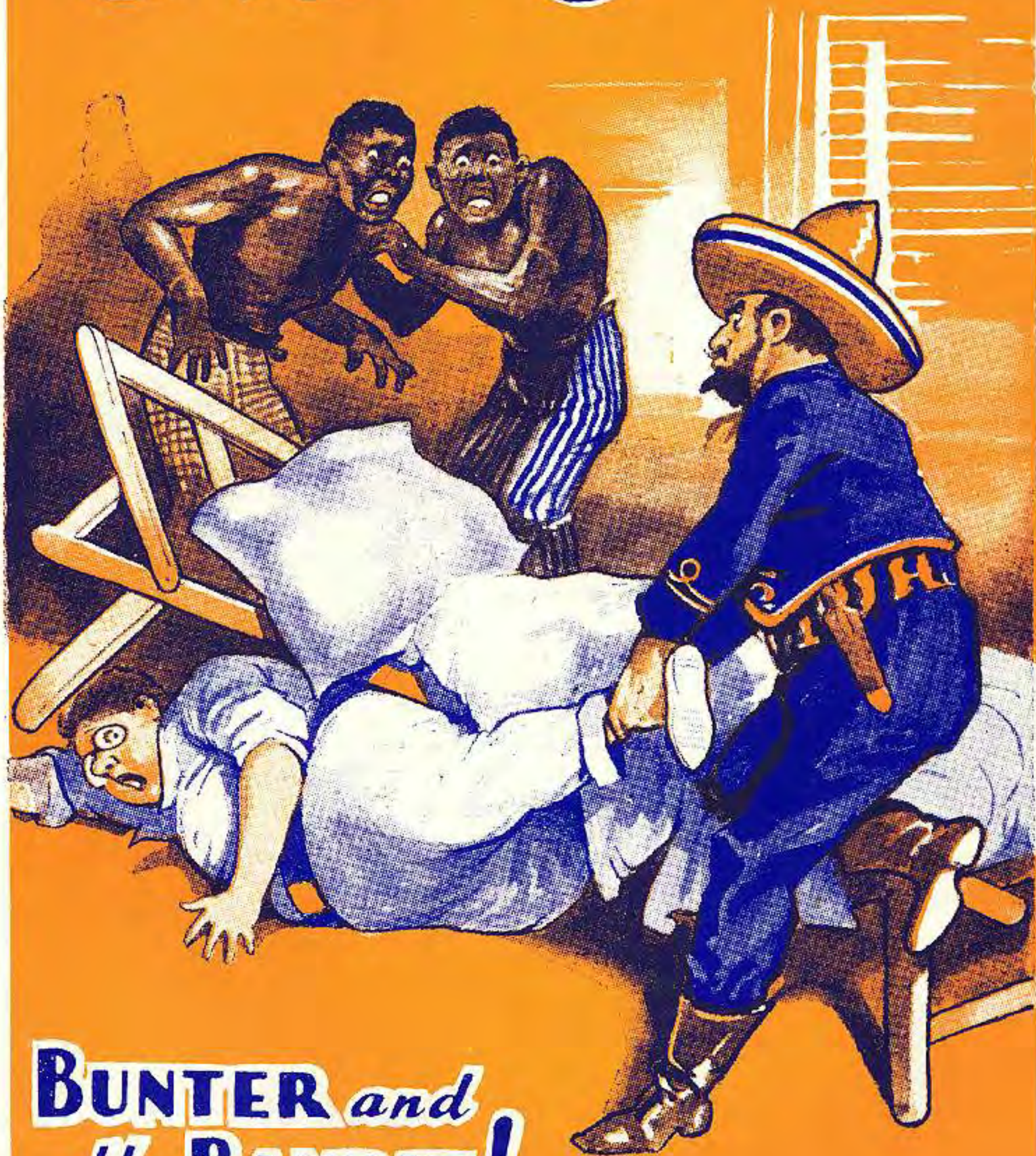


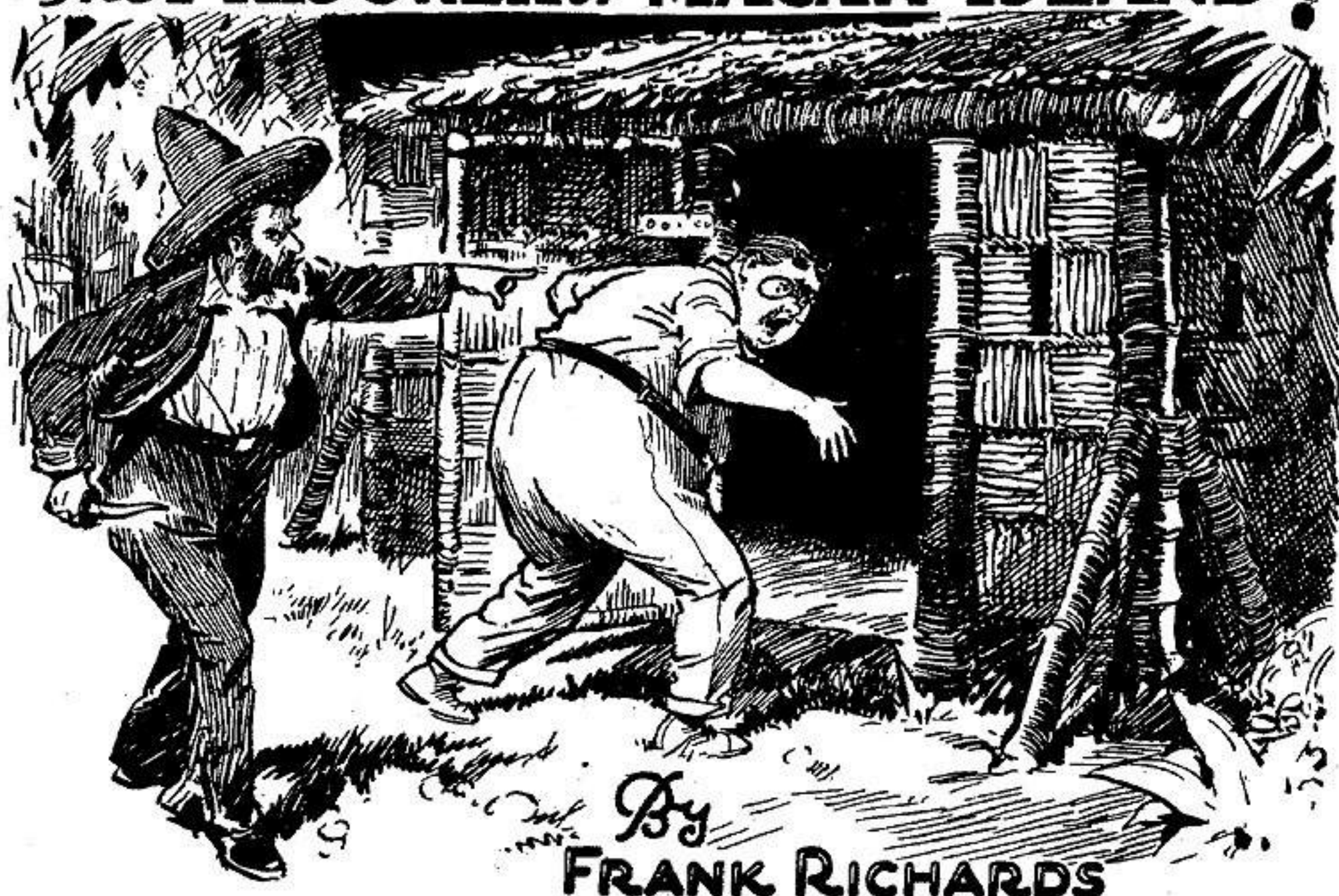
"THE PRISONER OF MACAW ISLAND!" Thrilling Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co. **Inside!**

The Magnet ^{2^d}



BUNTER *and*
the **BANDIT!**

The PRISONER of MACAW ISLAND!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Peril of the Night!

"**C** HUCK it!" mumbled Bob Cherry.

Bump!

"Silly ass! Chuck it!"

Bob mumbled sleepily as another bump came against the low-slung hammock. Bob was tired and he was sleepy; and it was no time, in his opinion, for larking. And he supposed that one of the other fellows, with a misdirected sense of humour, was bumping him in the hammock.

It was deep, dark night, in the camp by the mountain stream, in the wild back-country of Brazil. Harry Wharton & Co., perhaps, were dreaming of Greyfriars; but they were thousands of miles from the old school. And they were forty or fifty from the plantation on the Ria Rexo, where they had been spending the holiday with their old pal Jim Valentine. Seldom had a human foot trodden where the chums of the Greyfriars Remove were camped.

The hut stood against the cliffs that shut in the ravine. It was merely a slanting roof on four corner-posts. The cliff made a wall at the back—three sides were open to the air.

Hammocks were slung under the roof. The juniors slept in them as soundly as in the old Remove dormitory at Greyfriars School. More soundly, perhaps, for their days at the diamond diggings in the "Montanha Fria" were very strenuous. Every day they helped Jim's Uncle Peter in digging the "cascalho," the gravel in which the precious stones were found; and in washing out the diamonds—and under a burning sun, it was hard work.

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Bob Cherry, the most strenuous member of the Famous Five, was in no mood for "larking" when he turned in. He wondered that any other fellow was. But somebody was bumping his hammock, and it had awakened him.

Bump! came again.

The hammock was slung low, hardly more than a foot from the earth. Some silly ass must have stooped low to get under it and bump it from below. Bob sat up and rubbed his eyes. He was a good-tempered fellow, but he considered that this was too thick, when a fellow was tired and sleepy.

He stared from the hammock.

Outside the hut a camp-fire was burning, little more than a ruddy gleam. Beside the fire the figure of Chico, the Indian hunter, was huddled in a poncho. Nights in the tropics were cold, though the days were hot. Bob's glance fell on the Indian for a moment, and then turned round at the hammocks slung close by him.

"What the dickens—" he grunted.

The light from the fire was dim; but by it he could make out that the other hammocks were occupied. Next to him, on one side was Harry Wharton—on the other Frank Nugent. Close at hand were Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Next to them slept Jim Valentine. Farther off, but revealed by the ruddy glimmer of firelight, was Peter Valentine's hammock, bulging with the stalwart form of the planter. Bob blinked at them one after another in surprise. Everybody was in his place, and fast asleep; yet somebody, or something, was bumping under Bob.

It was not one of the fellows larking, as he had supposed. Clearly, it was not that. But what—

Bump! came again, as something brushed the hammock under him. Bob caught his breath, and his heart beat.

The thought of "O Lobo," the bandit of Brazil, came into his mind. Was it possible that, while the Greyfriars party slept, their enemy had tracked them to that remote and hidden recess in the mountains? The thought of the black-bearded, ferocious bravo lurking in the shadows made Bob's heart jump.

But it could not be that! O Lobo knew nothing of the camp in the "Cold Mountain"—he had failed to track the diamond-seekers there. Neither could he, cunning and stealthy as he was, have approached the camp, up the rocky ravine, without giving the alarm to the wary Indian. But who—what—was it?

Something was brushing and bumping against the hammock! Bob leaned over and stared down on the shadowy earth.

He gave a faint gasp.

The flesh almost crept on his bones at what he saw.

Dim, but catching glimmers from the camp-fire, a sinuous, stealthy, spotted form was creeping across the floor of the hut. It emerged from under Bob's hammock as he stared.

His eyes almost started from their sockets as the spotted head turned, and two glowing greenish eyes met his. Petrified, he sat in the hammock, staring at a jaguar within two or three feet of him.

From the other hammocks came a sound of steady breathing. No one else had awakened—no one was conscious of the fearful danger but Bob—and he only because the creeping jaguar had brushed against his hammock as it crept. The Indian, whether asleep or awake, sat motionless by the red embers of the fire.

Even Chico's keen ear had not caught a sound as the stealthy great cat crept down from some cranny in the cliffs into the sleeping camp.

Crouching, the jaguar stared at Bob. He saw a quiver run through the great, spotted body, and knew what was coming. And he woke to sudden life. One snap of those terrible jaws, one blow from the powerful paw, and it was the end of all things! He rolled blindly out on the other side of the hammock as the jaguar sprang. He crashed against Harry Wharton's hammock as he went, awakening the captain of the Remove at once.

Wharton started out of slumber. "What the thump—" he ejaculated. He did not need to finish the question. Neither was Bob's husky cry of warning needed. There was a terrible growl, as the claws of the jaguar clutched at Bob's hammock, a split second after he had rolled out of reach.

"Look out!" shrieked Bob. "Jaguar—oh, look out!"

There was a rending sound as the hammock went into shreds under the jaguar's claws.

The Indian by the fire leaped to his feet. His poncho dropped to the ground as his dusky hand grasped his spear.

With a single leap Chico was in the hut, spear in hand.

Peter Valentine, out of his hammock at the first sound, was grasping his rifle. Jim was groping for his automatic. Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, stared wide-eyed in the sudden alarm. Bob Cherry had escaped the jaguar's clutch—but only for the moment. Leaving the hammock rent in fragments, the fierce brute, growling, turned after him—and in a moment more, before any of his friends could have lifted a hand to help him, he would have been dragged down.

But in that moment a thrusting spear drove at the jaguar's neck—barely in time to save Bob from a lashing claw.

That lash missed him hardly by inches as the jaguar, growling horribly, turned on the Indian. Bob staggered against a post, white as chalk.

The spotted body was launching itself at the Caraya Indian. Chico, the hunter, stood like a rock; his red-bronze face set hard, his eyes like flints; the sharp spear steady in his sinewy hand. In a flash, as it seemed, the leaping jaguar was on him—and on the spear, which sank deep into the savage throat.

Deep as the thrust was, spilling the jaguar's blood in a torrent, it did not stop the leap. The heavy body crashed on the Indian, and he staggered back, the spear wrenched from his hands by the shock. He staggered and fell, and over him rolled the jaguar.

But it was dead as it rolled. The Greyfriars juniors were tumbling out of their hammocks—Peter leaping forward with lifted rifle. But the Caraya shook himself free and rose to his feet, grasped the spear, and drew it from the jaguar's throat. A quiver ran through the spotted body, but that was all, and then it lay still.

"Morto!" said the Caraya. He stirred the fire, and a flame leaped up; and Harry Wharton & Co., scarcely believing that they had escaped that fearful peril, stood gazing in almost stunned silence at the dead jaguar.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Smacks for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER stood in the veranda at Boa Vista and blinked through his big spectacles across the gardens, the orange-trees, and the coffee-fields of the

fazenda. Over his spectacles the fat brows of the Owl of the Remove were knitted.

It was sunny—it was always sunny at Boa Vista. It was hot—it generally was hot. Scores of men were at work on the plantations—Italians and negroes, superintended by Mr. Frulo, the manager. At the landing-stage on the Rio Rexo a long bataloa was being loaded with produce, to send down the river. In the house the voices of the black servants could be heard, some of them singing. It was a bright and cheerful scene—but Billy Bunter frowned.

Bunter was not satisfied.

That was nothing new; in the happiest circumstances Billy Bunter could always find something at which to grouse.

Bunter was feeling fed-up.

For two whole weeks Harry Wharton & Co. had been absent from the plantation on the trip to the Cold Mountain, far away across the forests to the west.

Billy Bunter had started with them on that trip, found the going rough, and turned back—glad enough to get back to ease and comfort at Boa Vista.

So he was left on his own.

It was, as the fat Owl bitterly reflected, just like those beasts to go off and leave a fellow on his own!

He was getting rather tired of his own company—charming as it was! Really life at the fazenda suited Bunter. He ate and slept and lazed and slacked. And what more could a fellow want—at least, a fellow like Bunter? Even

O LOBO'S LAST CARD!

With Billy Bunter—one of Peter Valentine's guests from Greyfriars—in his hands, O Lobo, the ruthless Brazilian bandit, plans to trade his prisoner's life for a fortune!

the fat Owl realised that he was lucky when he thought of Greyfriars and fellows going into the Form-room for lessons with Mr. Quelch.

Getting out of lessons was, alone, enough to make life worth the trouble of living.

Still, Bunter was not satisfied. He thought that very likely the chums of the Remove had forgotten all about him. Probably he was right.

"Beasts!" said Bunter, as he blinked across the fazenda at the dark forests which barred the view to the west.

"Beasts!" squawked a voice at his elbow.

Bonito, the macaw, was perched on the rail, his bright colouring of blue and gold gleaming in the sunshine, his round solemn eyes fixed on Bunter.

"Oh, shut up!" said Bunter crossly.

"Shut up!" repeated the parrot.

Bunter grunted.

He had made a pet of Bonito, who had taken a fancy to him. Bonito liked Bunter. There was, as Johnny Bull had remarked, no accounting for tastes. They were quite inseparable. If Bunter took a walk the macaw would perch on his shoulder; if he took a rest—as he did oftener—Bonito would perch on the back of his chair, or anything near at hand, and watch him with solemn eyes. Perhaps the fact that Bunter's pockets were always well supplied with food-stuffs helped to account for the parrot's attachment.

Bonito talked incessantly. He picked

up remarks from Bunter and repeated them, and was learning quite a lot of extremely uncomplimentary phrases. He was making a habit of it, and Bunter could hardly open his mouth without the talkative parrot giving a second edition of what he said.

"Leaving a fellow on his own for weeks!" growled Bunter. "Rotters!"

"Rotters!" said Bonito cheerfully. "I say, you fellows! Lot of rotters! Lot of beasts! Ha, ha!"

"Nobody here to talk to but that old fool Frulo!" growled Bunter.

"That old fool Frulo!" agreed the macaw, nodding his head just as if he understood. "I say, you fellows! That old fool Frulo!"

"A dashed old nigger!" snorted Bunter.

"Dashed old nigger!" chuckled Bonito. "Ha, ha!"

"Blow him!" said Bunter.

"Blow him!" said Bonito.

"Oh, shut up, you cackling, squawking brute!" snapped Bunter.

"Squawking brute!" yelled the parrot. "Ha, ha! I say, you fellows, squawking brute! Oh crikey!"

Mr. Frulo came up the path from the river and crossed the garden to the steps of the veranda. Bunter blinked at him morosely.

Dom Joao Frulo's copper-coloured face beamed with perspiration and good humour. He raised his immense hat in polite salute to the fat, frowning junior as he came into the veranda. Like many inhabitants of Brazil—a country where there is no colour bar—Mr. Frulo had a dash of the negro in him, and felt none the worse for it. He was so kind and good humoured that all the Famous Five liked him. Bunter didn't.

"You like to come on a river?" asked Mr. Frulo. "I go in a boat, and perhaps the little senhor like to go to come in a boat also."

It was sheer kindness on Mr. Frulo's part, for certainly he did not like Bunter's company. He was rewarded by a snort.

"I'll watch it!" said Bunter. "I'm not going out while that beast Lobo is hanging about!"

"It is all safe as one house," said Mr. Frulo. "I take one rifle, and if O Lobo shall show one nose—Puff! Bang! I shoot him through a head, and he is one completely dead person. There is no cause to go to be afraid of O Lobo."

"Who's afraid of him?" snorted Bunter. "I'm not afraid of any rotten, coffee-coloured Brazilian, I hope!"

As Mr. Frulo was a Brazilian this speech could not be called exactly polite. But when Bunter was irritated he had no politeness to waste on dashed foreigners, especially those with a touch of the tar-brush. Some of the cheery good humour faded out of Mr. Frulo's coppery face.

How Mr. Frulo refrained from smacking Bunter's head was a continual mystery to Harry Wharton & Co. It must have put a strain on him.

"Bom!" said the manager of the fazenda. "You do not like?"

"No!" grunted Bunter.

"That old fool Frulo!" weighed in the macaw. "Ha, ha! I say, you fellows, that old fool Frulo! Dashed old nigger! Yah! Dashed old nigger! Oh crikey!"

Mr. Frulo jumped.

He stared at the bird, and then his black eyes turned on Bunter. All the good humour was gone from his coppery face now.

"Nossa senhora!" exclaimed Dom Joao. "You teach a parrot to talk such of me! Yes? You teach a parrot

to say one old fool Frulo! You teach a parrot to say dashed nigger!"
Smack!

It was the first time that Mr. Frulo's temper had failed him in dealing with Billy Bunter—but it failed him this time.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter, as he rocked under the smack that landed on the side of his bullet head.

He nearly pitched over.

Smack!

A second smack, on the other side, righted him again.

"Yoo-hoop!"

"You have one cheek to say old fool and nigger!" roared Mr. Frulo. "I smack you one head! I smack you one head once more——"

"Keep off!" yelled Bunter, jumping away. "You cheeky beast, keep off! Yaroo! Oh crikey! I say, keep off—blow you!"

The fat junior dodged round the chairs on the veranda. Bonito, in great glee, squawked and cackled.

"Keep off!" he yelled. "Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, oh crikey! Ha, ha!"

"You are one cheeky person of bad manners!" exclaimed Mr. Frulo, and he turned and strode away from the veranda, much to Billy Bunter's relief.

The fat Owl rubbed his fat ears.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh crikey! Ow!"

"Oh crikey!" chuckled Bonito.

"Wow! My ears——"

"Wow! My ears!" said the macaw.

"It's all your fault, you silly beast!" howled Bunter, and he grabbed up a cushion from a chair and swiped at Bonito.

Squawking, the parrot whipped out of the way. Bunter made a dash after him, and the parrot fluttered away. He perched on the rail beside the steps and cackled in great glee, apparently regarding this as a game.

The exasperated Owl dashed after him, missed his step, and rolled down to the lawn below; he landed on the grass with a bump and a roar.

"Ow! Oh crikey!" howled Bunter.

"Oh crikey!" yelled Bonito. "Ha, ha! Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter picked himself up. He gave Bonito a glare that almost cracked his big spectacles. He crawled back to the veranda, grunting. He sat and rubbed his fat ears—and Bonito sat and preened his feathers.

"You cackling beast!" said Bunter.

"Cackling beast!" agreed Bonito.

"Shut up!" yelled Bunter.

"Shut up!" cackled Bonito.

Bunter blinked round for another missile to hurl. Domingo, the black steward, appeared in the doorway.

"O jantar esta prompto!" said Domingo.

Bunter had learned enough Portuguese to know that that meant that dinner was ready. The frown faded from his fat brow. Life, once more, was worth living.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter.

He rolled in to dinner—and all was calm and bright.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On the Track!

"Um urubu!" said O Lobo. O Lobo, the "Wolf," stood on a lava ridge on the Montanha Fria—the "Cold Mountain." His dark, black-bearded face was tilted upward as he watched a black spot dropping from the cloudless, blue sky. It was a vulture—an "urubu," in O Lobo's language. And his black

eyes glittered under his black brows as he watched it drop from the sky and disappear into the rugged hill—and watched other urubus gathering from all quarters towards the same spot. Black vulture after vulture dropped and disappeared.

In the lava rocks of the Cold Mountain, O Lobo, the bandit of Brazil, had camped that night, as he had camped many nights, and turned out at sunrise. Standing on the high ridge, he scanned the expanse of rock and cliff, forest and jungle, and wild ravine. He ate his meagre breakfast as he stood, chewing at a lump of "carne seca"—dried beef, tough as leather.

Round him stretched the rugged rocks and ridges of the Montanha Fria, clothed here and there with forest or jungle, in other places barren and bare.

Somewhere in that wilderness of mingled rock and tangled vegetation were the diamond-seekers. It was in the Montanha Fria—the Cold Mountain—that Peter Valentine had struck diamonds. It was to that lonely mountain, circled by the untrodden forests of the "sertao"—the unpeopled back-country of Brazil—that O Lobo had tracked the party from the plantation.

The planter was there with his nephew, and his nephew's old friends from school, digging and washing diamonds. But where?

The trackless rocks gave no sign, and O Lobo had hunted and searched in vain.

A week had passed since he had fallen in with two of the juniors at the foot of the mountain, and they had saved him, bitter enemy as he was, from the crushing coils of the anaconda.

Even the ruthless bandit, perhaps, was not quite forgetful of that; but it made no difference to his plans or to his fierce, greedy determination to lay his hands on the diamonds of the Montanha Fria.

He was disarmed, haggard, desperate, but as savagely determined as the brute whose name he bore. Wharton and Bob Cherry had saved him from the anaconda, and he had gone back to the forest, driven off under the muzzle of his own rifle. But he had lingered and lurked in the forest, waiting for another chance. Through the long hot days he hunted the recesses of the Montanha Fria, but in vain. Now he stood on one of the highest points of the mountain, watching the black vultures drop, one after another, into a dark ravine.

And the sight renewed hope in his breast.

"Um urubu!" he repeated; and he grinned, and showed his gleaming teeth through his black beard.

Where vultures swooped there was dead meat—perhaps only the carcass of some beast of the jungle that had fallen and perished. More likely, offal from a camp.

If it meant a camp, O Lobo had found the clue he sought; for there was likely to be no camp in that rocky solitude but that of the diamond-seekers from Boa Vista.

With glittering eyes, he watched.

From the high ridge where he stood he could mark hundreds of gullies and ravines; a dozen arroyos, or water-courses, with nothing to distinguish one from another—nothing to give him a clue till the circling vultures gathered and dropped, one by one, into one of the arroyos. Carrion was there, or the carrion birds would not be swooping!

Was it luck at last? It looked like a chance, at least, and the slightest chance was enough to spur on the desperate bandit.

Once he located the camp of the diamond-seekers, he knew what he

would do. It was more than a day's march back to the banks of the Rêxo, even for the hardy bandit; but he would make it, and he would return with a crew of desperate ruffians of his own kidney. There were no eyes to see what happened in the lonely mountain—only those of the black vultures! There was a feast coming for the urubus, if O Lobo had good fortune—if this was indeed a clue to the diamond-seekers.

Leaving the lava ridge, the bandit tramped away across the rugged rocks, climbing and clambering over jutting cliffs, scrambling through tangled jungle, scratched and torn, breathless and muttering oaths, but without a pause. It was yet early, but the sun was growing hot; the sweat trickled down his dark face.

But he kept on, and stood at last on the rugged cliffs that barred in the water-course. Below him now lay the arroyo into which he had seen the urubus swoop.

Far below he had a glimpse of a trickling stream, rippling over its rocky bed. It was not easy to find a way down the precipitous cliffs that walled in the arroyo; but by cleft and crevice he clambered down, slowly, stealthily, watchful as a jaguar creeping on its prey. Only too well he knew that, if he was seen, Peter Valentine's rifle or the whizzing arrows of the Caraya would be his greeting.

He stopped at last, crouching in a crevice twenty feet over the bank of the mountain stream, watching. He could see the camp of the diamond-seekers now, and from below voices came to his ears.

Close under the cliff stood a hut with a slanting roof; he could have tossed a pebble on it from where he crouched. At a little distance from the hut Peter Valentine was handling a spade, and the grind of the spade on the gravel came up through the hot air. He watched.

Unseen, unsuspected, he watched—like a lurking wild beast of his native jungle. He could see the planter at work early, digging the "cascalho"—the gravel in which diamonds were found—shovelling it into a truck, to be rolled down to the stream for washing. He could see none of the others, but he could hear voices; they came clearly to his ears.

The dropping urubus had guided him aright. The bandit of the Rêxo was looking down on the camp of the diamond-seekers.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Too Late!

"FED-UP?" asked Jim Valentine, with a grin.

"No fear!" answered Bob Cherry sturdily.

"The no-fearfulness is terrific, my esteemed and absurd Valentine!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

It was a sunny morning, and the Greyfriars fellows were at breakfast at the camp in the arroyo.

Chico had dragged away the carcass of the slain jaguar and thrown it into a thicket at a little distance up the ravine out of sight.

But the juniors had not forgotten it. The Famous Five of Greyfriars had plenty of pluck, but the adventure of the night lingered in their thoughts. Jim Valentine and his Uncle Peter had slept again as if nothing had happened, but the chums of the Remove had been very glad to see the sun rise. They were not quite so used to jaguars as Jim and Peter. And a jaguar bumping

on a fellow's hammock in the night was a rather startling experience.

"I won't say it was nice, old bean," went on Bob, "but we're not scared."

"Not in the least!" said Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"The scarefulness is not terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Jim Valentine was brewing "mate," the native tea, over the camp-fire. Peter was already at work, the strokes of his spade ringing along the ravine. On a rock in the stream Chico, the Caraya, sat, netting fish and keeping watch.

From the thicket up the ravine came a sound of scuttling, croaking, and snapping. From all over the mountain the black vultures had gathered, to drop into the bush where the carcass of the jaguar had been thrown.

worry, Valentine. We're enjoying this trip."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Frank Nugent.

"The enjoyfulness is—"

"Terrific and preposterous!" chuckled Bob.

Jim Valentine laughed.

"Well, we shall be through in a couple of days more," he said. "Peter's worked through that patch of cascalho with your help. You've had a spot of hard work—"

"A spot of hard work doesn't hurt anybody!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"A bit tougher than grinding Latin grammar with Queleh in the Form-room at Greyfriars—what?" smiled Valentine.

"Well, yes; but we're jolly glad to be of some use after your uncle's been so decent to us," said Nugent.

"Yes—we're going to break up here to-morrow, or the day after, at the latest. If O Lobo is still hunting for us, he's welcome to what he finds here—after we're gone."

The juniors laughed.

"You think that villain is still after us?" asked Frank.

"I shouldn't wonder—he's a sticker! But he's not likely to track us here—and if he came up the arroyo, Chico is watching for him—the first thing he would see of us, would be Chico's arrow sticking in him. We needn't worry about O Lobo," said Jim carelessly. "I fancy we're done with him. When he finds out that the diamonds have all been lifted, and sent away to Rio, he will know that his game is up."

From the thicket up the ravine, the



Smack! "Yaroo!" roared Billy Bunter, as he rocked under the smack that landed on the side of his bullet-head and nearly pitched over. Smack! A second smack, on the other side, righted him again. "You have one cheek to say old fool!" roared Mr. Frulo. "I smack you one head!"

The juniors had seen urubu after urubu come winging from the blue, to drop into the arroyo, drawn to the feast of carrion.

They did not guess that other eyes had seen the carrion birds from the summit of the Montanha Fria, and followed them as a guide. Living, the jaguar had done no damage; dead, he had guided O Lobo to the hidden camp. But the Greyfriars fellows were not thinking of the Wolf; they had almost forgotten him.

"We're sticking it out for a couple of days more!" went on Jim, as he poured the mate into the tin cups. "If you fellows aren't keen to get back to the fazenda—"

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull. "A jaguar's all in the day's work!"

"The night's, anyhow!" grinned Bob. "I thought it was one of you fatheads larking when my hammock was bumped, and I can tell you it made me jump when I found it was a jaguar looking for his supper! But don't you

"You've been a lot of use. Peter couldn't bring any of the men here from the fazenda; the less said about a discovery of diamonds the better. We've had trouble enough through that scoundrel O Lobo getting wind of it. Only old Frulo knows; and he's wanted at the plantation, of course, to carry on while Peter's away. So you fellows have been tremendously useful."

"As well as ornamental—good!" said Bob.

"You see, the strike isn't very extensive, though it's proved rather rich," said Valentine. "I dare say there's lots more of the cascalho under the rocks; but that's a mining proposition with machinery, not quite practicable in the sertao. That patch was exposed donkeys years ago, when there was an earthquake or something of the sort in this region. We've as good as cleared it out now. Many hands make light work. Peter reckons on winding up to-day."

"And then we get back to the fazenda?" asked Harry.

urubus were rising on the wing, soaring away to the sky, leaving only the skeleton of the jaguar in the bush. Harry Wharton & Co. finished their breakfast, and went along to the patch of cascalho, where Peter was at work.

The planter, resting on his spade, gave them a smile.

"Ready for another spot of hard labour?" he asked.

"Ready and willing," answered Bob cheerily.

"We get through to-day or to-morrow," said Peter. "We shan't be leaving much here, though I may make another trip another time. But I fancy it will be pretty thoroughly worked out."

The juniors set to work, digging, shovelling, trundling the trucks, and washing out the gravel.

From his eyrie, in the crevice high up the cliff, O Lobo watched.

But the savage satisfaction had died

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out of the swarthy face. O Lobo's black eyes were gleaming, his teeth gritting, with rage and disappointment.

Every word uttered by the Greyfriars fellows had reached the ears of the hidden bandit lurking above on the cliff.

He had found the diamond camp—and found, not success, but another bitter disappointment.

His plan had been cut and dried—to get back to the Rexo, gather a crew of lawless braves, and fall on the diamond-seekers at their camp. But that plan was futile now. He had discovered them, only to learn that their stay in the Montanha Fria was coming to an end.

Long before he could return to the spot with a gang of his associates, they would be gone; the camp would be deserted.

Days and nights of weary trailing and hardship had gone for nothing; he was defeated again, as he had been defeated before.

The bandit's black-bearded face was convulsed with rage.

Long he crouched there unseen, a prey to bitter fury and disappointment, while the sounds of the diamond diggers at work floated up to his ears.

But he crept away at last.

His game was up in the Montanha Fria. That was clear to O Lobo; and he had to make up his savage mind to it.

But the desperado had yet one card to play—his last! For two more days the diamond-seekers would remain at the Cold Mountain—he could reach the Rexo in that space of time before them.

On the Rexo was his last chance—at the fazenda. O Lobo, gritting his teeth, scrambled away over the rocks; and a few hours later he was gone from the Montanha Fria—tramping away through the tropical forest.

In the arroyo, Harry Wharton & Co. worked on cheerily through the long, hot day, digging and washing diamonds. It was hard work, but they were not slackers, and they were glad to make themselves useful to the planter, who had shown them boundless hospitality during their holiday in Brazil. Still, they were not sorry at the prospect of getting back to the fazenda on the Rexo.

The following morning the last of the cascalho was washed out, and the digging came to an end. That afternoon the diamond-seekers rested, and made their preparations for breaking camp, and at dawn the next morning they started down the arroyo, homeward bound.

"And to-morrow," said Bob Cherry, when they started, "we shall see jolly old Bunter again. Think of that, and rejoice, my beloved 'earers!'"

And the juniors chuckled.

They did not dream, at the moment, of the startling news that was to greet them when they arrived at the plantation on the Rio Rexo. If they thought of O Lobo, they thought of him still wearily hunting and trailing on the sun-scorched mountain, not even aware that they had departed. But they were soon to learn that O Lobo had not been idle.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Shot from the Forest!

"NUTS!" said Bonito.

"Here you are!" said Billy Bunter.

He cracked Brazil nuts, and threw them to the macaw.

It was a hot afternoon. Billy Bunter had packed away his usual extensive

lunch, rolled out into the veranda, and ensconced himself in a deep cane-chair, to take his happy ease.

The next item on the programme was a nap. If there was one South American custom of which Billy Bunter wholeheartedly approved, it was the midday "siesta." Inhabitants of tropical countries always rested in the heat of the day, and Billy Bunter considered it a jolly good idea. And he improved upon the custom by starting his rest early, and finishing it late.

Before settling down to happy slumber, however, Billy Bunter proceeded to deal with a pocketful of nuts. There was just a little space available inside his extensive circumference. Bunter was not the man to leave it vacant. And he liked Brazil nuts—one of the few good things he had found in Brazil.

Bonito, the macaw, shared that liking. It was through helping the macaw to get rid of a nut, in the hard shell of which his curved beak was stuck, that Bunter had first made Bonito's acquaintance.

Now Bunter was taking the trouble to crack the nuts for Bonito. Certainly, he was cracking more for himself. He parked at least six to the macaw's one.

Bonito hopped about the veranda after the nuts, and was happy, squawking with satisfaction. Bunter sat in the comfortable chair, and was happy, too—luscious nut following nut on the downward path.

The beasts had not yet returned from the Montanha Fria—Billy Bunter was still on his own. Still, he was having quite a good time. Lazing suited Bunter.

For a week or more, he had not stirred beyond the steps of the veranda. Before that, he had taken his walks in the gardens, and his naps in the hammock under the orange-trees. But one glimpse of O Lobo, lurking in the trees, had been enough for Bunter. That was more than a week ago; but the Owl of the Remove was taking no chances. Anyhow, he was not fearfully keen on exercise. The veranda was extensive enough for all the walking that Bunter wanted to do.

Squawk, squawk!

"Nuts!" cackled Bonito. "Nuts! I say, you fellows, nuts!"

"Oh, don't bother!" grunted Bunter. "You're a troublesome brute!"

"Troublesome brute!" agreed the macaw gleefully. "Nuts! Nuts! Lots of rotters! Rotters all round! I say, you fellows, nuts!"

Bunter threw the parrot another nut, and Bonito hopped after it. Then the fat junior leaned back, slid his straw hat over his eyes, and closed them, to glide into contented slumber.

Bang!

Bunter jumped, and sat up.

"Wha-a-t was that?" he ejaculated.

He knew what it was—a rifle-shot, ringing from the direction of the river. The report rolled, with a thousand echoes, over the coffee-fields.

A shot was not an uncommon sound on the banks of the Rexo. Mr. Frulo might have fired at an alligator or an urubu.

But Bunter was easily alarmed. He heaved his weight out of the chair, rolled to the rail in front of the veranda, and stood staring across the gardens and the coffee-fields, through his big spectacles.

Bonito hopped on the rail by his side, and from the rail to Bunter's shoulder. That fat shoulder was his favourite seat.

A loud buzz of voices came from the direction of the river. Bunter's fat face

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grew anxious as he listened. Something had happened.

A black man came running up the path from the Rexo. He was shouting in Portuguese, of which Bunter understood nothing; but he could read the alarm and excitement in the black face.

He felt a tremor of uneasiness. Domingo, the black steward, came running out from the house. There was a rapid fire of Portuguese between the two blacks. Then Domingo came running in again.

"I say, what's happened?" shouted Bunter.

Domingo did not heed, if he heard. He rushed into the house, and his voice was heard calling. Then he rushed out again, with five or six black servants at his heels.

"What the thump—" gasped Bunter.

"Thump!" cackled the macaw in his ear. "Thump, thump! I say, you fellows, nuts! Nuts! I say, nuts!"

But Bunter did not heed him. He blinked anxiously along the path to the river. He did not intend to leave the safety of the house to learn what had happened. But he was getting very anxious.

Domingo and the black servants reappeared, coming up the path. Bunter saw that they were carrying something—it looked like a hammock slung on poles, with somebody in it.

He soon saw who that somebody was. It was Dom Joao Frulo, with a ghastly pallor in his coppery face.

Bunter blinked at him, in alarm and horror. He did not like Mr. Frulo—less than ever since the exasperated manager had smacked his head. But he could see that something serious must have happened, and he had heard the rifle-shot.

With a chattering of excited voices the blacks carried Mr. Frulo into the veranda. Bunter jumped to him.

"What's up?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

A spasm of pain twisted the Brazilian's coppery face.

"You hear one shot?" he panted. "Yes? I am shot in a leg. I have one very bad hurt in one leg! Yes! Sim, sim, senhor!"

"But who?" gasped Bunter.

"Nao fac ideia!" groaned Mr. Frulo. "I know not a thing! I stand beside a river, and from another bank, from a tree, come a shot, which shall go to come to hit a leg. Perhaps it is that bandit. O Lobo, that watch for me and shoot me in a leg. Now I have one leg that is what you call in English a game!"

He signed to the blacks, and they carried him into the house.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh crikey!" said Bonito in his ears.

"Nuts!"

"Oh, shut up!" hissed Bunter.

"Shut up!" said the macaw. "Nuts!"

Bunter did not heed the parrot. He rolled back to the rail and stood blinking across the sunny gardens and coffee-fields.

Mr. Frulo was being put in his bed in the house. Billy Bunter was, perhaps, concerned for the coffee manager, disabled by a shot treacherously fired from the cover of the forest. But he was very much more concerned about himself.

Who could have fired that treacherous shot?

The kind-hearted manager was popular with all the men, blacks and Italians and Indians, employed on the fazenda, and with the natives in the villages along the river. It was not one of them who had lain in ambush for him and shot him down. Bunter knew—at

least, he was sure—that it was O Lobo the Wolf, or one of his gang.

But why?

The fat junior felt that he could guess only too easily why. For Mr. Frulo himself the bandit cared nothing. But it was Mr. Frulo who was Bunter's protector at the fazenda. There was no other white man at Boa Vista, while Peter Valentine and Jim were away with the Greyfriars fellows.

Bunter shivered.

Once already during the planter's absence O Lobo had made an attempt to get hold of him, and had been driven off under the raining bullets of Joao Frulo's rifle. Now, if he came, Mr. Frulo would not stand in his way! The fat Owl realised only too clearly why that shot had been fired from the forest.

"Oh lor!" breathed Bunter.

There were plenty of men on the plantation, but they did not live near the house; they had their quarters in huts along the river. Bunter could see a good many of them now—black negroes and swarthy Italians, in groups in the coffee-fields, talking excitedly—evidently discussing what had happened. He knew that there was no help from them. They were peaceful labourers, little likely to lift a hand against an armed and desperate bandit if he came.

Bunter had heard many tales of O Lobo since he had been at the fazenda. The bandit who would have been seized at once in Rio or Sao Paulo, swaggered a free man on the Rexo, eyed with fear by the villagers when they saw him. Now that Mr. Frulo was disabled and helpless, was he coming to the fazenda? He would not have dared had Mr. Valentine and Jim been there, but he knew that they were away.

"Oh lor!" repeated Bunter.

He was not thinking of a nap now! He was thinking that he wished he had gone with the party to the Montanha Fria, rough as the going was. They believed that he was safe at the fazenda, under the guard of Joao Frulo. But with Mr. Frulo laid low by a treacherous shot, Bunter doubted very much whether the black servants would dare to oppose the bandit if he came.

From the orange-trees by the lawn, emerging suddenly into the sunlight, came a dark, black-bearded figure. Bunter's eyes and spectacles fixed on it in terror. With swift strides O Lobo crossed the sunny grass towards the steps of the veranda. Billy Bunter gave him one terrified blink, turned, and bolted into the house, in such a hurry that Bonito was dislodged from his shoulder and fluttered to the floor.

Bunter forgot Bonito. Breathless he rushed into the house, scuttled into his room, and dodged under the bed. In that hiding-place he listened, in palpitating terror to the heavy tread of the bandit.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Bandit's Raid!

O LOBO tramped heavily across the veranda. The bandit's face was grim and desperate.

Domingo, looking out of the doorway, saw him, and his black face fell, his jaw dropping with fear. He stood as if transfixed under the desperado's gleaming eyes.

The bandit strode towards him, his hand on the knife at his belt.

"Onde estro senhor Inglez?" he snarled.

"Beast!" came a squawking voice from the veranda, and the bandit spun round in surprise.

Bonito, perched on the back of

Bunter's empty chair, blinked at him. O Lobo stared at the macaw.

"Nuts!" said Bonito. "Yah! Beast! Rotter! Lot of rotters! I say, you fellows, lot of rotters! Leaving a chap on his own. Ha, ha!"

The bandit turned away again with a grunt of impatience. He grasped the trembling Domingo with his left hand. With his right he half-drew the long, glittering "faca" from his belt.

"O senhor Inglez," he said, in a low tone of savage menace.

"Sim, senhor!" stammered Domingo.

The bandit followed him. Two or three of the black servants saw him as he entered, and scuttled away, panting with fear.

"O quarto do senhor Inglez!" hissed O Lobo, between his teeth; and the trembling Domingo led him to Bunter's room.

From an adjoining room came a sound of low groaning. O Lobo did not heed that sound of pain from Joao Frulo, lying there bandaged and helpless. Whether his treacherous shot had wounded or killed the manager of the fazenda, the desperate ruffian cared little. He knew that Dom Joao could not stand in his way, and that was enough for him.

His fierce black eyes roved round the room in search of the Owl of Greyfriars. Bunter was not to be seen.

It was a large room, with a number of hammocks slung, and only one bedstead. The Famous Five, when they were at the fazenda, slept in the hammocks, but Billy Bunter preferred a bed, and had a bed. Bunter spent a good deal of his time in that bed—now, for a change, he was spending a little time underneath it.

From under the bed the fat junior could see O Lobo's mosquito-boots. The rest of the bandit was out of his view. But the trembling Owl saw enough of him, and did not want to see any more.

He hardly breathed.

O Lobo swept the room with his fierce glance, and then turned to the black steward, his knife out of its sheath.

"O senhor Inglez!" he hissed. "Digame, onda esta o senhor Inglez?"

Bunter knew enough Portuguese to guess that the bandit was demanding "Where is the English senhor?"

But Domingo, who did not know, could only stammer helplessly that he knew nothing of Bunter's whereabouts.

"Corpo de Deus!" ejaculated O Lobo suddenly.

Leaving the trembling Domingo at the door, he strode towards the bed, bent, and glanced under it.

A savage grin wrinkled his dark face at the sight of a terrified fat countenance, and a large pair of spectacles, blinking at him owlishly.

"O rapaz gordo!" grinned O Lobo.

"The fat boy! Bom!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Little senhor—"

"Ow! I'm not here!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I—I mean, g-g-go away! I—I say, I—I—I—ow!"

"Venha!" snapped O Lobo.

He reached under the bed, grasped a fat leg, and drew Billy Bunter out, squeaking.

The fat junior's eyes almost popped through his spectacles. He gave a blink at Domingo, but Domingo was already fading out on the picture.

O Lobo gripped a fat arm.

"Venha!" he repeated. "Come!"

"I—I say!" stuttered Bunter.

He broke off at a flash of the long knife.

"Ow! Keep that away!" howled Bunter. "I—I—I'm coming! I—I—I—"

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want to come! I—I'm coming like anything! Oh crumbs!"

And he came.

Stumbling, with O Lobo's iron grasp on his fat arm, the fat Owl tottered out into the veranda.

"Nuts!" cackled Bonito. "I say nuts!"

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"Oh lor'!" said Bonito. "Nuts!"

O Lobo cast a swift glance round him from the veranda. Desperate and reckless as he was, he knew he was running risks. He was in haste to go.

"Venha!" he snapped, and he jerked the fat junior to the steps.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

He dared not attempt resistance. Once, since he had been at the fazenda, Billy Bunter had displayed pluck—when he had saved Chico, the Caraya, from the alligator. But what pluck Billy Bunter possessed oozed out at his fat finger-tips now. The grasp of the bandit chilled him to the very marrow of his bones with fear.

He stumbled down the steps in the bandit's grip.

There was a squawk and a flutter of wings, and Bonito landed on his shoulder.

"Urrrggh! Gerraway!" mumbled Bunter.

Squawk!

Bonito did not get away. He generally perched on Bunter's fat shoulder when the Owl of the Remove went out into the gardens; and now he fastened on his usual perch.

The bandit paid no heed to the parrot.

With his iron grasp on a fat arm, he cut across the gardens at a run, Bunter stumbling and tottering after him.

A voice was heard shouting in the distance as they disappeared into the orange-trees. Some of the plantation hands had seen them.

O Lobo hurried on.

It was not likely that any of the labourers in the coffee-fields would venture to tackle the burly, ferocious bandit. But, given time, they might gather in numbers and pursue. The bandit lost no time.

Through the orange-grove, he hurried away towards the river, leading, or rather dragging, the Owl of the Remove after him.

Bunter had a glimpse of hope. He knew that Mr. Frulo had been directing the loading of a bataloa at the landing-stage, and he could hear a sound of voices from the direction of the desembarcadouro. Some of the boatmen carried weapons, and if they saw him—

But they did not see him, and that glimpse of hope vanished. O Lobo kept carefully clear of the landing-stage, where a crowd had gathered. Keeping to the cover of the trees, he struck across to a point on the river at a distance from the desembarcadouro.

There was no eye at hand to see him when he emerged from the trees. And he did not linger.

Under the bank a canoe was tied up. With a swing of his sinewy arm, the bandit threw Bunter into the canoe, and it rocked as the fat junior sprawled there. Bonito, clinging to his shoulder, cackled wildly.

O Lobo stepped in swiftly, cast off, and seized the paddles. The canoe shot out into the Rexo.

Bunter sat up, gasping.

O Lobo was paddling the canoe up the river with swift strokes. The current was against him; but it was

slow and sluggish, and the canoe almost flew.

Bunter's last hope died in his breast. He had had some faint, lingering hope of dodging away from his captor in the forest. But it was not on foot, by the forest paths, that O Lobo was taking him. There was no escape from the canoe—unless Bunter threw himself overboard. And if that thought had entered his mind, it would have been banished by the sight of an alligator's snout lifting from the mud.

Bunter sat gasping, while O Lobo, giving him no attention, plied the paddles with swift, skilled hands. The canoe shot up the Rexo. Downstream, other craft might have been passed—and there were native villages on the banks. But the Valentine fazenda was the last settlement on the Rexo; farther up the river was the untrodden wilderness. As the canoe skimmed the glimmering water, Bunter knew that he was being carried off into the sertao—the desert—by a path that left no trace.

The fazenda vanished behind him.

Dark forest closed the view on either side of the river. Monkeys grinned at Bunter from the branches; parrots cackled in the foliage. But there was no human eye to fall on him, as mile after mile glided past under the swift paddles.

"Nuts!" cackled a voice in Bunter's ear.

But Bunter did not heed. He sprawled in the canoe and groaned, as the rapid miles slid by, and he was carried deeper and deeper into the untrodden wilderness.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Island in the Rexo!

"**P**OR aqui!" muttered the bravo, through his black beard.

The canoe had stopped.

How many miles it had covered on the winding Rexo Bunter did not know, and could not guess; but he knew that it must be plenty.

More than one island, thickly wooded and jungly to the water's edge, had been passed—and now it was at an island in the river that the bandit had come to a halt, and, it seemed, to his destination.

It was a small island—not more than a hundred feet in its widest extent. It was covered with vegetation over every inch of its surface. Thick trees grew close together, but, close as they were, smaller trees grew among them, and the inter-wound trunks were tangled with lianas and pendant masses of Spaniard's-beard.

Looking at it from the canoe, it seemed a solid wall of green, with hardly an interstice by which a rabbit might penetrate. Bunter blinked at it, wondering how he was to land.

The bandit turned the canoe in from the current, and, standing up, lifted a vast mass of lianas that hung between two trunks. Then Bunter saw that a tiny creek jutted in between the two trees, hitherto hidden by the sprawling creepers.

Holding up the screen of creepers, O Lobo pushed the canoe into the creek, hardly wide enough to admit it. It was merely a ditch, with a foot of water on the mud.

Bunter gave a grunt as a tangle of lianas caught him round the neck, and jerked off his hat and the parrot from his shoulder. He had not ducked in time as the canoe floated under.

O Lobo glanced at him and gave a scoffing laugh. Towards the other Greyfriars fellows the Wolf had displayed feelings of bitter animosity. But he did not seem to consider the fat and fatuous Owl worthy of his hate. For Bunter, his feeling was only one of contemptuous scorn.

Bunter did not mind. He was not worried about what this desperado of the sertao thought of him. O Lobo's scorn was not so dangerous as his hatred.

He squeaked and grabbed at the lianas as they clutched him. Bonito squawked indignantly. Bunter did not heed the parrot—he had not heeded it all the way up the Rexo—Bunter's fat thoughts were concentrated wholly on W. G. Bunter.

He scrambled through the clinging creepers, grabbed up his hat, leaving Bonito to take care of itself, which, however, the macaw was quite able to do.

O Lobo shoved the canoe up the narrow, shallow creek, and the lianas dropped into place behind. The creek extended hardly a dozen feet into the shore; but it was a perfectly safe hiding-place for the canoe.

Once the lianas were in place again, hanging from the boughs to the water, no eye could have followed the canoe—the keenest searcher might have passed the river-island, and never guessed that any craft was there.

Bunter realised that; his fat wits were very much alive now. He could guess that this was a hiding-place well-known to the bandit of the Rexo. O Lobo defied the law—of which there was little enough in that outlying region.

But he had been hunted more than once by "soldados," sent in pursuit of him, and on such occasions he had lain in hiding till the soldiers gave up the search.

Probably the bandit had a dozen different lairs in different parts of the wilderness. The one he had chosen for his prisoner was as secure as a hiding-place could be.

On either side of the island the river rolled—walled in by almost impenetrable forest. On the muddy banks, where there were shallows, huge cayamans, as they were called, waddled in the mud—alligators whose fearful jaws made Billy Bunter feel faint, even to see them at a distance. Above and below the island alligators floated—the canoe had almost brushed some of the river monsters.

Even had Bunter been left at large on the island, he would hardly have thought of attempting to leave it by swimming, or floating away on a log.

But he soon saw that he was not going to have the chance, little likely as he would have been to take advantage of it.

Leaving the canoe, O Lobo stepped ashore, pushing a way through thick, clinging underwood, under the thick trees. He made a sign to Bunter to follow, and the fat Owl dragged himself dismally out of the canoe.

He discerned now that there was a kind of path through the thicket. It had been hacked with an axe. But the jungle encroached on either side, and it was necessary to put branches and twigs out of the way to advance.

It was a short path, leading into the centre of the little island. O Lobo tramped on, without turning his head, Bunter limping at his heels. Bonito was on the fat shoulder again now, squawking. From the trees around came



As the Greyfriars juniors paddled in pursuit of the bandit's canoe Harry Wharton took aim with his rifle. Bang! The Co. expected to see O Lobo fall. But the bullet only grazed the bandit, for he paddled as swiftly as before!

answering squawks—they were alive with parrots.

Bunter gave them no attention; but he could not help noticing them. The island was alive with macaws.

They were not like Bonito to look at, however. Bonito was blue and gold, and the macaws on the river island were of the crimson variety, and looked like flickering flames as they darted in the dusk of the branches.

Squawking and cackling rose on all sides as the parrots were disturbed. O Lobo came to a halt where a hut stood under a towering tree.

Huts in the back-country of Brazil, so far as Bunter had seen, generally consisted of a roof on poles, open at all sides to the air. But the hut on the river island was a more careful construction.

It had four walls, built of poles cut in the thicket, and planted in the earth. The roof was also of poles laid across, and thatched with leaves. The door, of plaited canes, was thick and strong, hung on leather hinges. There was no window—but Bunter saw that several apertures were left in the walls—either for ventilation, or for use as loopholes, in case of attack—no doubt serving both purposes.

The fat junior blinked at the hut in dismay. This, he could see, was to be his prison.

"I—I say—" he stammered.

O Lobo threw the door open, and made him a sign to enter. As Bunter paused, a ferocious look came over the bandit's face, and he made a motion towards the knife in his belt.

That was enough for Bunter. He bolted into that hut like a fat rabbit into a burrow.

O Lobo grinned and followed him in. Over the trees the sun was blazing with burning brilliance. But under the

thick branches it was dusky in the shade. Inside the hut the dusk was deeper still, and Bunter could hardly see his surroundings until his eyes became accustomed to the gloom.

The bandit sat on a wooden bench near the narrow doorway, and rolled a cigarette, and lighted it. He watched the fat junior with a kind of contemptuous amusement.

Bunter blinked round the hut. A dirty hammock hung in the corner. There were a few rough utensils, and a large tin pan with a lid, used for keeping food away from the ants. The only seat was the bench on which O Lobo now sat—and Billy Bunter had to stand.

He stood and blinked at the bandit. He shivered at the thought of being left alone in that desolate and solitary spot. But even solitude was preferable to the company of O Lobo.

"A thousand welcomes to my home, little senhor!" said O Lobo, with mocking politeness. "All that I have I offer you."

"Oh lor'!" said Bunter.

Such polite speeches were common in Brazil, but from O Lobo it came with sardonic mockery.

"Your friends, I think, will not find you here," grinned the bandit.

"Nunno!" mumbled Bunter.

"You may, if it pleases you, call out," said the Wolf. "Your voice will bring you answers from a thousand crimson macaws—but no other."

"Oh dear!"

"I do not think you will escape. Nao! But perhaps, little senhor, your imprisonment will not be long. It depends on the Senhor Valentine."

"Blow him!" groaned Bunter. "I wish I'd never come to Brazil. I wish I was back at Greyfriars. Oh lor'!"

"It was my wish to lay hands on

one of the others whom, as I know, the Senhor Valentine values more highly," said O Lobo. "But the young Valentine is too wary for me. And the boy Wharton escaped when I had my grasp on him. I had no choice, little senhor. But let us hope, for your sake, that the Senhor Valentine values the life of even such a guest as you."

Bunter shivered.

"If he values your life, little senhor, you will like to return to your country of Inghilterra. But he must value it at a high price—the diamonds of the Montanha Fria."

"I—I say—"

"The senhor will receive word from me when he returns to his fazenda," said O Lobo. "Let him pay for your life with the diamonds he has dug out of the cascalho in the Montanha Fria; and I wash my hands of you. If not, you find a grave in the jaws of the alligators, and I look for another chance."

"I—I say—"

"I leave you, little senhor. In the iron pan there is farinha bread, and rapidura and carne seca; not much, but enough to keep you alive. Nossa senhora! You will look for short commons here. There is water in the can. Do not waste it, for I may not be here to refill it from the river. I bid you a thousand adieux, little senhor. In my absence my dwelling is yours."

Rising from the bench the bandit made Bunter a mocking bow, and stepped out of the hut.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

The door closed on him. He heard O Lobo fumbling outside for a few minutes, doubtless securing the door. Then there was a brushing and a rustling as the bandit tramped away back

to the canoe. Loudly came the squawking of the swarming macaws. It died down, and Bunter knew that the bandit was gone from the island.

He sat down on the bench, his fat knees feeling weak under him. A gleam of blue and gold in the dusk caught his eyes. It was Bonito. He had quite forgotten the macaw. In the terrible solitude the company of Bonito was a relief, and Bunter's dismal fat face brightened a little as he blinked at him.

"Oh, you!" he said.

"Oh, you!" cackled Bonito, cocking his head at Bunter. "Beast! Lot of rotters! I say, you fellows, nuts!"

Thus reminded that he still had a cargo of Brazil nuts in his pocket, Billy Bunter groped for a handful. Bonito cackled gleefully at the sight of them. There was comfort in foodstuffs, dismal as Bunter's prospects were. He cracked nuts and ate them, and Bonito sorted among cracked shells for nutty fragments. Then Bonito, apparently tired of the close space of the hut, fluttered about looking for an outlet. But the loopholes were too small for the macaw to pass, small as he was, and he fluttered back to Bunter, and perched on a fat shoulder.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh lor!" he said.

The macaw blinked back.

"Oh lor!" he agreed.

And there was silence.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bad News!

"O MOCHO BRAVO!" panted the Caraya.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Something's up!" said Bob Cherry.

In the dusky aisle of the forest the Greyfriars fellows came to a halt. It was the second day of the march, and they had almost reached the river, on which the last stage of the journey was to be done by boat, down the Rexo to the fazenda.

Chico had been sent ahead of the party. Alone, the swift and hardy Caraya could travel twice as fast as the rest. Chico was to reach Boa Vista well ahead of the others, and bring the montaria up the river to the spot where they were to embark.

They did not expect to see him again till they reached the Rexo, where he was to wait for them with the boat and paddlers at a spot still fifteen or twenty miles distant from the plantation.

But the Rexo was not yet in sight when they saw the Caraya. Evidently he had sighted them from a distance, and was coming to meet them; and the look on his bronze face showed that he had bad news.

Peter Valentine's face set grim and dark as the Caraya came panting up. The juniors did not understand the Portuguese in which he spoke, in low, hurried tones to the planter. But they knew who he meant by "O Mocho Bravo."

"O Mocho" meant the Owl. It was Chico who added the adjective "bravo" to it. Billy Bunter had been called the "Owl" often enough by the Greyfriars fellows, but never the "Brave Owl."

Chico had a grateful remembrance of the fact that Bunter had saved him when O Lobo had captured him, and tied him to a stump in the mud by the Rexo, and left him to the alligators.

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All the juniors agreed that Bunter had done a plucky thing on that occasion, though he had, as Johnny Bull expressed it, done such a "song and dance" on the subject that they had become more than fed-up with Bunter's heroism.

But the Caraya had not heard, or, at all events, understood, the fat Owl's boasting. To Chico's simple Indian mind the fat junior was a hero, and he had treated Bunter with a deep respect that made the other fellows smile.

They liked the Indian for it; but they did not share his admiration for the fat Owl. It was rather a new experience for the Famous Five to find Billy Bunter set far above them in any one's estimation. But to Chico, the Caraya, Billy Bunter was the "goods," without a rival. The Famous Co. were merely "also rans" in comparison.

"O Mocho Bravo!" came continually in the Indian's panted speech, and the planter's face grew darker as he listened, and Jim Valentine's brow set. The chums of the Remove exchanged uneasy glances.

Chico had been to the fazenda to bring the boat up the river, and he had brought bad news. They could see that. And he was speaking of Bunter. It looked as if something had happened to Bunter in their absence.

But what could have happened?

Bunter had refused to share the toils and perils of the trip to the Montanha Fria, and undoubtedly the other fellows had been relieved to leave him at the fazenda. There they had not doubted that he would be safe—under the care of Mr. Frulo and the black servants.

The surrounding forests were full of perils; but Bunter was not the fellow to wander in the tropical forests and look for trouble. He was anything but that kind of fellow!

They had pictured him, when they thought of him at all, lazing away the sunny days, eating gargantuan meals, and sleeping in the hammock under the orange-trees or in a deep chair in the shady veranda.

That, indeed, was how Bunter had passed his time, and he had found much satisfaction therein.

"What the thump can have happened?" muttered Bob Cherry uneasily. "Old Chico's handing out bad news of some sort."

"O Lobo—" muttered Harry.

"O Lobo's at the Cold Mountain—he was hunting us there—we dropped on him the day we killed the anaconda!" answered Bob. "We've left him behind there, still hunting for us and the jolly old diamonds."

"I suppose so!" assented Harry.

"But—"

"Bunter hasn't run into a jaguar or a puma—he would take jolly good care of that!" said Johnny Bull.

"A snake-bite, perhaps—" said Frank Nugent.

The mere suggestion was enough to make the juniors change colour. Poisonous reptiles were the most deadly danger of the South American forests.

The Caraya ceased to speak. Peter Valentine turned to the anxious juniors, his face dark.

"Bunter—" began Harry.

Peter nodded.

"Yes, it's bad news! That scoundrel, O Lobo, has got him!"

"O Lobo!" exclaimed Bob. "But we've left him behind at the Montanha Fria—"

The planter bit his lip.

"So we believed," he said. "That he was there, hunting for us, we know—but he must have given it up and tried his

luck at Boa Vista. This time he has got away with it."

"You mean that he has taken Bunter?"

"That's it!"

"But Mr. Frulo—" exclaimed Frank.

"Frulo was knocked over by a bullet fired from cover, and has been on his back ever since!" said Mr. Valentine.

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

"When?" asked Harry.

"Only yesterday!" said the planter.

"If we'd left a day earlier—" He gritted his teeth. "But who could have foreseen this? Bunter was safer at the fazenda than at the Montanha Fria—Joao Frulo was ready to shoot that scoundrel down if he appeared, and there were plenty of the blacks to help him. But with Dom Joao wounded and disabled, the bandit seems to have put the wind up the whole show—and he walked Bunter off under their eyes—"

"The desperate villain!" muttered Harry. "Then—poor old Bunter is a prisoner somewhere in the hands of that scoundrel—"

"There's no doubt that it was O Lobo?" asked Johnny Bull.

"None! He was seen by four or five servants at Boa Vista. Chico got the news when he arrived there to fetch the boat for us. Domingo told him that Bunter was hidden in his room, and the bandit rooted him out and took him away. He must have made quick work of it. As soon as Joao Frulo heard, wounded as he was, he took measures at once, but O Lobo was gone, and Bunter gone with him."

The juniors stood overwhelmed with the news. All Billy Bunter's faults and little foibles were forgotten now. They remembered only that he was their schoolfellow, and that he was in the hands of the ruthless desperado of the sertao.

"We're going to find him!" said Bob Cherry. "And we'll make that scoundrel Lobo pay for what he's done!"

"Chico will find him, if he can be found," said the planter quietly. "He owes Bunter his life, and an Indian does not forget. Bunter did a very plucky thing when he saved the Caraya from the alligators—and in doing so he made a friend of the man who can do most to help him now." He broke off. "Let us get on—the sooner we get to Boa Vista the better."

The Caraya was already trampling back towards the river. The planter followed him, and the Famous Five tramped on.

Jim Valentine's face was deeply distressed. He had had his trials with Bunter as a guest at Boa Vista, but, like the other fellows, he forgot all the fat Owl's faults now.

"Bunter's life isn't in danger—so far, at any rate, you fellows," said Jim quietly. "We know what O Lobo's game is—he let it out the time he got hold of you, Wharton. If he could have trailed us down at the Montanha Fria it would have come to scrapping—and that's what he was keenest on. But he had a second string to his bow—the dastardly villain! With one of Peter's guests in his hands, his game is to trade his prisoner's life for the diamonds."

"But—" said Harry.

"Don't have any fear for Bunter! Bunter's my uncle's guest at Boa Vista—and if he cannot be found, and rescued, Peter will come to terms with the bandit—any terms that O Lobo chooses to dictate!" said the boy planter. "It will be a tough pill to swallow—but Peter will get it down, you can bank on that."

The juniors were silent.

They did not doubt that the planter of Boa Vista would make any sacrifice to save the life of a schoolboy who was in his charge. On that the Wolf had calculated, and they felt that he had calculated well.

But it was bitter to think of the desperado triumphing; of getting the best, at long last, in the struggle for the Montanha Fria, and by such treacherous and desperate means.

Before it came to that every effort would be made to find the captured schoolboy and rescue him. But what chance was there? Hidden in some remote recess of the trackless tropical forest, O Lobo could snap his fingers even at the Caraya hunter.

Their hearts were heavy as they tramped on to the river. They reached the bank of the Rexo, and found the montaria waiting there, manned by black paddlers from the fazenda. They packed into it, and the blacks paddled down the stream.

The Caraya sat with a dark, grim face, silent. Little was said as the montaria floated down the stream, between the walls of tropical forest, passing many wooded islands. On one of the islands troops of red macaws could be seen as they passed, like dancing flames in the brilliant sunlight, and there was a loud squawking and cackling at the boat as it paddled by. The juniors glanced at them in passing.

"That island's a favourite nesting-place of the red macaws," said Jim Valentine. "Hundreds of them there—if not thousands! They're hardly ever disturbed—a canoe hardly ever comes as far up the river as this."

The montaria rolled on, rapidly paddled down the current, and the squawking of the macaws died away behind. The juniors, with other thoughts in their minds, soon forgot the island of the red macaws—little dreaming of the secret it held or how near they had passed to the prisoner of O Lobo.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"Oh lor'!" said Billy Bunter for the umpteenth time.

"Oh lor'!" repeated Bonito almost as dismally.

Bunter was plunged in the depths of dole. And the high spirits of the happy macaw seemed to have departed.

A night had passed in the hut on the river island; a new day was blazing over the South American forests and campos.

Bunter had slept in the dingy hammock. He did not like hammocks—but he had been glad of it, as there was no alternative but the floor. And the floor was of earth, damp from the river, and there were ants in it.

Two or three dingy old ponchoes and a dirty blanket were all the covering he had—and the night was cold. Bunter had not slept as soundly as usual, and his deep snore had been interrupted many times.

He was glad when day came again. But day was dismal enough. He sorted out food from the can—stale bread of farina, and "carne seca"—dried beef hard as leather and with a musty scent to it. After the boundless fare of Boa Vista it was awful for Bunter.

There was rapidura also—the hard toffee of native make. It was hard as a brick; but he chewed it and found a little comfort in it. The meagre meal was washed down with tepid water.

The supply of nuts in his pockets had been finished long ago. Bunter had to be content with the hard tack left by

the bandit; but even Billy Bunter's appetite was not equal to dealing with the carne seca. His fat jaws ached after a long, hard chew, and he gave it up. The rapidura, hard as it was, was, at least, sweet and sticky, and he sucked at a chunk of it—and groaned.

During the night he had grumbled at the cold. Now he was grumbling at the heat.

The tropical day was hot on the river; hot on the thickly wooded island. The hut was a good deal like an oven.

Bonito shared his dismal mood. The parrot, as a rule, was a happy little creature, cackling with glee. But it was accustomed to freedom, and it hopped and fluttered about the inside of the hut, continually seeking a way out and failing to find it.

Bonito had never known the inside of a cage. He was one of the half-tame parrots that swarmed about the Boa Vista, often flocking under the veranda to feed on handfuls of farina thrown to them. Since he had attached himself to Bunter the macaw had perched in the veranda, where he was free to come and go as he liked. This was his first experience of being shut up, and it was clear that Bonito did not like it.

He seemed puzzled and worried by being enclosed within impassable walls. He fluttered continually round the walls and nosed about the door. Many times he got his beak and his little head through one of the loopholes in the wooden walls, but he could get no farther, and had to retreat, squawking with anger and disappointment.

Billy Bunter saw his efforts to escape with a morose eye.

There was no doubt that Bonito was attached to Bunter. But there was equally no doubt that he would have got away from the imprisonment in the hut on the island if he could. Bunter, however, was glad that the macaw could not get away. In the solitude, Bonito's company was a boon and a blessing. It was something to hear the parrot talk, when he was so far from the sound of a human voice.

The fat junior would have been almost glad to see O Lobo's evil face again. Yet he trembled at the thought of the bandit's return. Only too well he knew that his fat life hung on a thread, in the hands of the Wolf of Brazil.

He hardly hoped for rescue. His friends, so far as he knew, were still

absent at the Montanha Fria, diamond-digging, with Peter Valentine. But even if they returned to the fazenda, what could they do?

Nothing! The keenest tracker—even Chico, the Caraya cacador—could never trace him to that hidden lair. He knew there was no chance of it. Had there been, O Lobo would never have hidden him there. In this desperate game the Wolf was playing his last card, and taking no chances.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter again, sitting on the bench and blinking at Bonito as he dismally chewed brick-hard toffee

"Oh lor'!" said Bonito. "Nuts! I say, you fellows, nuts!"

But there were no nuts for Bonito. The macaw hopped round Bunter and squawked, loudly and insistently, and indignantly. It was the first time Bunter had been unprovided with food of some kind since Bonito had made his acquaintance.

At Boa Vista there was always something to eat in Bunter's pockets. Bunter liked meals between meals. There had always been something for Bonito. Bunter was liberal with supplies that could be renewed without limit. But now there was nothing, and Bonito was puzzled, and disappointed, and annoyed.

"Nuts!" he cackled. "Nuts! I say, you fellows! Beast! Rotter! I say, nuts!"

"Oh, shut up!" howled Bunter exasperated.

"Shut up!" said Bonito. "Nuts!"

He hopped on a fat knee, squawking.

"Gerrout!" snorted Bunter.

"Gerrout!" retorted the macaw.

"Nuts! I say, nuts!"

Bunter pushed him off, and Bonito hopped on the earth, cackling angrily. Once more he made a dive at one of the loopholes. He wedged his neck into the little orifice and stuck, and squawked frantically.

Squawk, squawk, squawk!

Squawk, squawk, squawk! answered hundreds of macaws in the thick trees round the hut. They grew so close that the trunks touched the walls, and the branches covered the roof. Every branch was alive with parrots.

At the least alarm there was an outbreak of squawking from innumerable parrots that was almost deafening.

Bunter knew that it was but seldom that a montaria or a canoe came so far up the Rexo. But he had thought of shouting, in the hope of being heard on some craft that might happen to pass. It was futile, for the first call started a thousand parrots squawking, drowning every other sound. It dawned on his fat brain that O Lobo was well aware of that circumstance. The cunning bandit forgot nothing.

"Beast!" roared Bunter at the macaw as he squawked with his head in the loophole and a terrific hullabaloo of squawking responded from outside.

That endless squawking of the parrots was getting on Bunter's nerves. Sometimes there was silence on the island

(Continued on next page.)

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and the silence was heavy and oppressive. But the most trivial incident would start the parrots cackling and squawking, and then the noise was deafening.

Now, with Bonito going off like fireworks, and more and more macaws squawking back from the trees, the uproar was unnerving.

"Stop it, you little beast!" roared Bunter.

Squawk, squawk! came back from Bonito as he struggled, and shed tail feathers.

Bunter snorted angrily, rose from the bench, and grabbed the macaw and helped him out of his predicament.

"Oh lor!" said Bonito, when he was released.

He did not try his luck with the loopholes again. He seemed to be fed-up with them. He hopped about the hut, and Bunter sat down again on the bench, while the uproar outside slowly faded away.

"You ungrateful little beast!" said Bunter, glaring at Bonito through his big spectacles. "You'd jolly well clear off, if you could, after all I've done for you. Rotten little beast!"

"Rotten little beast!" said Bonito, perching on the end of the bench and gazing at Bunter with solemn eyes.

"You keep quiet, see?" said Bunter. "It's rotten enough here, without a million parrots squawking! Millions of the noisy brutes!"

"Millions of the noisy brutes!" said Bonito, with his head cocked on one side, catching Bunter's words. "Squawking! Squawking! Ha, ha! I say, you fellows, millions of the noisy brutes."

"This filthy island seems to swarm with them!" groaned Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, this filthy island seems to swarm with them!" repeated Bonito.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

"Oh dear!" said Bonito. "Nuts!"

"I jolly well wish I had some Brazil nuts!" groaned Bunter.

"Nuts! Nuts! Millions of the noisy brutes!" said Bonito. "I say, you fellows, this filthy island seems to swarm with them! Nuts!"

"I've got to get out of this somehow!" said Bunter desperately.

"Somehow!" agreed Bonito.

Billy Bunter rose from the bench again and approached the loophole through which Bonito had failed to force a way. He blinked through the tiny opening, and saw only trees, thick branches, and foliage, and flaming red parrots. The thought was in his mind that he might possibly enlarge the opening somehow, and make a way through the wall. If he could once get out of the hut there was a remote chance of spotting some native on the banks of the river who might take him off in a canoe.

It did not seem a hopeful proposition, for the poles of which the walls were built were strong, though not thick. But Bunter was getting into a state of desperation, and prepared to exert himself, if exertion would do any good.

But as he blinked through the loophole there was a sudden terrific outbreak of squawking, and a wild fluttering of the macaws in the branches. Something had alarmed the innumerable parrots again.

A whirring, rattling sound came to Bunter's ears. Something long and sinuous was winding over a branch close by the hut.

He blinked at it and saw—and heard—what had alarmed the macaws this time! For an instant he blinked at the rattlesnake, hardly a foot away from him, and then bounced back from the wall with a yelp of terror.

him, and then bounced back from the wall with a yelp of terror.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

"Oh crikey!" said Bonito.

Bunter sank down on the bench again, white and gasping.

He no longer desired to get out of the hut! One glimpse of the rattlesnake at close quarters was more than enough for Bunter. He did not even look out again, and the slow day dragged by, till another night came, and he crawled into the hammock and forgot his woes in slumber.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

O Lobo Makes Terms!

"IF a fellow could do anything—" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Nothing!" said Harry.

"Chico's on the hunt!" said Frank Nugent hopefully. "If anybody can get on the track of that villain, the Indian can."

Harry Wharton looked from the veranda of Boa Vista at the forest in the distance—vast, trackless, stretching away, mile on mile, to the Montanha Fria, far to the west. His face was darkly clouded.

Even the Indian could do nothing, and he realised it. Chico was a keen and experienced hunter; he was devoted to the "Mochó bravo" who had saved him from the alligator. Keen, hardy, tireless, Chico had taken to the forest at once, after the return to Boa Vista. All that could be done in seeking for traces of the bandit's prisoner he could and would do; but unless chance favoured him what hope was there? Little or none, as the juniors knew.

It made them chafe to remain idle; yet, for a party of schoolboys to plunge into the trackless wilderness in search of the cunning bandit was too hopeless to think of.

They had one comfort—such as it was. Bunter was a prisoner in the Wolf's hands, hidden in some remote recess of the South American wilderness. But his life was not in danger—for the present, at least.

Bunter was a pawn in the bandit's game.

If the planter came to O Lobo's terms, Bunter would be saved. Ferocious ruffian as he was, O Lobo had no object in harming the fat junior, so long as Bunter served his turn. Indeed, if Mr. Valentine came to his terms he would not do so without stipulating for guarantees of Bunter's safety. But the terms would be hard enough—the diamonds of the Montanha Fria in exchange for the bandit's prisoner.

If that ransom was not paid Bunter would never be seen alive again. That was a certainty. But it would be paid, if there was no other resource.

It looked as if O Lobo had won his long and desperate game—banking on the planter's concern for a schoolboy for whom he was responsible.

The juniors hardly needed Jim's assurance on the point. They felt sure that Peter would play up, if there was no other way. But it was a hard and bitter alternative.

No word had come from the bandit, so far. O Lobo himself was not likely to appear at Boa Vista. But if he was to make terms, some sort of a messenger would be sent. The juniors wondered when he would come.

"We're bound to hear from the brute before long!" remarked Johnny Bull. "And that will mean a messenger. What about bagging the man when he comes, and making him point out where Bunter is?"

Jim Valentine smiled faintly.

"Nothing in it!" he said. "O Lobo will send someone with his message—but the man will not know where Bunter is—or even where O Lobo is. The Wolf is too cunning for that."

"Oh!" said Johnny.

"And I shouldn't wonder if this is the man!" added Jim, as a figure appeared on the path up from the river.

The Famous Five stepped to the rail and looked at the man as he came. He was a negro, dressed in red-striped cotton trousers and a big straw hat.

One glance at him was enough to show that he was not one of the desperate ruffians with whom O Lobo consorted.

The black came up to the steps, and Jim made him a sign to enter the veranda. From a pocket of his cotton trousers the negro produced a crumpled paper.

"O senhor Valentine!" he said. "Uma carta."

"A letter!" said Bob.

Peter Valentine came on to the veranda from the house. The black saluted him, and handed over the "carta."

It was written on coarse paper, without an envelope, folded. In silence the planter unfolded it. It was written in Portuguese.

Quietly Peter read it through. The chums of the Remove watched him in eager silence. For a few minutes he talked to the black in Portuguese, the juniors listening without understanding. Then the planter turned to them.

"It is from O Lobo!" he said quietly. "He tells me what I knew—that Bunter is in his hands, hidden where we shall never find him. And—" He paused, with a deep breath.

"And—" said Jim.

"The price of his life is the diamonds of the Montanha Fria!" said Mr. Valentine. "More than enough to make O Lobo rich for life." He smiled bitterly. "O Lobo was not always an outcast of the sertao. He had a position once, in Rio, and lost it by gambling and other rascalities. He has seen the world, outside the borders of Brazil—he knows Europe, and would be glad to return there, and leave his history of crime behind him, if he made his fortune! And my discovery of diamonds at the Cold Mountain is to be the means!"

He breathed hard.

"Do not doubt me," he added. "If there is no other means of saving Bunter, I shall not hesitate. But I have hope in the Caraya."

The juniors knew that the diamonds dug at the Montanha Fria were worth many thousands of pounds; an almost uncountable sum in Brazilian milreis. That sum, O Lobo could not know; but he knew that it was large. Unless the ransom satisfied his greed, the negotiations would come to nothing.

"So long as there's a chance of finding Bunter—" said Harry.

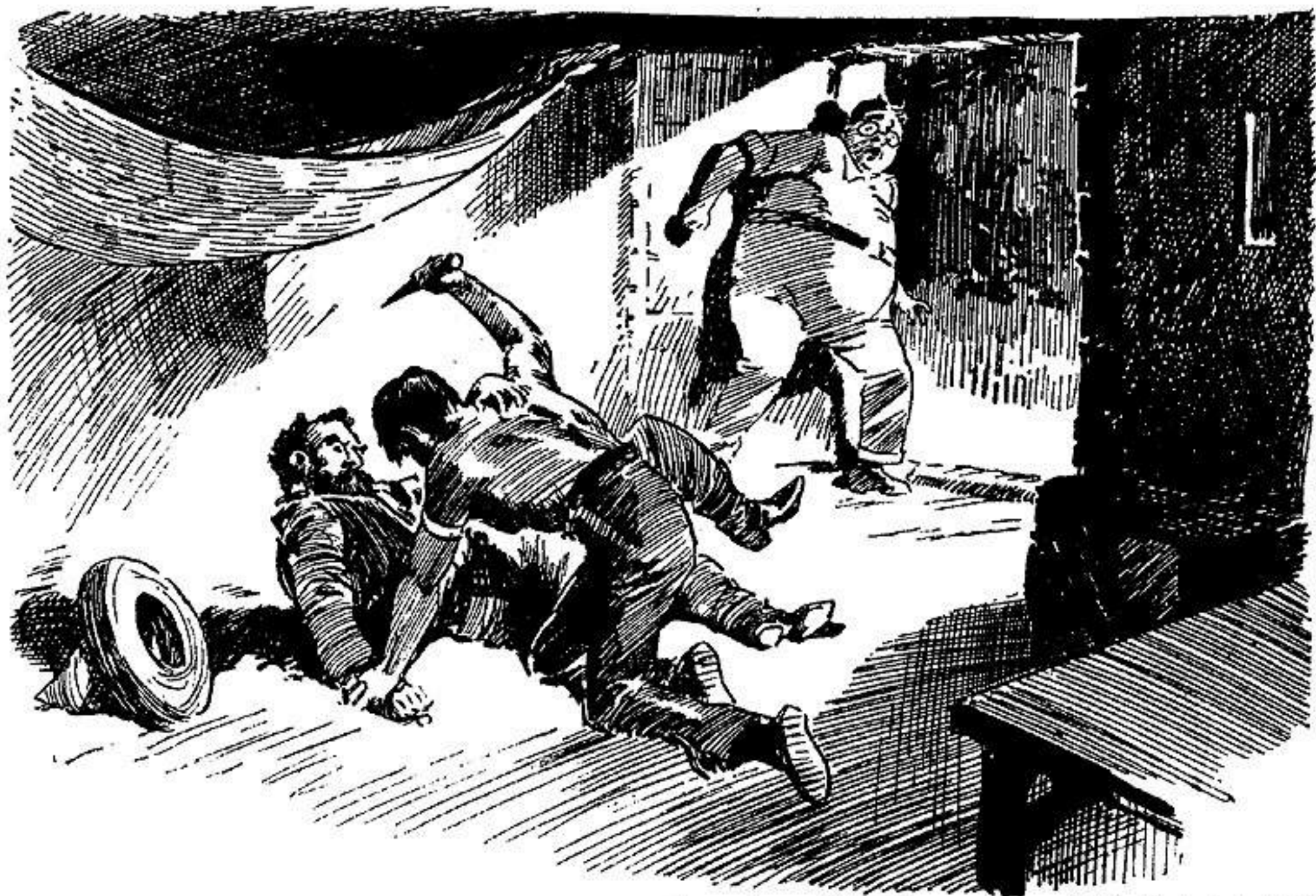
"There is little—but there is a chance," said Peter. "O Lobo gives me, in this letter, three days in which to hand him the diamonds—and names a sum—a very large sum—of which they must not fall short. If I accede to his demand, I am to reply by this messenger, and he will communicate later, to tell me how the diamonds are to be handed over—without danger to him."

"And if not—" breathed Bob.

"If not," said Peter, "we shall never see Bunter again."

There was a grim silence.

"Nothing can be learned from this man," added Peter, in reply to the juniors' unspoken thoughts. "He is simply a boatman of the Rêxo—he has brought the bandit's letter, because he dared not refuse an order given him by



The struggling figures rolled near the doorway of the hut. A silvery gleam of the rising moon revealed, to Bunter's terrified gaze, the struggling figures—the dark, evil face of O Lobo and the red-bronze face of Chico, the Indian. "Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

O Lobo—it would be as much as his life was worth."

"But he will have to see the villain, to hand over your answer," said Bob. And then—

The planter shook his head.

"O Lobo will choose his moment," he answered. "The man has no appointment to see him—he is to carry my answer till O Lobo appears and claims it."

The juniors were silent again. It was clear that the cunning Wolf was covering his tracks in every possible way.

The negro stood waiting, hat in hand. There was a long pause, then the planter laid O Lobo's letter on a table, took out a fountain-pen, and wrote on the back of the letter in Portuguese.

Folding it, he handed it to the black man, who tucked it into his pocket, and went down the steps, disappearing through the orange-trees.

Peter smiled faintly at the anxious looks of the Greyfriars fellows.

"I have written my answer!" he said. "I have agreed to the villain's terms—I could do nothing else. To-night or to-morrow, my answer will be in O Lobo's hands, and he will know that on the third day from now, the diamonds of the Montanha Fria will be his—unless—"

"Unless Chico gets on the track, before the time is up!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath.

"Exactly! There is still a remote chance—and we must hope for the best." With a nod to the juniors, the planter went down the steps. The work of the plantation claimed him. Mr. Frulo was lying bandaged in his room, and it was likely to be weeks before the manager of the fazenda was about again.

"There's still a chance!" said Bob Cherry hopefully. "Everything depends on Chico now."

The chums of the Remove were anxious to see the Indian hunter again. He had been absent a night and a day, and they knew that he would be unresting on the hunt.

But when the sun sank westward behind the Montanha Fria, the Caraya was seen returning—worn and worn down, and one look at his clouded bronze face told that he had had no success.

Even the keen, devoted Caraya had failed—and they all knew that there was no more hope—the game was up, and the Wolf of Brazil had won it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Tack!

"THAT beast!" groaned Billy Bunter.

It was morning on the Rio Rexo, and glimmering shafts of sunshine penetrated into the dusky hut.

Bunter was almost glad to hear a footstep outside the hut on the island, though he knew that it could only be that of O Lobo.

Bunter was hungry.

For once, the fat Owl had turned out early, of his own accord. The previous day he had finished every scrap of food that his captor had left for him.

There was an aching void inside Bunter. He turned early out of the hammock, faced by the dismal prospect of no breakfast—unless O Lobo came with a fresh supply.

It had been bad enough already, imprisoned in the hut on the island of the red macaws. It was going to be worse, if there was a shortage of food.

It was scarcely possible that O Lobo intended to starve his prisoner. Bunter

was too valuable to him for that. But anything might happen to the lawless outcast and prevent his return.

So it was a relief to the fat junior to hear the bandit's footstep; little as he wanted to see O Lobo personally.

"That beast!" repeated the macaw. "I say, you fellows, that beast! Nuts!"

Bonito was quite as fed-up with the hut as his master. There was a shortage of food for the macaw, as well as for Bunter.

Bonito's cackle no longer had its gleeful sound. He squawked and croaked dismally.

There was a fumbling at the door of the hut. O Lobo had left it carefully secured.

Bonito, perched on the hammock, fixed his little round eyes on the door, as he heard the sounds without. Bonito knew that the door was going to open—and he knew what he was going to do as soon as he saw egress.

Bunter did not heed the parrot.

He blinked at the door apprehensively, dreading to see the dark, evil face of the bandit, yet longing for the supply of food that he hoped his captor had brought.

"Oh crikey! I'm hungry!" groaned Bunter. The hardest chunk of mandioca bread, the toughest cake of rapidura, would have been welcome to him. And a crumb would have been welcome to the hungry macaw.

"Hungry!" repeated Bonito. "I say, you fellows, hungry! Millions of the noisy brutes! Ha, ha! This filthy island seems to swarm with them! Nuts!"

The door opened. Sunlight streamed in, glimmering down through the branches. The burly figure of O Lobo blocked the doorway.

(Continued on page 16.)

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The PRISONER of MACAW ISLAND!



By FRANK RICHARDS

(Continued from page 13.)

His black eyes gleamed in at Bunter. The fat junior's heart quaked as he saw the black look on the bandit's face. O Lobo looked in an evil mood.

He tramped into the hut.

There was a swift flutter of blue-and-gold feathers, as the macaw shot towards the doorway.

O Lobo, with a muttered oath, struck at the bird as it fluttered by him. But Bonito easily dodged the lashing hand, and flew out of the doorway.

Like a flash of gold he vanished into the trees.

Bunter, heedless of the macaw, blinked at the evil face of the bandit, his eyes dilated with terror behind his big spectacles. The look the bandit gave him was dark and threatening. The fat Owl almost forgot that he was hungry.

That the desperate outcast, if it suited him, would crush him as ruthlessly as a mosquito, Bunter knew only too well. His life depended on whether O Lobo could put him to use. If the bandit's plans failed, Bunter was a lost man.

He hardly breathed as he blinked at O Lobo.

The bandit pulled the bench to the doorway, and sat there. From a bag slung over his shoulder, he took a rough loaf of mandioca, and a lump of carne seca, and threw them to Bunter.

"Eat!" he snarled.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Whatever had caused the bitter, savage, evil mood of the bandit, he had brought his prisoner food—of a kind. Bunter picked up the food thrown to him, and tough as it was, began to chew at once.

O Lobo, seated on the bench, leaned on the doorpost and lighted a black cheroot. He smoked in sullen silence.

Bunter realised that the bandit had come there to stay.

Disagreeable as the solitude had been, Bunter would have preferred it to this terrifying company.

It was a relief to have the door open. The hut was less dusky and stuffy. But the bandit's burly form blocked the doorway as he sat, as if he doubted whether his prisoner might not make some desperate attempt to escape. Bunter was hardly the man for that; but O Lobo was taking no chances.

Bunter finished his dismal meal. As O Lobo had the only seat, he crawled into the hammock and sat there. The floor was not inviting—there were too many ants about.

O Lobo smoked cheroot after cheroot, scowling. At the same time, Bunter could see that he was watching and listening. It dawned on him that the ruffian was in dread of pursuit.

No doubt his friends at the fazenda were doing what they could for him, if they had returned from the Cold Mountain. There was some hope of rescue, if the Caraya was searching for him. At all events, it was plain that O Lobo was uneasy, and that he was remaining in hiding.

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"I—I say—" Bunter ventured at last.

The bandit's black eyes turned on him.

"I say, are my friends back at Boa Vista?" asked Bunter.

"Sim!" snapped O Lobo. He showed his teeth through his black beard. "Sim! And the Caraya is hunting for you—and for me! Hope that he will not find you, little senhor!" His dusky hand touched the hilt of the knife in his belt, and the glitter that shot into his eyes made the fat junior's blood run almost cold. "Corpo de Deus! If you are found, you will not be found alive! I will drive my knife to your heart at the first sign of the Caraya."

Bunter shuddered.

There was no doubt that O Lobo meant every savage word he uttered. The faint hope of rescue died in Bunter's breast.

"Hope, too, that the senhor Inglez will write a favourable answer to the message I have sent him!" added O Lobo. "The diamonds of the Montanha Fria are the price of your life, little senhor. I have sent a carta—a letter—to the planter, by the hand of a negro. What will he reply?"

He stared at the shivering fat junior savagely.

"The Caraya is hunting me," he went on. "Others are hunting—the English planter has offered rewards of thousands of milreis for news of you. I am hunted like a jaguar. But they will not find me here—here I am hidden and safe, little senhor—and at night I shall see the black, and get from him the planter's answer. Hope, little senhor, that it is favourable, for if it is otherwise you go to the alligators."

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

"If it had been one of the others, I should have felt more sure!" muttered O Lobo. "His nephew—or one of his friends. But you, what are you—a fat fool, of no account! Yet to save your life—"

He fell into moody silence, which Bunter did not venture to interrupt again. The fat junior lay in the hammock, in dismal mood.

It was clear that the Wolf was hunted hard; but Bunter had no hope that he would be hunted down. In any of his usual haunts, the hunters would have found him; but hidden in the interior of the wooded island on the Rexo, he was safe from discovery. That the hunt had been hard, O Lobo's evil mood revealed; but he had escaped it, and here he was safe.

Billy Bunter could only hope that he would receive the answer he expected from the planter at Boa Vista. He dared not let his thoughts dwell on the alternative.

Not till long after darkness had fallen, at a late hour of the night, did the bandit quit the hut on the river island. It was clear that in the light he dared not venture abroad, even into the forest. He feared the Caraya, if he did not fear the others.

When, at last, he went, Bunter was left with a dry chunk of mandioca, and a can of tepid water, to last him till the bandit should return. The door was fastened on him, and he listened to the squawking of the disturbed macaws, as the bravo went back to his canoe. It died away.

He was alone again, in darkness and silence. He had no longer the company even of Bonito.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

It was not easy for even Billy Bunter to sleep that night. Only at intervals did his snore reverberate through the lonely hut on the Rexo.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The River at Midnight!

"BED?" asked Frank Nugent. Harry Wharton shook his head.

In a troubled group, the Famous Five stood in the veranda of Boa Vista, looking out over the moonlit gardens, and the orange-trees glimmering in the silvery light. In the distance gleamed the rolling waters of the Rexo.

There was no news of the missing junior. Chico had reported failure; but after a brief rest he had gone on the trail again, and Peter and Jim Valentine had gone with him.

The Famous Five would have been glad enough to go also; but in the dark forest they would have been rather a hindrance than a help, and they knew it. But they were not content to remain at Boa Vista and do nothing.

"Look here," said Harry abruptly. "We shouldn't be much use in the forest, and we know it. But we're not sticking here doing nothing. You fellows game to get out a boat and go up the river?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry, at once.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Better do anything than nothing!" said Johnny Bull, with a nod. "We can't stick here while poor old Bunter's in that villain's hands."

"O Lobo's hidden pretty deep, I suppose," said the captain of the Remove slowly. "But wherever he is, he will have to get out to get his answer from that black. And—I've got an idea."

"Cough it up!" said Bob.

"The day he got hold of me he had a canoe on the Rexo—he was getting me away to it, when I got away!" said Harry. "I think very likely that's how he got Bunter away. He seems to have got away pretty quick—and Bunter's no walker. It's ten to one that he went in a canoe on the Rexo."

"That washes out the last chance of trailing him!" said Bob glumly. "No trail on the water, old bean."

"He must have landed somewhere," answered Harry. "No doubt he's a good distance away, but he must be near enough to keep in touch. And the farther off he is, the more likely he is to be using a canoe—it's slow going on land here."

"That's so. But—"

"Might have gone up or down the river!" said Johnny Bull. "There's no telling—"

"I think there is!" said Harry quietly. "Down the river there are villages on the bank, and passing craft—bataloas and montarias, coming and going to the fazenda. Up the river there is only forest. O Lobo's a reckless and desperate man—but he wouldn't want to be spotted getting his prisoner away, if he could help it. If he went by the Rexo, he went up the river."

"Right on the wicket!" agreed Bob, with a nod. And the rest of the Co. nodded assent to Wharton's argument.

"But up the river there's thick forest on both sides," said Frank. "We've been up twenty miles, on that trip to the Cold Mountain. And there's a lot of islands in the river, too. It's a big order, old chap."

"I know that! All I say is, that it's better than doing nothing," answered Harry. "We can take the rifles, and take care of ourselves. And we know how to paddle a canoe."

"We're on!" said Bob.

"The onfulness is preposterous!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And, having made up their minds,

the Famous Five made their preparations to start.

That it would very likely prove a wild-goose chase, they were only too well aware. The bandit had baffled the keen Caraya hunter; and the planter and his nephew, who were accustomed to the ways of the forest. Where they failed, the chums of the Remove could not entertain much hope of success.

But it was better than idleness; it was something, at least, to feel that they were doing all they could.

And, hopeless as the chance looked, they were not without hope of luck. Wharton believed, and his comrades agreed that it was probable, that O Lobo's lair was somewhere up the Rexo—and it was clear that, at times, he would have to venture out of it, if only to carry on his plan of extorting Bunter's ransom from the planter. And he was likeliest to venture out under cover of night. There was, at least, a sporting chance.

With their rifles under their arms, the juniors left Boa Vista, Wharton leaving a message with Domingo for the planter when he returned.

It was, perhaps, a little doubtful whether Mr. Valentine would have approved of the expedition; but the juniors were too anxious about Bunter to let that deter them. They could imagine the feelings of the hapless Owl, shut up in some hidden den in the wilderness, in the power of the merciless bandit—every hour, every minute a terror to him.

There were canoes tied up at the desembarcadouro; and the juniors picked one out, carried the paddles into it, and pushed off from the landing-stage.

They floated out into the Rexo, under the glimmering moon. The river lay like a sheet of silver, barred with deep black where the shadows of branches fell.

The huts of the plantation workers were dark and silent when the canoe floated past them; all of the workers were in their hammocks and sleeping. At Boa Vista, only Domingo was awake. The hour was late.

Four of the juniors handled the paddles. Harry Wharton sat with his rifle across his knees, keeping a keen look-out.

At a little distance from the fazenda, primeval forest shut in the river and the gliding canoe. Looking about them, the Greyfriars fellows might have fancied that they were in the heart of the South American wilderness, hundreds of miles from the nearest white man's settlement.

From the forest came the sounds of the night, rustling of wild beasts stealthily creeping. Alligators lay like logs in the muddy shallows. Ripples, flashing in the moonlight, ran from the paddles as they dipped. High over the forest the moon soared, like a bowl of silver.

The juniors had gone twenty miles up the Rexo by boat in making the trip to the Montanha Fria. Then they had gone in a montaria, paddled by brawny black men. But the light canoe moved swiftly as they paddled, hardly impeded by the slow and sluggish current.

Wharton, as he watched the shadowy banks, and the dark wooded islands in the river, realised, more clearly than before, how little there was to hope. At any point on the banks, on any of the little islands, O Lobo might have landed with his prisoner—if, indeed, he had gone by canoe at all. Nevertheless, all the juniors were glad that they had started. They felt that they could not turn in and sleep at Boa Vista if there

was the remotest chance of helping the fat Owl.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

From the distance, through the silence of the river, came a sudden loud squawking and cackling of disturbed birds.

Bob pointed to a dark mass in the glimmering water, ahead of the canoe.

"Something's woke up the jolly old macaws!" he remarked. "That's the island we passed, you remember—Jim told us it was a nesting-place of the red macaws."

"I remember!" said Harry.

He sat and stared at the dark mass of the island ahead.

"I remember something else, too!" he added quietly. "The macaws cackled at us as we passed—a passing craft is enough to set them going."

"More likely a snake, or something," said Johnny Bull. "Snakes eat parrots, I believe! We're not near enough to disturb them."

"Somebody else might be!" said Harry.

"Oh!"

"If there's a craft ahead of us on the river," muttered the captain of the Remove. "Jim said that a canoe hardly ever comes so far up the Rexo—and it's late now, too! Keep your eyes open for a canoe or a montaria."

"What-ho!" murmured Bob.

The squawking and cackling rang loudly and sharply from the island. It died away, and there was silence again.

Had a craft passed the island and disturbed the macaws? More likely than not, it was some creeping snake in the trees that had caused the alarm. But the juniors watched the moonlit river ahead with keen eyes. And Harry Wharton uttered a sudden, low exclamation under his breath.

"Look!"

Bob caught his breath.

"A canoe!"

"Look out!" muttered Wharton.

(Continued on next page.)

(1)
When I considered how to frame
My interview with Potter,
The only rhyme upon his name
That I could use was "rotter."
That's rather an unhappy choice,
As you'll agree with hearty voice.

(2)
For every reader knows the truth,
That such a word is not a
Correct description of this youth,
For Potter's not a rotter.
(I've used another rhyme, I see;
Now how did that occur to me?)



(4)
With Coker as a study-mate
Life isn't jam for Potter,
A grizzly bear when in a bate
Would scarcely make things hotter!
He roars and howls and wags his chin,
And fills the study with his din.

(5)
The Fifth Form fellows sympathise
With poor old Greene and Potter,
Especially when Coker tries
His cunning as a plotter!
He lands them with the dirty work.
If they refuse, he goes berserk!

(7)
So when I held the other day
My interview with Potter,
To get the Coker-bird away
I bribed the page-boy, Trotter,
To tell the ass to go to Prout,
And waited till he wandered out.



(10)
Said I: "Live and let live, you know!
That's always been my motto!
Talk quickly, then, and I will go!"
"Oh, travel!" came from Potter.
Then Coker entered, full of rage,
And in his clutch he held the page.

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Our long-haired poet is still going great guns.
In the following snappy verses he brings
before your notice
GEORGE POTTER,
Coker's study-mate in the Fifth Form.

(3)
Now if the "er" in Potter's name
Were fastened on to Stott, a
Description would be easy game,
For Stott's an awful rotter!
But that's the way the world around,
No "easy money" jobs are found.



(6)
He shatters over Greeney's head
A vase of terra-cotta,
Then calmly leaving him for dead,
He turns and starts on Potter.
He then goes out with wrathful stride
And leaves them lying side by side.

(8)
I then went in with cheerful step,
And said, "Hallo!" to Potter,
Who was, with Greene, engaged in prep
With pen and ink and blotter.
"Clear out of here!" the ass replied,
And "Shift!" the other fathead cried.



(9)
I answered them, "I've come here for
An interview with Potter."
And he replied, "You see that door?
Well, use it; for I've got a
Confounded lot of prep to do,
And have no time to talk to you!"

(11)
Well, after I'd been knocked about
By Coker, Greene and Potter,
I blindly rose and staggered out
As fast as I could totter,
A ruined wreck of rags and bones
I crawled away, dissolved in groans!

A dark slip on the silvery surface of the Rexo, a canoe shot into sight, coming swiftly down the river, paddled by a single paddler.

That that canoe and its occupant had disturbed the macaws the juniors could not doubt. All they could see of the man in it was an immense hat of plaited straw—he might have been a Brazilian, a negro, or an Indian.

But their hearts beat fast as the canoe shot towards them.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull laid down their paddles and grasped their rifles. Possibly it was some Indian hunter, or negro fisherman; but they meant to know.

And they knew—suddenly!

For the paddler in the little canoe saw them suddenly in the moonlight, lifted his head, and stared—and they saw the dark, evil face, with its beaky nose and black beard, clear in the shining of the moon.

"O Lobo!" panted Wharton.

And he fired as he spoke.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Pressed!

"CORPO de Deos!" hissed O Lobo, through his gritting teeth.

The juniors' canoe was hardly a dozen yards away from him when he suddenly saw it on the moonlit Rexo.

Not till nearly midnight had the bandit ventured to leave his lair on the island of the macaws. That the tireless Caraya was hunting him, in the shadowy aisles of the forest he had no doubt, and he would not have been surprised to see Chico in a canoe on the river. But he was astonished by the sight of the Greyfriars juniors.

For a moment, as he stared at the larger canoe, he fancied that the juniors must have some clue to his lair, as he saw them so near to the island of the macaws. But a moment's thought told him that it was only by chance that they were there.

As he stared at them, the wind of a bullet whizzing past his swarthy cheek

made him start. The roar of the rifle followed, waking the echoes of the Rexo and the adjoining forest.

The bandit grasped at his rifle, slung on his back. But the next moment he was plying the paddle again, and the canoe whirled round, and dashed back up the river.

O Lobo had left his lair, to seek out the negro who had Peter Valentine's answer to his "carta." But he could not carry out his purpose now. To pass the Greyfriars canoe was to pass under the shower of bullets. With Bunter's liberty, and perhaps his life, at stake, Harry Wharton & Co. were not standing on ceremony with the bandit. Fortune had favoured them; and the Wolf was not going to escape if they could help it.

"Stop!" shouted Harry Wharton, standing up in the canoe, his rifle to his shoulder.

"Stop!" roared Bob Cherry.

The bandit paddled like lightning. It was not a party of unarmed schoolboys that he had to deal with now, as on previous occasions. It was a party of fellows who were armed, and quite ready to use their weapons, if need be. O Lobo sweated at the paddle.

"He's got to stop!" said Harry Wharton. His eyes blazed over his rifle. "We've got to think of Bunter. We can't let him get away."

"Let him have it!" said Bob, between his teeth.

The Co. were paddling again, in pursuit of the bandit's canoe. Harry Wharton stood with the rifle at his shoulder.

He had fired at sight of the bandit, hoping to disable him, and make a prisoner of him. Now, as he took aim, he hoped that the bullet, if it struck the bandit, would only disable him. But O Lobo had to take his chance of that. Bang!

The report roared over the river.

Watching, Harry saw the man in the canoe ahead give a convulsive start, and for the moment he expected to see O Lobo fall. But the bullet had only grazed the bandit. He was paddling as swiftly as before.

From the open moonlit river the canoe

shot into the dark shadow of overhanging trees. Wharton fired twice again, but with little hope of hitting the target.

O Lobo had passed the macaws' island and was fleeing up the river as fast as he could drive his canoe.

After him came the Greyfriars canoe, as fast as the paddles could drive it. Harry Wharton laid down his rifle and took a paddle to help.

The juniors, during their stay at Boa Vista, had done a good deal of canoeing on the Rexo, and they could handle the paddles well. They made their canoe fairly fly.

It was five paddles against one in the race, but the bandit's canoe was small and light, and his strength great. He was keeping his distance, and above the island the river was narrower, and the branches of the great trees on the banks almost met overhead.

In the dusky shadow, shooting could be only at random. The juniors were ready to grasp their rifles if the bandit turned at bay. But while he fled, they devoted themselves to paddling; and fast as he went, they were gaining.

At intervals, he disappeared from view in black masses of shadow. Then they glimpsed him again, where moonlight streamed through the openings of the branches. And every time they glimpsed him they were a little closer.

"We're getting him!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"We'll get him, or run him down to his den!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth.

That the lair of the bandit was on the macaws' island, now left a good mile behind them, the Famous Five had no knowledge. So far as they knew, O Lobo had passed the island of the macaws, coming down the river, as he had passed a dozen others. Now that he was in desperate flight before them, they naturally supposed that he was heading for his den, somewhere in the forest far up the Rexo.

"There he is!" muttered Nugent, as the fleeing canoe appeared again, in a patch of moonlight, hardly six yards ahead.

Wharton grasped his rifle again.

Bang!

The fleeing canoe shot on into darkness again. A yell from the bandit floated back. The bullet had gone close.

"Go it, you fellows!" said Harry. His face was set grim and hard. "I can get him now—as soon as he comes into the light again. I can't miss at this range. If he won't stop, he can take what's coming to him. Put your beef into it!"

Four paddles flashed and rippled; and the captain of the Remove stood, rifle at shoulder, watching. The fleeing canoe was passing under a vast overhanging mass of branches, but beyond was an open space and light. As soon as O Lobo shot into the light, Wharton could not fail! It was point-blank range—and he waited and watched, with grim face and steady hand.

Crash!

The sudden collision in the dark made Wharton stumble. His finger was on the trigger, and the rifle roared, sending the bullet through the dark branches overhead. In the dark shadow, the canoe had crashed into something.

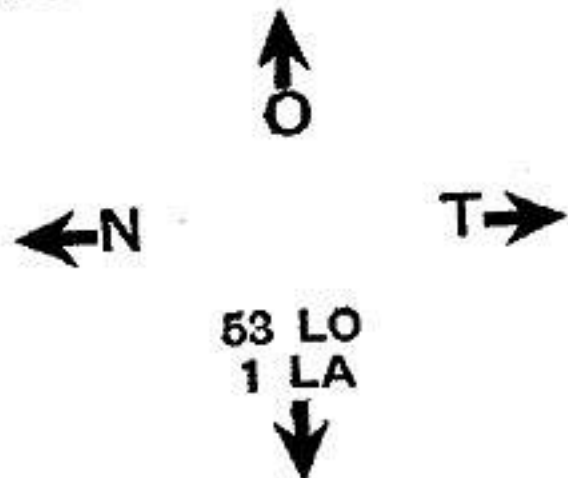
"What——" panted Bob.

"Look out——"

"A log!" exclaimed Nugent. There were drifting logs on the current of the Rexo. But it was not a log into which the canoe had crashed. It was another canoe!

Dusky and dim as it was under the shadowy trees, the juniors could make

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The PILOT

it out—rocking from the shock. It was O Lobo's canoe—but it was empty. Bob grasped at it, and dragged it alongside. The paddle lay in it. O Lobo had vanished.

As the juniors stared about them, startled and puzzled, a harsh, mocking laugh sounded from the darkness of the branches above them.

Then they stared up, realising what had happened. O Lobo had known that he could not escape in the canoe, and he had caught at a low branch as he passed beneath it, and clambered into the tree, leaving the canoe rocking on the water.

Following the laugh came a ringing shot, and a bullet splashed into the water. It missed by yards.

Then there was a brushing, rustling, scrambling. Floating in the canoe under the branches, the Famous Five grasped their rifles and fired up at the shadowy foliage overhead.

But they had little hope of hitting the bandit. The lead tore away through leaves and twigs. But a rustle farther up the bank told that O Lobo had clambered from the tree and taken to the forest.

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth.

"He's gone!" he muttered.

Pursuit in the black tangles of the tropical forest was hopeless. O Lobo had escaped. And the juniors, in bitter disappointment, took the bandit's canoe in tow and floated down the current of the Rexo. The sunrise was red on the river long before they came in sight of the distant fazenda.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bonito Turns Up!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. fairly jumped.

That familiar greeting, to which they were so accustomed from Billy Bunter, struck suddenly and strangely on their ears.

Under the sunshine of early morning, their canoe floated down the glimmering river. A night out had tired them, and they were feeling the effects of the hard race in pursuit of the bandit. Luck had seemed to favour them for a time, but it had failed them at the finish. O Lobo had escaped, and they were no nearer than before to rescuing the Owl of the Remove. Fatigued and far from cheerful, they sat in the canoe, floating down with the sluggish current, as the sun rose higher over the Brazilian forests. There was no hurry to get back to Boa Vista, and they needed a rest.

In the awakening life of the forest, birds called and screamed in the branches along the river, and huge caymans rolled by. More than once fluttering parrots alighted on the canoe from the branches that it brushed as it floated by, and the juniors gave them no heed.

But at that sudden voice, calling out words familiar to their ears, they gave heed—jumping almost clear of the canoe. Five fellows stared round blankly.

"What the——" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Who——" gasped Bob Cherry.

"What the dickens——"

"I say, you fellows, nuts! Lot of noisy beasts! Millions of them! I say, nuts! Ha, ha!"

"Bonito!" yelled Nugent.

On the gunwale was perched a blue-and-gold macaw.

It had dropped from a branch, as a dozen other parrots had done, unheeded. But now that they gave it their attention, the juniors realised that they had

seen that bird before, and knew it! It was Bunter's parrot.

"Jolly old Bonito!" gasped Bob Cherry.

The macaw cocked his head at the staring juniors, and cackled gleefully. Evidently he knew them again, and was glad to see familiar faces.

"Nuts!" screamed Bonito. "Lot of rotters! Beasts! That ass Wharton! That silly fathead Cherry! Nuts! I say, nuts!"

The juniors could not help grinning. Bonito picked up his language from Billy Bunter, and it was clear that he had overheard many uncomplimentary references to the Famous Five.

"That old fool Frulo!" went on Bonito cheerfully. "That old ass Peter Valentine! Lot of rotters! That milk-sop Nugent! Ha, ha!"

"Dear old Bunter!" grinned Bob. "He didn't forget us while we were away. We were lost to sight, but to memory dear."

"That idiot Bull!" went on Bonito. "That nigger Inky! Lot of rotters! This filthy island swarms with them! Ha, ha! Nuts! I say, you fellows! Nuts!"

Of all the words uttered by the macaw, the only one he understood was "nuts." But he did understand that word. And evidently he wanted nuts! Bob Cherry had some Brazil nuts in his pocket, and he cracked one under his heel and threw it to the parrot.

Bonito hopped after it at once, and his curved beak was quickly busy in extracting the kernel. While he was dealing with the nut he was too busy to talk, though he squawked and cackled a good deal.

"Where the dickens did he come from?" asked Nugent. "He must have dropped from one of the trees."

"He was with Bunter," said Harry. "Domingo told us that."

The juniors had not forgotten Bonito during their absence at the Montanha Fria. They had missed the macaw, as well as Bunter, on their return, and learned from Domingo that the parrot had gone when Bunter went, hopping on the fat Owl's shoulder. Whether it had accompanied him to his place of imprisonment, or whether it had flown away en route, they could not know, but it had not been seen at Boa Vista since Bunter had gone. That looked as if it had gone to a good distance, for, near at hand, it would certainly have found its way back to the fazenda.

The juniors watched the macaw, glad to see it again. If Bonito, who talked so much could only have talked intelligibly, he could have told them, in all probability, what they so keenly desired to know. But poor Bonito could only repeat words and phrases that he had heard, and though he repeated them with remarkable fidelity, he had, of course, not the remotest idea of their meaning.

Having finished the nut, the macaw cocked his head at the juniors again. Clearly he wanted more.

"Nuts!" he squawked. "I say, you fellows! Lot of rotters! Leaving a fellow on his own! Nuts! After all I've done for them! Nuts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" repeated Bonito gleefully. "Noisy brutes! Ha, ha! Nuts!"

They could not help laughing at Bonito's innocent revelation of Billy Bunter's soliloquies. Bob Cherry threw more nuts to the macaw, and Bonito's curved beak got busy again.

"If that jolly old macaw could only talk sense——" said Bob.

"He must have gone all the way

with Bunter, I think," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "You fellows remember how he always stuck to Bunter."

"That's so," agreed Bob. "He came on Bunter's shoulder, when Bunter started with us for the Montanha Fria. He came all the way Bunter did, and went back with him. Ten to one he stuck to Bunter all the way he went with that brute Lobo. But he seems to have left him, after all."

"Bunter's shut up somewhere, of course; and a bird could get out, when Bunter couldn't," remarked Nugent.

"If he could only tell us where," sighed Bob.

"Well, he's a jolly intelligent bird; but that would be asking rather a lot of a parrot," said Johnny Bull.

"We haven't had this night out for nothing, at any rate," said Harry. "We should never have found Bonito again if we hadn't come up the river. When he got loose, he was too far from Boa Vista to get back—that's pretty clear—or he would have come hopping in. He knows us again, of course. And finding him here proves one thing pretty clearly—Bunter was brought up the Rexo by that villain Lobo. Bonito wouldn't be here, otherwise."

"That's so," agreed Bob.

"It looked like it, falling in with O Lobo as we did. And now I think we can take it as certain," said Harry. "That's something to report to Mr. Valentine, at least. And we've bagged O Lobo's canoe, though I suppose it won't take him long to steal another somewhere along the river. It's something to be sure of the direction Bunter was taken."

"Not much; but something," said Bob.

The canoe floated on, the juniors rather cheered by the meeting with Bonito, and the proof, or as good as proof, that they had been on the right track.

They reached the desembarcadouro at the plantation at last. Peter and Jim were on the landing-stage, evidently watching for them, and their faces lighted up at the sight of the Famous Five.

"You got our message from Domingo, Mr. Valentine," said Harry, as the juniors stepped on the desembarcadouro.

"Yes; but I have been very anxious about you," said the planter, rather curtly. "You have been in danger. If you had happened to run into that scoundrel O Lobo——"

"We jolly well did!" said Bob. "And he was glad to cut and run. We've bagged his canoe."

Peter Valentine stared.

"What?" he ejaculated. And Jim whistled.

Peter listened in silence to what the Famous Five had to tell him. He smiled when they had told him.

"You've had more luck than we've had," he said. "Even the Caraya has made no discovery. Chico is still on the trail: he is tireless."

"I say, you fellows, that old ass, Peter Valentine!" chimed in Bonito. "Lot of rotters! Millions of them! Noisy brutes! That fathead Cherry! Ha, ha!"

Peter glanced at the macaw. He had hopped out of the canoe on Bob Cherry's shoulder—the usual fat shoulder not being available.

"If that bird could tell what he knows——" said the planter.

"He can only tell us what Bunter

thinks of us," said Bob, with a faint grin.

"That ass Wharton!" cackled Bonito. "That fathead Cherry! Millions of the noisy brutes! What a row! Shut up! You noisy brute, you're starting all the others squawking! Ha, ha! Nuts!"

"You boys had better turn in, and get a rest," said Peter.

The Famous Five were almost dropping with weariness. They were glad to get back to Boa Vista and their hammocks.

Bonito took up his old perch in the veranda, gobbled nuts, and went to sleep there. The Famous Five and Jim Valentine had to get a rest; but the planter ordered a bataloa to be manned to make a search up the Rexo. The chums of the Remove had, at least, ascertained the direction in which to search, though, with endless miles of impenetrable forest lining both banks of the river, the search was rather like that for a needle in a haystack. It was late afternoon when Peter returned—unsuccessful.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

O Lobo's Triumph!

THE grinning glee in O Lobo's face was a relief to Billy Bunter when his eyes fell on the bandit. He had expected O Lobo to return while it was yet dark; but the morning came, and he was still alone in the hut on the river island.

Having finished his supplies overnight, Bunter was faced with the prospect of no breakfast. But it was not till the middle of the morning that he heard the outbreak of squawking from the macaws that announced a disturbance on the island, and guessed that it heralded the bandit's return.

The door was thrown open, and O Lobo stepped in, grinning with glee. One blink at the bandit's face told that matters were going well for him, and it was a relief to the hapless Owl. Whether the Wolf of Brazil got away with the diamonds of the Montanha Fria, or not, mattered very little to William George Bunter, in comparison with the safety of his own fat skin. What mattered was whether Billy Bunter got away from O Lobo.

"Desejo-lhe muito bons dias!" That polite greeting showed that the Wolf was in a cheerful temper, very different from his black mood of the day before.

He threw a well-filled bag on the floor.

"O almoco esta prompto!" he grinned, meaning that breakfast was ready—a phrase Bunter knew, having heard it a good many times from Domingo at Boa Vista.

Bunter pounced on the bag.

It was packed with food, and the fat junior lost no time in getting busy on it. O Lobo, seated on the bench by the open doorway, smoked a black cheroot, and watched him with a grinning face.

"Eat, little senhor!" he said. "Corpo de Deus! Why not, when you are worth a fortune to me?"

Bunter did not need telling. He gobbled.

"I should have chosen one of the others," said O Lobo. "But it is all the same. Fat fool as you are, the senhor Inglez will not leave you to die by the knife of the Wolf! Nao! Look!"

He held up a crumpled sheet of

paper, and the fat Owl blinked at it. It was written on in Portuguese—a deep mystery to Bunter, conveying no meaning whatever to him.

O Lobo chuckled.

"That is the answer of the senhor Inglez," he remarked. "He has come to my terms. He could do no other, if he desired you to live. What do you think is written there, little senhor? Yesterday I send him this paper by a black man, to demand the diamonds, for your life! Here it is written that the diamonds will be given in exchange for you."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, with his mouth full.

He was glad to hear it.

"A fortune for me, and freedom for you, when the diamonds are in my hands," grinned O Lobo. "You understand? You—you are nothing to me, whether you live or die, what matters?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter again. It mattered a great deal to him.

"But the senhor Inglez; he does not trust me," grinned O Lobo. "He has written that the diamonds shall be mine, for your freedom, on the third day—that is to-morrow. But it must be made clear that you will be returned safe to Boa Vista. Nossa senhora! That will cost me little. What do I care? In the meantime, they hunt for me." He laughed mockingly. "Do you think they will find me here, little senhor—even the Caraya, who is able to track the jaguar to his lair? Nao!"

He lighted a fresh cheroot, grinning. Evidently the bandit was in great spirits at the sight of success, now fairly within his grasp.

"Yet by chance they came close," he went on. "Last night, little senhor, when I leave you in my canoe, I see your friends. They search for me by moonlight on the river. A chance that might have been fatal to me. But it is not easy to catch the Wolf of Brazil." He shrugged his shoulders. "I take to the trees, and leave them to stare. But they take my canoe. I have to go by the forest, and in every shadow I think I see the face of the Caraya."

The grin died off the bandit's swarthy face, and his eyes glinted. He passed his hand over his arm, where a bullet had grazed.

Bunter blinked at him uneasily. But the grin returned to the face of the Brazilian as he glanced again at the paper in his hand, and the message written by the planter of Boa Vista.

"But all goes well," he resumed. "I have seen my negro, and he will take my message to the senhor Inglez—it is all arranged for the diamonds to be handed over for you, fat one! To-morrow they will be in my hands, and afterwards the sertao will know me no more!"

"A rich Brazilian will live in Paris, little senhor—O Lobo will never be seen again on the banks of the Rexo! One night more in this island of the macaws, and you will be free, and I shall be rich. I found them, too late, at the Montanha Fria; but they were digging the diamonds for me—for O Lobo!"

And he chuckled in triumph.

Billy Bunter finished his meal—the first really square meal he had had since he had fallen into the bandit's hands.

He felt better for it—and still better at the prospect of getting away from the island of the macaws.

That the success of the bandit's

cunning scheming, the loss of the fortune he had found at the Cold Mountain, would be a heavy blow to his hospitable host at Boa Vista, Bunter would probably have realised, had he given that aspect of the matter a thought. But Billy Bunter's thoughts, as usual, were concentrated on W. G. Bunter.

If, indeed, any thought of Peter Valentine had been in his fat mind, it would have been banished by O Lobo's next words.

"They have been hunting me—sim, sim! But it is well for you, little senhor, that they did not trace me here! If they had found you, fat one, they would have found you with O Lobo's knife buried in your heart!"

Bunter shivered.

Even yet, if the English senhor should think of tricking me—"The black ferocity in the bandit's face made Bunter's flesh creep. In the hands of the treacherous bravo, his life hung on a thread. But O Lobo's dark brow cleared again. "But do not fear—he will keep his word, when once it is given—I may trust him, if he will not trust O Lobo! You will remain within reach of my knife till the diamonds are in my hands—that is enough! All goes well!"

The day passed dimly enough for Billy Bunter. It was to be the last day of his imprisonment on Macaw Island, according to O Lobo's words. But not since he had been in the lonely hut had a day seemed so long.

It was not till sunset that the bandit left the hut. He remained absent for some time, but he was not gone; the squawking of the disturbed macaws told Bunter that he was moving on the island. No doubt he was watching the river, from the thick cover, to make sure that pursuit came nowhere near his lair.

That he had no cause for alarm Bunter could see, when he returned to the hut. He was grinning, and Bunter heard him mutter, again and again "Amanha! Amanha!" which the fat junior knew to mean "To-morrow." The bandit was looking forward to the morrow as keenly as Bunter himself.

But much was to happen before the morrow, if the Wolf of Brazil had only known it!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Did Chico Know?

LOT of rotters! Lot of rotters! Noisy brutes! came a squawk, greeting Harry Wharton & Co. when they came out into the veranda, where Domingo was serving tea.

Peter Valentine was drinking "mate," handed by the black steward. He looked tired and worn.

"No luck?" asked Jim.

The planter shook his head.

"Lot of rotters! Nuts!" came from the macaw. "I say, you fellows, nuts! Millions of the noisy brutes!"

The Caraya was there. Hardy, iron-limbed as he was, the incessant trailing of days and nights had worn down the strength of the Indian hunter. Chico's bronze face was drawn, almost haggard.

He had not spared himself, in his search for "O Mocho Bravo," who had rescued him from the alligator. But O Mocho Bravo had vanished into the unknown depths of the Brazilian wilderness, and Chico had failed. By chance, or luck, the juniors had come nearest to

success in the hunt for O Lobo; but they, too, had failed.

It was easy to read, in Mr. Valentine's face, that he had no further hope. All that could be done, had been done; and Bunter was still a hidden prisoner in the hands of the bandit. It remained only to barter the diamonds of the Montanha Fria for his life and liberty.

"Lot of rotters! Nuts!" cackled Bonito; and he ran on, chattering tirelessly and meaninglessly.

The juniors noticed that the Caraya, as he sat on the planks of the veranda, had his dark eyes fixed on the macaw, and was listening intently to the stream of unmeaning words.

But those words were even more unmeaning to the Caraya than to the others; for he did not understand the language in which they were spoken.

Yet he listened, with fixed attention, as the parrot chattered.

"The game's up, then, Peter?" asked Jim Valentine quietly.

Peter nodded.

"Yes. I've had another message from O Lobo, by the same negro. The matter is settled now, and tomorrow—" He broke off for a moment. "We've done all we can—and I cannot let Bunter pay the penalty as O Lobo knows well. He has me in a cleft stick. That's that!"

Harry Wharton glanced at the setting sun, which almost touched the summit of the Montanha Fria, far away over the forest. There was still a night before the day of O Lobo's triumph. If there was a chance yet—

But he shook his head. There was no chance.

"I say, you fellows!" the macaw chattered on. "Shut up! What a row! Lot of rotters! Millions of them! Ha, ha!"

The Caraya lifted his head, and broke his long silence, speaking to Jim Valentine, in a low voice, in Portuguese.

Jim smiled faintly.

"What does he say?" asked Harry.

It was clear that what the Caraya had said had some reference to the parrot's incessant chatter.

"Chico knows hardly any English," explained Jim. "He has asked me to translate to him what the parrot is saying."

"What on earth for?" asked Bob Cherry.

"He fancies he may learn something from it, I think. He knows that the macaw was with Bunter, in O Lobo's hands. He seems to have some idea in his head that we may get some sense out of what the macaw is gabbling."

(Continued on next page.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

AS you know, chums, I am always delighted to receive letters from readers abroad, so this week I am going to start off by answering a letter from Allen Gibson, who is

A NOVA SCOTIA READER.

Allen says some most complimentary things about the good old paper, and asks me a few questions. The first concerns his name. Gibson comes from the name "Gib," which is a contracted form of Gilbert. In early days this was one of the most popular font names. Gibson, therefore, means "the son of Gilbert." The inquiry regarding his chum's name—Bayne—is a bit more difficult to answer. It may have come from the word "bay," in its meaning of "reddish-brown," thus designating an original owner who had a tanned complexion and red hair. On the other hand, it might be a contraction of the word "banner," signifying a bearer of a banner. As he is of Scottish descent, this is most likely, as there are several versions of the name in Scotland, notably the name "Bannerman."

Allen's other query regarding the smallest railway in the world is also a difficult one to answer. At one time the smallest passenger-carrying railway was that which ran from Dymchurch to Hythe, but it has now been closed down, and figures are not available to show which railway has since taken the "smallest" record in its place. If any of my other readers know of any small railways in their vicinity will they drop me a line, and I will pass on the information.

NEXT question, please? George Walton, of Tonbridge, wants to know

WHO INVENTED SALUTING?

There are several different versions to account for the origin of this military custom. Some say that it originated in the East, where the hands were held

before the eyes as though the brilliance of the man before him was too great for the eyes of an inferior. The modern method of saluting is claimed to date from the Borgias. They lived in fear of assassination, so when any inferior was shown into their presence, he had to hold up his hands to show that no dagger was concealed in them.

No wonder the Borgias—Cesare and his sister, Lucrezia—were anxious not to be assassinated. They are generally credited with being:

THE WORLD'S GREATEST MURDERERS.

and amazing stories are told of their infamous activities. Cesare made himself ruler of vast tracts of territory in Italy, and carried on a series of wars. He had many enemies, and conveniently disposed of them, mostly by means of poison. It is said that his sister also specialised in poisoning people she did not like, but there is no confirmation of this. Cesare had a most ingenious method of poisoning people by means of a wine flask. Ordinary wine could be poured out and be drunk without ill effect. But, by holding the flask in a certain way, poison mixed with the wine as it was poured out. So, though Cesare drank from the same flask as his guests, the wine did not affect the poisoner, but killed his victim!

He also possessed rings which injected poison into the hand of those who shook hands with him. Other devices used were such things as candles which gave off poison when they were lighted, and clothing which introduced poison into his victims. The world was well rid of Cesare when he was eventually "bumped off." Lucrezia died a natural death.

FROM a Halifax reader comes a request that I should tell him something about

BRITAIN'S FIRST STREAMLINED TRAIN.

This train, which runs on the London and North-Eastern Railway, between London and Newcastle, is called the "Silver Jubilee." The engine is streamlined and painted in several tones of grey. It is named "Silver Link." The tender has a corridor running through it, thus allowing for the changing of the driver and the fireman during the run, if necessary. Composed of seven coaches, the train has been specially built for the job. Each coach-end fits into the other; a flush casing covers up the spaces between them. This makes a surprising difference in the windage, too, so that the whole train rolls along with the least disturbance of wind. The train is a complete unit, with restaurant cars, and its weight is 220 tons, or with passengers all on, 230 tons. The engine, which can turn out about 2,500 horse-power, weighs something like 150 tons in working trim.

In the first-class restaurant car is an electric speedometer, which enables the passengers to see exactly at what speed the train is travelling. Here are some of the technical details:

Length of the engine, 70 ft. 6 in.; weight of the engine, 165 tons; boiler pressure, 250 lbs. per square inch; diameter of driving wheels, 6 ft. 8 in.; length of train, 392 ft. The average speed is over 70 miles per hour, and the train stops only once between London and Newcastle—at Darlington.

And now for next week's tip-top bill-o'-fare. The grand long complete yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled:

"THE MILLIONAIRE STOWAWAY!"

By Frank Richards,

and is one that I am confident will gain your interest from the very first chapter. All good things come to an end, and none realise it more than Harry Wharton & Co. Having enjoyed the hospitality of Jim Valentine's uncle, they board ship for home. En route they make the acquaintance of Putnam Van Duck, who, for a certain reason, has bolted from his guardian. Loaded with dollars, Van Duck is the most remarkable stowaway that ever stowed himself away on a ship.

"Magnetites" are quite justified in anticipating that this story will prove to be extra-specially good.

You'll enjoy, too, the rib-tickling issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," the exciting chapters of "The Lost Squadron!" and the Greyfriars Rhymester's snappy verses written around Stephen Price, of the Fifth.

Be sure and order your copy early, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,467.

"Lot of rotters!" said Bonito agreeably. "Lot of ticks! I say, you fellows, noisy brutes!"

"Chico will hear what Bunter thinks of his friends, at any rate, if you give him a construe!" said Bob.

The Caraya spoke again, and Jim nodded. As the parrot chattered on, he translated the words into Portuguese, the Indian listening with the deepest attention.

That some thought was working in the Redskin's mind was clear, though the juniors could hardly guess what. The parrot's gabble told them nothing, except that Bunter had uttered continual complaints—which they certainly did not need telling; they could have guessed that!

But they saw a sudden gleam come into the Indian's dark eyes. He started to his feet with a quick breath.

"Outra vez—outra vez!" he exclaimed—which the juniors knew meant "again." He was asking Jim to repeat some of the phrases uttered by the macaw.

The boy planter repeated them; meaningless enough to the ears of the juniors, though they seemed to have startled the Indian out of his impassive calm.

"Noisy brutes! Millions of them, I believe, on this rotten island! Shut up, you brute! You'll start the whole lot squawking!"

That was what Jim repeated, in Portuguese, to the listening Indian.

The Caraya's eyes flashed. "Bom! Bom!" he exclaimed. "Esta certo?"

The juniors stared in wonder at the Indian. The Caraya had looked tired out; but now fatigue seemed to have dropped from him, like a cloak thrown off. His air was alert, his eyes gleaming, and he breathed quickly.

He stepped to the wall, where lay his spear and his bow and arrows. Swiftly he caught them up.

"What the thump!" exclaimed Bob. "Is Chico going on the trail again, Jim?"

"Looks like it!" said Jim Valentine. "But—"

He called to the Caraya, but Chico did not answer. The Indian stood for a moment looking to the west. The sun had dipped behind the Cold Mountain, and shadows were extending over the forest—the brief tropical twilight, soon to be dark. Then the Caraya turned to Peter, and spoke to him in low, rapid tones.

The juniors saw the planter start.

Before he could answer, the Caraya ran swiftly down the steps and crossed the garden, through the orange-trees, at a run.

In utter amazement, they stared after him.

They saw the Caraya reach the desembarcadouro, leap into a canoe, and push off. With rapid strokes of the paddle he drove the canoe up the river in the direction the Famous Five had gone the previous night. With almost lightning swiftness the canoe flew, and vanished up the winding Rexo. The darkness dropped, and river and forest were hidden. In the darkness the Caraya was gone—where, and why?

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

To the Rescue!

"WHAT—" The Famous Five all spoke together. Amazed by the Caraya's sudden and unexpected flight, they

looked at Peter Valentine for information. The astonishment with which the planter had listened to Chico's hurried words had given place to an eager look. Whatever it was that the Indian had said, it made a deep impression on Peter.

It was evident that the Caraya had—or believed he had—a clue to the missing junior. That was why he had darted away and taken the canoe. But it was mystifying to the juniors.

"By Jove!" said Peter. "If he is right—" He breathed hard and deep.

"By Jove, there's a chance yet!" "Cough it up, Peter!" said Jim Valentine. "We can't make head or tail of it. Does Chico think he's on Bunter's track?"

"He does; and I think he is right!" said the planter. "He has learned something from the chatter of the macaw that we never thought of."

"Lot of rotters!" came from the cheery Bonito. "Ha, ha! I say, you fellows, noisy brutes—millions of them!"

Peter, listening to Bonito's cackle, nodded.

"But what—" exclaimed Harry.

"Bonito picks up his words from Bunter," said Peter. "It occurred to the Caraya that he might have picked up some phrase, giving a clue to the place where the boy is hidden."

"Lot of rotters! Noisy brutes—millions of them!" contributed Bonito.

"Blessed if I see any sense in that," said Bob blankly.

"Chico picked out the sense from the nonsense," said the planter, smiling. "Most of Bunter's remarks, I am afraid, were nonsense. But there may have been a grain of wheat in the chaff. The allusion to noisy brutes—millions of them—might refer to a flock of parrots."

"Very likely," said Bob.

"Another phrase was 'Millions of them on this rotten island.' Bunter must have uttered those words, for the macaw to have picked them up. If he uttered them while in O Lobo's hands—"

"Oh!" said Harry. "That might be a tip that O Lobo has parked him on one of the islands in the Rexo."

"Exactly!"

"But there are dozens of them, large and small!" said Bob Cherry. "If Chico's gone to search all the islands up the river, he's cut out a big job of work."

Peter laughed.

"But there is one island—Macaw Island—that swarms with red parrots," he said. "There are parrots on all the islands, but on that one the red macaws have their nesting-places, and they are there in myriads. And—"

"Shut up!" screamed Bonito. "You'll start the whole lot squawking! What a row! Millions of them on this filthy island, I believe! I say, you fellows, lot of rotters! Lot of rotters!"

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob.

The juniors exchanged eager looks. Now that they gave attention to the parrot's chatter they realised that there might be, as Peter expressed it, a grain of wheat in the chaff.

Nine-tenths of what the macaw uttered was a repetition of Billy Bunter's grouching. But was he now repeating Bunter's peevish remarks on his surroundings in the hidden lair where O Lobo kept him a prisoner? And was that hidden lair on Macaw Island? It was evident that the Caraya thought so, and it seemed to the juniors that it was very likely that the keen-witted Indian was right.

"By gum!" repeated Bob. "If it's possible that that jolly old parrot is

giving us the clue, it was lucky we made that trip up the river, you men. We should never have seen Bonito again, but for that."

"The luckfulness was terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed macaw is the stitch in time that saves ninepence, as the English proverb remarks."

"We're going after Chico, Mr. Valentine!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The planter nodded.

"Yes, and at once. If there is the remotest chance of laying hands on that scoundrel, and rescuing Bunter—"

"It's more than a remote chance," said Jim Valentine. "It looks to me like a jolly healthy chance."

"Lot of rotters!" screamed Bonito. "This filthy island is thick with them! What a row! Oh lor! What a row! A fellow can't sleep! Oh crikey!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I can just hear Bunter saying all that if he's parked on the macaws' island," he said. "Old Bonito is worth his weight in Brazil nuts!"

"Nuts!" yelled Bonito. "I say, you fellows, nuts!"

"Get your rifles!" said Peter.

The juniors were not long in getting ready. They were eager to start. Chico, it was evident, had no doubt—or little doubt—and the more they thought of it the more they felt assured that the Caraya was right. The Famous Five had already ascertained that Bunter had been taken up the Rexo—in the direction of the macaws' island. They remembered that it was near that island that they had encountered O Lobo the previous night. There was renewed hope in their hearts as they tramped down the path to the river, with their rifles under their arms, leaving Bonito still cackling and squawking in the veranda.

A montaria was quickly manned by black paddlers, and they pushed off from the desembarcadouro. The moon was not yet up, and the Rexo was pitchy dark. The paddles flashed in the sinewy hands of the negroes, and the montaria rushed swiftly through the darkness.

But they did not expect to sight the Caraya. He was miles ahead of them in his swift canoe. Once he had the clue to the bandit's lair, the Caraya had not lost a second in speeding to the rescue of "O Mocho Bravo."

As the montaria glided rapidly up the dark, murmuring Rexo the juniors wondered what might be happening in the darkness ahead of them. It was many long miles to the island of the macaws, and, to their eager impatience, the minutes crawled by on leaden wings.

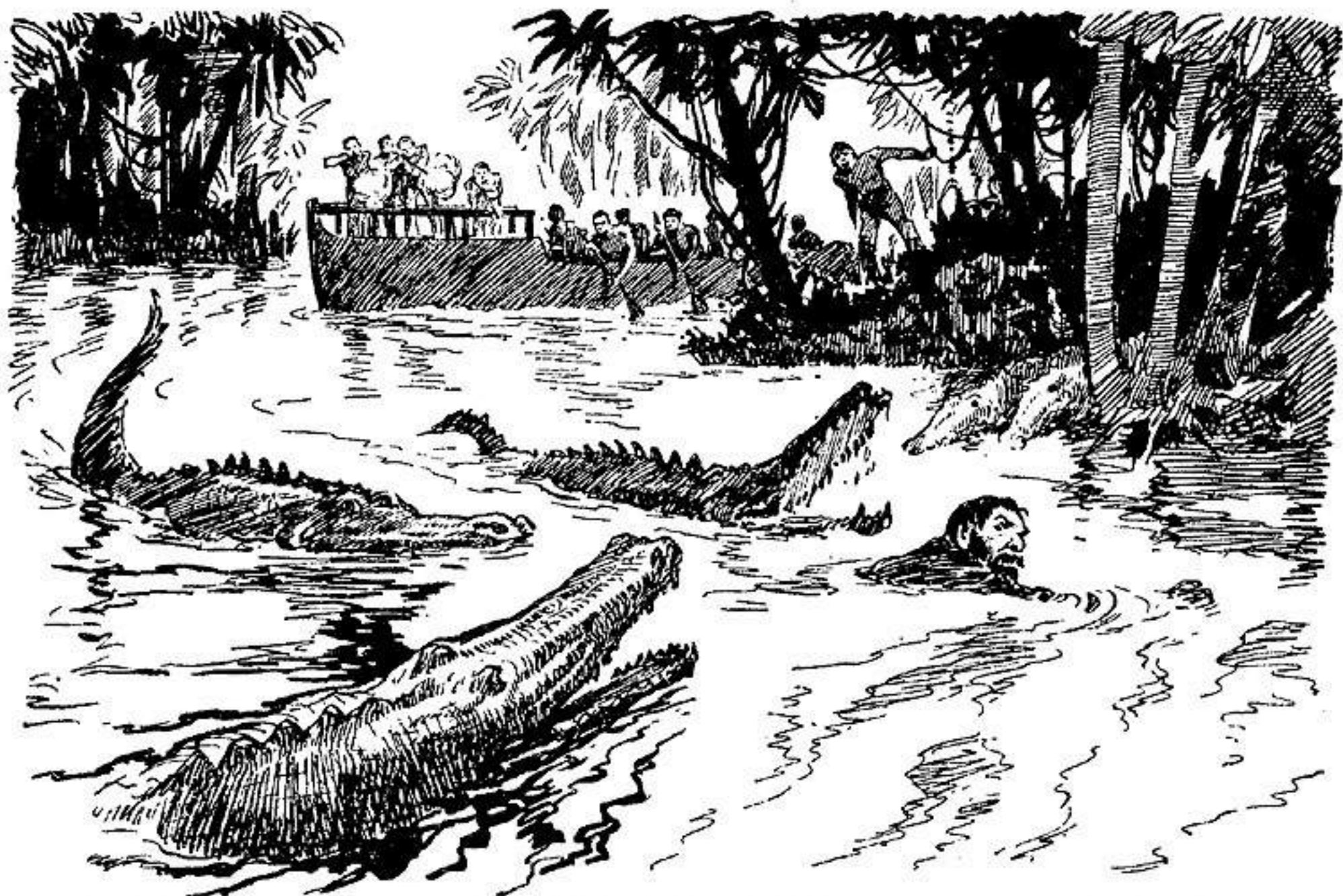
The moon was glimmering in the east when they sighted the macaws' island at last, and there was a silver glimmer on the thick foliage of the trees with which it was covered to the water's edge.

"There it is!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Listen!" muttered Harry.

Loud, and growing louder, came the squawking from the island of the macaws. At that hour the birds would have been at rest, and silent. Something had disturbed the innumerable feathered inhabitants of the island in the Rio Rexo.

The juniors felt their hearts beating as the blacks paddled on. The Caraya was there. What was happening in the darkness of the wooded island? The montaria glided swiftly on.



The alligators, drawn by the scent of blood, closed in on O Lobo. Bob Cherry gave a cry. "Save him! Even that brute—save him!" The Greyfriars juniors blazed away with their rifles in the hope of driving the alligators off.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Fight in the Hut!

"**N**OISY brutes!" groaned Billy Bunter.

O Lobo, stretched in the hammock in the hut on the island, was sleeping soundly. There was only one hammock in the hut, and O Lobo occupied it, leaving the bench for Bunter.

A hard, wooden bench was an uncomfortable couch. Bunter had dragged it to the back wall of the hut, so that the wall would keep him from rolling off. But it was not easy to sleep, even for Billy Bunter, good as he was in that line.

Every now and then he dropped off, and his snore mingled with the steady breathing of the bandit sleeping in the hammock. But he woke again and again. And several times there came an outbreak of squawking from the macaws, disturbed from their slumbers by some creeping serpent or jaguar. Now, once more, the squawking broke out, louder than ever, and Bunter sat up on the bench, and grunted and groaned.

It was hard enough for a fellow to get a little sleep, without those rotten parrots kicking up a terrific shindy at intervals through the night.

"Blow 'em!" groaned Bunter.

He heard a stirring in the darkness as O Lobo moved in the hammock. But the bandit settled down to slumber again and once more Bunter could hear his steady breathing.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

The cackling and squawking died away again. Billy Bunter tried to compose himself to sleep. At intervals there came a rustle or a cackle from the thick branches outside, as if the feathered population of the island was not wholly at ease.

It seemed to the sleepless fat Owl that

there was a rustling and a brushing close by the walls of the hut—and he pictured a creeping jaguar, or a winding rattlesnake, and shivered.

He was glad to remember that the walls were strong and the door, of plaited thick canes, securely fastened. Neither serpent nor jaguar could gain entrance; he knew that there was no danger of that. But he shivered, as the faint sounds in the darkness hinted of some living creature prowling at the fastened door.

He sat up again, his fat heart thumping. The interior of the hut was black as pitch; he could see nothing but the dimmest outline of the hammock in which the bandit slept.

Something—something living—was at the door. He was certain of it—and it thrilled him with terror. He pictured the claws of a jaguar groping—the fierce eyes like balls of fire in the dark.

"Oh crikey!" he breathed.

He was tempted to awaken the bandit. But he dared not. He sat in the darkness, quaking.

A breath of fresher air fanned his fat cheek, and he gave a violent start. In spite of his terrors, he had counted on the door remaining fast; but now he knew it was open—or opening.

The breath of fresher air was the wind from the river, penetrating into the close, stuffy interior of the hut. The fat junior sat transfixed.

How had the door opened?

He knew that O Lobo had fastened it securely. No wild animal could have opened it noiselessly—the tearing of a jaguar's claws would have made noise enough, and would certainly have awakened O Lobo on the instant. But the door had opened without a sound—and Billy Bunter realised, in terrified amazement, that it must have opened to a human hand. Only a knife would have cut through the strong, wiry fibres that

fastened it—or perhaps through the leather hinges!

It was a human being who was hidden in the darkness at the doorway—now open.

Bunter sat petrified. Thoughts of savage Indians—of desperadoes of the same kidney as O Lobo—floated through his mind. Someone had landed on the lonely island in the river—that was why the macaws had squawked; it was not, this time, a snake or a creeping jaguar! And that "someone" was now at hand—silent, stealthy, unseen!

The bandit still slept.

There had been no sound to alarm him—and even Bunter, with his fat ears straining in terror, did not hear the sound of a footfall; but he knew that the unseen intruder had entered the hut.

Dark as it was, the doorway was less dark than the interior, and across it a black shadow flitted for a moment.

Bunter did not move. He could not. Clamped on the bench in the darkness, he hardly breathed—his fat heart scarcely beat.

But as a groping hand touched him, it was too much for the fat Owl's nerves, and he gave a squeak of horror.

"Ow!"

There was a quick breath. The man, whoever he was, was close to him, touching him. Bunter rolled off the bench, squeaking with terror, stumbled, and bumped on the floor.

There was a stirring in the hammock. The noise had awakened O Lobo. The bandit's angry voice came through the dark.

"Que ha?"

The words were followed by a hissing breath from the unseen man. The bandit's voice guided him to the hammock. Bunter, as he rolled, caught the flash of a knife, and heard the figure in the darkness spring at the hammock.

"O Lobo!" he heard a voice panting.

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A wild, fierce yell rang through the hut.

Bunter dragged himself up. He knew that a blow had been struck—that the unseen intruder was attacking the bandit.

He heard a crash as O Lobo rolled headlong from the hammock, grappling with his assailant.

A wild and desperate scuffling followed, a desperate struggle of two powerful men, grappling and struggling in the darkness.

Billy Bunter crouched back into a corner, as the rolling, struggling figures brushed him. He heard O Lobo's panting voice:

"O Chico! O Chico!"

Then Bunter knew!

It was the Caraya!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

It was the Caraya who had come—to save him! It was the Caraya who was now struggling with the desperado in the darkness. The Caraya had found him—how, Bunter could not begin to guess.

The struggling figures rolled at the doorway of the hut. From the darkness came a silvery gleam of the rising moon, penetrating the branches. It fell into the doorway, revealing to Bunter's terrified gaze the struggling figures—the dark, evil, black-bearded face of the bandit; the red-bronze face of the Indian, set in a grim ferocity as savage as O Lobo's own. It was the ruthless ruffian who had tied him up by the Rexo, and left him for the alligators, who was in the Indian's grasp; and in Chico's face were hate and vengeance, and the knife in his bronze hand struck and struck again. Bunter, spellbound with horror, watched.

He saw O Lobo break suddenly loose, wrenching himself from the Indian's grasp.

As Chico flung himself upon him again, the panting bandit whirled away and fled, crashing through the thickets towards the river.

After him, swift and fierce as a jaguar, darted the Indian.

Loud and discordant came the squawking of the macaws, roused by the crashing of the desperate fugitive and his savage pursuer. Hundreds, thousands of parrots squawked and cackled frantically as the branches swayed and crashed. Billy Bunter, holding on to the doorposts for support, his fat legs crumpling under him, blinked out of the hut, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last of O Lobo!

"LOOK!" shouted Harry Wharton. The montaria had almost reached the island.

All eyes were fixed on the wall of green, glimmering silvery in the gleam of the moon. From the island came a pandemonium of frantic squawking and cackling.

A mass of lianas suddenly parted, and a figure appeared on the water's edge—a desperate, panting figure, with a wild, black-bearded face splashed with blood—the figure of O Lobo!

He did not even see the montaria and its crew. Close behind him, crashing through the thickets at his very heels, came the Caraya, knife in hand, and howling the war-yell of his tribe.

"O Lobo!" breathed Peter Valentine. He grasped his rifle.

For an instant the bandit stood in view, panting, gulping for breath, knee-deep in mud, clear in the moonlight.

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Then he plunged headlong into the river and swam for the bank.

The Greyfriars juniors, shuddering, saw the water reddened as it flowed past the bandit. He was wounded, but swimming strong and hard.

A moment or two later and there was another crash in the lianas, and the Caraya leaped out into sight, splashing into the mud.

His dark, fierce eyes flashed round for his fleeing enemy.

He saw the montaria and the startled faces of the juniors. Peter called to him, but he did not answer or heed. Only for a second his eyes rested on the boat—then they flashed on the glimmering river, seeking O Lobo.

The bandit, swimming desperately, leaving a trail of blood in the water as he went, was already a dozen yards from the island.

Chico saw him, and made a movement to spring into the Rexo in pursuit.

But he stopped.

Standing in the mud, motionless, he fixed his eyes on the swimming bandit, and the juniors saw a dark and terrible smile glide over his bronze face.

"Oh, look!" panted Bob.

The next moment they saw what had caused that look on the Caraya's face.

Close by the desperate swimmer, a hideous snout rose from the water. Another and another rose close by O Lobo—the alligators drawn by the scent of blood!

Bob gave a cry.

"Save him! Even that brute—save him!"

Peter Valentine shouted to the blacks. The paddles dashed into the water. The montaria swept down on the swimmer and the river monsters that surrounded him.

The juniors blazed away with their rifles, in the hope of driving the caymans off. The distance was short and the boat was swift—but the caymans were swifter.

There was a snap of jaws—one last, loud, terrible cry from the Wolf of Brazil—and O Lobo disappeared under the surface of the Rexo.

He was not seen again.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed, with white faces, at the circling ripples on the water, where the alligator had plunged with its prey.

The ripples widened and faded; the Rexo flowed calm again, under the gleam of the moon. O Lobo was gone—on the banks of the Rexo, in the forests and deserts of the sertao, no eye was ever to fall again on the Wolf of Brazil.

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter gasped with relief at the sight of the rescuers as they threaded their way through the thickets, amid the squawking of the macaws, and reached the hut.

"Here we are, old bean!" said Bob.

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter faintly.

"I—I say—Oh crikey!"

"Safe now, old chap!" said Jim Valentine. "We've got a boat here; we're going straight back to the fazenda. Buck up, old bean!"

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I've had a fearful time! I—I say, is—is—is that villain gone?"

"He's gone," said Harry Wharton very quietly. "An alligator got him, Bunter; you will never see O Lobo again."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Come!" said Mr. Valentine, and he took the fat junior by the arm and led him away to the boat.

The Famous Five followed. They helped Bunter into the montaria, and

he sank down gasping. The Caraya in the canoe gave him a smile.

"O Mocho Bravo!" he said. "Estou muito contente."

"What the dickens does he mean?" grunted Bunter. "Is he calling me names?"

"No, you ass; he says he is very glad," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Well, so am I; though I can tell you he gave me a turn when he came creeping about in the dark." He blinked at the Caraya, who was speaking again in Portuguese. "I say, you fellows, what is he saying now? I can't understand a word of that idiotic lingo!"

Jim Valentine, grinning, translated.

"He's saying that he is happy to have saved you from O Lobo, because you got him away from the alligators; and that when you leave Brazil he will always remember your courage."

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Good! You hear that, you fellows? That chap knows me! He's only a blinking Indian, but he's got a lot of sense! He knows me better than you fellows do!"

"I don't think!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The Indian glided away in the canoe. The juniors packed themselves in the montaria to follow. There was a snort from Billy Bunter.

"For goodness' sake, give a fellow room! Don't tread on my feet, Bob Cherry! Clumsy ass!"

Bob chuckled.

"Same old Bunter," he remarked.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter.

"I say, did you bring anything to eat?"

"I'm afraid we never thought of that," said Peter Valentine, with a smile. "We were thinking of your safety, Bunter."

"Well, that's all very well, but you might have thought of something to eat, too!" grunted Bunter. "I'm hungry! I say, make those niggers get a move on! They're lazy! I'd kick 'em!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

Billy Bunter's terrifying experience as a prisoner in the hands of the bandit had not changed the fat Owl of the Remove; he was the same old Bunter.

The montaria made good speed down the river. They arrived at the plantation, and the Famous Five marched Bunter up to Boa Vista, where, in the lamplight, a blue-and-gold macaw immediately flew off his perch and landed on a fat shoulder.

"I say, you fellows, nuts!" yelled Bonito. "Ha, ha! Lot of rotters! Lot of beasts! Noisy brutes! That ass Wharton! Ha, ha! I say, you fellows, nuts!"

"I say, what about supper?" asked Bunter.

"I say, what about supper?" screeched the macaw. "Lot of rotters! I say, you fellows, what about supper?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

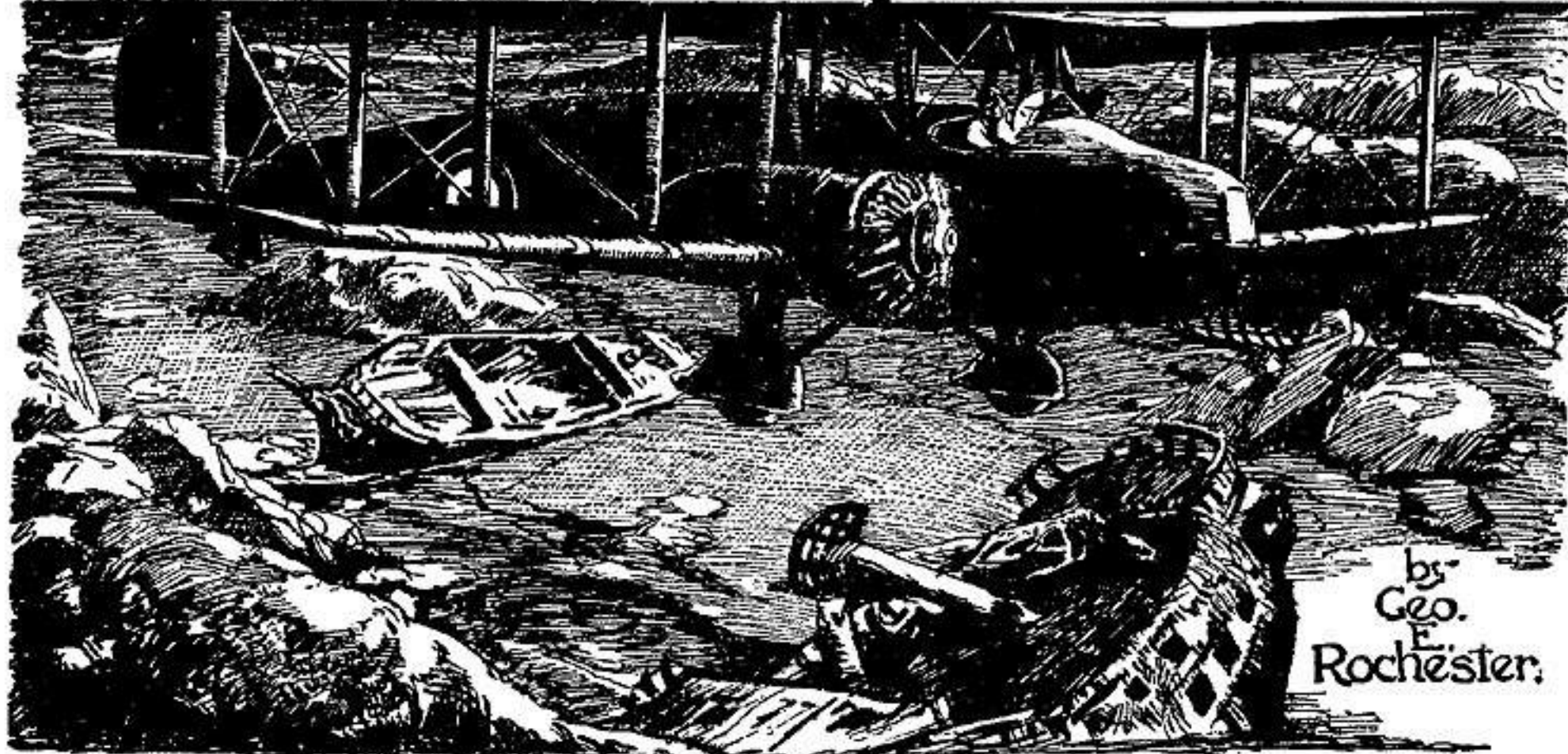
"Ha, ha, ha!" repeated Bonito.

"What a row! I say, what an awful row! Ha, ha!"

Supper was immediately provided for Billy Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. waited on the fat Owl like a fellow they delighted to honour. And, to judge by the beatific expression that overspread Billy Bunter's fat face as he packed away the foodstuffs, he was already forgetting his trials and tribulations, and beginning to enjoy once more his holiday in Brazil. THE END.

(In next week's grand long yarn, Harry Wharton & Co., bound for Blighty, meet a new chum in Putnam van Duck—"THE MILLIONAIRE STOWAWAY!" You'll find thrills and fun in plenty in this topping tale, boys!)

THE LOST SQUADRON!



by
Geo.
E.
Rochester.

The Lair of the Slug!

CAST away on a stretch of land which has risen up from the bed of the English Channel as the result of a huge tidal wave, Squadron-Leader Akers, Flight-Lieutenant Ferris, and a stoker named Sam, discover that England and Western Europe are submerged beneath the sea.

Reconnoitring, they pass the age-old ruins of Camelot, where, together with two more castaways, named Baines and Crawley, they decide to establish their headquarters. Trekking southwards, they meet Captain Anstruther and seven more survivors, who have detected a seam of gold in the rocks. Arranging to meet again later, Akers and his companions continue their journey until rain forces them to seek shelter in a cave. During his spell on watch, Ferris is exploring the cave when there comes to his nostrils a smell of decaying fish.

He had gone about a dozen paces when, by the flickering illumination of the candle, he saw that another cave branched off at right angles to the one he was treading.

That brought him to a halt again. Suppose something was lurking in that branch cave? If there was, it would be idiotic for him to go on, because if the creature emerged, he might find his retreat to the main cave cut off.

"If!" he muttered savagely. "It's all 'ifs'. My nerves must be in a confoundingly bad way!"

That decided him to go on again, so, with a sidelong and scared glance at the inky blackness of the branch cave, he resumed his advance. But what was unnerving him now was the fish-like smell which grew stronger with every step he took.

There was something in the cave. Some evil presence. He couldn't only smell it, he could feel it. Sudden panic seized him, and, with heart thumping wildly, he was on the point of turning to flee, when he caught a glimpse of something lying a few paces ahead of him on the sandy floor.

Moving forward, he touched the object with his foot. It was the decaying and dismembered body of a shark.

"So that accounts for the smell!" he muttered, passing the back of a trem-

bling hand across his damp brow. "Phew!"

He moved on, for if the discovery had disgusted him it had considerably heartened him. There was nothing in the cave; nothing at all, except a dead shark, which had obviously found itself stranded there following the upheaval.

The cave was narrowing now, and the smooth, sandy floor gradually rising. After he had taken another twenty cautious paces forward, Ferris found that if he was to go on any farther, he would have to bend his shoulders.

"Well, this looks about the end of it," he soliloquised, and, deciding that there was nothing to be learned by going on any farther, he turned about, and commenced to retrace his steps the way he had come.

It was as he approached the spot where lay the dead body of the shark that he suddenly halted, his eyes dilating in horror.

For in the dim illumination of his candle he saw, slowly issuing from out the branch cave, the vast grey bulk of a fearful and nightmarish creature!

His face ghastly, and his mouth dry with terror, Ferris backed against the rocky wall of the cave, staring in fascinated horror at the bestial monster which was moving slowly into view.

The thing was a huge grey mass, round, and of tremendous girth. The head, indistinguishable from the body, possessed two widely set protuberances, short and thick, which were the eyes, and a great wide slit which was the mouth.

The only thing to which the terrified Ferris could liken the creature was a gigantic slug, and that impression strengthened as the immense body of the monster moved slowly into view.

It was a slug, a colossal mollusc of the depths, able, apparently, to live, for a time at least, a terrestrial existence, as could so many of its smaller species.

The thick skin of the monster was slate grey in colour, and showed in immense and hideous folds as it moved slowly forward towards Ferris, who stood rooted to the spot, incapable of either sound or movement.

The thing was coming for him—was going to devour him. He was certain of that, yet his paralysed limbs refused

to function, and he could only stand there clutching the candle which illumined that enormous bulk, those bestial, protruding eyes, and the long, rubbery gash of a mouth.

Reaching the body of the shark, the monster paused. And as Ferris watched, sick to his very soul with terror and repugnance, the thing commenced to slobber over the putrefying carcass.

Of Ferris it took no notice at all. It was obviously to feed off the shark that it had issued from out its lair, and Ferris realised now that when he had first come across the carcass it had been half-devoured.

He was beginning to get a grip on himself again, and the knowledge that the creature had either not seen him, or was content to wait until it had gorged itself on the shark before commencing on him, galvanised him into action.

Keeping close against the wall, he rushed past the monster, and, gaining the main cave, dashed towards where his companions lay sleeping by the fire.

"What on earth's the matter?" demanded Akers, startled out of slumber as Ferris shook him frantically by the arm.

"Matter?" babbled Ferris. "You—you don't know what I've seen back yonder! Oh, my hat! I—I feel awful!"

"Try to be coherent, for goodness' sake!" advised Akers, scrambling to his feet. "Now, what's wrong? What have you seen?"

Ferris told him, and Sam, Baines, and Crawley, who had been awakened by the commotion he had made, listened wide-eyed and with mouths agape to the tale of the giant slug.

"After what we've already experienced," said Akers severely, when Ferris had concluded, "nobody but a fathead would have gone off exploring on his own like that. You ought to think yourself lucky you're still alive."

"I do!" said Ferris fervently. "If you could have seen the brute—"

He broke off with a shudder, and mopped at his face with his handkerchief.

"I'm going to see it!" said Akers determinedly. "From your description

"I don't suppose the brute can move very fast, and it can't be particularly dangerous, unless it gets one cornered. Coming, Sam?"

"Yes, sir!" said Sam briskly, starting to his feet.

"If you take my advice, Akers, and you, Sam," said Ferris unsteadily, "you'll stay here. The brute's not a—not a pretty sight!"

"That's just why we want to see it," responded Akers, and human nature being what it is, neither Baines nor Crawley could refrain from also going off to have a look at the monster slug.

But they went very warily, those two, keeping well in the wake of Akers and Sam, and all ready to do a bolt at the first sign of danger.

Each carrying a lighted candle, Akers and Sam skirted the pool at the rear of the cave and moved cautiously onwards. Then suddenly they came to an abrupt halt, one with a sharp intake of breath, the other with an involuntary exclamation. For there, ahead of them, still feeding on the dead shark, was the huge grey bulk of the sea slug.

"Gosh, it—it ain't believable!" muttered Sam, staring in amaze. "Poor Mr. Ferris, it must have give him a turn when he see'd it!"

"Yes, undoubtedly!" agreed Akers.

For long moments they stood watching the gigantic mollusc, which seemed quite oblivious of their presence.

"D'you reckon it found that shark in the cave, or brought it in here, sir?" asked Sam.

"Most probably it found it outside and dragged it in," replied Akers.

"Like that octopus tried to drag me," said the shaky voice of Baines behind him. "Come on, Crawley, I'm going. I've seen all I want to see, thanks!"

Accompanied by Crawley, he beat a retreat, and when Akers and Sam returned to the fire they found the pair of them getting the packs ready under the direction of Ferris.

"What's the idea?" inquired Akers.

"What's the idea?" repeated Ferris, in astonishment. "Surely you don't have to ask that, man. We're going!"

"But it's still raining."

"I don't care what it's doing!" retorted Ferris. "I'm not staying here with that brute in the cave."

"No, nor me, neither!" growled Baines. "I'm beating it, quick!"

"You can please yourself what you do!" said Akers curtly. "But you're staying here, Ferris!"

"But, look here, man," began Ferris protestingly, "it's absolute madness—"

"It's nothing of the kind!" cut in Akers. "That thing back there can't possibly move quickly enough to prove dangerous. We'll build up the fire. Sam and I will keep watch, and we'll stay here till dawn."

"And what if the brute comes crawling along here for a breath of fresh air, or for a constitutional or something?" demanded Ferris.

"If that happens," laughed Akers, "I'm afraid we'll have to clear out and leave him in possession. But we've got to hang on here till daylight if we can. Great Scott, man, it's as black as pitch out there, and raining harder than ever. It would be absolutely impossible for us to attempt to push on at the moment."

"Well, so long as you don't suggest my turning in, I'll stay here!" grumbled Ferris. "But don't blame me if we have a visit from the brute."

"It's asking for trouble, that's what I think!" growled Baines.

"Unfortunately, we're not in the slightest degree interested in what you think!" snapped Akers. "If you and Crawley wish to go, you're quite at liberty to do so."

Baines and Crawley apparently preferred to share the dubious safety of the cave with the other three members of the party, rather than face alone the perils of the darkness and the rain. Anyway they made no attempt to go, but with many a furtive glance towards the black shadows at the rear of the cave, they produced their blackened clay pipes and commenced to smoke.

Sleep was out of the question for any of the five, and having built up the fire they proceeded to await the coming of dawn with as much patience as they could muster.

"What's going to be the end of all this?" burst out Ferris at length. "If we've got to stick here all our lives I'm going to find a decent liner and live aboard it in comfort as long as the stores and water last. I'm sick of this infernal trekking!"

"Same here!" agreed Baines.

"What I say—"

"You shut up!" snapped Ferris. "I'm not talking to you! What about it, Akers? This trek back to Camelot was an idiotic idea from the start. We'll never be rescued, and you know it!"

"You're quite wrong," said Akers evenly. "We will be rescued, and it can't be long now before we are."

Realising that Ferris was feeling jumpy and nervy, Akers quietly and reassuringly took command of the conversation, putting forward such simple and logical arguments as to why they must soon be rescued, that eventually Ferris said somewhat shamefacedly:

"Yes, I know, Akers. I'm sorry about what I said just now, but it's this confounded place—it's getting on my nerves!"

"Yes, and on mine as well," chimed in Baines. "Fair getting me down, it is. I won't never be the same man again, not after that octopus getting hold of me. What do you say, Charley?"

Thus appealed to, Crawley gave it as his opinion that if the octopus had got hold of him he would have died there and then of heart failure, or else his hair would have turned white as driven snow.

The talk then became general, and at long length, without their having seen any further sign of the sea-slug, there came a lightening in the eastern sky which told that dawn was at hand.

The Philosopher!

SAM and Crawley stirred themselves, and soon the odour of frying bacon and coffee began to permeate the cave. It was still raining, but by the time the castaways had breakfasted there were visible signs of the weather clearing.

"Come on," said Akers, "we'll go. This drizzle won't hurt us."

"It'll be fine in an hour," said Crawley, shouldering one of the packs. "We'll have sun as well."

His forecast proved quite correct, for shortly after they had quitted the cave the drizzle of rain ceased and the yellow sun of early morning began to

glimmer through the thinning clouds, eventually dispersing them altogether to bathe in golden light that world of rock and sand.

As on the previous day the going was bad, and progress was laboriously slow until, when, towards mid-morning, they struck a long, flat stretch of beach, lapped by the sparkling wavelets of the boundless sea.

For a mile or more they trudged along the firm, yellow sand, until they came to an out-jutting of rocks and boulders which ran down almost to the water.

As they approached these rocks they heard a strong and singularly sweet masculine voice raised in song on the other side.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Ferris. "Somebody seems happy enough."

Clearer to their ears came the voice:

*"Sitzt das arme Menschenkind
An dem Ozean der Zeiten:
Schopft mit seiner kleinen Hand
Tropfen aus den Ewigkeiten."*

Rounding the rocks, his companions at his heels, Akers came to an abrupt and involuntary halt.

For, seated on an upturned box, his broad-shouldered back to them, was the singer. In front of him was a roughly constructed artist's easel, and as he sang, he painted upon a big and uneven square of three-ply wood.

"Good-morning!" said Akers, stepping forward.

With a sharp exclamation, the artist sprang to his feet, and wheeled, disclosing himself as a tall, muscular man, golden-haired, and with an untrimmed golden beard. For the rest, his features were finely moulded, and a pair of quizzical blue eyes regarded Akers and the others in obvious astonishment.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "Where on earth have you come from?"

"We are merely castaways, the same as yourself," answered Akers.

"I didn't think there were any, except myself," interposed the other, in a voice which expressed anything but pleasure. "Confound it, but this is rather a blow. Are there many more of you?"

"I know of eleven, at least," laughed Akers, thinking of Jim Crow and his two friends, and the Anstruther contingent.

"Oh lor!" groaned the other. "Why, the blessed place must be absolutely overcrowded. I thought I'd discovered Utopia, and all the time I've been living in a fool's paradise." He ran his eye over the party. "Margate beach," he observed bitterly. "All we want now is a few donkeys."

"But aren't you a castaway?" demanded Ferris, in surprise.

"It all depends upon what construction you put on the word castaway," replied the painter. "I was certainly cast up here aboard the good barge Elsie Gladys the night of the storm. She's lying up there on the rocks now. But after I'd mourned the passing of her master and his crew of two, who were swept overboard, and taken a look round, I began to think myself the luckiest fellow in creation."

"Oh?" said Ferris blankly.

"For what did I find?" went on the other. "The very thing for which I've always craved. Solitude. Utter and complete solitude unbroken by the senseless chatter of the human voice and

the whir and maddening roar of stinking automobiles, trams, and buses. In a word, Utopia. Only once has my sweet sojourn been marred. And that was a few days ago, when a beastly aeroplane went bellowing past a few miles inland."

"That was my machine," said Akers. "Indeed! Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Where is it now?"

"I crashed it." "Splendid! Then I won't be bothered by it again?"

"No," replied Akers, "you certainly won't. But, seriously, do you like being here alone?"

"Like it?" repeated the other. "Why, man, I love it! When I'm not painting, I just lie on the yellow sands and dream. This is the perfect existence, sought by philosophers down through the ages, but never found until now."

"Then you are a philosopher?" commented Akers.

"I am one who has realised the futility of civilisation," returned the other.

"Do you by any chance happen to know what land this is?" cut in Ferris, with interest.

"No, I don't," replied the painter, "and I don't want to know. I've had one illusion shattered this morning by this meeting with you fellows, and I don't want another shattered. I thought this a land of perfect solitude, and now I find it littered with a lot of beastly trippers. A fool's paradise indeed, but one in which I'll continue to dwell until my last illusion vanishes with the arrival of the London to Ramsgate ferry steamer."

"There is no London, and there is no Ramsgate," said Akers. "England has gone, submerged beneath the sea, and this land is the ocean bed."

He thereupon explained what had happened, the while the painter listened in dreamy abstraction.

"So, in spite of your preference for solitude," concluded Akers, "I suggest that you join us, and come to the base which we intend to establish at the ruins of Camelot."

The other shook his head. "No," he said determinedly, "I stay here. I have plenty of food, and I am—or, rather, was, until you arrived—perfectly happy. But, merely as a matter of passing interest, I'd like to point out that the ruins you have spoken of cannot possibly be those of Camelot."

"Indeed!" said Akers politely. "Camelot," proceeded the painter, "if it ever did exist, was situated on the River Usk, in Wales. So how your ruins can be those of Camelot, I don't know."

"The exact location of Camelot has always been a matter of dispute," cut in Ferris. "There are plenty of people who say it was situated in Lyonesse. I ought to know, because when I was a kid there was no one keener on Arthurian legends than myself. And, anyway, it doesn't matter a hoot whether the ruins are those of Camelot or not. We've called them Camelot, and that's good enough for us!"

"Oh, certainly!" replied the other urbanely. "You can call them Caerleon, or Avalon, or anything you like, for all I care. And now, if you'll all push off, I'll get on with this seascape."

With that he seated himself, and after imperiously waving Baines and Crawley out of the way, he resumed his painting, seemingly quite oblivious to the continued presence of Akers and the others.

"Look here!" said Akers. "For the last time, will you join us?"

"No!" snapped the painter. "I won't! Push off!"

Seeing that there was nothing else for it, Akers gestured to his companions, and they moved on along the beach.

"Mad, I suppose," observed Ferris. "No," corrected Akers, "merely temperamental."

Sam, Baines, and Crawley, however, were firmly of the opinion that the muscular and golden-haired artist was mad, and this conviction afforded them a topic of discussion for the rest of the morning.

By keeping to the beach, the party found the going much easier, and such good progress did they make, that they reached the ruins of Camelot long before the sun had dipped down to the western horizon.

Conspirators!

THEY camped that evening at the foot of the gaunt and barren hill upon the summit of which Akers intended to build the bonfire which would be kept going day and night as a signal not only to other unfortunate castaways, but to any rescue ship or aeroplane which might arrive on the scene.

They were early astir the following morning, and all day they laboured, collecting driftwood and erecting sleeping tents made from sail cloth and tarpaulins which, together with fresh stores and water, they obtained from near-by derelicts.

With the dusk they abandoned all other work in order to carry the wood up to the summit of the boulder-strewn hill; and that night, three hundred feet above the ruins of age-old Camelot, a beacon fire glowed red through the darkness which enshrouded the drear and silent land.

In order that the fire should be kept permanently alight, it was necessary for someone always to be on duty up there, and Akers apportioned the guard duty quite fairly by giving alternate three-hour spells to every member of the party, including himself.

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The wisdom of the signal fire soon became apparent, for within forty-eight hours of it having been lighted, fifteen castaways had drifted into Camelot, all with harrowing stories of suffering and privation undergone since the night of the upheaval.

At the foot of the hill, near the ruins of the castle, an encampment of makeshift tents soon sprang up; and as another day passed, and then another, seven more castaways came into Camelot which, including Akers' contingent, made a total of twenty-seven gathered there.

As might have been expected, there were some rough and hard-bitten fellows amongst the newcomers, and one man in particular, a big, burly Swede named Hans Larsen, quickly earned for himself the definite dislike of Akers and Ferris.

Surly and lazy, he had not been in the camp more than a day before he had gathered about him some half-dozen choice and kindred spirits including Baines and Crawley.

The first intimation which Akers had of Larsen's influence over the latter pair was when they moved their tent and pitched it beside Larsen's on the other side of the encampment. The next intimation came that same evening when Baines refused point-blank to go on duty.

"There's plenty of other people in the camp," he informed Akers. "Why don't some of them take a turn?"

"You know what happened to you last time you refused to obey orders," said Akers sternly.

"Yes; but it won't happen this time," grinned Baines. "Larsen says I needn't go on duty."

Akers glanced at Larsen, who was lounging near, thumbs hooked in his belt, and his five newly acquired and ruffianly looking pals with him.

"Did you tell Baines he need not go on duty?" demanded Akers.

"Ja, I did," leered Larsen.

"Then in future," retorted Akers, "you will oblige me by kindly minding your own business. Baines, get up to the fire!"

Larsen stepped forward and, with a slow sweep of his muscular arm, thrust Baines aside and confronted Akers.

"I haf said that he does not go on duty," he rumbled.

Crack! Like lightning Akers' clenched fist had shot out, taking the Swede full on his bearded lips, snapping back his head, and sending him floundering backwards to fall heavily.

With an angry growl the other men surged forward, then stopped short under the menacing threat of the squat automatic which had appeared in Akers' hand.

"Come on!" invited Akers grimly.

The men declined the invitation, however, and Akers turned his attention to Larsen, who had scrambled to his feet.

"Understand this!" he said harshly. "So long as we are here I intend to maintain discipline, and you and your friends—and that includes Baines and Crawley—will obey my orders, or else clear out. Get up to the fire, Baines!"

With an injured sort of look at Larsen, Baines slouched away and commenced the ascent of the hill towards the fire.

"I don't want any trouble with you, Larsen," went on Akers, "nor with anyone else. But if I have any further interference in the running of this encampment, there'll be trouble."

With that he slipped the automatic into his pocket and, turning on his heel, walked away with Ferris.

"Why don't you go after him, Larsen?" growled Crawley.

Larsen's fists were clenched and his eyes were blazing.

"I wait until I meet him without that gun!" he grated.

It was a sullen and mutinous Baines who descended the hill when his spell of duty was over. And straight to Larsen's tent he went with his grievance.

He found Larsen entertaining Crawley, together with a burly American named Krunz, and a swarthy, dagoish-looking fellow who wore ear-rings and rejoiced in the name of Ramon Zangarro.

Larsen's tent was a squarish structure of broken spars and tarpaulin, and he and his three guests were seated on up-turned boxes smoking, by the light of a hurricane lantern.

"Well, you're a fine bloke, I must say!" grumbled Baines. "You promised Crawley and me that there wouldn't be any more duty for us."

"There will not be after to-night," growled Larsen. "In the morning I kill that Akers."

"And a fat lot of good that'll do," retorted Baines. "You know as well as I do that we're bound to be rescued sooner or later, then you'll be hanged, and the rest of us'll most likely do time. No, all you had to do was to put him in his place. Give him a good hiding, like."

"Never mind about that just now," cut in Krunz, the American. "This pard of yours, Crawley, has been shooting a line of talk about a seam of solid gold way back about thirty miles up the coast. Do you know anything?"

"Do I know anything?" repeated Baines. "I should just think I do. There is a seam of gold, and what's more, I've seen it with my own eyes."

"A fellow called Captain Anstruther's laying claim to it, ain't he?" inquired Krunz.

"Yes, that's right," assented Baines. "He's got seven of his men with him, and they're going to share it."

"Yeah?" grinned Krunz.

Baines looked at him sharply, a sudden excited gleam in his eyes.

"You—you ain't thinking of—" he stammered.

Still grinning, Krunz nodded.

"You've said it," he cut in. "That's just what we are thinking of—taking it for ourselves and working it. There ain't much about gold mining what I don't know, being Nevada born, and having done my share of prospecting afore I took to the sea."

"But how are you going to get hold of the seam?" demanded Baines.

"Easy," responded Krunz. "There's you and me and Crawley, and Larsen, and another four fellers what we can rely on. That makes eight, and it won't be hard to get another two or three. We'll clear out of here to-morrow night, quietly and without any fuss, and when we reach the seam we'll rush Anstruther's camp and just take possession."

"What about Akers?" demanded Baines.

"He won't know nothing about it," replied Krunz. "We ain't going to advertise out departure any, nor where we're going, neither."

"But what if Anstruther comes and complains to Akers, which is what he's pretty certain to do?" asked Crawley.

"Akers can't do nothing," retorted Krunz. "There's only one law in this land, and that's the law of the gun and the cudgel. If Akers comes snooping round that seam, then he'll find a packet of trouble, and find it mighty quick."

"You do not haf to worry about Akers!" growled Larsen menacingly. "I will settle with him."

They fell then to planning the details of the attack on Anstruther's camp, and it was finally decided that they would make their party up to ten and clear quietly out of Camelot the following night.

It would take them two days to do the journey, so Baines informed them, owing to the rough nature of the going. The attack, therefore, would be made under cover of darkness on the second night after leaving Camelot.

It was late when eventually the conference broke up, and, after pledging themselves to secrecy, the conspirators sought their tents and their blankets.

Northwards!

It was Larsen and Krunz who selected the six men who were to make the party up to ten, and the following night, when the camp was asleep, they slipped quietly and unobtrusively out of Camelot and commenced the march northwards to Anstruther's camp.

Each man carried a pack, consisting of a blanket, stores, and a tin or can of drinking water. They were unarmed when they started, for they possessed no guns at all, and they had decided to fashion cudgels for themselves on the journey.

The absence of Baines was first discovered when he failed to relieve Ferris, who was on duty at the fire. And when morning came Larsen, Krunz, Crawley, and the others were also found to be missing.

The first hint as to where they had gone was conveyed to Akers by Sam, who appeared at Akers' tent, accompanied by a castaway named Hudson.

"Those fellers are up to something," said Sam. "Hudson, here, was invited to join them, but he wouldn't go because he didn't like Krunz."

"What did they say to you, Hudson?" asked Akers.

"Nothing, except that they were going to clear out and go to a place where there were some rich pickings to be found," replied the man.

"They didn't mention where this place was," pressed Akers, "or the nature of the pickings?"

"No, it was Larsen who asked me to go with them," replied Hudson, "and beyond saying that we would all be rich for life he would tell me nothing."

Akers looked at Sam.

"Is it a looting expedition, do you think?" he asked. "Like that upon which Coles embarked?"

Sam shook his head.

"It wouldn't want ten of them to go on a looting expedition," he said slowly. "No, sir, if you ask me, they're after that gold that Cap'n Anstruther discovered."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Akers. "I wonder if you're right?"

He turned again to Hudson.

"Was nothing specific mentioned at all?" he demanded. "Did Larsen give you no hint as to the manner in which you were to become rich?"

"No, sir, he told me nothing," reiterated Hudson. "All he said was that if I went with him and his pals I'd soon be wealthy."

"H'm!" said Akers thoughtfully. "I wonder if it is that gold seam, Sam? Baines saw it, of course, but that does not necessarily mean to say that that's where they've gone. Larsen may have some other idea in mind. Anyway, I'll have a word with Mr. Ferris."

He did have a word with Ferris, and the outcome of it was that he decided to dispatch Ferris and Sam to the Anstruther camp in order to warn Anstruther to be on the look-out for trouble.

During the past few days, Akers' spare time had been spent in mending and caulking a ship's dinghy which he had found on the rocks, and as the little craft had proved herself thoroughly seaworthy, he suggested to Ferris that he and Sam should sail it up the coast to Anstruther's camp rather than make the journey on foot.

"If this breeze holds, it will save you any amount of time," he said, "and in case Larsen and his men are making for the gold seam you've got to get there as quickly as possible. Anstruther must be warned before they arrive."

Consequently, neither Ferris nor Sam lost any time in embarking, and within the hour, with makeshift sail set, the little dinghy was dancing merrily over the sparkling waters on its way northwards to Anstruther's camp.

With a following wind, the dinghy made such good progress that towards midday it was opposite the camping-place of the philosophic artist whom Akers and his companions had encountered on their way southwards to Camelot.

"Look here, Sam, I've got an idea," said Ferris. "What about our putting in here and getting this artist fellow to come along to Anstruther's camp with us? He's a beefy sort of chap, and ought to be pretty useful if it comes to a scrap with Larsen."

"Yes, he ought," said Sam. "But I don't think he'll come. He didn't strike me as being the fighting sort."

"Well, we'll try him, anyway," laughed Ferris; and, putting over the tiller, he stood in towards the beach.

(Look out for something extraordinary in the way of scraps in next week's gripping chapters, chums.)



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A RAIN OF TERROR!

Another Side-splitting Spasm of "The Skoolboy Dictators!" by the irrepressible young "orther"

DICKY NUGENT

Ting-aling-aling!
The solum hour of mid-nite boomed out from the old clock tower at St. Sam's. Pitch darkness surrounded the skool, which was bathed in brilliant moonlight. Mingling with the hooting of owls, the mournful wailing of cats and the rawcous singing of some Sixth Formers making wopee, was a silence as of the dead.

But stay! What is that stealthy footprint that echoes eerily down Masters' Passidge? Is it the footprint of a yewman, or of some fiendish specter from an unseen world?

In a patch of moonlight the cawse of the footprints suddenly appears. Spook or yewman? It is impossible to say! All that can be seen is a sinnister, shapeless, spectral splodge, striding along with slow and stately step.

It stops—opens a door—enters a room! And two ticks later Mr. I. Jolliwell Lickham, the master of the Fourth, felt a narled hand closing over his sholder, shaking him out of his slumbers!

"Grooooo! Cerraway!" muttered Mr. Lickham,

sleepily. "Tain't rising-bell, is it?"

Then he opened his eyes and caught a glimpse of his visitor—and at the site of the grim and garstly ghost at his bedside, he let out a howl of horror.

"Yaroooooo! Help! Murder! Perlice—"

Mr. Lickham's yells tailed off into muffled gasps, as the eerie visitor clapped a hand over his mouth. The Fourth Form master sat up and hit out desprightly—then started violently as he reckernised a very familiar voice.

"Woocooop! Lickham, you ass—"

"The Head!" cried Mr. Lickham in amazement.

"Of course it is!" snorted Doctor Birchmell, throwing back his hood and rubbing his injured jaw. "What's the idea, Lickham, biffing me like that there?"

"I thought you were a specter, sir!" said Mr. Lickham. "Sorry and all that! But why have you called on me at this unearthly hour, sir?"

"Because the time has come for you to have the sack!" replied Doctor

Birchemall. "Here you are, Lickham!"

And he handed the Fourth Form master a large empty sack containing several holes. Mr. Lickham stared at it in distonishment. "What the merry dickens—"

"Put it on, my dear fellow, and don't argow the toss!" said the Head. "The Lambs of St. Sam's are just about to begin bizziness!"

"Oh!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "Now I see daylight!"

"Honest injun?" gasped Doctor Birchmell. "Then we must get bizz without delay. The Lambs of St. Sam's carry out their work under the cloak of darkness. Hurry, Lickham!"

"Right-ho, sir! Shan't be a jiffy!"

Mr. Lickham tumbled out of bed and hurriedly started to dress himself in the sack. He realised now what lay behind the Head's

has taken his motor-bike to pieces, and at the time of going to press is busily engaged in turning it into an aeroplane!

Of course it won't fly—which is just as well for Coker. But everyone who has heard about it says it's a jolly good idea all the same.

Now that his motor-bike has become an aeroplane, you see, we can all walk about without that dread of being biffed into eternity that used to haunt us when Coker's speeding was done on the ground!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Herbert Vernon-Smith had no compunction in giving Snoop away when Mr. Quelch suspected his chum, Redwing. Redwing had taken an imposition to the study—and a chapter of Mr. Quelch's "History of Greyfriars" was missing. Smithy saw Snoop leaving the study later—and he did not regard it as "sneaking" to clear Redwing!

midnite introosion. The Lambs of St. Sam's—that secret society of masters which the Head had founded to terrorise the skool into boughing to his orthority—were about to start their deadly work.

No sooner had Mr. Lickham donned the sack and pulled over his head the hood that was attached to it than there was a nock on the door.

"Our brother Lambs, I eggspect," Lickham, "wispered the Head. "I told



them to meet me here. Come!"

And he led the way to the door.

Sure enuff, when they got outside, it was to find half-a-duzzen others, all wearing long sacks around their bodies and hoods over their heads. Nobody, looking at those spectral figgers, would have dreamed for a moment that they were St. Sam's masters—yet such was the case!

"Ready, brothers?" muttered Doctor Birchmell.

"Ready, I, ready!"

"Then follow your leader!"

And he led the way to the door.

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"Ready, brothers?"

So saying, the Head tramped off down the passidge, and the weerdly dressed Lambs of St. Sam's followed him.

Sir Frederick Fungus' high-handed action in putting his foot down on punishments at St. Sam's had compelled Doctor Birchmell to leave the classicks and adopt tactics. Without phaltering once, he went straight to the Sixth Form passidge.

"Now to teach the Sixth a lesson!" he said, grimly. "They're all in Prefect's Room having high jinks. Lissen, brothers!"

The Lambs lissened. From the distance they could hear the strains of a mouth-organ and the banging of hevvy feet.

"What are you going to do about it, sir?"

Doctor Birchmell larfed grimly.

"A week ago, brother, I'd have waded into you with my birch-rod! But that is now forbidden, I propose to sprinkle itching powder inside their pyjamas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ripping idea, sir!"

"Here you are, brothers!" went on the leader of the Lambs, pro jooicing some sinnister-looking tins from the folds of his sack. "Don't stint yourselves! There's plenty more if you run short!"

The Lambs took the tins with alackrity and skipped off with the eagerness of a crowd of Second Form fags.

In five minnits they had sprinkled enuff itching powder into the seniors' pyjamas to last them a

lifetime. When they had finished, the Head put the final touch to their handiwork by leaving in each room a printed card which bore this inscription:

"HAVE RESPECT FOR ORTHORITY! With the Condiments of the LAMBS OF ST. SAM'S."

"Perhaps that will bring them up to scratch!" remarked the Head, as he led the Lambs away.

"The Fourth have been very sawey since the ban on birching, sir," venchered Mr. Lickham.

"Can't we do something about them?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled the Head. "We'll fix up a booby-trap for them. Let's take steps to do it at once!"

And he took a pair of steps from the kitchen and carried them upstairs to the passidge outside the Fourth Form dormitory.

There the Lambs helped him to fix up a tremendous booby-trap consisting of

laid after pail filled with liquid glue and soot.

There was still plenty left for the Lambs to do. Mr. Justiss wanted a little correctivo applied to the Fifth and Mr. Chas. Tyzer was anxious to teach the Third what was what and

who was who. So the avenging Lambs tip-toed round to those two dormitories, sprinkling drawing-pins on the floor and tipping glue into the trowsis of the sleeping okkupants!

After leaving speessimens of the Head's cards everywhere, they wended their way back to Masters' Passidge.

A little later the grinning masters, tucked away once

more in their respective beds, heard the results of their midnite labours. First came a rare old hulla-balloo from the Sixth Form passidge.

"Yaroooooo! I'm itching!"

"Woocooop! My pyjamas!"

Then the noise woke up the dormitories upstairs.

In a few minnits a regular pandemonium was raining in the Skool House at St. Sam's—and it got worse instead of better when the fellows found the misterious messages that had been left behind by the Lambs of St. Sam's!

Without a shaddo of doubt the Rain of Terror had begun in topping style. (Don't miss next week's "eggssiting" instalment of this unique serial.)

There are very few noises that Billy Bunter, with his peculiar gift of ventriloquism, cannot imitate. Bolsover major thought a terrific dog fight had suddenly broken out behind him in the quad. He spun round to behold nothing but the grinning "Owl"!

Bunter "hooted" involuntarily as Bolsover "flew" at him. The other fellows (howled!

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Eventually he reached the goal-mouth. He kicked. Hazel-dene, in goal, was left standing, and the ball lodged beautifully in the far

corner of the net. Bunter had scored his goal!

Now that it's all over, I know the usual chorus of criticism is being raised. Some say that the other side let him get through for a lark; others, that the chaps were so helpless with laughter that they couldn't play.

My own idea about it is that Bunter just showed what he could do if he tried. The fact is that Bunter CAN play footer.

And now he has proved that he can I'm going to keep him up to it for good!

(If Peter sticks to his threat we're sorry for Bunter—AND PETER!

—Ed.)

eyes were fixed on the distant goal. Puffing along at the speed of a steam-roller, he punted the ball down the field and just used his entire weight on anyone who stood in his path. One player after another dropped before his furious onslaught till he had left quite a trail of bodies behind him!

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The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

March 28th, 1936.

STOP PRESS NEWS

Bunter Can Play Footer!

Declares PETER TODD

My firm opinion has always been that deep down in Bunter there are lots of latent talents lying undeveloped. This week one of those latent talents for a brief minute came to the surface.

Lend me your ears and get a load of this—BUNTER CAN PLAY FOOTER!

It happened at Compulsory Practice. Everybody seemed to be telling Bunter to do something. Wharton kept on asking "What are you DOING, Fatty?" Wingate, who was in charge, repeatedly asked "Why don't you DO something, Bunter?" Even Mr. Lascelles, who was doing a bit

more in their respective beds, heard the results of their midnite labours. First came a rare old hulla-balloo from the Sixth Form passidge.

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GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



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Overhearing Skinner mention a bottle of limejuice he had left in his study, Billy Bunter tried to "bag" it. Surprised, he attempted to gulp down the contents of the bottle rapidly. His splutters, when he found it contained not limejuice but castor oil, were terrific, and set Skinner, who had engineered the joke, in a "splutter" of laughter!



When an old windjammer with a fine spread of sail came to anchor temporarily in Pegg Bay, Tom Redwing cut classes to row out to it. In view of the fact that Redwing was brought up by the sea and knew the windjammer's captain, the Head excused him. Otherwise, "Reddy" might well have been "windy." He was in a nasty "jam"!



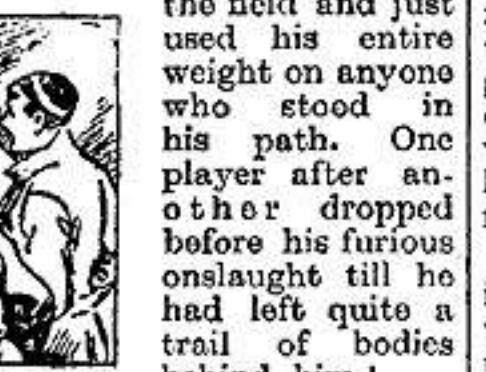
Frank Nugent had Study No. 1 to himself before Harry Wharton came to Greyfriars. They "rowed" at first—owing to Wharton's temper—but soon became firm friends. Colonel Wharton congratulated his nephew on his success as Form captain. But Wharton does not forget what Nugent's friendship has meant to him!



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From scene-shifter to stage star in a single evening! This was the romantic fate of George Bulstrode of the Remove last Tuesday! Here's the red-hot story, just as I got it from him immediately after the fall of the curtain:

"Yes, sir, it's quite true that until this evening I was a mere scene-shifter. But I'd always had my dreams—dreams of a day when I should be bowing to the plaudits of an enraptured audience."

"I suppose it was those dreams that made me sit up late at night in my humble garret in the Remove dormitory, memorising the leading actor's part. I had a vague hope that some day, by some miraculous means I should get my chance."

"To-night, sir, all my dreams came true! Wibley, who was due to play the leading part in his original play, 'Crime at the College,' failed to turn up—kidnapped by gangsters, they say. It took me all my time to pluck up sufficient courage to tell Stage Manager Wharton that I knew the part—but somehow or other I did it in the end! Wharton turned it over in his mind and tried me over with a few lines—and a few minutes later I was inside a dressing-room, changing from overalls into stage props!"

"How my heart thumped as I walked on to the stage into the blinding glare of the footlights! It was all I could do to speak my

lines at first. But gradually I got control over myself until in the end I was acting with all the confidence of an established star!

"Didn't the audience rise to me? I had 'em shrieking with laughter one minute—and crying the next minute!"

And the new star went strutting back to his dressing-room.

It would perhaps be unfair to conclude without mentioning that Bulstrode's enthusiasm about his meteoric rise to stardom isn't shared by everyone. Asked what he thought about the scene-shifter's performance, Stage Manager Wharton said he considered it too putrid for words. Admittedly, Bulstrode had made the audience laugh and cry in turns. But they laughed where they should have cried, and cried where they should have laughed.

Wibley, who turned up in a very dishevelled state just before bedtime, was even more emphatic. He said that Bulstrode couldn't act if his life depended on it, and that he jolly well wouldn't get another chance in the Remove!

But then Wibley was rather prejudiced. You see, he'd found out that the fellows who kidnapped him were all Bulstrode's pals; and furthermore, that the kidnapping was carried out on Bulstrode's own instructions for the sole purpose of giving Bulstrode a chance to take Wibley's part.

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