the barricaded opening of the gully, and the juniors saw his face clearly in the sunlight.

It was not the impassive face they knew; it was dark and clouded, and lined with anxiety. Soames' position as leader of a mob of cannibal savages was not a happy one; it was probably only by a promise of plunder that he had induced them to follow his lead, a promise that he would find it difficult to make good now that the Aloha had gone down. His life was in the power of these wretches, and no one knew better than Soames the fickleness of the barbarian. A defeat, even a disappointment, might cause them to turn on him, and consign him to the cooking-oven. The night, which had been bitterly anxious for Harry Wharton & Co., had probably been as anxious for James Soames.

His quick, keen eyes were searching the cliffs. He came along with the mob of blacks, scanning every opening and cranny of the line of cliffs as he came. Beyond doubt he knew that the Greyfriars party were close at hand. It was, indeed, only a matter of minutes now before he came upon their rocky retreat.

"The rifle—quick!" breathed the Bounder. "Now's the chance to give that scoundrel what he has asked for!"

Wharton pushed the rifle forward; but he hesitated to pull trigger. Even at that terrible moment there was something repugnant in the idea of shooting down a man off his guard, from cover.

"Fool!" muttered the Bounder.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, at all events, had no such scruples. He sighted the automatic carefully through a crevice of the boulders, taking aim at Soames, who was now quite near at hand.

The report rang suddenly, sharply, among the cliffs.

The juniors saw Soames start and clap his hand to his shoulder. But he did not fall.

For a second his face blazed with fury; and then he was shouting in the native tongue. The natives, taken by surprise by the sudden shot, were staring stupidly towards the gully; but Soames' shouting voice roused them to action. A dozen blacks, spear in hand,

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rushed into the gully, and the juniors had no more attention to give Soames.

Crack, crack, crack!

Wharton fired steadily with the magazine rifle, and the automatic and the revolver rapped out rapid shots. There were wild yells from the savages as the bullets tore among them, sending man after man reeling over. Of the dozen who had rushed forward only three reached the barrier of rocks, and as they clambered furiously over they were struck down by the defenders.

All along the crowded beach there was now wild yelling and calling, and the voice of Soames was heard above the rest. More and more of the blacks crowded into the narrow gully, with savage faces and blazing eyes, clambering at the piled boulders like wild beasts, glaring, yelling, thrusting with their spears.

It was a fight to a finish now.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Three of the juniors pumped out lead, while the rest wielded bush knife or axe. Hideous, fierce faces glared within a few feet of the desperate defenders as they still made their defence good.

In the midst of the fearful din, which seemed as if pandemonium had broken loose on the beach, there came from the interior of the island a deep and terrible rumbling sound, unheeded, almost unnoticed, in the fierce heat of the conflict.

It was the voice of the volcano.

"Back up!" panted Bob Cherry, as he slashed with his heavy bush knife across a glaring face; and the savage dropped back, yelling.

Crack, crack!

The last shot had been fired; there was no time now to slip in a cartridge. Wharton clubbed the rifle, and crashed the butt upon the kinky heads that swarmed up the barricade. A brawny savage clambered over, only to fall under a coral rock in the hands of Talupa, and gasp out his life on the inner side of the defences. But all the juniors knew that it was the finish; they were fighting a lost fight against overwhelming numbers, and it was only the grim tenacity of their race that kept them fighting still.

But the burning sun blaze that had streamed down into the rocky gully was dimmed now; even in those wild moments the juniors were conscious of a black shadow that had darkened the sun, without knowing what it was. Deep and terrible, like the roar of thunder, sounded the voice of the volcano. From the summit of the fire-mountain—unseen beyond the cliffs—poured thick masses of smoke, shot with flame, that darkened the heavens over the treasure island. And suddenly—like the strange, shifting scene of a dream to the dazed juniors—the attack ceased and melted away; and they were aware that the blacks were running.

Wild yells still rang over the beach and echoed among the crannies of the cliffs, but they were yells of fear.

Wharton leaned on the rifle and panted for breath.

He could scarcely believe his eyes.

A minute more, and the swarm of blacks would have been pouring over the barrier of rocks, overwhelming the defenders with their mass. And now he saw them running, yelling with fear. What had happened—if it was not a miracle?

"The volcano!" panted Ben Danec.

"The volcano!" repeated Wharton dully.

"It's the eruption."

It was the eruption at last—long threatened and now in full activity.

Whether it was superstition, or terror of the burning lava, the juniors could not tell; but the eruption of the island volcano had terrified the savages into wild flight.

Looking from the rocky gully, the juniors could see them streaming across the beach at frantic speed, making for the canoes.

It was like a dream; but it was real. The savage cannibals, only a few moments before threatening the whole party with destruction, were running as if for their lives.

"Thank heaven!" panted Nugent.

The darkness of the blackened sky was shot with red flames. Beneath their feet the juniors could feel the solid earth trembling. The sun had completely disappeared from sight, and a dim twilight reigned on the island under the rolling black clouds of smoke. The rumble and roar of the volcano were deafening.

Wharton, with his brain almost spinning, dashed the sweat from his brow and stared out over the bay. Canoe after canoe was racing out to the open sea. Scarce a dozen of the savages were still on the beach, save the dead and wounded that lay round the mouth of the gully and under the barricade.

He caught a glimpse of Soames in the dimness—the sea-lawyer was among the handful of savages that remained on the beach—shouting, gesticulating, raving with rage, at this disaster to all his plans, this utterly unexpected defeat at the hands of Nature.

But the blacks paid Soames no heed; they were crowding frantically into the last canoe, thinking only of flight.

Wharton saw Soames, in his rage, seize one of the blacks by the shoulder, as if to hold him back by force. The man turned on him like a wild beast and struck him down. Then the last of the blacks crowded into the canoe and fled across the bay to the sea. The sea-lawyer lay stretched on the beach where he had fallen.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Sea!

BEN DANCE tapped Wharton on the shoulder.

In the roar of the eruption, filling the air with thunder, it was difficult to make even a shout heard. The wooden-legged seaman put his lips to Wharton's ear to shout:

"Better get out of this, sir. There'll be heavy falls among the cliffs—"

"Right!"

The whole island seemed to be rocking under the terrible force of the volcanic eruption. Already loose rocks were tumbling down the cliffs, splintering where they fell.

There was nothing further to be apprehended from the savages. The canoes were already hidden from sight, in the black pall that hung over the bay, fleeing out to sea. Wounded savages were crawling away from the gully whimpering with fear, giving no heed now to the "white marsters," thinking only of their own overmastering terrors.

"Drag the boat out, you fellows!" shouted Wharton.

It was dangerous to linger in the rocky gully even for moments with rocks tumbling on all sides. But the whale-boat was the only salvation of the castaways, and they could not think of abandoning it. Every hand was rapidly at work. The rock barrier was torn aside, and every fellow grasped the

whaleboat to drag it away. Even Billy Bunter lent a hand.

The boat was rushed over the rocks, down to the sandy beach.

The waters of the bay, so short a time before as placid as a lake, were wildly agitated. Heavy rollers came in from the Pacific, and broke, roaring, in surf on the beach. Ceaselessly came the rumble and roar of the volcano and the sound of falling rocks and crashing trees.

Amid the darkness rose a glare of wide flame, from the interior of the island, where the burning lava had set the woods on fire. From shore to shore of Caca pandemonium was reigning.

"Quick with the boat, sir!" panted Ben Dance.

"What are you stopping for, Wharton?" roared the Bounder.

"Soames—"

"Hang Soames!"

Wharton did not answer.

He ran along the beach to the spot where Soames had been struck down. The surf was breaking over him, and he did not stir. Wharton bent over the inert form. Blood was on his clothes from the bullet-wound in his shoulder, but Wharton knew that he was not dead. The crashing blow from a brawny savage fist had knocked him senseless, but it could scarcely have killed him.

Wharton seized him and dragged him out of reach of the breaking surf.

Soames' eyes were closed, his face white as marble; he was completely insensible. He lay like a log at the feet of the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton!" yelled the Bounder.

Harry Wharton turned.

"You fellows lend a hand!" he shouted.

Three or four of the juniors ran up. The Bounder's face was dark with rage.

"Let him lie! Come and launch the boat, you fool!"

The juniors looked very dubiously at Wharton. The man was a villain; almost all their disasters were due to his villainy and his treachery. But to leave him there— It was evident that ere long the beach would be flooded by the wild waters rolling in.

"We cannot leave him here," said Harry. "He is a scoundrel, but we are white men, and we can't do it."

The other fellows hardly heard his words in the roar of the rumbling volcano, but they caught his meaning.

"Wharton's skipper," said Bob Cherry.

"You shan't take him in the boat!" shouted Vernon-Smith.

"Stand aside!"

The Bounder clenched his hands furiously. Tom Redwing caught his arm and pulled him aside.

Wharton and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull picked up the insensible man, and carried him to the whaleboat. He was dumped down in the boat, and lay there without motion.

"You ain't saving that sea-lawyer, sir?" exclaimed Ben Dance.

"Yes!" snapped Wharton.

"It's madness, sir! He'll turn on us at the first chance—"

"We won't give him a chance. Get in, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the boat.

It was no easy matter to launch the boat, with the rollers coming into the bay. But the juniors got it afloat at last, and clambered in, drenched to the skin. Bob Cherry, up to his neck in water, was the last. The whaleboat floated out on the tossing bay, with Ben Dance at the lines and six of the juniors at the oars. Tossing and rocking on the

NEXT SATURDAY'S WINNER!

Skinner, of the Remove, never a pal of Harry Wharton's, sees in the absence of the captain of the Remove a chance to score off him. It's a cute dodge he employs, but it's a cuter one the chums of the Remove spring on Harold Skinner, with what result you'll learn from

"SKINNER TRIES IT ON!"

Next Saturday's grand complete story
By Frank Richards.

Don't miss it, whatever you do, boys!



surging waters, the juniors pulled for the open sea, past Pirate Point, which was veiled in clouds of smoke.

Dim twilight reigned around them, lighted by the blaze of burning woods on the island, and the glare of the roaring volcano. On the shadowed sea not a sign was to be seen of the savages' canoes. From the mouth of the bay the whaleboat pulled out into the Pacific, and the roar of the volcano grew fainter behind them.

Far out on the waters they rested on their oars and looked back. Against the smoke-blackened sky Caca stood out like an island of fire. From end to end of the island the woods, dry as tinder from the heat of the sun, had caught fire, and were blazing like torches, till extinguished by the deepening tide of lava pouring down the sides of the volcano. Hissing steam rose in great clouds on every beach, where the streams of lava had already reached the sea, and were pouring into the ocean and into the lagoon. Smoke and steam and the glare of flame enveloped the treasure-island, and over all hung the pall of black smoke—a wild and terrifying spectacle to the eyes of the castaways in the whaleboat.

But the juniors lost little time. Whether the savages were likely to return they did not know; but they were anxious to get clear of Caca while the way was open. They bent to the oars again, and the whaleboat drew farther and farther away from the island of treasure and terror, beyond the radius of the smoke-pall, and into the sunshine. The island of smoke and fire sank lower into the sea behind the boat; the rumble of the eruption following the fugitives across the sea like the growl of thunder.

A low groan startled Wharton; he had forgotten Soames. The sea-lawyer, stretched in the bottom of the boat,

raised his head, and looked wildly round him. He pressed his hand to his aching brow, and drew himself up to a sitting posture, and stared back at Caca. Then he looked round at the juniors, and his look was strange.

"You have escaped, then," said Soames.

"Looks like it, old bean," said Bob Cherry cheerily. The horrors of the last day on Caca did not seem to have diminished Bob's cheerfulness.

"You've left the island?"

Soames stared back at Caca again.

"And the treasure?"

"We've got the treasure, you scoundrel!" said the Bounder, with a look of bitter hostility. "We've got the treasure, and we've escaped from your cannibal friends, and we're heading for Nuka-Hiva. You've been put on this boat against my will, but I can tell you this, at the first sign of trickery, you go over the side with a bullet through your head first to make sure of you! You're beaten all along the line, and if you prefer a prison to the sharks you'll keep quiet!"

Soames was silent for some moments.

"Beaten all along the line!" he said at last, repeating the Bounder's words. "Beaten by a mob of schoolboys!" He sank back wearily. "You may put that bullet through my head as soon as you please, Master Herbert. I care little now."

And Soames lay silent while the whaleboat surged on over the sea and the treasure island sank out of sight below the horizon.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Adrift on the Pacific!

ANOTHER day dawned on the Pacific, and it saw the chums of Greyfriars alone on the wide sea, the trackless waters rolling round them without a sign of land.

The previous afternoon Caca had been dropped below the horizon, and during the night the whaleboat had drifted on. In the rising sunlight the juniors searched the sea with keen glances, but no sign of the treasure island, no sign of a sail greeted them. They might almost have been the only inhabitants of a world of water. If they had had any lingering misgiving regarding the cannibals of Caca, they were relieved of it now. Caca Island and its savage inhabitants, the fire mountain, and its torrents of lava were far away.

The morning was calm and sunny. The whaleboat, with a total crew of eleven, and packed with provisions and water-kegs, was well loaded, and all on board were glad to see that there was no sign of rough weather. Well supplied as they were, so far, with food and water, the juniors agreed that both should be carefully rationed. The Greyfriars party had been so glad to get clear of the cannibal island that they had given little thought to the perils of a voyage in an open boat. Indeed, it would have been of little use, since there was no choice in the matter. But now that they were far on the wide Pacific in the whaleboat, they realised that perils were still thick around them. How long it might be before they reached land, or before they were picked up, it was impossible to say, and they were very well aware that it was possible that they might never reach land and might never be picked up.

There was only one dissentient voice when the rations were decided upon, and that was Bunter's. Bunter was loud and indignant on the subject. But Bunter's remarks were not heeded. He was handed his rations, and his eloquence fell upon deaf ears.

Soames had not spoken a word. Redwing had bound up the sea-lawyer's wound as well as he could, Soames receiving that act of kindness in silence. He was pale and weak, and evidently plunged in gloomy despair. In his lawless bid for the treasure of Black Peter he had failed, and he had lost all. Nothing but a prison awaited him when the Greyfriars party reached land, if ever they reached it.

For long hours the sea-lawyer sat silent, his chin sunk on his breast, plunged in gloomy thought. If he felt any gratitude for being brought off the island he did not express it. And he could scarcely be entertaining any hope of gaining the upper hand of the boat's crew. Wharton had saved his life, but he was as ready as the Bounder to fling the sea-lawyer overboard if he attempted treachery. All the juniors were on their guard against him, and the Bounder and Ben Dance watched him incessantly, and Talupa's eyes were seldom off him. The game was up, and the defeated schemer knew it, and for a long time he abandoned himself to hopeless despair.

The day passed, hot and blazing. There was little wind and little shelter from the sun. The boat was not masted. But before quitting the sinking Aloha the juniors had placed a spar and canvas aboard to rig up a mast and sail. This task occupied them long. But when it was completed the boat glided before the light breeze, and they were saved the labour of tugging at the oars. All through the hot day they glided on, slowly but steadily, Ben Dance and Tom Redwing consulting over the course. Nuka Hiva, in the Marquesas group was, so far as they knew, the nearest land, and it was there

that they had left Mr. Vernon-Smith and the millionaire's yacht. Glad enough would they have been to see the hills of Nuka-Hiva rising from the sea and the Golden Arrow floating in the bay of Taio-hae. But many long and weary miles lay between them and the Marquesas.

It was probable enough that, if they reached Nuka-Hiva, they would not find the yacht there, for Mr. Vernon-Smith had business among the islands, and intended to make many trips in the Golden Arrow while the schoolboys were treasure hunting in the Aloha. But at Nuka-Hiva they could wait for him, if only they reached the island. The long day passed, and all through the long hours the juniors watched the sea for a sail. But no sail broke the solitude of the vast ocean, and another night came down on the Pacific, calm, gleaming with stars.

If desperate thoughts were working in Soames' mind, if he hoped anything from the hours of darkness, he was disappointed. The boat's crew were divided in regular watches, and only half the party slept at one time.

The following day there was a change in Soames. The wound in his shoulder, though not serious, was painful enough, but his iron constitution seemed to make light of it. He knew that he was beaten, that he had no chance left, but his grim despair had passed. The ruthless sea-lawyer, the savage associate of savage cannibals, had gone, and he was becoming once more what the juniors had first known him—the quiet, deferential manservant. He began to make himself useful in the boat, the old deferential smile returned to his face, and, with obsequious humility, he joined in the consultations on the course, and soon made both Ben Dance and Redwing understand that his knowledge on that subject was infinitely superior to theirs. There was no doubt that, so long as he attempted no treachery, he was a valuable addition to the crew of the whaleboat.

Whether he was seeking to make his peace, or whether he was only naturally anxious to reach land—even if in doing so he reached a prison—the juniors could hardly tell. But he was not likely to succeed in making his peace. His crimes had been too many for that, and he had to answer for the blood he had shed. His calm, impassive face gave no clue to his thoughts; but it could not have been with pleasant feelings that he approached a land where law reigned, and where the law would require him to answer for what he had done.

Yet it was scarcely possible to avoid being civil in return for unfailing civility and deferential service. Indeed, at times the juniors almost wondered whether what had happened on the Aloha and the treasure island had not been a dream, and whether Soames had not been always the civil and soft-spoken manservant he had now become once more. It was only with a mental effort that they could realise that he was undoubtedly on the watch all the time to possess himself of a weapon which would make him master of the whaleboat, and that if he succeeded the lives of all the party were worth nothing. That knowledge gave the Greyfriars fellows a feeling something like loathing for the strange man who had played so many parts. And yet at times, under the influence of his unfailing obsequiousness, they found themselves forgetting his offences.

Day after day, night after night, the whaleboat glided over the waste of waters. Twice a sail was seen in the

distance, twice the smoke of a steamer, but both vanished below the horizon before the boat could draw near enough to be seen. But all the time the weather remained placid, the breeze favourable, as if fortune were tired of persecuting the voyagers, and they drew nearer and nearer to their hoped-for destination.

Day after day they sailed, to a steady accompaniment of grousing from Billy Bunter. Bunter did not like rationing; and though when a week had passed he realised that rationing was necessary, he still failed to see why he, William George Bunter, should be rationed. It was quite a good idea for the other fellows. Bunter admitted that. But he desired most earnestly to make an exception in favour of himself. Nobody else seemed to see it, however, and Bunter reflected bitterly that these fellows were just as selfish on the Pacific as he had ever found them at Greyfriars.

And when the indignant Owl of the Remove attempted to help himself to an extra feed he was collared, regardless of his indignation, and given six with a knotted rope, wielded by the grinning Talupa. The Tonga Islander laid them on well, and Bunter's wild yells were audible far over the smiling waters of the Pacific.

After which Bunter contrived to content himself with his rations, and took it out in grousing.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mr. Vernon-Smith!

NIGHT on the Pacific.

The breeze had dropped; the little sail of the whaleboat flapped idly against the improvised mast. The boat drifted on her course at almost a crawling pace.

Overhead, the deep, dark-blue, velvety sky was alive with stars. In the whaleboat the steady snore of Billy Bunter kept time to the washing of the waves. Bunter was the one member of the party who never joined in the watches. Ben Dance sat at the lines, steering. Wharton and Bob Cherry and Tom Redwing were on the watch; the rest of the party were sleeping. Wharton noticed that Soames lifted himself from where he lay, and, kneeling up in the boat, watched the dark sea patiently for a long time. Then he turned his head, and Wharton, with a grim face, dropped his hand on the rifle at his side. If Soames was thinking at last of treachery, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was ready for him.

Soames smiled faintly as he noted the junior's movement.

"Master Wharton," he said softly.

"Well?"

"If the weather holds good, we should be at the Marquesas in a couple of days now."

"I hope so," said Harry.

"May I ask what it is your intention to do with me when we arrive there, sir?" asked Soames softly.

"You have no need to ask," said Harry quietly. "We have no choice in the matter. You will be handed over to the authorities, to stand your trial for what you have done."

"With you and your friends as witnesses?"

"Naturally."

"That may mean hanging, Master Wharton."

"We've no choice in the matter," answered Harry coldly. "You should have thought of that before you started as a mutineer and a pirate."



It was no easy matter to launch the boat, with the rollers coming into the bay. But Harry Wharton & Co. got it afloat at last, and clambered in, drenched to the skin. Bob Cherry, up to his neck in the water, was the last. Then, tossing and rocking on the surging waters, the juniors pulled for the open sea. (See Chapter 14.)

"Quite so," said Soames suavely. "I merely asked the question, sir. I am to take it, then, that I have nothing to hope from you?"

"Nothing."

"Nevertheless, while there is life there is hope," said Soames, undisturbed. "I have never thanked you, sir, for taking me off Caca as you did; but, believe me, I am grateful."

"I could not leave you to drown in the surf."

"Quite so. It was humane on your part. I trust I should have done the same in your place," remarked Soames. "If I had escaped the surf and the eruption, undoubtedly the savages would have turned on me, and I should have been made into kai-kai in the Caca cooking-ovens!"

"The fate you intended for us!" granted Bob Cherry.

"Not willingly, sir," said Soames, in a deprecating voice. "Only as a last resource. But I do not seek to excuse myself."

"It wouldn't be much use!"

"Quite so," said Soames again, as he sank back as if to sleep.

Tom Redwing was staring across the gloomy sea in the direction in which he had noticed Soames looking before he spoke. The eyes of the sailorman's son were very keen.

"Port a little, Dance," he said quietly.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"What—" began Bob.

"There is a light on the sea."

"Oh!"

"Soames saw it," added Redwing. "I guessed as much. And he did not intend to tell us, as you did not give him the answer he wanted."

"Quite so!" came Soames' sleek voice. "You are perfectly right, Master Redwing. At Nuka-Hiva I should have more chance of escape than if I am taken on board a vessel in mid-ocean. Your eyes are very keen, sir. I felicitate you upon it, if it is not taking a liberty."

Redwing did not answer.

"Wake up, you fellows!" roared Bob Cherry.

The sleeping juniors started up at once, rubbing their eyes.

"What—" exclaimed the Bounder.

"A sail!"

"Oh, good!"

Even Billy Bunter awoke. There was animation and excitement in the whaleboat from end to end. All eyes were fixed on the distant speck which Soames had seen, and which the keen eyes of Tom Redwing had picked out.

"Is that a ship's light?" asked Nugent doubtfully.

"I think so," answered Tom.

"Him light of feller ship!" said Talupa. "Feller ship him come this way—right on to boat belong us!"

"Hurrah!" bawled Bob Cherry.

The juniors were all on their feet now. For long minutes yet some of them were doubtful. But at last the lights were plain to all—the headlights, green and red, of a vessel bearing directly towards the whaleboat, though still at a great distance.

"Saved, you fellows!" chortled Bob.

"The savefulness is terrific!" said Harree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Hurrah!"

Eagerly the juniors watched the lights. The strange vessel was bearing down right on the boat, and could scarcely miss her—indeed, the danger

was rather of the whaleboat being run down than missed. Wharton slung the lighted lantern to the head of the little mast as a signal.

Nearer and nearer came the gleaming lights from the dusk of the sea; and over the intervening space the juniors could now hear the throb of engines. It was a steamer.

"They're near enough to hear us now, I think," said Harry Wharton at last. "Shout all together, and put your beef into it."

"You bet!"

"Ship ahoy! Help! Help! Help!"

The united voices of the Greyfriars party roared out together, with the deep tones of Ben Dance, the howl of Talupa, and the squeak of Billy Bunter. For some minutes the hearts of the juniors were tense with anxiety; it seemed to them that their shouts had not been heard, that their dancing light had not been seen, and that the towering bulk of the oncoming vessel would swamp them. Then a shouting voice rang across the shadowed waters, and the red and green lights changed their position. The steamer had slowed down to quarter speed.

"Ahoy!" rang a deep voice.

"Help!" shouted back Wharton. "We're in an open boat—survivors of the schooner Aloha, of Nuka-Hiva."

"What?" yelled back the voice in tones of astonishment.

"I know that voice!" gasped the Bounder. "That's Captain Greene. That vessel is the Golden Arrow."

"What?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"My father's yacht!"

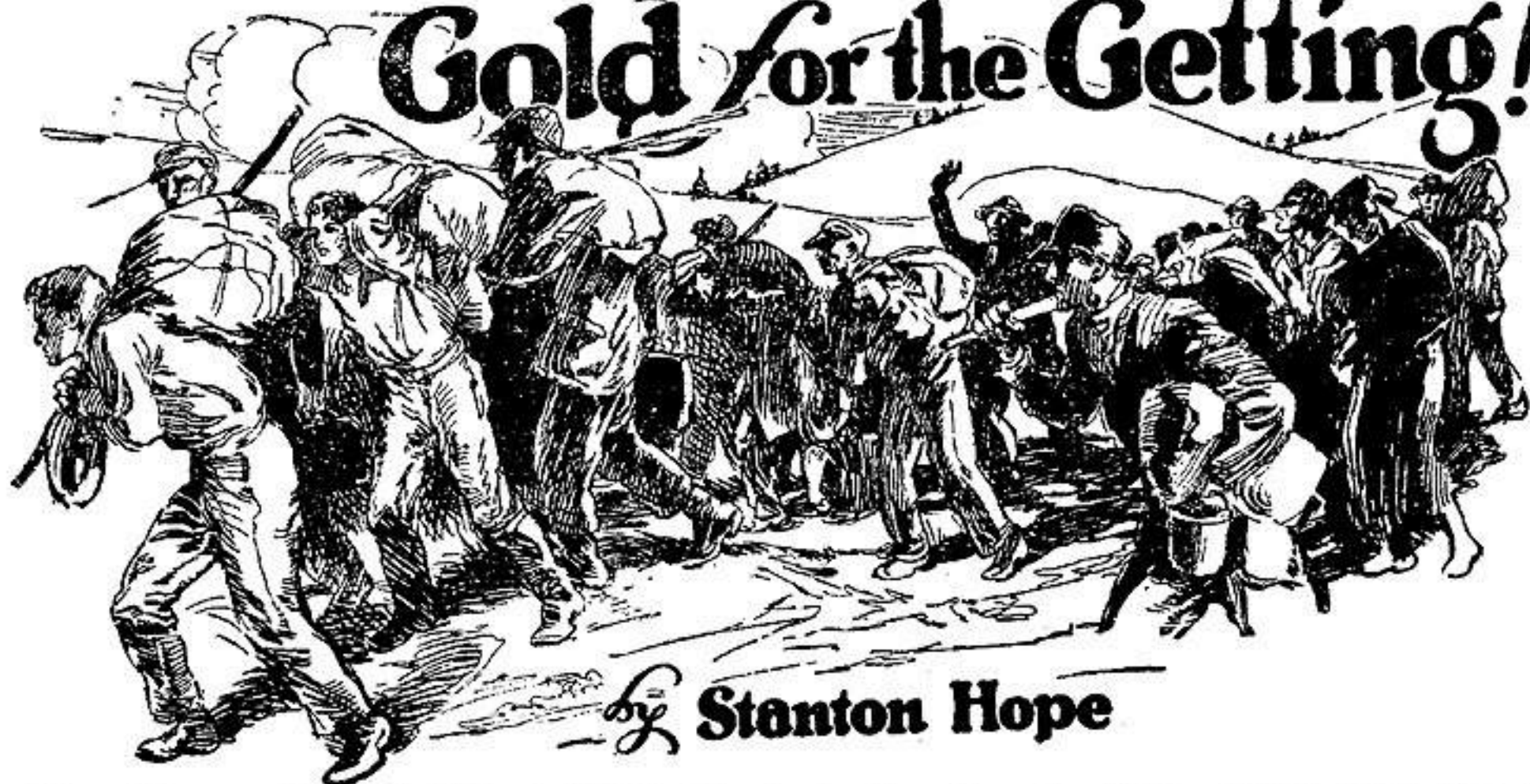
"Oh, my hat!"

(Continued on page 26.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,026.

A SHOCK FOR JACK ORCHARD! That there's some mystery about "Uncle Clem"—that he hides some secret from the world—has been apparent to Jack Orchard for some time. But when Fate solves the mystery young Jack gets the shock of his life!

Gold for the Getting!



—by Stanton Hope

The Story of a Thrilling Gold Rush to the Land of the Midnight Sun!
(Introduction on page) 25.)

Lefty Simons Makes Gun-Play!

JOCK McLENNAN was there, getting a tasty stew on the boil, and Skookum was sleeping in the lee of the shack, having finished his dried salmon. McLennan's own huskies, together with the sledge, were in a kind of corral, and also more or less contented after a feed.

Never was a meal more to the trail-worn pards. Not until they had done full justice to the stew McLennan had prepared did they trouble to bathe their hurts and apply iodine, which they had secured from Dan Kearney.

"By the way," remarked Jock McLennan, as he prepared to leave the shack, "I ought to warn you there's that slick guy called Lefty Simons in the camp—the pard o' that big he-bear Bull Morgan you fought for the life o' Skookum, Jack."

"Lefty Simons!" exclaimed Jack. "I've a bone to pick with him! He's the fellow who tried to 'out' me at Starvation Creek, and besides—"

"You steer clear of him while we're here, Jack," advised Uncle Clem. "I've got a bone to pick both with him and his precious pard. Leave me to handle 'em, my boy."

"I guess they never rebuilt the High Life Pool Saloon," remarked Jack. "I heard say that the place, which was burnt down the night Terry and I were there, hadn't been insured."

"No, it sure wasn't rebuilt," returned Jock McLennan. "I've heard say, though, that Bull Morgan's started some other lay in the city, but I ain't certain what it is. O' course, this jackal Lefty Simons has pitched his wigwam at Bear Creek to ply his usual perfession—cyards. He's runnin' a faro outfit nigh opposite Kearney's stores, and I reckon there ain't none o' these fool miners hyer as can show winnings taken offen him."

"He's nothing but a beastly shark!" exclaimed Jack. "And it's got me licked why men, who have to work and sweat to get gold out of the ground, choose to pass it into his greasy hands on the mere turn of a card."

The old sourdough shrugged his shoulders.

"There ain't a deal of amusement in

the Yukon, Jack," he replied, "and less chance of it hyer at Bear Creek than most settlements. Rye whisky, cyards, and swapping lies jest about fill the list for this place."

He left the shack, saying he might as well make one or two extra purchases ready for hitting the trail on the following day, and suggested that both the others should take a sleep.

Uncle Clem, who was not as vigorous as Jack, had suffered more severely on the trail, and he gratefully sought his blankets and slept like a dog. For safety, he put the moose-skin bags filled with the golden nuggets under his pillow—not that he feared any attempt at being robbed in Bear Creek Camp. There were bandits on the trails, but in the camps themselves the miner could leave his pokes of gold lying about, and no one would touch them. The only dishonest type were jackals like Lefty Simons. But even these gentry preferred to take the miners' gold by judicious cheating rather than by bare-faced robbery, with the risk of being shot or hung out of hand.

While Uncle Clem slept Jack took Skookum down to Dan Kearney's stores, far more concerned about Terry than his own physical disabilities.

There was no change in Terry's condition, but Jack learnt with satisfaction that his chum was still asleep, and buoyed himself up with the hope that this was a favourable sign. For the best part of an hour he sat in the store, chatting with Kearney and half a dozen miners and chewing apple-rings from the dried fruit barrel.

When Jack took his departure from the stores he found that Skookum, whom he had left outside, had gone off on his own, probably on a tour of the shacks to see what he could pick up in the way of food. He knew that Skookum would return at will, and his only worry was that the dog might get into some fight and kill one of the other huskies in the camp.

Reaching McLennan's shanty, he found the door slightly ajar. Softly he pushed it wider, not wishing to disturb Uncle Clem if he were still asleep. Then he stopped on the threshold of the shack, as he saw that someone was standing beside his old pardner's bunk.

At first Jack thought it was the old-timer, McLennan; but then he realised that this man was leaner and younger. Jack's fists clenched and his lips set in a firm line as he watched the intruder. Beneath Uncle Clem's pillow were the golden earnings from the Yellow Horse-shoe mine, and Jack suspected the trespasser was after these.

The man, however, made not the slightest effort to search for any gold which might be about, but remained bending over the sleeper, apparently engrossed in watching him. Finally, with a grunt, he rose and half turned so that the light from the door of the shack illuminated his profile. And Jack saw that it was their old enemy, the half-breed, Lefty Simons!

"Well, what do you want?"

Jack's quietly spoken question brought the intruder round with a sudden gasp of alarm. If anything, he looked leaner and more greasy than ever, and his eyes revealed black, hollow rings as the result of all-night sittings at the faro table. He swallowed hard at the sight of Jack, and as he recognised the boy, pulled his swarthy, evil face into some semblance of a disarming smile.

"I guess I blew around to congratulate you on a mighty fortunate escape!" he wheezed.

"Yes, thanks to my dog Skookum!" retorted Jack. "It was he who pulled me out of the creek after you'd knocked me in with that cowardly blow from behind."

Lefty Simons started, and involuntarily yanked down the sleeve of his right arm to cover the scars made by Skookum's fangs on that distant day.

"Aw, you've got it all wrong!" he bluffed. "I heard tell about that attack on you up at your claim, but it was no consarn of mine!"

"That's a lie!" answered Jack. "I caught a quick sight of you and that was enough. And now what are you doing in this shack?"

"I've told you once!" granted Simons. "I came down to congratulate you on your escape from the wolf-pack. I saw someone was asleep, and looked to see who it was. Still, I ain't disturbed your old pardner, who I guess

wants all the rest he can get after that terrible experience on the trail."

Jack was not deceived by the half-breed's plausible words. Knowing the shady character of Lefty Simons, he was certain the fellow had come to the shack for no good purpose. What it was he could not guess, as Simons had made no apparent attempt to interfere with the sleeper or steal anything. As Lefty Simons advanced, Jack remained barring the door.

"See here," wheezed Lefty, changing his expression, "if you ain't ready to accept a friendly call in the spirit it's made, I reckon I may as well beat it home. Stand away from that door!"

In spite of what Uncle Clem had said about wishing to tackle both Morgan and Simons himself, Jack felt his fighting blood rising now that he was face to face with this despicable enemy of theirs. His fists clenched, but before he could make another move he found himself looking into a Colt revolver which had leaped like lightning from the half-breed's pocket into his hand.

"Reach for the ceiling y' young cub!" snarled Simons. "Or you'll get a brand of pill that'll cure you mighty quick of that fightin' fever!"

The animal hatred in the smouldering eyes behind that revolver warned of the folly of disobedience, and with a muttered remark Jack put his hands above his head.

"Well, I guess you've got an ounce of savvy in that head of yours!" grinned Simons. "And if you'll accept a small slab of advice, it'll be to your advantage. When a fellow wants to bury the hatchet and smoke the pipe o' peace don't freeze him out. It ain't good for nobody to have enemies—and most of all up here in this forsaken country. Now, if you'll be so kind as to stand aside from that door I'll bring my friendly little visit to an end and drift along home!"

Jack stepped back, knocking the door wide open and dislodging an aluminium water-scoop which was hanging up behind it. The sudden clatter disturbed Uncle Clem, who, dog-tired, had slept soundly through the previous conversation. The sound of his moving on the bunk caused Lefty Simons to glance back over his shoulder.

Instantly Jack's left hand came down sharply on the half-breed's right wrist, and there was a crashing report as the revolver was discharged and a bullet thumped into the packed snow of the roadway outside. Then, before Simons could recover himself and take any sort of an aim, Jack swung his right fist to the rogue's mouth, depositing him neatly on to the floor of the shack. The revolver clattered down beside him, and, with a lightning movement, Jack whipped it up.

"You young swab!" bellowed Simons furiously. "I'll kill you for this!"

Dashing a hand across his lips cut by Jack's knuckles, he started to get up. Actually he reached his knees, and as he found himself gazing into the black, unwavering muzzle of his own revolver, his hands crept slowly aloft.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" he whined in a sudden paroxysm of fear. "For the love of Mike, be careful! The hammer of that gun's on a hair-trigger!"

"Hope it doesn't go off too soon!" remarked Jack cheerfully, as he wagged his finger between the trigger and the trigger-guard. "Now, just keep polite for a few minutes and answer a question or two, and p'r'aps, after all, you won't be carried out of this shack feet first!"

The sound of the shot that had been

fired had instantly aroused Bear Creek Camp. Uncle Clem had come up from the blankets like a jack-in-the-box, and he stared in wide-eyed amazement at the spectacle of Lefty Simons on the floor and Jack standing over him.

Several miners had come out of their shanties, and were seeking to know what the trouble was about. The majority, more cautious, remained indoors, not anxious to be too prominently on the scene during gun-play.

"By heck! What's the bobbery?" demanded Uncle Clem. Then swiftly he ran his hands under his coarse pillow, and, finding the small moose-skin bags of gold were safe, breathed a sigh of relief.

"I found this greaser in the shack," Jack replied. "Now, let's have the truth, Simons. What was your game?"

He flicked the revolver, suggesting by the gesture an imperative demand for a reply. The effect on Lefty Simons was to make him squeal like a whipped cur.

"D-don't do it!" he begged. "That'll go off in a moment, and you'll be getting yourself into trouble with the sheriff."

"Well, there's no need for you to worry about that," smiled Jack, "'cause you'll be safe enough from trouble by that time. What were you doing here?"

"Gosh! Why don't you believe me?" whined Simons. "It was only a friendly visit, I'll swear it!"

The doorway of the shack was darkened by the bulky bodies of two or three miners, and through them barged Jock McLennan.

"That fellow would swear snow was black if it suited his purpose!" rumbled McLennan. "If he's been prowling around my shack I guess you'd better go through his pockets."

Knowing full well that Lefty Simons would be too cowed by the presence of the men to resist, Jack dropped the revolver into his own pocket and carefully searched the half-breed's clothes.

"Nothing doing!" he said in a somewhat surprised tone.

The men seemed surprised, also, and Jock McLennan opined that possibly the half-breed had not had time to steal anything.

"Aw, you've got a down on me!" growled Simons. "You're sore 'cause

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 Bill 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.

At long last the three "pardners" make a "strike" at Starvation Creek and scoop up gold amounting to something over a thousand pounds which they decide to deposit at a bank in Dawson. En route, however, they are attacked by a pack of hungry wolves and Terry is severely mauled. The trio are almost at the end of their tether when Jock McLennan, another prospector, arrives in the nick of time. Terry is placed on his sledge and taken to the nearest settlement where he receives necessary treatment, what time Uncle Clem and Jack retire to a ramshackle shelter which they make their temporary home.

(Now read on.)

I've made a bit at cyards here. But Heaven knows every cent I've got has come honest! Reckon I'd better hit the trail and join my pardner back in Dawson. D'you mind if I go to my shanty now?"

No one offered the slightest objection; indeed, Jock McLennan assisted him out of the shack with a couple of hefty kicks from his heavily nailed boots. After Jack had explained how that disturbing shot had come to be fired, the miners drifted back to their own shacks, and Jack McLennan went round to the corral to give a look to his dogs.

"I can't understand what the dickens that half-breed wanted in here," muttered Jack, when he and Uncle Clem were alone. "I watched him for a minute or two, and all he seemed to be doing was standing quietly beside your bunk."

As Uncle Clem made no suggestion Jack resumed:

"I thought, maybe, by searching the brute, I might have found the Bear's Claw nugget—the nugget my uncle, Dave Orchard, was supposed to have stolen from the miner Simpson."

"You're sure, Jack, that was the Bear's Claw you saw in the High Life Saloon, at Dawson?" inquired Uncle Clem. "You'd never set eyes on it before, remember."

"No, but I know all about it," replied Jack. "That nugget which Morgan wore round his neck was the Bear's Claw. I'd wager my share in the Yellow Horseshoe Mine against a rasher of bacon that it was none other. It's jolly unlikely there's another nugget in the North of that size and exact shape."

"And the last you saw of it was on Bull Morgan?" murmured his old pard.

"That's so. But Lefty Simons was kicking up a dickens of a row about Morgan's unfair division of the spoils they'd acquired. It occurred to me that possibly the Bear's Claw might have passed into the hands of Simons. Even if it has, the search I made showed me he hadn't got it on him."

As Uncle Clem did not seem inclined for further conversation, Jack threw himself down in a spare bunk to rest his weary limbs. His head hardly touched the rough pillow when he was sound asleep.

At about seven o'clock in the evening he awakened, and partook of a meal of tough steak fried with beans, followed by flapjacks and tea. Afterwards he and Uncle Clem went down to Kearney's stores and saw Terry, who had come out of his sleep. The Irish boy was still feverish and suffering severely, but he pulled his face into some semblance of a smile as he saw his pards, and cracked a feeble joke.

"Tis a bad country this, me bhoys," he said, "and not a patch on Ould Oireland. Whin first we came here 'twas mosquito bites and wolf bites. And, bedad, now I want a bite of those murphies I can smell cooking, I can't have 'em!"

"Potatoes would be no good for him at all," answered Dan Kearney gravely. "As long as he's got this fever I shall have to keep him on low diet—barley water and suchlike. Perhaps in three or four days he'll be able to travel to Dawson."

The following morning brought an end to the bitter cold snap. With a rise in temperature there was a slight fall of snow, but all preferred this to the cutting wind of the last few days. Jock McLennan hit the trail shortly after dawn, and before going told Jack and Uncle Clem that they might use

his shack as long as they liked until his return.

"Mind you go armed to Dawson," was his final word of warning. "As you may have heard before, there are some powerful bad men on the trails leading into the city, and there have been several hold-ups. If you're not anxious to get 'rolled,' go armed and keep your eyes skinned."

They saw McLennan and his dog team hit the trail out of Bear Creek Camp with regret. This was made up for in part by seeing Lefty Simons and the team of dogs he had acquired also hitting it in the opposite direction. Obviously, the half-breed was going to Dawson, probably to rejoin Bull Morgan and begin anew his mean trade of fleecing honest miners.

There followed a day of anxiety for them concerning Terry. The Irish boy grew less feverish, however, and the severe wounds in his left arm remained clean. Dan Kearney had kept them well dressed, though he could not promise that more trouble would not later ensue, and it was his own suggestion that Terry should be got to hospital in Dawson on the following day.

The journey from Bear Creek was only about ten miles, and as the weather remained comparatively good this would not present much hardship. There were many offers from the small miner populace of the camp to help in getting the boy to Dawson, but Jack and Uncle Clem said that they would easily manage the ten miles themselves.

So Terry was placed on the sledge,

well wrapped up in blankets and furs, and Skookum hitched to it. Then, followed by the good wishes of the rough Yukoners, the pards and their dog made their way out of the camp across the frozen creek, and followed the well-marked Dawson trail.

Only a light covering of new-fallen snow was over the marks of the feet and sledge-runners which had passed along that trail before. It was not even necessary for one to beat down the trail ahead with snowshoes, and both Jack and Uncle Clem were able to help Skookum by pushing the sledge. There was of necessity some slight jolting at first, and painful though it was to his wounds, Terry endured it all with a smile, and even tried to cheer his pardners with an occasional joke.

Once across the frozen Klondike River, they made even better progress until they entered a small winding canyon between two ranges of hills. They had seen no one, and so it came as something of a shock when about half a dozen men came suddenly into view from round the base of a small hill.

"Great snakes!" exclaimed Jack. "Looks to me like an ambush."

Foremost in his mind was the thought of what Jock McLennan had said about the bandits who had been infesting the Dawson trails to rob the miners of their gold. From his pocket Jack whipped out the revolver of which he had relieved Lefty Simons, and shouted to Skookum to stop.

"By jingo, we'll make a fight of it!"

he cried. "Come on, Uncle Clem; get your gun!"

Their old pardner had stopped a few yards back on the trail and was staring fixedly ahead.

"Bedad, is ut bandits?" demanded Terry, trying to lift his head. "Put a gun within reach of me fingers, Jack, me bhoy, and 'tis drilling ivery mither's son of 'em I'll be before they take our gold!"

The Men in the Buffalo Coats!

SCARCE had Terry spoken when Jack emitted a joyous laugh and thrust his gun back in the belt under his furs.

"All right, Terry, old chap!" he cried gleefully. "No need to exert yourself. It's a party of Mounties, and, good egg, I believe that's Sergeant Curtis at the head of 'em!"

Terry gave a feeble "Arrah! Hiven bless them!" but Uncle Clem was silent. So blinding white was the snow that at first it had been difficult to recognise the party. Moreover, the winter uniform of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with their short, shaggy coats of buffalo fur and heavy caps with ear-flaps, was not so well known to the pards as the summer attire of the police.

"Mush, Skookum!" cried Jack.

The relief of finding that this was no ambush of bandits, and the sight of their old friend, Sergeant Curtis, set

(Continued on page 27.)

THE GREYFRIARS CASTAWAYS!

(Continued from page 23.)

The yacht—for undoubtedly it was the Golden Arrow—loomed over the boat. A rope was thrown, and it was Soames who caught it and made it fast. Captain Greene stared down in the flare of a light.

"You young fellows," he stuttered, "where's the Aloha, then?"

"At the bottom of the Pacific," answered the Bounder. "But we're all safe. Call my father."

"Mr. Vernon-Smith is coming on deck now."

"I say, you fellows, lemme get up first!" gasped Billy Bunter, as the ladder was lowered. "I don't like the way this boat is rocking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was passed up to the deck of the Golden Arrow. There Mr. Vernon-Smith, the most astonished of millionaires, blinked at him.

"Herbert!" he shouted.

"All serene, dad! Coming!" shouted back the Bounder.

And he clambered up the side of the Aloha, and the other fellows clambered after him. In the excitement of the moment Soames was forgotten by the juniors, but they remembered him when they were on the deck of the Golden Arrow.

"Soames!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Get that scoundrel aboard and put him in irons!" He stared down the side. "Where's the boat? Great gad, the scoundrel's gone!"

The boat was no longer to be seen.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"My hat! Soames has bunked!" he ejaculated.

The juniors stared down the side. They saw no sign of the boat. Soames

had cast off the rope, doused the lantern, and fled. The sea-lawyer had found his chance at last and acted promptly. With her little sail filled by the wind, and the desperate man at the helm, the whaleboat had shot away from the side of the yacht and vanished into the darkness of the sea.

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

"Get after him!" said the Bounder between his teeth. "We can run him down yet—"

"Let him go!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "We're done with him now, Smithy. And he's showing no light; we should never find him. Let him take his chance—it's not much of a chance at the best!"

The Bounder opened his lips for an angry reply, but he did not utter it. His face cleared, and he nodded.

"After all, he dare not land in any white man's country," he said. "Let him take his chance—for what it is worth!"

And Soames was dismissed from the minds of the rescued juniors. The Golden Arrow glided on her way again—bound on one of Mr. Vernon-Smith's many business trips among the islands—and the darkness of the Pacific swallowed up the desperate sea-lawyer for ever. Late as the hour was, there was little sleep for the Greyfriars juniors that night—or for Mr. Vernon-Smith. The millionaire listened in amazement to the strange story of Soames' treachery, and of the wild adventures of the schoolboy treasure-seekers; and he stared with amazed eyes at the great pearls in the sandal-wood box—evidence beyond dispute of the reality of the treasure of Black Peter.

When Harry Wharton & Co. turned in at last in their old state-rooms on board the millionaire's yacht, it was to

sleep peacefully and dream of home. And Billy Bunter was not the only late riser among the Greyfriars fellows the following morning.

The treasure-quest was over.

Of the yacht's run home there is little need to tell. It landed the Greyfriars party in England late for the beginning of the term at Greyfriars School, but that did not worry them to any great extent.

Mr. Vernon-Smith kindly undertook the sale of Redwing's pearls, and the sum realised was more than enough to provide for the sailorman's son and for his father when John Redwing came back from sea. Mr. Vernon-Smith, as a business man, did not decline Redwing's offer to indemnify him for the loss of the Aloha; and Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman, found himself provided for out of Black Peter's treasure; and Talupa, who had been left in the South Seas, was left with a gift that made him a great man on Tonga Island. Best of all, however, was the circumstance that Tom Redwing—once a scholarship junior at Greyfriars—was to go back to the old school "on his own," the only fellow at Greyfriars who paid his own fees! Now that Tom was so well provided with that necessary article—cash—Billy Bunter generously offered to take him into his study at Greyfriars and make a pal of him—an offer which Tom declined, with what Bunter could only regard as black ingratitude. Tom was Smithy's study-mate in Study No. 4 in the Remove when he went back to Greyfriars—which he regarded as the happiest possible outcome to his fight for a fortune.

THE END.



To the amazement of Jack and Terry, Sergeant Curtis fixed his grey eyes on the chums' bearded pardner. "In the name of the law," he said, "I arrest you, David Orchard, for the theft of the Bear's Claw and Joe Simpson's gold nuggets in San Francisco!" (See Page 26.)

"GOLD FOR THE GETTING!"

(Continued from page 26).

Jack urging Skookum forward at a faster speed towards the approaching constabulary. He brought the dog and sledge to a halt before he reached them, to enable Uncle Clem, who had dropped behind, to catch up, and also to quieten down Skookum, who was snarling savagely and baring his great white fangs.

"Travelling too fast for you, Uncle Clem?" he cried gaily.

Uncle Clem puffed breathlessly and sank down on the side of the sledge beside Terry, his hand raised for support on the barrel of his rifle.

"Ay, I guess you are travelling too fast for me, Jack!" he said.

"I was so jolly excited and glad that they weren't bandits," answered Jack. "Our gold, you know—"

"Our gold," repeated Uncle Clem, as though to himself. "No, these fellows aren't after our gold."

Sergeant Curtis, wearing snowshoes, and with a carbine slung over his shoulder, came plodding along slightly ahead of his companions.

"Hallo, sonny!" he called to Jack. "Your chum hurt?"

"A torn arm, sergeant," answered Jack. "We're getting him to hospital in Dawson. You remember Terry and Uncle Clem?"

The other Mounties came up and stood round the sledge, and Sergeant Curtis, after a kindly word to Terry, turned toward Uncle Clem, who had risen, holding his rifle.

With a gesture the sergeant indicated

the space at the sledge side next to Terry.

"Put that gun down," he said quietly. "Looking into the muzzle of a thirty-three isn't the sort of thing that makes me feel the more comfortable."

A slow smile spread over Uncle Clem's weather-tanned face.

"You didn't think, sergeant," he remarked, "that I was threatening you fellows with it?" He placed the gun down beside Terry and stood erect.

"When you and your men came out from behind that hill we thought you were bandits, didn't we, Jack?"

"Yes," laughed Jack. "Even Terry was trying to roll off the sledge to fight for his life. You haven't seen signs of any thieves on the trail, sergeant?"

Sergeant Curtis made a gesture, and two of his men unslung their carbines, pointing them at Uncle Clem.

"Only one," he answered quietly, "and he's right here!"

Then, to the utter amazement of Jack and Terry, he fixed his grey eyes on their bearded pardner, who stood erect and dignified beside the sledge.

"In the name of the law," said Sergeant Curtis, "I arrest you, David Orchard, for the theft of the Bear's Claw and Joe Simpson's golden nuggets in San Francisco."

Had the sergeant suddenly drawn a revolver and shot Uncle Clem dead, Jack and Terry could neither have been more surprised nor dismayed.

"Begorra!" cried Terry, half raising himself from the sledge. "'Tis crazy you are, sergeant! Phwy, David Orchard is Jack's uncle—the very one he looked for in 'Frisco and has been inquiring after since."

The wounded Irish boy was trembling all over, and suddenly alarmed for him, Jack made him settle back among the blankets and furs.

"Don't excite yourself, Terry," he said. "Of course, it's all a crazy mistake."

And then, as he turned from Terry, he saw the rigid silent figure of his old pard and the expression of despair on his bearded face.

"Uncle Clem!" he cried, in alarm. "This—this isn't true?"

Uncle Clem swayed slightly, but seemed too overcome to speak.

Like one in a dream, Jack felt a fur-clad hand laid lightly on his shoulder, and heard the voice of the sergeant speaking to him as though from a great distance.

"You went to 'Frisco to seek your uncle, Jack," the sergeant said, "and you've found him here on the Yukon trail. I've been seeking him a mighty long time, too, in common with the police of the Western Coast, from Los Angeles to the Baring Straits. I'm real sorry for you, lad, and for young Terry here—but for you especially. It's mighty hard to find that your old pardner whom you've learned to call Uncle Clem, is none other than your own uncle, Dave Orchard, the crook!"

(Could it possibly be true that the man whom Jack had come to call Uncle Clem was none other than his real Uncle David, a wanted man? Make sure you read the continuation of this gripping serial which will appear in next week's bumper number of the MAGNET, chums.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,026.

FAMOUS FOOTER CLUBS!

(Continued from page 2.)

them out, or kick them out as circumstances demand. Altogether, a remarkable side, with just enough frills to make them look pretty, but not enough to prevent them from being really effective.

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good football Manager McWilliam will see that they do in the future as well. Also he knows the value of efficient reserves. One of these days Middlesbrough, under the guidance of McWilliam, will win that First Division championship. You may take that as a tip straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

The other day I had a chat with Peter McWilliam about this Middlesbrough team. That evening, they were playing the Spurs—the side which McWilliam used to manage. This is what he said: "I don't care whether we win or lose to-night's match against my old team," he said, "but I do hope my lads play real football." That's the sort of manager McWilliam is—with real football being shown by his side as the chief concern.

But Manager McWilliam doesn't find managership easy. In fact, he tells me that he often sighs for the days when he could kick the ball on the field instead of watching other fellows kick it. And the different way in which a manager and a player may look at a match is shown by the following true experiences of Peter McWilliam. On the day when he was first chosen to play for Scotland there was a hue-and-cry for him in the hotel where the Scottish team was staying. He could not be found. Finally, he was discovered in a corner of an obscure lounge, fast asleep.

To-day, when McWilliam is a manager, he confesses that sometimes he never gets a wink of sleep during the night prior to a big match. He is so nervous about the result.

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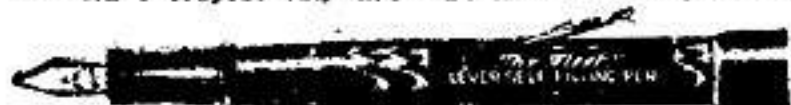
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I.

CRASH! Bang! Dr. Birchmell hastily thrust aside the cluttered commick paper he was reading, as a gentle tap sounded on the door of his study.

"Come in, you grubby-faced young rascal!" he growled. "Oh, it's you, Lickham, is it? Sorry! I thought it was Binding, the page."

Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, stepped into the study.

"Pardon my intrusion, sir," he said, "but I am wondering if you have forgotten the existence of Binns, the dustman's son? A whole week has elapsed—since you confined him in the coal-seller, for his complicity in a joke which was played on you. It seems a long time to be shut up—"

"Shut up!" snapped the Head. "And mind your own business, Lickham!"

"But—but you can't keep Binns a prisoner indefinitely, sir. You can't leave him to languish in anguish, without food and drink. He will be parched with hunger, and starved with thirst!"

"Kats!" growled Dr. Birchmell. "I have seen to it that the young rascal is suitably nourished. I have sent him bread and water every day this week—except on five or six days when it happened to slip my memory."

"My hat!" cried Mr. Lickham, against. "The wretched boy will be famished! He will be wasted to a skeleton, and you will be had up for kidnaping!"

But there was no fear of that happening. If the Head had forgotten the existence of the prisoner, Jack Jolly & Co. hadn't. The chums of the Fourth had a grudge against "Dusty" Binns, and they considered the Head had treated him shamefully.

Several times a day Jack Jolly & Co. had paid sly visits to the coal-seller, and fortified the imprisoned junior with lots of back from the school shop.

Dr. Birchmell smiled at the master of the Fourth.

"I have decided to release Binns to-day," he said. "The time is now ripe for him to be punished for the dastardly joke he played at my expense."

"Really, sir! I should have thought the boy had been punished enough. For a whole week he has been shut up in that Black Hole of Calcutta. Is not that sufficient? But, anyway, I am glad to hear he is not to linger longer in languor."

Dr. Birchmell frowned.

"Try to not spare any pity for that low-down son of a paper, Lickham! Have you forgotten what he did? He paid a visit to my bed-room at dead of night, and painted my face, and died my beard, and transformed me into a Red Indian! I only wish it was in my power to give him a life-sentence—to let him languish in anguish, as you express it for the rest of his days! As that is impossible, I must punish the young villain in some other way. This afternoon he will be released, and brought before a General Assembly in Big Hall."

"And then?" queried Mr. Lickham.

"Then, Lickham, I shall birch him. Black and blue—just as a sort of preliminary canter. After the birching, I shall order him to run the gauntlet. The boys will bring rotten towels into Big Hall for that purpose. After he has run the gauntlet, he will receive a bumping, till every bone in his miserable body is shaken! And after the bumping—"

"You will send for the ambulance, and have him removed to hospital?"

"Yes—if there is anything left of him! What do you think of my idea, Lickham?"

Mr. Lickham looked horrified.

coal-seller for a week, and half starving him, you propose to bring him out, and birch him, and make him run the gauntlet, and bump him, and goodness knows what besides!"

"Bah! He will be getting off lightly," said the Head. "I only wish I had the power to burn him at the stake, to put him in the pillory, or give him something lingering, with boiling oil in it. What a pity we are not living in the good old days!"

And the Head sighed wisely.

But Mr. Lickham frowned.

"I shall send for some soap and water, sir, and wash my hands of this business!" he declared. "I will not have it said that I was a party to such brutality. Just because Binns happens to be a dustman's son, there is no need to treat him like dirt! You are getting vicious and spiteful in your old age, sir!"

So saying, Mr. Lickham turned, and flung out of the study, just in time to avoid being flung out by the Headmaster.

He left Dr. Birchmell rubbing his stinging hands together, and gloating with glee at the prospect of all the horrible things that were going to happen to "Dusty" Binns.

Suddenly the Head was startled by a loud purring noise in the quadrangle. It was not caused by a cat; it was the purring of an automobile.

The Head jumped to his feet and rushed to the window.

A magnificent car, with a ducal crest painted all over it, was in the act of slowing up. It was driven by a liveried shoer.

Seated in the back was a tall, distinguished looking gentleman, with a coronet perched on the back of his head.

"The—the Duke!" cried Dr. Birchmell, in great excitement. "It is my dear old friend, the Duke of Stony Stratford!"

And he dashed out into the quadrangle, just in time to open the door of the car for the imminent personage.

As the Duke stepped out, the Head grovelled before him like a fawning squire.

"Your Grace!" he murmured. "I kiss your hand! Welcome to this noble seat of learning, over which I have the honour to preside! But enough of formalities. Added the Head, straightening himself. "How the merry dickens are you, my old pal?"

The Duke frowned.

"I was not—how!—aware that we were on terms of intimacy, Dr. Birchmell," he drawled. "I do not hobnob with headmasters. I have come hither to see my son—the Honorable Algernon."

"Ah! A fine lad!" said the Head gushingly. "A noble prodigy of an illustrious pier! The Honorable Algernon is extremely popular at St. Sam's—in fact, we worship the ground he walks on!"



DICKY NUGENT

by His Grace. Then the Head led his distinguished visitor into the school building.

When they reached the Fourth Form passage, lots of faces peered out from study doorways, but the Duke did not heed them. He stalked straight on, looking neither to right nor left, till the Head halted outside the end study.

"This way, Your Grace!" he said, throwing open the door with a flourish. And the Duke stepped into the sumptuous apartment, which was the most expensive furnished study at St. Sam's.

The floor was strewn with hansom Turkish carpets; the sofa was like a Sultan's divan; the pictures on the wall were all Van Dykes and Rembrandts.

The Honorable Algernon was reclining in a cosy arm-chair when the Duke stalked in. He stared at the Duke, and the Duke stared at him; but there was no recognition in their stares.

"Good gad!" ejaculated the Duke. And he continued to stare at the Honorable Algernon through his monocle.

"Who—who is this boy, Dr. Birchmell?"

"Surely you know your own son, Your Grace?"

"This is not my son!" cried the Duke angrily. "I have never seen this boy before!"

"What, never?" gasped the Head.

"No, never!"

"Well, this is a rum go!" said Dr. Birchmell, in perplexity. As for the Honorable Algernon, he looked as if he would like to bolt from the study. Under the Duke's searching, angry gaze, he dropped his eyes, and his face fell, too.



DICKY NUGENT

"Search me!" groaned the Head, spreading out his hands helplessly. "I have always been under the impression that this boy was your Grace's son."

"You will produce my son at once, Dr. Birchmell," he cried, "or I'll have you arrested for deduction!"

"If Your Grace means abduction, I assure you I am innocent of any such crime!" said the Head.

"Bah!" snorted the angry Duke. And he stamped furiously from the study, bawling loudly for his son, and scolding the faces which peered out at him from every doorway.

But the one particular face which the Duke sought was not to be seen.

II.

THE Duke continued to ramp and rage up and down the Fourth Form passage. The Head followed stealthily at his heels, trying in vain to pacify him.

"Pray be calm, Your Grace!" he kept saying.

"Calm?" roared the Duke. "Would you be calm, sir, if your only son had been deluded? But I will find him, if I have to turn this precious kindergarten of yours upside-down! Algernon! Algy, my dear boy! Where are you?"

"Your sons are in the end study, sir," said Jack Jolly.

"Nonsense! That is not my son—it is an impostor!"

"M-m-my hat!"

a fine football play, and aspen-did little sport altogether!"

"That's 'Dusty' to the life!" gasped Jack Jolly.

The Duke looked at the juniors.

"Is there a boy heath answering to my description?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir!"

"Then where is he? Take me to him at once!"

Jack Jolly glanced rather nervously at Doctor Birchmell before replying.

"Ahem! He—he's down in the coal-seller, sir," he explained. "He's been shut up there for a week, by the Head's orders."

"But that boy is not Your Grace's son!" cried the Head. "He is a boy named Binns—the son of the local dustman! He is an out-and-out reprobate, whom I am about to punish with the utmost severity!"

"Nevertheless," said the Duke grimly, "I insist upon seeing this boy. Conduct me to the coal-seller immediately!"

Doctor Birchmell, with a very puzzled mean, led the way to the coal-seller. The Duke followed, his eyes glittering angrily. A big procession of juniors came crowding behind curious to see what would happen.

"Mind how you go, Your Grace!" warned the Head, leading the way down the seller steps. "The bottom step is the lowest!"

The Duke's next action was very brisk and brisk. He bowed Doctor Birchmell aside, and dashed down the steps; but only to find that the door of the coal-seller was heavily padlocked.

"The keys!" roared the Duke. "Produce the keys, Doctor Birchmell, and unlock this door immediately!"

The Headmaster of St. Sam's fumbled in his pocket and produced an enormous bunch of keys. Then, with the skill and speed of a master-crooksmen, he unlocked the seller door and threw it wide.

What happened next came as a bomb-shell to the Head, and to the St. Sam's juniors who came crowding down the seller steps.

From the interior of the coal-hole emerged an extraordinary figure—black as a nigger, an egg-shaped head, black as a nigger, from the sole of his head to the crown of his feet. With a wild and joyful cry he flung himself into the arms of the Duke.

"Father!" he cried. "My dear old dad!"

Heedless of the grime and coal-dust which was transferred to his elegant togs, the Duke embraced his son warmly.

"Found at last!" he ejaculated. "Algernon, my dear boy, what is the meaning of this? How came you to be a prisoner in this dreadful place?"

And then, while the Head and the juniors stood absolutely flappergasted, the Honorable Algernon told his story. And it was a story that fairly took their breath away.

"Just before I came to St. Sam's, father," he said, "I happened to fall in with Binns, the dustman's son. He said he was coming to St. Sam's, too, so I

thought it would be no end of a lark if we swapped places, and the Duke's son became the dustman's son, and vice versa. Binns was all in favour, so we changed clothes, and Binns turned up in our family car, whilst I arrived in the local dust-cart."

"Good gad!" gasped the Duke.

"Nobody tumbled to our little deception," went on the Honorable Algernon. "But I soon felt jolly sorry that I changed places with Binns. I wanted to change back again, but he wouldn't hear of it. You see, Doctor Birchmell, here, is a frightful snob. He how-towed to Binns, thinking he was the Duke's son; and he made my life not worth living, thinking I was the dustman's son."

"I didn't—I never!" cried the Head wildly. "I am not a snob, Your Grace! I do not make fun of one and fowl of another. I treat all boys alike, whether they are princes or paupers."

"Then how comes my son to be shut up in this awful place?" demanded the Duke, turning fiercely upon the Head.

"You would not have dared to ill-treat him like this, had you known he was my son! But, thinking he was merely a dustman's son, you have made his life unbearable with your persecutions! Do not dare to deny it, sir! You have behaved abominably! You are not fit to be the Headmaster of this school. I shall make a complaint to the governors."

"Nunno!" cried the Head in great alarm. "Not that, Your Grace—not that! I admit I have behaved abominably—I confess I am an awful old snob—but I will make reparation! I will see that your son is treated handsomely in future, and given the best of everything! As for that wretched dustman's son, Binns, upon whom I have showered favours in my ignorance, I shall meet out to him the punishment I had prepared for your son. There! I can't say fairer than that. But don't give me away to the governors, Your Grace—don't, I implore you!"

And the Head flung out his arms beseechingly.

The Duke's lips curled with scorn and desision.

"You shall not be given a chance to treat my son handsomely, or otherwise," he said. "I shall take him back home with me to-day. I am satisfied that this school, with such a despicable worm of a headmaster is no place for Algernon. As for the boy Binns, I forbid you to punish him! The desecration which he and my son have practised was, after all, quite a harmless one. Come, Algernon! You badly need a bath, and after that I will take you home."

And the Duke and his son mounted the seller steps, making their way through a throng of amazed juniors.

Doctor Birchmell followed them, clutching nervously at his beard.

"Your Grace!" he cried appealingly. "Promis me you will report me to the governors, or I shall lose my appointment! And that will be a terrible disappointment!"

"Very well," snapped the Duke, glancing scornfully over his shoulder. "I will let you off this time. But let this be a lesson to you not to be such a beastly snob in future!"

An hour later St. Sam's looked its last upon the Duke's son, and Jack Jolly & Co. were sorry to lose him. They were wishing that Binns could have gone, and the Honorable Algernon remained. But it was not to be.

Binns had to give up his luxurious study for humbler quarters; and that evening the sole topic of conversation at St. Sam's was devoted to the amazing affair of Duke's son and dustman's son!

THE END.

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