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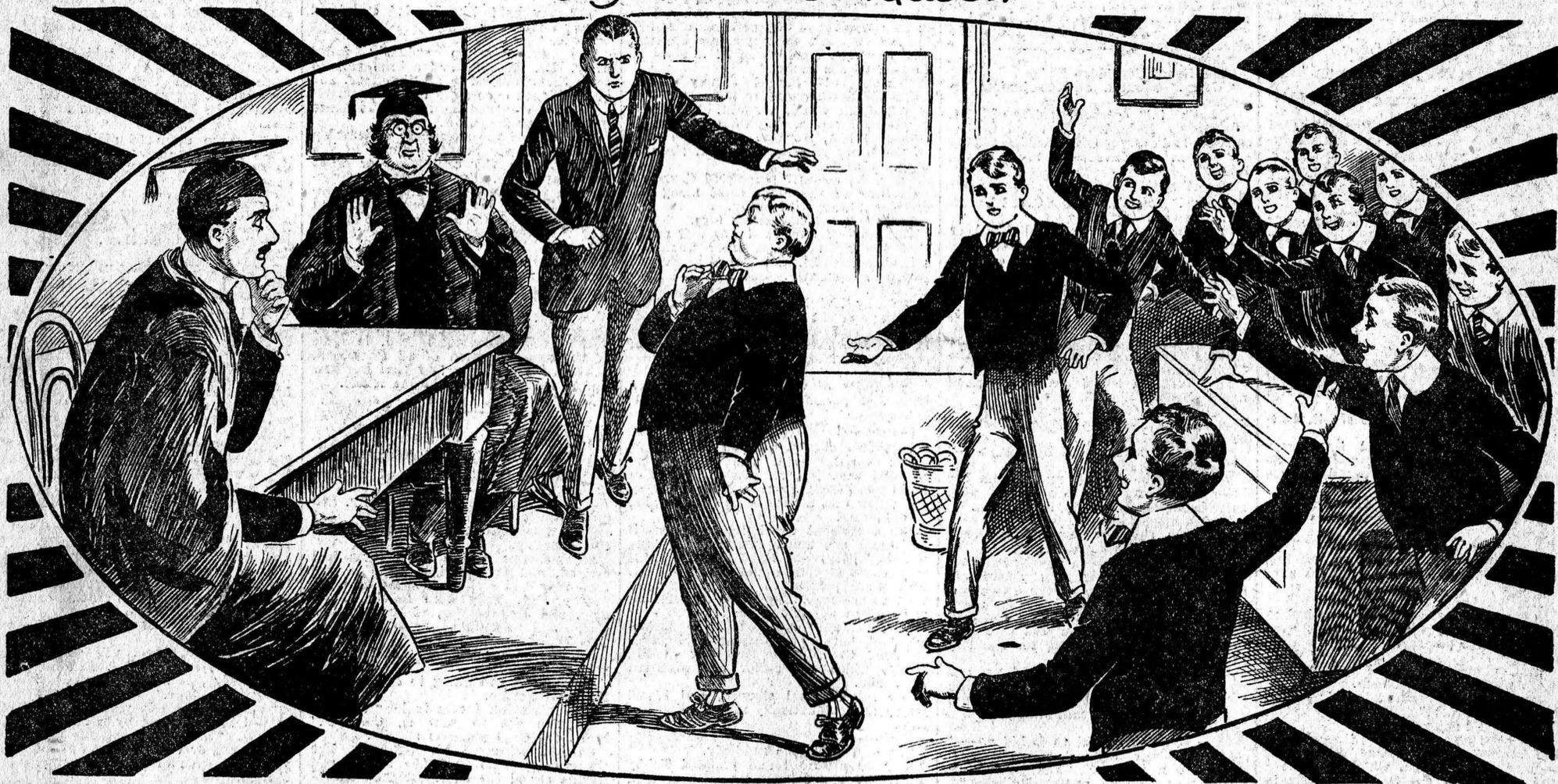
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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending May 24th, 1919.

The Blackleg of Rookwood!

By Owen Conquest.



FORWARD, MUFFIN! "Go it, Tubby!" Tubby Muffin rolled forward, his fat little nose high in the air. "At the request of the school, sir," he said loftily, "I am standing for election! Let the best man win!"

The 1st Chapter.

Carthew's Little Game!

"Silver, my boy!"
Carthew of the Sixth looked into the end study in the Fourth Form passage with an agreeable smile on his face—as agreeable a smile as his hard features were capable of.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at home.
The four juniors had been deep in discussion on the subject of the captain's election, which was fixed for that afternoon. The discussion ceased suddenly as Mark Carthew appeared in the doorway. The Co. fixed rather grim looks on him, and Jimmy Silver's hand strayed towards a cricket-bat that lay on the table. Carthew, as a prefect of the Sixth Form, was a person to be treated with respect by juniors; but Carthew did not always get the respect his position entitled him to. He was too much given to bullying the fags to be popular among them.

So Carthew's agreeable smile found no reflection in the end study. No smiles were visible on the faces of the Fistical Four.

"I've looked in to see you kids," went on Carthew pleasantly.

"Oh!" said Jimmy, puzzled.

"Just a little chat, you know," explained Carthew.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Arthur Edward Lovell.

Raby and Newcome simply stared.

What this sudden affability on the part of their old enemy might portend they could not even guess. But they concluded that the bully of the Sixth meant mischief, somehow.

Carthew came in, and sat on a corner of the table. The Fistical Four eyed him, and Jimmy Silver rested his hand in a careless sort of way on the cane handle of the bat. In dealing with Carthew there was no telling whether a cricket-bat might be needed or not.

Carthew did not notice it—or affected not to notice it. He grinned agreeably at the surprised juniors, with a grin of the utmost affability.

"You chaps are not busy just now?" he asked.

"Nunno!" stammered Jimmy. "We were just talking about the election, that's all."

"What a coincidence!" remarked Carthew. "I've come here to speak to you about that!"

"Have you?" murmured Lovell.

"Just so. The fact is, I really want to consult you," explained the Sixth-Former.

"Kik-kik—consult us?" stuttered Lovell.

"That's it."

"Oh, crikey!"

The chums of the Fourth almost wondered if they were dreaming. Even a good-natured prefect like Bulkeley or Neville never carried his affability to the extent of consulting Fourth Form fellows.

And for the bully of the Sixth to do so—it was no wonder that the Fistical Four were astounded.

They blinked at Carthew.

"The fact is," said Carthew, with a beaming smile, "I think a lot of your judgment."

"Oh!"

"You fellows are the leaders of the Fourth Form, and you have a lot of influence in the Lower School generally," said Carthew. "Now, rightly used, that influence may be a very good thing for the school—and, of course, the good of Rookwood is what we all have at heart."

"Well?" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Well? I—I say, Carthew, are you pulling our leg?"

"Certainly not. I am quite serious!" said the Sixth-Former. "As matters stand at present, Rookwood is in rather a bad way. Bulkeley has offended the Head, and has been removed from the captaincy, and is no longer a prefect. All the other prefects have resigned, as a protest. I had some doubts about it, but I stood in with the rest. But you fellows, being rather sharp and sensible kids, can see that this isn't a good thing for the school."

"It certainly isn't!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "I wish the Head would come round, and give Bulkeley his old place back!"

"He won't do that," said Carthew, shaking his head; "he's too firm. Once he's

made up his mind, the thing's done. Bulkeley's had his day, and it's over. But this sort of thing can't go on—no prefects in the school, and Rookwood without a captain. You see that?"

"Well, there's a new election for captain to-day," said Lovell, with a grin.

Carthew gave him a sharp look. He did not quite understand what that grin implied.

"Yes, that's so," he went on. "Now, as all the Sixth—even the Moderns—are standing by Bulkeley, it's rather a question where the new captain will come from. Nobody wants a Fifth-Former as captain. It's quite unheard of, and it wouldn't do!"

"No fear!" said the Fistical Four, with one voice.

"It comes to this, then," continued Carthew—"that for the good of the school some member of the Sixth will have to come forward. I've decided to do so."

"You!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Exactly."

"Oh!" said Jimmy; and he looked at his chums.

Carthew's excessive affability was explained now.

The most unpopular senior of Rookwood was standing as a candidate for the captaincy; and it was a time to be affable. Under ordinary circumstances, Mark Carthew would not have stood the slightest chance of election.

But with Bulkeley down and out, and the Sixth Form standing by him to a man, there was a chance for him—at least, he hoped there was. It involved the desertion of Bulkeley's cause; it involved turning against the general movement in his own Form, and taking advantage of the peculiar state of affairs for his own benefit. But Carthew was not overburdened with scruples at any time.

Jimmy Silver & Co. gazed at Carthew, hardly taking the trouble to conceal the contempt they felt. Carthew was fishing in troubled waters, but he was not likely to catch the Fistical Four.

Carthew rattled on cheerily, apparently not observing the expressions on the faces of the Co.

"I'm doing this from a sense of duty, of course. Rookwood simply can't go on as at present. I've seen the Head, and he approves. I've had my name put up as a candidate simply because it wouldn't do for a Fifth Form chap to get in as captain. The fact is, I expect the election to be merely a matter of form—a walk-over—as there will be no rival candidate. Still, Hanson of the Fifth might think of trying his luck. Some other chap in the Sixth might come forward at the last minute. Now, can I count on you chaps for support?"

Jimmy Silver smiled sarcastically.

"Chaps!" he repeated.

(Continued on next page.)

THE BLACKLEG OF ROOKWOOD!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Yes; you chaps." "Have we been promoted?" asked Jimmy.

"Promoted?" repeated Carthew. "I don't catch on."

"Last time you spoke to us we were young sweeps, and fags, and cheeky little blighters!" explained Jimmy. "Now we're chaps! I suppose, that may be looked on as promotion?"

There was a chuckle in the end study; and for a moment Carthew's affable smile faded away.

His eyes glittered, but only for a second. Then he smiled again.

"My dear kid, I don't mind your little joke," he said pleasantly. "Now, to come to business. I want your support. Every vote counts in an election. Are you standing by me?"

"Not quite."

"If I become captain of Rookwood I shall remember fellows who backed me up," remarked Carthew. "I shall also remember fellows who refused to do so!"

"My dear man, that's all right; you won't become captain of Rookwood!" answered Jimmy Silver. "There's one captain of Rookwood—one and only—and that's old Bulkeley. We're backing him up!"

"Bulkeley is not standing for election this—"

"He's going to be elected, all the same!" said Jimmy. "It's all cut and dried, my dear man! The Head's pushed him out of the captaincy, but all Rookwood is going to plump for him at the election, and the Head can put that in his pipe and smoke it! See?"

Carthew's lips tightened.

His affability had gone again—for good. It was pretty clear that the sweetest of smiles would extract nothing from Jimmy Silver & Co.—excepting plain English.

"You can't re-elect Bulkeley!" he said savagely. "The Head would take it as disrespect—"

"I hope he'll take it as a tip." Carthew slid from the table.

"Then you're not backing me up?"

"No fear!"

"You cheeky young scoundrel!" roared Carthew.

"Aren't we 'chaps' any longer?" asked Jimmy Silver innocently. "Have we become cheeky young scoundrels already?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew clenched his hands. Jimmy Silver took a businesslike grip on the bat. It was needed, after all.

"None of your little games, old nut!" he remarked. "We're ready for you, you know."

"If you dare to touch a prefect—"

Jimmy chuckled.

"You're not a prefect now," he said coolly. "There aren't any prefects at Rookwood now, you know. The prefects are on strike!"

Carthew's reply to that argument was a rush. He had resigned in concert with the rest of the august body of prefects; but apparently he considered that he still retained his authority.

The Fistical Four did not see it, however.

Carthew's rush was met by Jimmy Silver's cricket-bat, which jammed on his chest with what a novelist would describe as a sickening thud.

"Oh!" roared Carthew, staggering back. "Ow! I—I—I— You young demon, I'll—"

"You'll travel!" grinned Jimmy Silver, lunging again with the bat. "Kick him out, you fellows—he's not a prefect now, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As one man the Fistical Four rushed on Carthew. The Sixth-Former went spinning down the passage.

Crash!

Carthew measured his length on the cold, unympathetic linoleum.

"Jump on him!" roared Lovell. "Now, then, all together!"

Carthew did not wait.

He leaped up and ran for it, and from the Fourth Form passage a roar of laughter followed him, which was not a good augury for Carthew's prospects in the captain's election.

The 2nd Chapter. By Order of the Head!

remarked in his slangy way, "one in the eye" for the Head.

The high-and-mighty Sixth, of course, could not consent that they were planning "one in the eye" for their headmaster. Their view was that Bulkeley's re-election would show the trend of public opinion in the school, and influence Dr. Chisholm into reconsidering his decision. It was a more sedate way of putting it; but it really came to the same thing.

"Vote for Bulkeley?" Tommy Dodd was saying, as the fat Classical roared up. "I should jolly well say so. Every junior on our side is going to vote for Bulkeley. Leggett doesn't seem keen—so he's going in with me, and I'm going to keep hold of his arm. If he puts up his paw for Carthew, something is going to happen to Leggett; he will think it's an air-raid come back."

"I say, Jimmy—"

"It will make the Head think, when Bulkeley is re-elected by practically the whole school," said Jimmy Silver. "Besides, it will give him a graceful way of climbing down. No need for him to keep up this game, after he's had proof that the whole school has confidence in Bulkeley."

"After all, the Head means well," remarked Kaby.

"Only he's so jolly obstinate!" grunted Lovell.

"Jimmy—" roared Tubby Muffin.

"Oh, run away and play, fatty!" said the captain of the Fourth.

"But there's a notice on the board—"

"Oh, we all know about that—election at six!" said Jimmy Silver.

"A new notice—" howled Tubby Muffin.

"Never mind—"

"In the Head's fist!" shrieked Tubby.

"Oh! Something about the election?" asked Jimmy Silver, showing a little interest at last. "Not postponed, is it?"

"Nunno! But Bulkeley can't be elected!" gasped the fat Classical.

"Rats!"

"The Head's forbidden it!"

"What!" shouted all the juniors together.

"That's it!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "Bulkeley's forbidden to stand for re-election, and everybody's forbidden to vote for him in his absence—by order of the Head!"

"Great Scott!"

"Cheek!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "Awful cheek!"

Dr. Chisholm, the reverend Head of Rookwood School, would probably have been petrified if he had heard his action described as "cheek" by the Fourth-Formers. Fortunately, he did not hear.

"Let's go and see it!" exclaimed Newcome. "That fat duffer may have got it all wrong!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

There was a rush of the juniors to the School House.

They found a crowd already collected round the notice-board.

Teddy Grace, the new boy in the Classical Fourth, called to Jimmy Silver, as he came breathlessly up.

"Seen this, Silver? The Head says—"

"Let's see it!"

Putty of the Fourth made room for Jimmy. Jimmy read the notice, with knitted brows and deep indignation.

It was official enough.

Evidently the intention of Bulkeley's supporters had become known to the Head. There it was, in the Head's own classic hand. Briefly, the notice announced that Bulkeley of the Sixth, formerly captain of the school, was forbidden to offer himself for re-election; and that no member of any Form was permitted to propose, second, or vote for Bulkeley in the election.

"By gad! The Head's dished us, and no mistake!" said Mornington. "What do you think of that, Jimmy Silver?"

"Thumping cheek!" said Jimmy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head's no right to forbid us—"

"Headmasters assume these rights!" grinned Mornington. "The game's up, old infant; we can't re-elect Bulkeley."

"Let's go ahead with it just the same!" suggested Putty of the Fourth.

"Fathead!" was Morny's reply. "An election held against the order of the Head would be null and void."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"That's so," he said. "Besides, we— we can't very well directly disobey an order from the Head."

"It's cheek, all the same!" said Lovell hotly.

Jimmy compressed his lips.

"Carthew's been to the Head," he remarked. "He's put the old boy up to this, of course, to dish us. And it jolly well looks as if we're dished, anyway. I sha'n't vote at all."

"We sha'n't vote for Carthew, anyway!"

"No fear!"

"But if there's no rival candidate, Carthew will get a walk-over," said Teddy Grace.

"Let him, the cad!"

"The Sixth ought to interfere," said Lovell hotly. "Carthew is going back on his own Form, and trying to squeeze in as captain by trickery. The Sixth ought to stop him somehow!"

"Bulkeley could chip in and give him a jolly good hiding," suggested Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dash it all, that's not a bad idea!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Let's go and see Bulkeley—"

"Come on!"

An excited crowd of juniors headed for Bulkeley's study. Jimmy Silver knocked on the door and opened it.

Bulkeley was there at work at his table. The fallen captain of Rookwood had not appeared in the public eye so much as usual since his fall. He was spending this half-holiday at Greek. He

looked up, with a surprised frown, as his doorway was blocked with excited juniors.

"Bulkeley—" began Jimmy Silver.

"What do you want?"

"There's a new notice on the board, Bulkeley!"

The erstwhile captain of Rookwood raised his hand.

"Cut off!" he said.

"What?"

"Leave my study, please, all of you!"

"But—"

"Shut the door after you."

Bulkeley dropped his eyes to his work again. The juniors looked at one another rather sheepishly. Jimmy Silver, with pink cheeks, drew the door shut. Evidently the loyal—and somewhat noisy—support of the Lower School was not, somehow, gratifying to him. There was nothing to be expected from "old Bulkeley."

The 3rd Chapter. Not Popular.

Jimmy Silver & Co. could not help feeling a little crestfallen as they walked away from Bulkeley's study.

The calm and quiet reserve of the Sixth-Former dashed their spirits a little and threw cold water upon their warm enthusiasm.

But their loyalty did not waver.

Whether Bulkeley wanted their support or not he was going to get it.

"After all," said Jimmy Silver considerably, "we've got to make allowances for old Bulkeley. He's proud, you know. He couldn't very well get mixed up with a mob of juniors against the Head. He couldn't, you know! There's the dignity of the Sixth to consider."

"Oh, blow the dignity of the Sixth!" answered Lovell.

"Bulkeley's right," said Mornington. "He's bound to keep clear of it. But we're backing him up all the same."

"Yes, rather!"

"And, anyway, we can boycott the election," suggested Erroll. "If Carthew gets in on the votes of two or three cads like himself it won't be a genuine election, and he won't have much of a show as captain of the school."

"That's so!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "But the Sixth ought to interfere. And if the Sixth won't, we will. We ought to let Carthew know what Rookwood thinks of him, anyway. He's gone back on the other prefects, and even Knowles wouldn't do that."

"Here he comes!" murmured Conroy.

Carthew of the Sixth came along the corridor towards his study.

There was a smile on his face.

The bully of Rookwood was well aware that the Head's latest order would be attributed to him, and that it would add to his unpopularity. But he cared little for that.

His way had been made clear to the captaincy of the school, always an object of his ambition, though he had never before had the remotest chance of realising that ambition.

Hiss!

The bully of the Sixth started as a loud and prolonged hiss fell upon his ears.

Hiss-s-s-s-s!

Carthew's cheeks coloured a little.

The corridor and the stairs were crowded with juniors, and every one of them was hissing away as if for a wager.

Carthew cast a furious look round him.

Hiss-s-s-s-s!

For a moment the bully looked as if he would run amok among the hissing juniors, hitting out right and left. But the results of that would certainly have been more painful to the Sixth-Former than to the fags. He controlled himself, and walked on quickly to his study.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Tubby Muffin.

Tubby, burning to distinguish himself, followed Carthew to the door of his study, which the senior had slammed after him.

The fat Classical stooped, and hissed loudly and emphatically through the key-hole.

Hiss-s-s-s-s-s!

The door flew open suddenly.

A hand appeared and grabbed Tubby Muffin by the collar, and with a loud howl Tubby disappeared bodily into the study.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

It was the sound of an ashplant smiting with terrific vim upon the fat person of Reginald Muffin of the Fourth.

Whack, whack!

"Yooop! Help! Rescue!"

Whack, whack!

"Rescue!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Come on!"

"Phew!"

There was a moment's hesitation. Carthew was no longer a prefect, certainly, but the idea of "rushing" a Sixth-Former in his study was rather startling. But since there had been no prefects at Rookwood discipline had been very much relaxed. The hesitation was only momentary. Jimmy Silver led the way, and a crowd of the Fourth followed him, with some of the Shell and the Third.

The ashplant was whacking away in Carthew's study as the rescuers arrived, and Tubby Muffin's yells were terrific.

Carthew was taking it out of the fat Classical, as it were, for the hissing juniors had given him in the corridor. The luckless Tubby was paying for all.

"Yaroooh! Rescue! Help! Yoooooh!" roared the unhappy Tubby. "I say— Oh! Leggo! Leave off! Yoooop!"

"Rush him!" yelled Lovell.

The juniors came in with a swoop. Carthew swung round, brandishing the ashplant, and Arthur Edward Lovell yelled again as he caught it. But Carthew had no time for more.

He went spinning over under the rush of a dozen fellows, and crashed on his hearthrug.

As he sprawled there an enterprising junior up-ended the table, and a shower

of books and papers and an inkpot descended upon Carthew.

Then Tubby Muffin was seized and rushed in triumph out of the study.

The juniors crowded out.

They stayed for a moment in the doorway to give vent to a loud and prolonged hiss, and then departed, triumphant.

Carthew sat up dazedly.

He felt as if an earthquake had happened in his study as he dabbed the ink from his hair and face.

"Ow-ow-ow!" he stuttered. "Ow! Yow! The young villains! I—I—I'll smash—"

He staggered to his feet and grasped his ashplant. But he stopped.

On second thoughts he decided to remain in his study. The juniors were in a dangerous temper just then, and Carthew had no support to expect from the rest of the Sixth.

He decided to take the invasion of his study "lying down," so to speak, to be repaid with interest at a later date—when he was captain of Rookwood.

But there was no rest for Carthew yet. He had just finished washing off the ink when there came a tap at his study window as a stone clinked there.

He stepped to the window and looked out.

Outside thirty or forty juniors had assembled, and a roar went up as Carthew appeared.

"Blackleg!"

"Yah!"

Hiss-s-s-s-s-s!

Carthew gritted his teeth.

He stepped back from the window, but the shouting outside continued. Not a single member of the Sixth Form appeared on the scene. As the prefects were on "strike" it was not their business to interfere.

But suddenly an awe-inspiring figure appeared in the doorway of the School House.

"Boys!"

It was the Head's voice—a voice of thunder.

"Oh, my hat! The Head!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Cave!"

The demonstration suddenly faded away. Dr. Chisholm had a brief view of heels that vanished in all directions, and quiet reigned once more in the quad.

The Head turned back into the house with a frowning brow.

He had had the advantage of learning what the Lower School thought of the candidate for the captaincy—for what that was worth. But it made no difference to the Head. Opposition only confirmed him in his determination, and Jimmy Silver & Co.'s demonstration was very far from shaking his decision.

A little later there was fresh news for Rookwood. Carthew of the Sixth had been reappointed a prefect—so far, the only one that Rookwood could boast. Evidently the cad of the Sixth had completely made his peace with the Head—by deserting the cause he had at first half-heartedly supported. And, in spite of the angry derision of all Rookwood, it seemed a certainty now that Carthew was to become captain of the school.

The 4th Chapter. Carthew Means Business!

Neville of the Sixth tapped at Carthew's door, and opened it.

The prefect looked at him sourly, and more sourly still at the faces that appeared behind Neville, as he stood in the doorway.

Six members of the Sixth Form had arrived, and their serious looks showed that they had serious business with the new prefect. They were Neville, Lonsdale, and Jones major, of the Classical side, and Knowles, Frampton, and Catesby, of the Modern Sixth.

"You needn't come in!" was Carthew's polite greeting.

"We've got something to say to you," answered Neville.

"I don't think I care to hear it."

"You've got to hear it, Carthew!" broke out Cecil Knowles angrily.

Carthew shrugged his shoulders. The six seniors came into the study, and Neville closed the door. Carthew leaned back in his chair, and regarded them with a mocking smile.

He could guess the purport of the visit, but it was not likely to influence him in any way. He was never likely to have another opportunity of realising his ambition.

"We'll come straight to business, Carthew," said Neville. "It seems you're a prefect again now."

"That's so."

"You've gone back on the Sixth!" exclaimed Lonsdale.

"I felt it my duty—"

"Oh, give us a rest!"

"My duty," pursued Carthew calmly, "to give the Head my support. Discipline must be maintained in the school. The juniors are getting out of hand already. There must be prefects. On second thoughts I think a strike was a rotten idea—utterly rotten. Having come to that conclusion, I was bound to go to the Head and withdraw my resignation."

"You mean you backed up the Sixth till we were fairly committed, and then sold us out for your own purposes," said Knowles.

"That's a rotten way of putting it, Knowles. I felt it my duty—"

"We didn't come here to listen to that rot. The question is, are you going to stand by the other prefects, and support Bulkeley, or desert them?"

"You haven't always been so keen on supporting Bulkeley, Knowles," sneered the bully of the Sixth.

"That's neither here nor there. In the present case, it's a question of the whole body of prefects defending their rights, and we all ought to stand together—if only for our own sakes."

"That's how it stands, Carthew," said Neville, more mildly. "You can't say it's playing the game to creep in like this and make a bid for the captaincy."

Carthew sneered.

"I dare say other fellows here had the same idea in their heads," he answered. "I dare say I was a few hours in front of somebody else."

Knowles coloured.

"That's rot," said Neville. "Knowles has second claim to the captaincy, but he hasn't tried to take Bulkeley's place."

"If I were rotter enough," said Knowles, "I should know that all the Sixth would be down on me, and I shouldn't think it good enough."

"That's why you haven't chipped in, then?" grinned Carthew.

"Knowles wouldn't!" said Catesby.

Another shrug from Carthew. He was quite convinced that Knowles would have played his game, if he could have, and that he had simply been first in the field.

"To come down to plain talk," said Jones major, "you've got to chuck it, Carthew. We want you to resign again."

"Can't be done."

"And withdraw your candidature for the captaincy!" said Knowles savagely.

"Sorry!" said Carthew. "Can't be done."

"You're simply selling us out by taking this line."

"I don't see it."

"You don't choose to, you mean!" exclaimed Neville. "All the prefects are on strike till Bulkeley is reinstated. You're acting the part of a blackleg!"

"My duty—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Knowles. "Duty from you is a bit too funny."

"If that's all you've got to say to me, you may as well clear!" remarked Carthew.

Neville glanced at his companions. The Sixth-Formers were looking very grim. There was deep anger in their hearts at this betrayal of their cause by a member of their Form, for the purpose of fishing in troubled waters. Even Knowles, who was not a scrupulous fellow, would have hesitated to take the course Carthew had taken.

"You intend keeping on as you've begun, then—currying favour with the Head, and setting up as captain of Rookwood?" asked Neville.

"That's simply abuse. I sha'n't answer it."

"In a word, then, will you line up with the rest of the Sixth and stand by Bulkeley, as we agreed at first?"

"Can't be done."

"Very well. Go to your election, then. It will be boycotted by the Sixth," said Neville. "No member of the Sixth will be present, or will vote, or will recognise you as captain of Rookwood if you are elected."

"I shall be captain, all the same," answered Carthew coolly.

"So long as you keep up this game you'll have all the Sixth down on you."

"I'll chance that."

"You won't find it easy to face."

"I'll try," smiled Carthew.



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"As captain and as a prefect you won't get any support from the Sixth. You've seen already how the juniors look on you."

"I dare say a few floggings will get them into a state of subordination," said Carthew coolly. "I hope so, at all events."

"You'll be sent to Coventry by the Sixth."

"I'll risk it."

"You mean that you're keeping on with this cad's game, and nothing we can say will make any difference?" exclaimed Neville.

Carthew nodded coolly. "You've hit it!" he answered.

"We may as well go," said Jones major, in disgust. "I shan't speak to the cad again, I know that."

"Same here."

"It's a dirty trick!" said Frampton.

"So sorry you think so," smiled Carthew. "Shut the door after you, will you?"

The angry prefects retired from the study. Knowles shut the door—with a slam.

Carthew knitted his brows when they were gone.

He had kept up a smiling face while they were present, but he was not so confident as he affected to be.

The game he was playing was a treacherous one, and it was pretty certain that the Sixth-Formers would not forgive such a trick. He had entered into the plan of going on "strike," and he had deserted to the enemy, as it were, as soon as his fellow-prefects were too deeply committed for retreat to be possible.

It was not a game of which even Carthew could be proud, and he knew how deeply it must exasperate the other prefects, especially Knowles, who was suspected of having an eye on the captaincy himself.

But he did not falter.

With the Sixth Form in opposition, his tenure of the captaincy was not likely to be a bed of roses; but, at all events, he would be captain of the school, with the Head's support, and the fellows might come round in time. He could hope for the best, anyway.

"It's worth it," muttered Carthew. "There'll be trouble—there's sure to be trouble—but it's worth it. Captain of Rookwood! It's worth something! Let them stick to Bulkeley, if they like—hang Bulkeley! Captain of Rookwood! That's a prize worth bagging."

And Carthew lighted a cigarette, and smiled through the curling smoke. In his mind's eye he already saw himself captain of Rookwood.

But there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as Carthew was destined to discover. He had reckoned without his host—in the shape of Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Fourth.

The 5th Chapter.

Something Like a Stunt!

Putty of the Fourth strolled into the end study, where Jimmy Silver & Co. had sat down to an early—and disconsolate—tea. The Fistical Four were not cheerful.

The captain's election was coming off at six, and it was to be a walk-over for Mark Carthew. That seemed inevitable. A rival candidate might have beaten Carthew at the poll; but no other Sixth-Former would set up as a candidate for Bulkeley's place. And in that they had the support of the Fifth Form. Hansom, the captain of the Fifth, had thought it over, and decided that it wouldn't be "cricket." And his Form-fellows agreed. And if any less particular Fifth-Former had thought of it, he did not venture to make a bid for the honour. Hansom & Co. would certainly have put the "stopper" on any such ambitious candidate from their Form.

Jimmy Silver & Co. would have welcomed even a Fifth-Former as a rival to Carthew; they would have welcomed even Knowles of the Modern side. And over tea Jimmy Silver & Co. debated whether it was possible for a junior to stand. Certainly such a candidature was unheard of; but if it would lead to the defeat of Mark Carthew it was worth thinking of.

But the difficulties in the way were great. Supposing even that a junior could enter the field as a candidate, there would be an immediate split between Classicals and Moderns, Fourth and Shell, and one candidate from the Lower School might be followed by a dozen. And it was pretty certain that if a junior was elected, the Head would not allow such an election to stand.

Putty smiled cheerfully at the glum four. Teddy Grace's chubby face was always cheerful. The Co. gave him grim looks. Putty's cheerfulness seemed to them out of place at a time when, as Lovell expressed it, Rookwood School was going to the giddy bow-wows.

"You fellows look down!" remarked Putty.

"We're feeling down," growled Arthur Edward Lovell, "and we don't feel any better for being grinned at by a silly ass!"

"What I like about this study," remarked Teddy Grace, "is that a fellow can always depend on a civil reception here!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Teddy Grace smiled—and did not go. "The election's coming off pretty soon," he observed. "I came along here to make a suggestion for dishing Carthew."

Jimmy Silver looked up eagerly.

"If you can think of a way of doing that—," he began.

"I've thought of one!"

"Go ahead!"

"Another candidate is wanted—"

"Rot!" said Lovell. "No senior in the school will put up for Bulkeley's place. Even Knowles isn't cad enough—or he's afraid of public opinion!"

"What about a junior?"

"We've thought of that," said Jimmy.

"N. G. The Head wouldn't allow the

election to stand, for one thing. And the Moderns would want a Modern—"

"And the Classicals a Classical, of course!" said Raby.

"And the Shell would want a Shell chap—and, of course, the Fourth would want a Fourth-Former!" said Newcome. "It would simply mean all the juniors at loggerheads, and the vote split into dozens of sections. And most likely a lot of seniors would vote for Carthew then, to keep a junior out. He would get in on a big vote instead of a little one!"

Putty nodded.

"But all the Lower School might unite if a suitable chap was found," he answered. "This is my idea: The Head won't let us vote for Bulkeley. We don't want to vote for anybody else."

"So we're not going to vote at all," said Raby.

"That's playing into Carthew's hands!"

"Can't be helped. Even if another senior put up, we don't want him as captain any more than Carthew."

"Let me expound!" said Putty. "Bulkeley's down and out. We don't want any other candidate, and it seems that we're going to be landed with Carthew. But suppose we turned the whole bizney into ridicule by electing a candidate who made the election ridiculous—"

"Oh!"

"It would keep Carthew out all right, and it would be a lesson to the Head not to dictate to the chaps whom they were to vote for."

"But who?"

"Tubby Muffin!" said Putty.

"Who?" yelled the Fistical Four.

"Tubby!" said Teddy Grace calmly.

"You howling ass!"

"You thumping chump!"

"Lend me your ears, my infants!" said Putty appealingly. "Don't you see what a really corking idea it is?"

"No, I don't!" said Jimmy Silver gruffly. "One of your idiotic practical jokes, I suppose. Go and eat coke!"

"But listen to me—"

"Rats!"

"Listen to a chap, for goodness' sake!"

the seniors would rally round Carthew, most likely, to keep a junior out. They'd beat us, with our vote split. But all the fellows would back up for a jape on the Head like this. It's like stating our terms to the Head. We offer him Tubby Muffin till he offers us Bulkeley."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a corker!" said Putty. "Depend on it, the fags will rally round as one man. The only chap who'll take the election seriously will be Tubby himself. He may!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver jumped up. "It's really a bright idea of yours, Putty!"

"Quite a brain-wave!" grinned Raby.

Jimmy looked at his watch.

"Election in an hour!" he said. "No time to lose. We've got to do a lot of electioneering—"

"For Tubby Muffin?" gasped Lovell.

"Yes. Come on!"

"Oh, all right!"

The Fistical Four left their tea unfinished. They hurried from the end study with Putty to begin the good work.

Word was quickly passed for a meeting of the Lower School in the Common-room, and Putty's amazing scheme was pronounced by the captain of the Fourth—to be met at first with a howl of astonishment and derision, and then with roars of laughter.

"By gad!" exclaimed Mornington. "It's corkin'—the best thing this term! And it's the only way of dishin' the Head!"

"Dishing the Head" seemed a popular idea just then in the Lower School of Rookwood.

There was great enthusiasm on the subject. With not more than a dozen exceptions, the juniors agreed to vote "en bloc" for Tubby Muffin. Modern and Classical alike entering into the joke.

Tubby Muffin was in his study finishing his tea while the meeting was held. His study-mates, Putty and Higgs and Jones minor, had gone down to the meeting, and Tubby had remained behind—to finish their tea as well as his own. Tea

expected his importance, and his uncommon qualities, to be publicly acknowledged in this way.

It was, at last, a just tribute to his real merits—that was how the fat Tubby looked at it.

He began to swell immediately.

"Gentlemen—" he began.

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Gentlemen," said Tubby Muffin, with dignity, "I am obliged to you for this mark of your confidence and esteem—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And I shall have great pleasure in standing as the Lower School candidate at the captain's election—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall do my best to deserve your confidence, and to merit your suffrages," said Tubby, in quite a Parliamentary manner. "Gentlemen, I am at your service."

"Bravo, Tubby!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in the midst of an enthusiastic and chuckling crowd of supporters, Tubby Muffin, the juniors' candidate, was marched away to Hall.

The 6th Chapter.

The Election!

Six o'clock found Big Hall crowded. Carthew was there early—with no supporters. Not a single senior was to be found in the school to give him support.

The few who would have done so were deterred by the attitude of the majority. Sixth and Fifth sternly boycotted the election.

Half a dozen juniors were all the supporters Carthew could gather—by the promise of favours to come—and they trickled in, not very enthusiastically, and found their candidate there, with Mr. Bootles and Mr. Mooney, who were to count the votes.

The election was expected to be simply a walk-over, and Carthew was to be nominated, seconded, and elected as a matter of form.

"Yes, sir, there is one more," said Jimmy. "Forward, Muffin!"

And there was a delighted roar from the juniors:

"Go it, Tubby!"

"Hurrah for Muffin!"

"Muffins and crumpets! Hurrah!"

Tubby Muffin rolled forward, his fat waistcoat swelled almost to bursting; his fat little nose high in the air. At that moment Reginald Muffin of the Fourth was sublime.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles, in perplexity. "What—what? Am I—hum!—to understand, Silver—ahem!—that Muffin is—bless my soul!—a candidate for the captaincy of the school?"

"Yes, sir."

"At the request of the school, sir," said Tubby Muffin loftily, "I am standing for election! Let the best man win!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew made a furious stride forward. He understood the cause of the grinning swarm in Hall now.

"I protest against this!" he exclaimed angrily. "This is turning the election into a farce! A junior cannot stand—"

"Booooh!"

"Shut up, Carthew!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Really, Muffin—really, Silver—ahem—"

"I know it's unusual, sir," said Jimmy Silver firmly. "But there is no law at Rookwood against it. We claim the right to put our candidate forward and vote for him."

Mr. Bootles looked helplessly at Mr. Mooney, who smiled slightly.

"There is certainly no rule against it, that I am aware of," said Mr. Mooney. "It has never happened before, but—but there is no rule forbidding—"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles, taking off his spectacles and polishing them, and replacing them on his nose. "I—I really—"

"I protest against anything of the kind!" shouted Carthew furiously.

"Your protest is not in order, Carthew. There seems no reason against the candidature of Muffin of the Fourth, though the result of the election, of course, must be confirmed by the Head."

"The Head would never confirm—"

"That is for Dr. Chisholm to decide, Carthew, when the result comes before him. The election will proceed," said Mr. Bootles.

And, in spite of Carthew's almost speechless wrath, the election duly proceeded.

Smythe of the Shell had pleasure in proposing Carthew, and Lattrey of the Fourth had pleasure in seconding him—while Jimmy Silver and Putty had the same pleasure for their candidate.

When the names were put to the meeting for a show of hands, there were six hands for Carthew and more than a hundred for Tubby Muffin.

Mr. Bootles blinked at Mr. Mooney, and Mr. Mooney smiled at Mr. Bootles. Mark Carthew bit his lip till the blood came.

This was the outcome of his trickery; instead of romping home, as it were, as captain of Rookwood, he was beaten at the poll with every circumstance of ridicule—his successful rival being the fat and fatuous Tubby Muffin of the Fourth, celebrated as a raider of study-cupboards, and for possessing the most gargantuan appetite at Rookwood—and for nothing else!

It was a bitter pill for Carthew to swallow.

His face, as he watched the show of hands, was worth, as Arthur Edward Lovell remarked, a guinea a box.

Mr. Bootles blinked at him.

"Ahem! Muffin's supporters—ahem!—seem to be in the—ahem!—majority," murmured Mr. Bootles. "You may—ahem!—claim a count if you so desire, Carthew."

Carthew did not claim a count. It was not much use counting six hands against a hundred. Without even replying to Mr. Bootles, the disappointed and furious schemer turned and strode from the Hall.

Amid laughter and cheers, Mr. Bootles proceeded to pronounce Reginald Muffin, of the Fourth Form, duly elected captain of the school. And the proceedings terminated, so far as the masters were concerned.

But the juniors were not finished yet. "Speech! Speech!" howled Mornington.

"Ha, ha! Go it, Tubby!"

Tubby Muffin struck a Napoleonic attitude. He was still taking the proceedings with owl-like seriousness.

"Gentlemen—" wheezed the fat Classical.

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, you have done me the honour to elect me captain of the school," said Tubby, quite eloquently. "You can rely upon me to fill this lofty position with ability—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And in a really distinguished way. I'm not saying anything against Bulkeley, whom we all esteem—"

"Bravo!"

"But I think it will be admitted that Rookwood has got the right man in the right place at last—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Real merit has received recognition," "Oh!"

"And now that Rookwood has got the captain it really wanted all the time, the school will fairly go ahead! Rely on me for that! Gentlemen, you have placed me in a very important position. All I can say is, I deserve it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby's modest speech was the climax. The egregious Tubby was borne shoulder-high from Hall, and Rookwood School rang with cheers for its new captain.

But how long the new captain was to hold office was another matter!

THE END.

(Next week's grand story of Jimmy Silver & Co. is entitled "Captain Tubby Muffin!" by Owen Conquest. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance.)



A SURPRISE FOR TUBBY! As Tubby Muffin was hissing away through the keyhole of Carthew's study, the door flew open suddenly, and a hand grabbed Tubby by the collar. With a loud howl the fat classical disappeared bodily into the study!

shouted Putty. "Tubby Muffin, if he's elected, turns the whole thing into ridicule. Can't you see what a fater that would be for the Head? He won't let us have Bulkeley. We'll hand him Tubby, then, as a captain of the school! That's Rookwood's reply—see?"

Lovell snorted; but Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose in a rather thoughtful way.

The possibilities of Putty's extraordinary suggestion began to dawn upon him.

Certainly it would be a thunderclap for the Head. The Rookwooders were free to elect their captain; but the Head dictated that Bulkeley should not be elected. It would certainly be a crushing rejoinder if the fat and absurd Tubby was elected captain of the school, in response. The whole affair would become farcical, and it was not impossible that the Head might take warning from it.

"But," said Jimmy slowly, "the Head wouldn't let it stand; he would cancel the election—"

"And another would be held," said Lovell.

"Exactly!" smiled Putty. "And we'd elect Tubby again!"

"Oh!"

"And keep on electing Tubby every time till he lets us have Bulkeley back!" said Putty, with a chuckle. "We could keep it up as long as the Head. It would be a game. And the longer it lasted, the more ridiculous it would grow—and it might dawn upon his Nibs at last that it would be better to allow Bulkeley to be re-elected."

"By Jove!" said Jimmy.

"It would be funny, anyway," said Newcome, laughing.

"You see, all the Lower School could unite on this," said Putty eagerly. "If Jimmy Silver put up, Tommy Dodd would put up, too, for the Moderns; and Smythe would put up for the Shell, and Wegg for the Third, and very likely young 'Erbert for the Second—a crowd, in fact. And

was of more importance in the plump Classical's eyes than any meetings.

Tubby started as his study door was thrown open, and a crowd of the Fourth appeared.

He jumped up from the table in alarm.

"I haven't!" he roared.

"Hallo! You haven't what?" demanded Putty.

"I haven't touched the cake."

"The cake!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"What cake?"

"If Jones' cake isn't in the cupboard," said Tubby, "don't blame me. I don't know what's become of it. Higgs may have scooped it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Never mind the cake. We want you."

"Oh!" said Tubby Muffin. "Is it a feed?"

"Ha, ha! No! It's an election—the captain's election."

"Come on, Tubby."

"You're the candidate."

"Eh?"

"You're the junior candidate."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Don't you understand?" said Jimmy Silver. "We want you to stand as candidate for the captaincy."

"Oh-h-h-h-h!" stuttered Tubby, his round eyes growing quite saucer-like in his astonishment.

"Cheers for Captain Muffin!" yelled Mornington.

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you fellows are pulling my leg—"

"Not a bit of it, my tulip. You're our candidate, and we've got over a hundred votes promised," grinned Jimmy Silver.

Tubby drew a deep breath.

That he was a person of considerable importance, and that he had never really enjoyed the limelight he was entitled to, Tubby was convinced—but he had never

But as six o'clock approached, Hall began to fill.

It was a surprise to Carthew. He did not see what that army of juniors wanted there.

But they came—in swarms. Tommy Dodd led in nearly all the Modern juniors, Third and Fourth and Shell. Jimmy Silver marched in with most of the Classical Fourth. The Classical Shell was well represented. Even the Second Form sent a contingent, led by 'Erbert and Jones minimus.

Carthew bit his lip as he watched them.

The rules of the Rookwood election allowed a candidate to be nominated right to the time fixed for polling; and Carthew wondered whether the Sixth had decided, after all, to put up Knowles or Neville against him. It was possible that they had abandoned their lofty and dignified course of ignoring the election, simply for the purpose of dishing him. Yet not a single senior was present. It could not, after all, be that. Yet what was the meaning of this grinning swarm of juniors?

He felt uneasy, and showed it.

Tubby Muffin, pushed forward by his enthusiastic supporters, was prominent, but Carthew did not understand the cause of the lofty and swelling looks of the fat Classical. Of all the swarm of juniors present, Tubby was the only fellow who took his candidature seriously; but he was taking it very seriously indeed.

Mr. Bootles blinked over his glasses at the numerous assembly, and glanced at the clock, and then at Mr. Mooney. It was six o'clock.

"H'm! H'm!" said Mr. Bootles. "We shall now—ahem!—proceed—hum! Carthew, I believe—hem!—is the only candidate—hum—"

"Not at all, sir," interposed Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Bootles blinked at him.

"Indeed! I understand, Silver, that there is no other candidate."



SKULL ISLAND!

An Amazing New Story of Thrilling Adventure in the South Seas. By DUNCAN STORM.

NEW READERS COMMENCE HERE!

The famous school-ship, the Bombay Castle, is on the way to the South Seas on an educational voyage, with a mixed crowd of schoolboys drawn from many of the most famous schools in England. Our old friends, Dick Dorrington, Chip, Porkis, and Pongo Walker, with their famous pet animals, are of the number. Captain Handyman is in command of the liner. Dr. Crabhunter is the Head of the floating school, and "Scorcher" Wilkinson is responsible for the boys' discipline.

At the last moment Dick, Chip, Porkis, and Pongo manage to smuggle on board a quaint old riverside character, calling himself Captain Bones. Captain Bones is a little blind man of great age who sailed the South Seas in the bad old days, and is more than suspected of being a retired pirate himself. He tells the boys he has the secret of a wonderful buccaneer's treasure. The boys are sentenced to be swished by Captain Handyman for getting on board late.

(Now read on.)

A Taste of the Scorcher's Quality.

"This way, young gentlemen!" said Scorcher Wilkinson pleasantly, as he led the way down the bridge-ladder on to the hurricane-deck. "As you are to be swished I shall have to report the matter to the Head. He is in the chemistry-room."

Chip, Porkis, Pongo Walker, and Dick followed him along the deck in solemn procession.

They knew where the chemistry-room was. In the old days, when the Bombay Castle had been a famous liner, this had been the first-class smoke-room. But now the bar was cleared of bottles and glasses, and on its shelves were arranged all sorts of bottles of chemicals and apparatus, which were to be used in the instruction of the boys, and in the deep-sea research, which was the particular study of Dr. Crabhunter, the Head.

Dr. Crabhunter, in cap and gown, was seated there already, deep in a vast array of notebooks.

He did not look a bit like a headmaster. He was a dear old gentleman, with mild blue eyes, who knew more about infusoria and coral insects and ocean currents than he knew about boys.

He looked up through his spectacles as the four boys stepped through the door on to the rubber matting of the chemistry-room.

They could see Skeleton's nose flattened on the porthole of the room as he peered in to see the fate that was to overtake his chums.

"Dear, dear!" said Dr. Crabhunter, looking up from his notebooks. "What is it, Mr. Wilkinson?"

"Four boys to receive punishment on captain's report, sir!" reported Scorcher Wilkinson.

"Dear, dear, dear!" muttered the doctor, with a worried expression crossing his good-natured face. "What have they been doing?"

"Breaking leave, sir!" reported Scorcher Wilkinson, with a twinkle in his eyes. "They went off the ship before she moved, representing that they were going to buy some photograph film, and a sack for the confinement of their pet goat."

"A very legitimate reason for leaving the ship," said Dr. Crabhunter, taking the boys' part.

"But they returned after the ship was on the move, sir," continued Mr. Wilkinson, "and they were dragging a barrow containing a sack, which nearly caused them to lose the ship altogether!"

"But here they are, safe on board!" urged Dr. Crabhunter. "They did not delay the ship."

"But the captain has ordered them six cuts apiece, sir!" said Mr. Wilkinson—"so that they will learn not to cut things so fine in future!" he added in further explanation.

"What are their names?" asked Dr. Crabhunter.

"Richard Dorrington, Christopher Prodders, otherwise known as 'Chip,' Henry George Walker, otherwise known as 'Pongo,' and Howard Porkis, otherwise known as 'Porky,' sir!" reported Mr. Wilkinson, who appeared to be thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Dear, dear! These are the remarkable boys who have accompanied Captain Handyman in his recent adventures!" urged the doctor, as though this were some reason why our friends should not be swished.

Then he turned to Chip. "Dodgers," he began, "have you anything to say for yourself?"

"Prodders, sir!" corrected Chip, scowling at Skeleton, who was pulling faces at

the porthole, expressive of his delight at his friends' predicament.

"Exactly!" replied the doctor, accepting the correction. "Exactly, Todgers! Have you anything to say for yourself?"

"Prodders, sir!" urged Chip. "Well, Dodgers, if you can say anything in mitigation of the captain's sentence I shall be most happy to make representations to him!" urged the good old doctor, who was evidently most averse from swishing. "If Codgers, you could only give some reasonable excuse! You know, Bodgers, we all make mistakes sometimes. And it is very painful to me to have to sanction punishment so very early in our voyage."

"We don't mind it, sir!" replied Chip hardily. "We deserved it!"

Dr. Crabhunter sighed as he signed the punishment-book.

Then he turned to Scorcher Wilkinson. "I hope, Mr. Wilkinson," he said mildly, "you will—ahem!—temper justice with mercy. I will now withdraw. These punishments are exceedingly painful to me."

And he hastily left the chemistry-room, having to force his way through the crowd who were gathered at the portholes to see what was going on.

Scorcher selected a fine and pliable cane from the rack in the chemistry-room.

"It will soon be over, boys!" he said genially. "It is my painful duty."

"Not half so painful to you as it is to us, sir!" replied Dick Dorrington cheerfully. "But lay on, Macduff!"

Scorcher laid on, six of the very best to each delinquent.

"There, it might have been worse, might it not?" he asked as he put the cane away. "Now, young gentlemen, that you have purged your offence and we are all square again, I shall be glad if you will come to tea in my cabin this afternoon. I want to hear some of your adventures. A schoolmaster's life is a dull one at best, and he never gets any adventures."

"Rather, sir!" replied the boys in chorus. "And may we bring the other fellows, too?"

"Certainly!" answered Mr. Wilkinson. "The more the merrier! Now, boys," he added, "I don't know if I am asking too much, but what did you bring on board in that sack?"

The boys looked at one another. The contents of the sack were a secret. But they had all realised that Mr. Wilkinson was all right. Chip nodded to Dick, as much as to say, "Tell him."

"Well, sir," said Dick, with some hesitation, "it's really a secret. But you have been so decent that we have no

objection to telling you. It's a pirate!"

"A what!" gasped Mr. Wilkinson. "A pirate, sir!" reiterated Dick. "His name is Captain Bones, and he was dying to get to the South Seas. He kept a little sack and junk-shop—a sort of marine store—in an alley close by the docks where we started from, and he begged us to stow him away. So we put him in the sack, and wheeled him off on a barrow, and that's what made us late."

Scorcher Wilkinson looked at his pupils with admiration, not unmixed with awe.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed. "But what are you going to do with your pirate?"

"Well, sir," explained Dick, "he is not officially on board till we are outside the three-mile limit. Then when the pilot has been put ashore it will be too late to send him back. And he is going to show us an island in the South Seas where there is a great treasure. It is the Lima treasure, that was carried away by some Spanish galleons that revolted and turned pirate."

"How old is he?" asked Mr. Wilkinson.

"About a hundred, sir," answered Dick. "He is blind, and he has got a wooden leg, but he is as lively as a cricket. And if you will like to make one of the treasure-seeking party, sir, we will let you in!"

Scorcher Wilkinson's face was a study. He had set out to swish four boys. Now, though he had barely put his cane away, he was tacitly accepted as one of a pirate or treasure-seeking band.

"You won't give us away, will you, sir?" pleaded Dick.

"Not I!" replied Scorcher Wilkinson. "Of course, I shall be glad to join this—ahem!—pirate band, and to assist in seeking for the treasure. But I don't want any share of what is justly yours. But I am a great collector of coins, and if you happen to find any rare Spanish pieces I shall be most happy to have the chance of buying them."

He spoke half laughing, and it was plain that as yet he could hardly believe the boys' story.

"That's all right, sir!" answered Dick easily. "When we come to tea with you this afternoon we will bring you a sample of the treasure. Captain Bones has got it with him in the sack."

"And where is the sack?" asked Mr. Wilkinson incredulously.

"We gave it to Umpy Ginsen, one of the hands, sir," replied Dick, "and he's stowed it away up in the steerage."

"And what are you going to do with your pirate?" asked Mr. Wilkinson.

"Why, sir," said Dick, "we thought that, if he's no use aboard the ship, we might have him in the school. We can afford to pay his fees between us, and though he is over ninety years of age he is sure to be in need of some education. He has been knocking about the South Seas all his life, and I guess he won't know anything but geography."

Scorcher nearly choked at this.

"Do you expect me to swish a pirate who is nearly a hundred years old?" he asked.

Dick laughed.

"He may not want swishing, sir," he answered. "For all you know, he might turn out the white-headed boy—the best boy in the school!"

"Run along, you young rascals!" said Mr. Wilkinson helplessly. "And if we are outside the three-mile limit at tea-time this afternoon, you can bring your pirate to tea as well. I have never had the privilege of inviting a real, live pirate to tea before."

Mr. Wilkinson sank down in a chair at the research table as the boys bolted off cheerfully.

"I have met some extraordinary boys in my time," he laughed to himself, "but this crowd is about the limit! I can see that they are going to lead me into a lot of trouble. I can quite understand the cryptic warnings of my colleague, Mr. Lal Tata!"

And Mr. Wilkinson rubbed his hands. After five-and-twenty years of the dull routine of school life he was as eager for adventure as any schoolboy.

A Surprise for Bully Goadger!

The Bombay Castle was steaming out of the mouth of the Thames as the boys turned out on deck.

Skeleton came up to them at once.

"You've been a jolly long time in there," said he. "What sort of chap is Scorcher Wilkinson?"

"He's all right!" exclaimed the four, with enthusiasm.

"What have you got in that sack?" asked Skeleton, who was full of curiosity.

"It's a sackful of adventure, my boy!" replied Dick, clapping their chum on the shoulder. "Look here, Skeleton, can you lay hands on any grub? I know that if anyone on the ship can get grub out of hours, you can!"

"Rather!" replied Skeleton. "I have made friends with one of the cooks in the galley. His name is Lung, and he's a Chinese. I talked to him a while, and he gave me some little open-work tarts he was making, and some doughnuts."

"Do you think you can get some ham sandwiches and a fill of coffee for my thermos flask?" asked Dick.

"Easy," replied Skeleton. "But what do you want 'em for?"

"It's for the chap in the sack. We must not let him starve!" answered Dick. And calling Tom Morton and Skeleton aside, he confided to them the secret of Skull Island.

Skeleton dived below to the galley, where he had already made hosts of friends. It was not long before he reappeared with a large packet of sandwiches, cake, meat-pies, buns, and pastry, whilst his pockets bulged with oranges and apples.

He had also been to Dick's cabin, and, securing his thermos flask, had filled it with strong, hot coffee.

"If he's a real pirate," he whispered, "he will want rum. Pirates always drink rum, don't they?"

"They do in story-books," replied Dick doubtfully. "But this chap will have to go on the water-wagon. This is a dry ship, and if we are going to get him into the school, he'll have to be teetotal."

"Now, come along, you chaps," added Dick. "We'll drop down below, and go aft through the passages. We don't want to be seen along the decks."

"That we don't!" answered Skeleton. "There is a very unpleasant fellow looking for you round the decks. His name is Goadger, and he comes from St. Chippier's School, that swell private college at Sandbourne. There's a whole gang of 'em on board from St. Chippier's—practically the whole Sixth Form—and they mean to run the ship."

"I've heard of them!" said Dick, as they passed through the labyrinth of passages between the cabins below. "The Sixth Form at St. Chippier's is celebrated as being the most select gang of cads and bullies that has ever got together at any school, and I shouldn't wonder if their headmaster wasn't jolly glad to get rid of them and send them off to sea. But we'll fix them all right."

They had reached the extreme stern of the ship now, where a small stairway led up to the compartment that contained the great steel rudderhead and the machinery connected with the steam steering-gear which controlled it.

It was here that Umpy Ginsen had stowed the sack containing Captain Bones.

Dick unlaced the top of the sack. "Hallo, captain!" he asked. "Are you there still? We've brought you some grub!"

"That's the talk, my hearties!" said the old pirate, popping his head up out of the sack. "I can smell the sea, and it's given me an appetite!"

He sat up in the sack and clapped his queer old tricorne hat on his white head. "These are a couple of chums of ours, Captain Bones," said Dick, indicating Skeleton and Tom Morton.

The old freebooter turned that queer, blind eye of his inquiringly on Skeleton, for all the world as though he could see him.

"That's Skeleton!" said Dick. "Ha, ha!" chuckled the old man. "That's the chap to come and find Skull Island! Skeleton, Bones & Company! Ho, ho! Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"

Skeleton held out his packets of sand-

SOMETHING ABOUT BOWLING.

A Special Article for Young Cricketers. By "RAZOR" SMITH.

I have frequently heard men say, "A bowler is born, not made." There may or may not be something in these words, but I am quite sure in my own mind that be a youth ever such a naturally gifted bowler he will require years of practice before he is worth his salt in good-class cricket of to-day. There are thousands of bowlers who have good deliveries, accuracy in pitch, and are even able to impart a certain amount of break to the ball, who will never make first-class trundlers.

They have never troubled to cultivate to a fine art the natural aptitude they already possess, and are perfectly satisfied to go on, day by day, bowling a decent ball, when, with a little enterprise and practice, those ordinary balls could be turned into something better.

You can teach a boy how to make a good stroke in batting, but to attempt to teach him how to deliver a ball is beyond anybody. So it is wise to let him persevere in his own way, and go on for a time until he has got his swing and run, and then if there are any little faults they must be corrected very carefully, lest in doing so you upset the whole of the machinery.

I would always encourage the young player to cultivate a good length, and then if he has developed any special qualifications in the shape of swing or break they can be gradually added afterwards. There is a great tendency to over-bowl amongst youngsters, and I would warn them not to bowl too long at a stretch.

Youths will seldom admit being fatigued, and so it is necessary to keep a strict watch over this very simple point, for overdoing themselves is far-reaching in its evil effects, and is likely to do a subtle damage which few people can estimate.

A large number of youths one sees performing in second and third-rate cricket seem to have an idea that physical strength alone is the one thing needed to make a successful bowler. It is quite a common thing to see our public-parks young men tearing along to the wickets with a sling which savours a throw, and sending down balls which pitch half-way down the wicket, and either go high over the batsmen's heads or are stopped by some personal part of the gentlemen who are supposed to wield the willow.

If a few runs are scored against men of this tear-away type, it is more by luck than good judgment; and one can only wonder why there are not more serious accidents.

This reminds me of a certain match in which I was playing some time ago. A fast bowler was on at one end, and two men were in who had both topped the century. At last the fast bowler got cross when he saw his best deliveries going to the boundary, and, in a stage-whisper, said, "Now he's got to go, if I have to kill him!"

He then deliberately howled at the batsman's body, catching him inside the knees. Running up to the victim, he apologised most profusely, and the poor chap, after limping about for two or three minutes, went on with his innings. "Well,

of all the cheek!" muttered the black-guard bowler as he passed me. "He won't go after that. I must give him one on his skull!"

Now, this is an instance of unsportsmanlike behaviour which some would say is merely all in the game. It isn't in the game, and I do hope my young bowling friends will never be guilty of endeavouring to gain advantage by such methods.

Of course, I am fully aware that a very fast bowler is apt to make a mistake and drop a ball somewhat short occasionally. The bowler, no matter whether fast,

"RAZOR" SMITH,



the famous Surrey Cricketer, who has written this Article specially for the BOYS' FRIEND.

medium, or slow, would be a marvel if he could go on for ever without making a mistake; but I am quite sure that the ball with which the fast bowler gets wickets is not the short one.

It may be overpitched—if one can overpitch a ball—but in the majority of cases batsmen fall to the delivery which has become known as the one of good length.

It is generally said that fast bowlers depend upon their pace to beat the batsmen, and, no matter where the ball pitches, the bowler with a strong arm will find plenty of victims. Now, whilst fully recognising the force of such re-

marks when applied to cricket of that order which is played upon rough and uncareful wickets, I cannot for one moment agree that pace and pitch alone will work havoc amongst great batsmen on present-day plumb wickets.

However, good length alone will not bring success on the perfect wickets to which we are getting accustomed to-day. The young bowler must use his brain, always endeavouring to find a batsman's weakness, and, if possible, read his thoughts. But a good length is essential, for without it you can do nothing.

It is really the keynote of all good bowling; at the same time, although by a perfect length you may keep down the rate of scoring and have the credit of bowling a number of maidens, it will be more by the devilment that you attach to your ball in the way of break and pace as it comes off the pitch that you will command success.

I have frequently noticed in minor cricket how nervous a young slow bowler is of getting hit. He sometimes bowls in the most mechanical manner, and gets on an inch or two of break with one great hope of hitting the sticks each time. He is quite averse from the taking of risks—without which, by the way, he would never dismiss a real batsman in first-class cricket—and immediately he is hit his heart goes to the bottom of his boots.

When a batsman has made one or two boundary hits off balls which have been well pitched up, this silly young bowler starts to bowl short stuff, and is soon knocked off altogether. If a man hits you, let him have another go.

It is a thousand to one against his making the identical shot with the same amount of power over again, and, sooner or later, you will get his wicket—provided, of course, that you use brain and do not lose heart.

As I have written such a lot about the dangers of fast bowling on bad wickets, I may be forgiven for winding up my article with a short anecdote which illustrates what I mean. A certain amateur was batting on a very rough and uneven pitch against a bowler who was making the ball "fly" all over the place. The poor batsman's ribs, shins, chest, and shoulders were bruised by the ball, and at last one came along which caught him full on the mouth. "I'm awfully sorry," said the bowler as he ran up to his victim. "Fact is, it's a sporting wicket." The batsman struggled to get back his speech; then, spitting out a mouthful of blood and teeth, gurgled: "Very sporting. But I'm chucking this; and when my mouth has recovered I am going to give you a jolly good hiding!"

Such bowlers ought not to be allowed to play cricket.

W B Smith

wiches and the rest of the dainties he had coaxed out of Lung, the Chinese cook.

"I have brought you some grog, sir. It was all I could get. And there's some coffee. I couldn't get any rum!"

Captain Bones took the packets and the thermos flask eagerly.

"Thankee, Skeleton!" said he. "Thankee kindly for rememberin' a poor stowaway. And as for rum, I don't drink it. I've seen more trouble come out o' one bottle o' rum than would sink a dozen ships. It's rum that sets the lads a-fightin'. It's rum that draws the knives from their sheaths, and it's rum that sends many a jolly adventurer to Davy Jones' locker. No rum for me, Skeleton, me hearty!"

He was devouring the sandwiches eagerly in a fashion that made the boys suspect that he had tasted no breakfast that morning, or, for the matter of that, supper the night before!

Skeleton looked at the old reprobate quite anxiously.

"If you think there isn't enough, sir," said he, "I can bring you along a chunk of bride-cake from my cabin. It's topped with almond icing as thick as your fist!"

But the old pirate shook his head and chuckled.

"Ho, ho! Pirates don't eat bride-cake, my hearty!" said he. "Wait a bit till we get amongst the islands, and I'll show you the right food for jolly adventurers—turtle fit for an alderman, birds' nest soup that the Chinese will pay golden pieces to taste, and poi. Have you ever tasted poi, boys, the same as the niggers make it?"

"No, sir," replied Skeleton, his eyes lighting up at all this talk of good eating.

Then Captain Bones looked round stealthily.

"Say, lads," said he uneasily, "d'ye happen to know a swab on this ship called Goadger, a handog, skulkin' round with a face like a boiled turnip?"

"There is a chap of that name on board," replied Skeleton. "But how do you know that he's got a face like a boiled turnip?"

Then he blushed slightly.

"I beg your pardon, Captain Bones. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings—about your blindness, you know," he added hastily.

Captain Bones grinned and turned his sightless, opalescent eye on Skeleton.

"Bless you, boy!" said he. "I ain't a gal, to have feelin's. I'm blind enough; but I've got the sixth sense which serves me for eyes. Let me hear a man's voice and I'll tell you what his face is like."

"But what about Goadger?" asked Dick.

"He's been hanging round to see what you've got in your sack," said the old man, "and he's tried the door of this compartment. Ye see, the bo'sun has bolted it to prevent the young gents from getting their fingers in the machinery. But this here feller Goadger, he knows that the sack is here, and he's smellin' after it like a terrier after a rat. Tried the door three times he has, shoutin' somethin' terrible!"

"Face like a boiled turnip is right!" said Skeleton. "That's Bully Goadger, the terror of St. Chilpherie's!"

"H'm!" said the pirate, taking a bite of his sandwich. "Ha!" he added, taking another bite.

Then there came a thundering kick at the door of the compartment. It was a door of steel plate, and the kick sounded like the boom of a cannon.

"Hi, you cheeky kids, there! Open the door!" shouted a snarling voice outside.

"Open the door! I can hear you!"

"Who are you?" called Dick.

"I'll soon let you know who I am!" roared the voice angrily.

"Open the door before I kick it down! I'm Goadger—Bully Goadger of St. Chilpherie's—and we chaps from St. Chilp's are not accustomed to put up with any swank from cheeky kids!"

"Well, you go on kicking till you kick your boots out!" replied Dick.

He gave a hasty nudge to Captain Bones to get out of his bag, and to clear out his telescope and his sextant and the steel box containing his charts of Skull Island.

Then he winked at his companions.

"Get Gus up—quick!" he whispered.

"He's stowed away in the cricket-bag on the flat below. And take old Bones away and hide him in the junk locker. And bring up some old canvas cuttings and rope-ends and oakum—any old stuff!"

Now, considering that Captain Bones was a celebrated pirate, or claimed to be a celebrated pirate, he did not make a very good show as Goadger thundered on the door of the compartment.

He got quite shaky and nervous, and tumbled over as he struggled out of the sack, his wooden leg waving helplessly in the air.

But the boys, laughing, picked him up and helped him down the ladder through the trap which opened in the floor of the compartment.

They knew every cranny and corner of the Bombay Castle, and they knew that the little junk-locker, right in the stern, where the boatswain kept all his canvas cuttings and oakum and spare odds and ends of rope, would be a good hiding-place for him.

And down in the flat below lay Gus, the pet crocodile, smuggled on board in a stout cricket-bag of great dimensions.

Gus had grown so big, that it took more than an ordinary cricket-bag to hold him now, and the bag weighed quite a lot as they dragged it up the ladder into the steering-gear flat.

Goadger, who had gathered his gang round him, was hammering loudly on the door. He thought that he had got his victims safe, for he had no idea that there was any communication between the compartment and the deck below.

"Open the door, you young cubs!" he yelled. "The longer you keep us waiting the worse you'll get it!"

"All right!" called Dick, in well-assumed tones of fear.

He winked to his chums. They lifted up the cricket-bag and opened it into the mouth of the sack which had contained Captain Bones.

Out slithered Gus, the crocodile, in a very bad temper. Gus was about fed-up with being banged about in the cricket-bag. Besides, he had had nothing to eat for two days but a few salt bloaters. And Gus hated bloaters.

He was tipped into the sack with a thump, and the boys grinned as they heard his nose whack on the bottom of the bag.

Gus hissed as he curled round in the bag, and snapped and tried to climb out; but they rammed him down into the bottom of the sack with two good armfuls of oakum and canvas strips.

Then they tied up the mouth of the sack securely and knotted it firmly.

Goadger had ceased to hammer on the door. He was expecting it to open.

"You have done it now, you swanky kids!" said he. "Because you have travelled on this ship before, you think that you are going to play up any old game you like. But we've marked you!"

Dick slipped back the bolts, doing his best to look frightened, and Goadger stalked in, followed by his select gang of twelve bullies.

They were a formidable-looking crowd, for they all stood close on six feet. Some of them sported the beginnings of little toothbrush moustaches.

Goadger looked round the little group of boys as they stood round the sack.

He had his cap tipped at the back of his head, and his hands were in his pockets. From the corner of his mouth hung a half-burned cigarette, which he had been smoking furtively in the steerage.

"Right-ho!" snarled Goadger, surveying the group. "I seem to know all you young cads. Your name is Dorrington," he continued, nodding in Dick's direction, "and yours is Porkis. Oh, I know the lot of you, and we'll soon put you through it! But what have you got in this sack that you are so private about?"

Goadger lifted his foot and gave the sack a heavy kick.

biggest licking you have ever had in your life! I'll teach you to stow away! I'll give you 'poor little stowaway'!"

To Goadger, excited by the cruelty of the born bully, it seemed exactly as though a small boy were dodging about in the bottom of the great sack trying to evade the fingers that were grabbing for his collar.

But his yell of triumph suddenly changed to a yell of anguish.

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

The gang of bullies who had crowded round the sack, eager to take a hand in the sport of kid-baiting, leaped back as the yelling Goadger tried to withdraw his hand from the sack.

Something was kicking and struggling mightily in the rubbish, and they had a glimpse of a stubby, short leg with ugly claws. Then followed an ugly flat head like the head of a pike, the jaws of which were closed tightly on the bully's wrist.

"Take him off! Take him off!" yelled Goadger. "He's chewing my hand off!"

But not one of the bullies seemed inclined to assist their chum, as Gus flopped out of the bag, lashing his ugly tail and hissing like a barrow-load of snakes as he hung to Goadger's arm.

"I told you there was a crocodile in the bag!" said Dick mildly. "It wasn't for lack of warning!"

"Take him off!" whimpered Goadger, wincing as Gus nipped his wrist.

It was lucky for Goadger that he wore a wrist-watch in a heavy leathern strap about his wrist.

"Come on, boys!" said Dick. "Catch hold of Gus' tail!"

The boys had learned how to handle Gus. As they grabbed his powerful tail and gave it a twist, Gus knew at once that matters had been carried far enough.

He opened his jaws and released Goadger's wrist, dropping to the steel floor with a thump like a coal-sack.

And here he lay, looking up at Goadger with a cold, evil glitter in his green eye, as much as to say, "Don't you try to bully me again!"

Goadger had lost his goat, Gus had chewed his wrist-watch to splinters, and his nerves had received a severe shock.

There was no talk of lickings as he

St. Winifred's was a school which made a specialty of "form."

Goadger scowled at this table as well.

Sooner or later, he meant to take it out of the swells of St. Winifred's. He had already tried to clum up with Percy Poppleton, the senior St. Winifredian. But Percy Poppleton had slowly lifted his single eyeglass, and had looked Goadger up and down.

"Forgive me, sir, but I don't know you!" he had remarked.

"My name's Goadger," the bully had remarked, with a greasy and ingratiating smile. "I'm Bully Goadger of St. Chilpherie's, at Sandbourne."

"Aw! Pwivate school!" Percy Poppleton had remarked. "Aw! We St. Winifredians—aw!—don't know fellas from pwivate schools. Good-morning, Mr. Goadger!"

And, turning on his heel, he had left Goadger standing there desiring to twist the neck of every swell of St. Winifred's within reach.

But the swells were not kids. They were all Sixth Form boys, and quite big enough to hold their own against the bully and his clique.

The swells of St. Winifred's had looked with more approval on the "Glory Hole Gang." They had agreed between themselves that Dick Dorrington and his set were "a swange lot of birds," but they reserved their friendship for future use.

There was no school this afternoon. When lunch was over, the boys rigged the nets for deck-cricket, or strolled up and down, making acquaintance with the ship.

Presently a blast on the foghorn of the Bombay Castle called the pilot-cutter down on them. The Channel pilot descended from the bridge, and, shaking hands with Captain Handyman, dropped down the Jacob's ladder into the boat that was waiting for him.

Then the Bombay Castle was set on the mid-Channel course, and soon the coast of England faded from sight.

"Now," said Dick, as they watched the high land about Hastings fade away in the haze, "we are beyond the three-mile limit. We don't stop this side of Panama, so we can produce our pirate!"

It was close on half-past four, which

But ye shall be richer than they, my boys. Ye have given old Captain Bones a new lease o' life. Ye shall all be rich as princes, and—"

Here he broke off short.

"Where's you lily-livered feller with the face like a boiled turnip that was knocking at the door a while since?" he asked suspiciously.

"Oh, Goadger! He's all right. He's somewhere along the decks," said Dick easily. "He won't want to interfere with you. He's about fed up with looking for stowaways!"

And he told Captain Bones what had happened with the crocodile and the sack.

Captain Bones chuckled.

"That's the jolly lark, boys!" he grumbled approvingly. "That feller has a bad voice. He's cruel. Cruel as Captain Death, the worst I ever sailed with. But he won't interfere with old Bones! Not him! Let him try!"

He clapped his old three-cornered hat on his head and picked up his stick. It was a queer stick of ebony, with a carved skull for a handle.

"No need to guide me, boys," said he, as they started along the passages. "Old Bones can find his way about any ship although he's blind. Though this is a great tall ship, and different from any that I've sailed on before."

He stumped up on deck with his great telescope under his arm, whilst the boys carried his precious steel box.

He was a queer little figure of a man in his strange, old-fashioned clothing and the one great sea-boot that clothed his sound leg. He looked like a little boy, for he was scarcely four feet high.

He led the way with certainty. There was no one in the after well-deck to see the strange little figure as he stumped along humming his old pirate song under his breath.

"Isn't he a lad!" whispered Dick to Pongo. "I bet he'll make Scorchers sit up and take notice of the guest we've brought to tea!"

But Captain Bones came suddenly to a standstill.

From a cross alleyway on the deck there came a dismal wailing.

"Oh, Mr. Goadger, don't twist my arm! It hurts!" cried the voice of a small boy.

"That's what it's meant to do, my son!" responded the voice of Goadger. "I told you to unpack, and put my shirts in the top drawer. I didn't tell you to bunk off to see the pilot go and sling 'em on my bed!"

It was Bully Goadger putting his fag through a bit of torture in the secluded corner of the deck.

Captain Bones came to a stop.

"Drop that boy, you white-livered swab!" he cried, in a voice of thunder.

Goadger, taken aback by this sudden apparition, stared at the tiny figure in its three-cornered hat, which seemed to have walked out of the page of a picture-book.

"What's it to do with you?" he growled, after a long stare at this quaint apparition. "I suppose you are the stow-away who's been hiding up in the steerage," he added.

And he gave the fag's arm another twist.

"Hark ye, Goadger!" said Captain Bones, holding up his stick. "This is an Obi stick. 'Twas given me by a Mandingo king. Are you going to drop that boy?"

Goadger glared.

"No!" he replied shortly, and he gave the fag's arm another twist.

"Good!" snapped Captain Bones, and his blind eye seemed to shine like a red-hot opal. "Mark that big back tooth o' thine—the one with the hole in it. It will commence to ache!"

Goadger suddenly turned pale. His hands released the squirming kid, and were clapped to his jaw as a sharp twinge of toothache shot through the tooth Captain Bones had indicated.

"Mow-wow!" he groaned.

Then he writhed as Captain Bones shook the Obi stick in his face, and another spasm of anguish racked the tooth.

The Power of the Obi Stick.

The boys stood aghast.

Goadger, with one leg wrapped round the other, stood on one foot, in an attitude which indicated excruciating agony. He had grabbed his head in both hands, as though he were trying to hold it on his shoulders.

And before him the tiny figure of Captain Bones, whose head reached to about the middle waistcoat button of the big bully, stood shaking the Mandingo Obi stick.

There was nothing much in the stick. It was certainly a fine walking-stick, carved, of heavy ebony, the handle of which was a grinning skull, whose eyes were set with two green stones that glittered brightly.

But there was no doubt that the flourishing of the stick before the nose of Bully Goadger had brought on the toothache.

The kid, dropped by the bully at this unexpected intervention, sat on the deck in the alleyway, with the tears of pain still wet on his pink cheek, gazing up with rounded eyes at this strange-looking apparition which had intervened on his behalf.

"How do ye like that, me bully boy?" growled Captain Bones, giving the Obi stick a little shake before Goadger's nose.

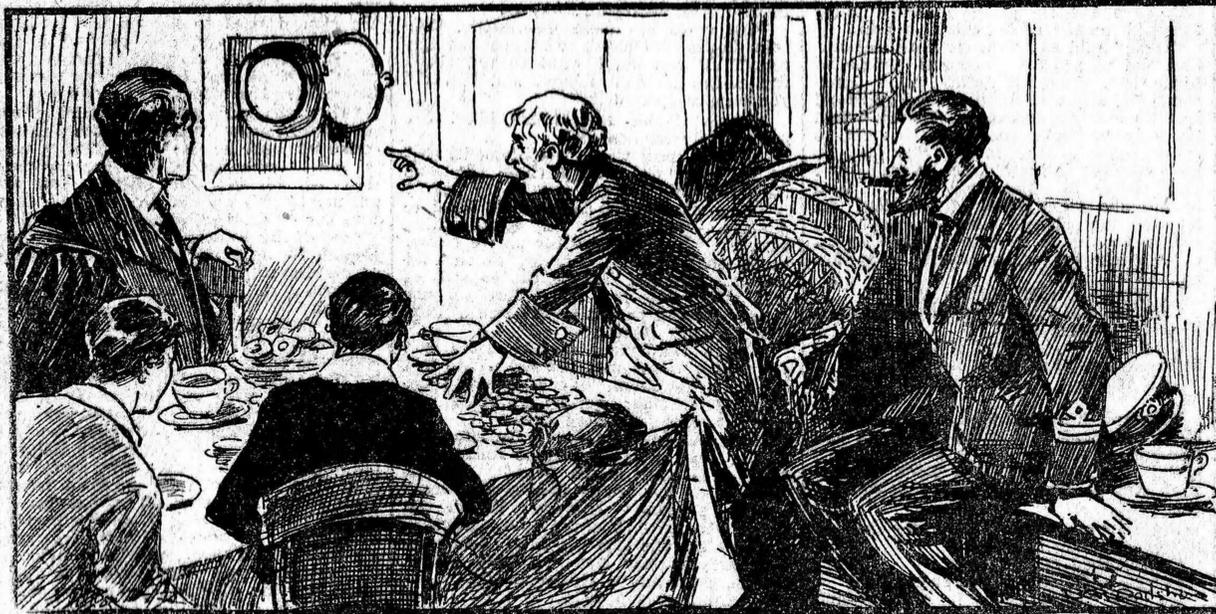
Goadger howled in response.

Every time that grim head on the handle of the stick shook, Goadger's tooth jumped in response. It felt to him as though someone were ramming a red-hot skewer into the hollow.

Another figure appeared on the scene, and gazed on the queer figure of Captain Bones with astonishment.

This was Mr. Lal Tata, who, invited to the tea-party in Scorchers Wilkinson's cabin, had come to hurry up the boys.

(Continued overleaf.)



HIDE THE GOLD, BOYS!

"Hide the Gold!" cried Captain Bones. "Look! At the Porthole! The man with the yellow face!" All eyes turned to the open port to which he pointed a quivering finger—but no face showed at the scuttle!

This must have landed in Gus' ribs, for he gave an angry squirm.

"Now look here," said Goadger, in threatening tones, "there is a story about the decks that you have got a stowaway hidden up here. And I'm going to see about it. What's in this sack?"

He shouted the words in an angry roar.

"It's not a stowaway," said Dick—"it's our pet crocodile!"

Goadger laughed disbelievingly.

"Don't you give me any of your gammon about crocodiles!" he snarled.

"Who ever heard of a pet crocodile? We think you've stowed away some gutter-snipe pal of yours in this sack, and we are going to have him out of it and give him a jolly good hiding before he's put ashore with the pilot. Then we'll attend to you!"

He seized the mouth of the great canvas bag roughly and gave it another kick.

"That's one for your chum inside the sack!" he grinned. Then he turned to his gang. "Come on, Tilly!" he growled.

"Never mind those lilywhite hands of yours! Lend us a hand to unlash it!"

Victor Tilly, an exquisitely-dressed youth who was apparently the bully's particular hanger-on, looked with distaste at the rough tarry rope with which the sack was secured.

"Aw, I say, Goadgy!" he protested. "I don't want to mess up my hands with that beastly tar stuff. It's just on lunch-time!"

Goadger kicked the sack again as he wrestled with the tough knots in the dressed rope. "That'll stir him up!" he snarled.

"Aw, I say, upon my word, Goady, you are pwiselessly funny!" giggled Tilly. "I shall fairly seweam when we see that chap's face!"

"Well, here he comes!" said Goadger, who had opened the neck of the sack and was pulling out handful after handful of tow. "That stuff is camouflage. I can hear him moving round in the sack!"

He thrust his arm down through the rubbish.

"Now I've got you, my lad!" he yelled triumphantly. "Out you come for the

turned away, surrounded by his sympathising pals.

The bugle for lunch rang out along the decks. The cricket-bag was brought forth, and Gus was hastily pitched into it and secured.

"Now," said Skeleton, rubbing his bony hands—"now we will hurry and bag our seats for lunch. I feel absolutely peckish. It must be the sight of Gus chewing Goadger that's given me such a twist!"

Captain Bones takes a Hand!

Off the boys trooped to lunch, and Skeleton distinguished himself in his usual style. Pigeon-pie, tongue, ham, salad, cheese, and pastry melted away like a dream as they were placed before him.

The bullies had got a table to themselves. Goadger was sitting there nursing a bandaged wrist, and looking as black as thunder, and now and then he directed meaning glances at the table which Skeleton had secured as the mess of the Glory Hole Gang.

The boys had taken up their old quarters in the large cabin known as the Glory Hole, and already it was being whispered about in the great saloon that these were none other than the famous "Glory Hole Gang" of the previous voyage of the Bombay Castle.

At a neighbouring table sat a dozen boys who did not mix with any other boys in the ship. They were the swells of St. Winifred's, the most exclusive scholastic establishment in England.

They looked round the saloon with inquiring glances, and three of their number surreptitiously produced single eyeglasses to assist them to read the menu. When they addressed one another it was with consummate politeness, and Chip lifted his eyebrows when one remarked audibly:

"What an awful gubby, sebubby lot of fellas! Aubwey, deah boy, will you be so awfully good as to—aw—pawss the buttah?"

But the swells of St. Winifred's were apparently quite harmless. They were beautifully clothed, and they prided themselves on their "form" above all things.

was tea-time, and the boys were not unmindful of their invitation to tea in Scorchers Wilkinson's cabin.

They ran along to the steerage, and Dick swung open the door of the junk-locker.

There, stretched comfortably on a pile of canvas scraps and cuttings, lay Captain Bones, fast asleep. He had taken off his wooden leg, and his grey head, with its long, white elf locks, was resting tranquilly on the hard corner of the steel box in which he kept his charts and plans of the Skull Island treasure.

"Wake up, Captain Bones!" cried Dick Dorrington.

Captain Bones sat up with a start and stared around him wildly.

He grabbed at his wooden leg, and brandished it as a weapon.

And as he sat there, with the black patch over his eye, he reminded the boys strangely of the great little Admiral Nelson, to whom he bore a strong resemblance.

"It's all right, captain," said Dick reassuringly to the half-sleeping pirate.

"It's only us. We've come to take you along to tea with Scorchers Wilkinson. He's the second master."

"Ay," said Captain Bones drowsily. "It's you, boys, is it? I was dreaming I was back in the old South Seas, and that some o' you head-hunting niggers from Malaita was after me. I'm an old, old man, lads, and my head is full o' dreams!"

He started to strap on his wooden leg.

"You can show up now!" said Dick triumphantly. "We are out of sight of land, and the captain won't have to send you ashore. The pilot has gone, and we are off. We don't touch anywhere till we reach the Panama Canal."

Captain Bones seemed to come to life.

"Panama!" he exclaimed. "The Spanish Main! That was the place, boys, in the old days o' Morgan and Kidd. That was the place in the days when the jolly buccaners singed the King o' Spain's beard twice a week, and took the tall ships, and dressed in silks and satins, with gold chains and jewels in their ears."

SKULL ISLAND!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Ay, ay, my rooster!" grumbled Captain Bones, his blind eye glowing. "This is the real Obi stick, given to old Bones by a Mandingo king. 'Twas sixty years ago when I sailed the West Coast, and twenty years before that I had saved that same king from being treated as ye were treating yon little curly boy. I'll teach ye to torture mothers' babes! Jump, ye liver-faced swab!"

The stick was jerked in the air, and with a howl Goadger, as though impelled by some magic power, leaped into the air like a performing dog.

And every time he jumped the tooth jumped, too.

The tears were running down the bully's face. But he had to leap into the air at every lift of that beckoning Obi stick.

Then Captain Bones took off his battered old three-cornered hat, which, with his patched eye, gave him so strange a likeness to Admiral Horatio Nelson. His exertions seemed to have made him hot, for he pulled out a silk bandana handkerchief from the great pockets of his skirted coat.

He wiped the inside of his hat and clapped it on his white elflocks jauntily.

Then he slipped the Obi stick under his left arm, like a sergeant-major addressing an unruly recruit, shaking a threatening finger before the astonished Goadger's nose.

"Hark ye, Jack Goadger, my bully boy!" growled Captain Bones. "No more twisting of children's arms! No more racking, no more knocking of heads, or by the piper that played before Moses and the power of the great Obi stick, I'll make thee dance to such a tune that thy feet will drop off! Has the tooth stopped aching?"

The tooth had stopped aching as though by magic, just as Goadger stopped dancing immediately the dread Obi stick had been clapped under Captain Bones' arm.

"Yes, it's stopped," he growled sullenly.

"Stopped, sir!" corrected Captain Bones, still keeping that strange blind eye fixed on the bully as though he could see him.

"Sir!" faltered the bully, as the captain's withered hand strayed again towards the handle of the Obi stick.

"That's better!" said the captain, grinning. "Now, off with thee, and remember thy warning!"

The glow in that blind eye died out, and Goadger, all of a sudden, felt as though a magnetic current had been switched off. He turned and simply bolted, whilst the astonished fag, almost scared out of his life by the strange scene he had witnessed, gathered himself up from the deck and prepared to run.

But the captain called him, with a flourish of the compelling Obi stick, and the kid was perforce obliged to return.

"Come hither, little one!" said Captain Bones kindly. "Thy name?"

"Please, sir, Arty Bolden!" lisped the fag.

"Bolden by name, thou shalt be bold 'un by nature!" responded the captain genially. "Thou art yet young for the rough usages of the sea. But, zooks! thou art no younger than was our incomparable Vice-Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson when he took to the sea, nor more delicate than yon frail little body which held so great a heart. Thou shalt be great-hearted, Arty!"

"Yes, sir!" said the astonished fag, who, after the wonders he had seen, was quite prepared to agree to anything which Captain Bones might be pleased to say.

"And the next that seeketh to injure thee, prop him on the nose!" said the captain, rubbing his hands and grinning gleefully.

"Yes, sir!" replied Arty, with a new boldness. As that blind eye rested on him little Arty Bolden felt a sudden tingling all over him. He felt good and strong, as though he could have lifted a hundred-weight on one finger. He wanted to slap his chest and sing.

The tea-bugle rang out along the decks.

"There goes the mess-bugle! Run, little one!" said the captain.

Arty bolted off, but he had not gone four yards before the strange influence of Captain Bones was put to the test.

The door of a deck-cabin opened, and out of it was thrust the head of Smarler, one of the bully gang from St. Chilpheric's. Smarler was unpacking, and trying to settle down.

"Hi, you kid!" he yelled. "Come here! I want you!"

Little Arty stopped in his run and turned, whilst Captain Bones, Lal Tata, and the boys watched proceedings.

Smarler had not noticed them, and the strange little figure of Captain Bones was hidden behind them.

"Please, sir," said Arty politely, "I am going to tea. If I don't go now I sha'n't get any," he added.

"You don't want any tea!" retorted Smarler savagely. "I've never seen such a lot of kids as there are on this ship! Come and clear up my cabin, or I'll give you such a clobbering that you won't be able to sit down this side of the Panama Canal!"

"But I'm not your fag, sir!" said Arty politely. "I'm Mr. Goadger's fag!"

For a moment Smarler glared at the child in speechless astonishment. That a nursery kid with the jam hardly wiped from his mouth should dare to stick up to him, Smarler of St. Chilpheric's, was almost beyond belief.

He reached out a long arm and grabbed Arty by the ear with a savage twist.

"You come in here!" said he, dragging him towards the cabin door. "I'll give

you a little touch-up with a hairbrush. Hair-drill, we called it at St. Chilpheric's. After that we'll see whose fag you are!"

But behind his friends Captain Bones had lifted the Obi stick.

In response to its wave through the air Arty Bolden, almost involuntarily, lifted his fist and punched the bully on the nose.

It was no timid blow. It was a real, good, old-fashioned punch, with a bit of meaning behind it. It flattened the bully's nose like a lump of soft rubber.

He dropped Arty like a red-hot coal and clapped his hand to his proboscis, which began to flow with red blood. Arty had tapped the claret of a fellow three times his own weight!

And Arty danced on the deck defiantly, hardly conscious of what he was saying.

What he did say was:

"You monkey-faced hoodoo! Touch me again, and I'll knock the sawdust out of you! I'm Arty Bolden, I am, alias Jimmy Wilde, the featherweight of the Bombay Castle!" And Arty leaped into the air, clicking his heels.

"Come out of that cabin, cowardly cussard!" he squeaked. "Come out, and I'll wipe the deck with you! I'm the man-eating boy! I'm the terror of the Lower First!"

But the stricken and astonished Smarler had dropped the curtain over the door of his cabin, and made no response to the wild kid's challenges.

Arty would have gone into the cabin and dragged him out, but as he moved to the door to do so Captain Bones gave another little shake of the Obi stick.

Then Arty stopped and looked round him, as though he had just wakened from a dream, passing the cuff of his sleeve across his eyes.

Then off he ran, chasing up the other fags who were streaming out of the deck-cabins, slapping them, punching them, and chucking caps into open cabin doors, thoroughly well pleased with himself, and quite unconscious that he had left one of the heaviest bullies in the ship bleeding into his washbasin from that well-directed punch on the nose.

Mr. Lal Tata had watched these remarkable scenes without saying a word. But as the little group marched along the deck he fell in behind with Dick.

"Dick," said he, "this is most remarkable old man! He has great powers of hypnotism. That Obi stick is all bunk-someness, all tosh, all unckseydoodleums! But he is great hypnotist, though blind. See how he make the bully Goadger to suffer pains in the tooth! See how he gave courage to little Artee to give great kick-punch to Smarler's nose! And behold the great fears of Smarler! He is most astonished, and his liver has turned to water. I do not like this St. Chilpheric's crowd on board. They are bad lots!" added Lal.

"I think so, too," agreed Dick.

"Where did you find this Captain Bones?" pursued Lal.

Dick told the story of the captain and his treasure, and Lal shook his head.

"He is most remarkable mans!" said he.

Dick now began to understand why the old pirate had been in such a funk lest Goadger should catch him tied up in the sack. He could not then have brought that strange, hypnotic eye to bear upon the bully.

But now they had reached the door of Scorchers' Wilkinson's cabin.

Chip tapped at it loudly.

"Come in!" called Scorchers.

He was sitting there in his cap and gown, and Captain Handyman, smoking a long cigar, was perched on the top of a chest of drawers.

"Come in, boys!" called the captain. "Have you brought your little friend with you?"

Captain Bones, rather timidly, stepped into the cabin, tapping the brass-bound sill of the doorway with his stick and stepping neatly over it.

Scorchers received him most politely.

"Take a seat, Captain Bones!" said he, indicating a basket-chair. "I understand that you are a retired-pirate, who has been stowed away on this ship by the boys?"

Captain Bones grinned. He evidently liked Scorchers' voice.

"Ay, ay, sir! I was a sort of pirate once," he replied, "but I've mended my ways. Not that I ever sailed under the Jolly Roger. But I was along o' Bully Hayes an' Ross Leewin, an' Captain Nick Death, the King o' the Black-birders, and that's near enough to piratin'."

"How old are you, Captain Bones?" asked Scorchers, regarding the prim little Nelsonic figure in the chair.

"I was born in Wapping, as near as I know, sir, in 1818, so I'm near a hundred years old, or thereabouts," replied Captain Bones. "But I wasn't a-goin' to die till I'd sniffed the South Seas again. An' when these young gents came into my little shop and told me they was off to the South Seas in twenty minutes' time, says I to myself, says I, 'Bones, my boy, now's your chance or never, and who takes old Bones to the South Sea, he shall share the gold of Skull Island!'"

And Captain Bones pointed with his Obi stick to the steel box which the boys had placed upon the cabin table.

"Well," said Scorchers Wilkinson, smiling, "first of all, Captain Bones, we will have a cup of tea. Perhaps, being a pirate, you would like a little rum in your tea?" he added. "You must forgive me if I have omitted it. But I have never had a pirate to tea before."

Captain Bones grinned and shook his head.

"Thankee kindly, sir," said he, "but rum and I parted company years ago. If it hadn't been for the rum I would have been rolling in my carriage these fifty years!"

He paused suddenly.

Cho-Foo, Mr. Wilkinson's Chinese boy,

soft-footed and almond-eyed, entered the cabin with the tea-tray.

Cho-Foo silently set out the tea equipment and retired.

"I don't want to talk about the treasure before them Chinks!" explained Captain Bones, helping himself to a sugared cake. "Chinks is Chinks all the world over, and when you are dealing with treasure you can't be too careful. I take it that we are the treasure-party in here?"

"I want no share in the treasure," replied Scorchers, pouring out the tea, "but I am greatly interested in Spanish coins and old gold pieces of any sort, and if you find this wonderful island I would like to have the privilege of buying the rarest of the coins and objects of value for the British Museum."

Captain Bones chuckled.

"I like the yellow boys myself," said he. "But I take interest in good British sovereigns. There's no coin like 'em. He thrust his hand in his pocket, and, producing a canvas bag, shot its contents in a yellow flood on the table.

"There's all the stuff I brought away from Skull Island," said he, "and there's tons of it still on the island!"

Scorchers' face was a picture as he surveyed the mass of gold coins, large and small, which the old pirate had poured out on the table.

The first coin he picked up was a gold piece of the mint of Edward III. of England, a rose noble of the value of six shillings and eightpence, which is still the standard of a lawyer's fee. Of English gold coins he picked out the first sovereigns and half-sovereigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. There were gold moldores, pieces of eight, doubloons, and ducats. There were gold mohurs and lumps of stamped gold shaped like squares of chocolate, coined by the Aztecs of Mexico, and stamped with the twisted serpent of the Montezumas.

It was a perfect museum of coins of all nations and many reigns which had poured out of Captain Bones' bag. But none of them were of a later date than the reign of Elizabeth, which gave support to the old man's story of the mutiny of the tall Lima galleons.

It was a real sample from a pirate hoard, and Scorchers gazed in wonderment at this strange stowaway.

"The coins are most interesting, Captain Bones. I don't want to ask any secrets, if you don't want to tell them. But where is Skull Island, and how did you happen to find it?"

Captain Bones turned his blind eye pathetically on Scorchers.

"I don't know where the island is, sir," he replied, "not within three thousand miles, for this was the way of my finding it. I was sailing as foremast hand to Captain Nick Death on a recruiting voyage. We was recruiting native labour round the Kingsmill Islands, which they call the Gilberts. Maybe the captain of this ship, who is sitting here on the chest, will call to mind the name o' Captain Nicholas Death."

Captain Handyman started. He had not said a word since the old pirate had entered the cabin, but had sat there smoking his cigar, quietly watching proceedings with interested eyes.

"I remember the name of Captain Nick Death," said he, "the biggest ruffian who ever sailed the South Seas! He got drowned on the Chago Reef in the wreck of the schooner Magellan Cloud. All hands were on a drinking bout, and they couldn't see the reef for rum. And they were all drowned but one, who was a teetotaller, being a Mohammedan."

Captain Bones nodded.

"That's the story!" said he approvingly. "I knew ye'd know it, cappen."

"But how did you know that I was sitting on this chest, Captain Bones?" asked Captain Handyman curiously.

"You say you are blind. And I've neither spoken nor moved since you entered this cabin!"

Captain Bones chuckled.

"I've the sixth sense instead o' mine eyes, captain!" said he. "It tells me how many people there are in a room, and I can count the presences. As for knowing it was you, I know that it is only you amongst the shipmen who smokes the strong Burma cheroots—the same sort that laid out the Customs Officer who tried to smoke it. We've heard o' your cheroots round the docks, captain, and I've often smelled your smoke as you passed out at the dock gates. D'ye mind when you gave one to the dock policeman, and he said that he'd save it up and smoke it on Christmas Day? He knew a bit—that policeman!"

Captain Handyman laughed at the way the cunning old chap had put two and two together, but he felt a strange uneasiness as the blind eye, that shone like an opal in the shadows of the cabin, turned in his direction.

"Ay!" said the old pirate, helping himself to another sweet-cake. "I was aboard the Magellan Cloud in the 'sixties with Nick Death. We was pinching niggers, and callin' it recruitin' labour. And it was from the Magellan Cloud that I was put on Skull Island."

"How did that happen?" asked Captain Handyman.

"It started with a hurricane, captain," replied Captain Bones, "and we ran before it for eight days, scudding under bare poles. There was a sure judgment on the Magellan Cloud. She was a hoodoo ship, and the strong arm o' the Lord was even then reaching out for her. Then, when the hurricane died away, small-pox broke out amongst the niggers who were shut down in the hold—for the ship, ye'll understand, was no better than a slaver."

Captain Handyman nodded and grunted. He knew the history of the blackbirding trade in the South Seas, which has now happily been nearly stamped out, and he knew that these small schooners, engaged in the nefarious traffic, would often load up a hundred natives in the small holds that would have found proper accommodation for thirty souls.

"The small-pox broke out!" said Cap-

tain Bones, with a grin, "and me with three others went down to look after the niggers in the hold, for Captain Nick Death was quaking in his cowardly shoes. He was a man that feared neither God nor man, but he feared small-pox."

And Captain Bones helped himself to another sugar-cake to fortify himself against the recollection of the stricken ship.

"The niggers died like flies," said he, "and a great calm fell after the hurricane. The sharks followed us by scores as we pitched the bodies over. And, when all the niggers had died, I and my three mates, all Englishmen, took the fever."

Then he turned his glowing blind eye on Captain Handyman.

"Then what d'ye think that dirty skunk Nick Death did to us poor souls?" he demanded fiercely.

"Well," replied Captain Handyman, "if all reports concerning Nick Death were true, he'd have chucked you after the niggers."

"And that's what he would have done," responded Captain Bones fiercely, "but an island hove up, and he had us rowed ashore and dumped there with a bag of biscuits and a keg o' water to die or get well!"

And Captain Bones scowled at the thought.

"My mates all died," said he, "but I got over it. I'm tough, I am, and it'll take more than a small-pox fever to kill off old Cappen Bones! But I lost my right eye with the small-pox, and bit by bit, as the years went on, the light faded out o' t'other."

He paused for a while, and was silent. Then he chuckled grimly.

"Nick Death didn't know that, when he dumped us ashore under the palm-trees on yon desert island, he dumped us down on top o' one of the treasure-chambers of the world!" grinned Captain Bones. "But when I went to bury my poor mates, Ned Jones o' Goole, Charlie Pilcher o' Plymouth, and Macintyre, who was a Scottie from Glasgow Broomielaw, the first thing I dug up was this half skull, and three feet under the ground lay the treasure. I'd only a broken scull to dig their graves with, and I buried them close by. Then I went crazy for a while. I couldn't stand the island which was shaped like a skull. I couldn't stand the sun. I used to dig up the treasure and bury it again, and play with the golden coins like a child, laughin' and cryin' to think that I had so much money to spend and no shops to spend it on!"

"Then the gulls got to screaming and shouting about me. They'd come swoopin' round my poor head, 'Bones!' they used to say. 'Jack Bones, you are going to die! Hi, hi, hi! Jack Bones, you are our meat! We are the drowned sailormen who live on dead sailormen! Hi, hi, hi!'"

Captain Bones stared in front of him as though he only saw the dreadful island of his dreams.

"Then I think a canoe must have come drifting to the island—a native canoe broke away from some other island," he muttered. "It must be drifted a thousand miles across the sea, for it was covered with weed. But it was tight. So I got in it with my broken scull, and paddled away from the island to get away from the gulls what was chippin' me. I'd got this gold in a bag, an' they followed me miles out to sea till sunset came, and they flew back to roost on Skull Island. Then I must have gone off my nut, for the next I know was that I was in hospital at Sydney. An honest captain had found me driftin' and crazy, and he brought me to Australia, and, what's more, he didn't pinch my bag of gold. They gave it me when I left th' hospital, and, though my hair was black as ink when I went on Skull Island, it was white as snow when I came away!"

The old fellow sat silent, and shaking nervously when he had finished his story, and all eyes were turned on him curiously.

There was no doubt that he was telling the truth.

For a moment he sat there as though in a dream. Then, of a sudden, he jumped from his chair and grabbed at the gold on the table.

"Hide the gold, boys! Hide the gold!" he cried. "Look! At the porthole—the porthole—the man with the yellow face!"

All eyes were turned to the port to which he pointed a quivering finger.

It was one of three scuttles in the cabin, and the brass-screw fastening was unscrewed, and the port was open.

But no face showed at the scuttle.

The boys ran outside the cabin, and looked round as, with shaking hands, Captain Bones gathered up the gold pieces and shovelled them back in the canvas bag.

But there was no one about in the neighbourhood of the cabin.

The man with the yellow face had been seen only by the man who was blind.

(Another magnificent long instalment of this thrilling new serial in next week's Boys' Friend. Don't fail to order your copy early.)

"Now stop butting, and come and sit down," said Bob Travers, with a cheery smile.

"Oh, rather!" chorused the others. And Wilson, too dumbfounded to offer any resistance, allowed himself to be forced into a chair.

Tea commenced, and a very pleasant meal it proved to be.

By the time the meal was over, Wilson had brightened up wonderfully, and, judging by his conversation, he seemed to be determined to run straight in future.

As for Jack Turner, Dicky had no longer any reason to doubt his brother, more especially after his brother's heroic rescue and Wilson's confession. Jack had learned lesson from his past misdeeds, and during the rest of that term he was quite one of the most popular fellows in the Fourth.

He obtained a place in the junior cricket eleven, and when, in the match with Bagshot, he carried his bat out for a meritorious 75, he was quite the hero of the hour.

He was carried shoulder-high to the pavilion by the excited Fourth-Formers—an honour that he had certainly never expected to receive on his arrival at the school, when there had seemed every prospect of his remaining the Scapegrace of Redclyffe!

THE END.

THE SCAPEGRACE OF REDCLYFFE.

(Concluded from last week.)

A second or so later Bob and Dicky drifted up.

They had to manipulate their boat carefully, to prevent it from being drawn towards the weir.

But they succeeded, and as their boat, after being turned away from the weir, shot along in the direction of the tree, Dicky shouted at the top of his voice: "Grab hold of the boat! Grab anywhere you can!"

Jack, although almost at his last gasp, waited and watched, and, timing his action to a nicety, he clutched at the gunwale of the boat, and was drawn swiftly through the water.

At last the boat grounded on the sandy bank.

Dicky made a frantic grab at the painter and leaped ashore.

He held on tight, whilst Bob took charge of Wilson's helpless figure.

Jack staggered up the bank. His face was as white as a sheet, and he was fairly panting for breath.

His eyes closed, and he fell backwards. Dicky was only just in time to prevent his brother from crashing to the ground.

He grabbed at him, and held him tightly in his arms.

Bob Travers came up, carrying the unconscious Wilson over his shoulder.

He gave Dicky a serious look.

"Better get them back to Redclyffe," he said quietly. "The sooner they're examined by a doctor the better."

A moment later Bob and Dicky set out for Redclyffe at a quick pace, bearing on their shoulders the forms of the unconscious juniors.

"Wilson and Turner come out of sanny to-day!"

It was a week after Jack Turner's gallant rescue of the cad of the Fourth. Both the rescued junior and his rescuer had been bad after their terrifying experiences, and the doctor had visited them each day in the sanatorium.

But now they were on the mend, and the news that they were about to leave the sanatorium spread throughout the Fourth.

There was a magnificent spread on the table of Study No. 5 when tea-time arrived.

Bob Travers was busily engaged on cutting bread-and-butter, whilst Dicky Turner was grumbling because the kettle would not boil quick enough for him.

Suddenly the door of the study opened, and Jack Turner, still looking somewhat pale and drawn, walked in.

The three chums gave him cheery smiles. Bob Travers shook the cushion in the easy-chair, and pointed towards it.

"Come along, old son," he said, "and sit down!"

"Oh, all right!" said Jack, smiling; and he sat down.

Dicky placed the teapot on the table.

"Now I think we're ready," he said. "Draw up, Jack, old son!"

Jack did not move; he was looking deadly serious.

"I—I wonder whether you fellows would care to do me a favour?" he asked slowly.

"A favour!" exclaimed Dicky. "What—"

"I should be awfully glad if you fellows would ask that chap Wilson to come along," he said. "I had a good old jay with him in sanny, and, candidly, I shouldn't care to be in his shoes. He hasn't a friend in the Fourth, and—"

Jack paused as there came a tap on the door.

Next instant the door opened, and Wilson, a careworn, anxious expression on his countenance, stepped in.

"I'm sorry to interrupt," he said. "I want to apologise for being a low-down cad." He turned to Dicky Turner. "You remember when you kicked me for listening at the keyhole of your door?"

"You needn't rake that up," said Dicky at once.

"I was jolly wild with you, and I—I thought I'd cause trouble between you and your brother," went on Wilson. "I placed that box of cigarettes in your brother's trunk, and—"

Wilson paused, his face was red from shame.

Bob Travers & Co. were staring at him in amazement.



The 1st Chapter.
Black Louis!

YEN CHIN'S LAST CHANCE

A Splendid New, Complete Story
of FRANK RICHARDS & Co.,
of the School in the Backwoods.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Just in time, old scout!" said Bob. "I guess this is one of the half-breed gang Billy Cook warned us about, Franky. Keep your distance, you scoundrel, or you'll get hurt!"

The half-breed was staring at the rancher's son with a blaze in his black eyes, quivering with rage and pain. The three schoolboys drew closer together. The ruffian was armed and he looked furious enough to attempt to use his weapon.

"Corbleu!" he muttered, between his teeth.

"Do you want any more?" asked Bob disdainfully. "You can't frighten us with your black looks, Mister Lorange. And I warn you that if you play any tricks in this section, you'll hear from the sheriff at Thompson."

"What did he want with you, Beau?" asked Frank, as the sullen half-breed did not speak.

Beaulere shook his head.

"I don't know—unless he's taken a fancy to my horse," he answered. "He had only just stopped me when you came up."

The half-breed stepped back from the trail, muttering to himself. Frank Richards & Co. set their horses in motion

"Velly bad man!" chimed in little Yen Chin, the Chinese. "Playee pokee at Red Dog, kickee up shindy, you bet. Playee pokee in camp in timbee— Oh, velly bad man, oh yes!"

Bob Lawless gave the little Chinese a suspicious look.

"How do you know they play poker in their own camp, you young rascal?" he asked. "Have you been there?"

Yen Chin shook his head.

"No goey—no goey!" he exclaimed, in a great hurry. "Me, Yen Chin, good boy! Gunttee tellee me!"

"Oh, so Guntten goes there, does he?"

"Gunttee velly bad boy!" said Yen Chin. "Me no likee Gunttee. No speakee to him. Me good boy."

"Blessed little humbug!" growled Bob. "If I catch you hanging round their camp, I'll give you the trail-rope, Yen Chin. You've given us trouble enough with your heathen tricks!"

"Me solly!" murmured Yen Chin. "Me velly good boy now!"

"Oh, rats!" said Frank Richards. "Very good boy till the next time, I suppose. Don't forget the trail-rope!"

The chums led in their horses to the corral, Yen Chin blinking after them with a glimmer in his almond eyes. For a few

Frank. "The bell will be going for classes in a few minutes."

"Me go downee in cleeck."

"What?" yelled Frank.

Yen Chin nodded sorrowfully. He looked as if his mind was fully made up. "Downee in cleeck," he said. "Pool li!" Chinese soon be deadee. Me say good-bye to handsome ole Flanky before downee in cleeck."

And Yen Chin turned on the path that led from the school gates towards the creek and started.

Frank Richards stared blankly for a moment or two, and then he darted after the little heathen and grabbed his pigtail. Whatever might be the trouble on Yen Chin's mind, Frank Richards certainly did not intend to let him drown himself in the creek.

"You young ass!" shouted Frank. "Stop!"

"Lettee go, ole Flanky. Me go downee—"

"You silly young ass!" said Frank wrathfully. "Are you trying to pull my leg?"

"No pullee Flanky leg. You pullee my pigtail!" wailed Yen Chin. "Hurtee pool li! Chinese. You lettee go. Oh, yes!"

"Hallo, what's the row?" asked Bob Lawless, coming along with Vere Beaulere towards the gates.

Frank Richards kept a tight grip on Yen Chin's pigtail.

"Allee light," answered Yen Chin. "Me go downee in cleeck. Me say good-bye to handsome Bob."

"Let me catch you drowning yourself in the creek!" answered Bob wrathfully. "I'll give you a jolly good lambasting with a trail-rope! What have you got in your silly heathen noddle now?"

"Chinee velly bad boy," said Yen Chin tearfully.

"We know that already."

"Too badee to live," said the Celestial. "Missy Meadee velly mad with Yen Chin when findee out. So me go downee in cleeck. Oh yes!"

"Keep hold of his pigtail, Frank!"

"You bet!" answered Frank Richards. "Not that I believe he's in earnest, either," growled Bob Lawless. "He's always at some stunt or other. I suppose he's been up to his tricks again, and is afraid of a larruping."

ous as the little Chinese made that startling confession.

"You've stolen somebody's dollars?" exclaimed Vere Beaulere aghast.

"Me velly bad boy."

"You awful young rascal!" said Frank. "Me velly solly; go downee in cleeck."

"You won't drown yourself in the creek, but you'll get a jolly good hiding!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "And you'll take the dollars back at once! Do you hear?"

"No can."

"And why not?"

"Losee dollee; playee piecee card."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

It was no wonder that the little Chinese was in a lugubrious and repentant mood if he had stolen dollars and lost them at cards. The Oriental passion for gambling seemed a part of Yen Chin's nature, and although Frank Richards & Co. had done their best to cure him of it—even to the extent of a friendly application of the trail-rope—Yen Chin was always sure to break out again sooner or later.

"Whose money was it?" asked Frank at last.

"Missy Meadee."

"You—you've stolen money from the schoolmistress?" gasped Frank, in almost helpless dismay.

"Me velly bad boy."

"How much?" asked Bob.

"Twentee dollee."

"And you've lost it?"

"Losee allee lot."

"Great gophers!" said Bob Lawless. "Blessed if I don't think we'd better take him straight to Miss Meadows!"

Yen Chin gave a howl.

"No takee to Missy Meadee. Allee light if me go downee in cleeck."

"Shut up, you little idiot!" said Frank impatiently. "Where did you get the money?"

"Missy Meadee desk."

"Miss Meadows always keeps her desk locked," said Beaulere.

"Me findee key."

The chums of Cedar Creek looked at one another blankly.

More than once—many times, in fact—they had helped Yen Chin out of scrapes, for, little rascal that he was, they made allowances for his heathen training, and for his apparent inability to distinguish between right and wrong. And he had sometimes shown good qualities in his character. Frank Richards had not despaired of making him honest, with plenty of effort, in the long run, though it was an uphill task.

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"Well, the poor little beast is sorry," said Beaulere. "After all, it's not as if he was a white man. But—but what on earth's to be done?"

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"Clang, clang, clang!"

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"Good-bye, Flanky—"

"Come with me, you little idiot!" answered Frank Richards. "We'll see what can be done."

"You no tellee Missy Meadee!" pleaded Yen Chin.

Frank looked at his chums.

"No," he said at last. "We—we'll see what can be done, you awful little rascal. Come in now."

"Flanky velly good handsome ole boy—oh, yes," said Yen Chin contentedly. And he trotted in quite cheerfully with the Co. to afternoon lessons.



TROUBLE IN THE HALF-BREEDS' CAMP! Black Louis made a savage stride towards Bob Lawless, and Billy Cook thrust his rifle forward. "Go slow!" said the ranchman laconically. "I guess you'll find trouble if you don't, my Injun friend!"

again, the trader watching them, as they went, with glittering eyes. Whatever had been his intentions, he apparently did not consider it worth while to try conclusions with the three.

The trio rode on up the trail towards Cedar Creek, and the timber hid them from the eyes of the muttering ruffian.

"I guess you came jolly near to losing your horse, Cherub," remarked Bob Lawless. "If ever a galoot looked like a horse-thief, that galoot does. He won't find it healthy in this section, if that's his game!"

"I suppose that was his game," assented Beaulere. "They will get into trouble if they stay in this section, I fancy. We may as well give the fellows at school a tip to keep out of the timber on this side."

"You bet!"

Chunky Todgers was adorning the gates of Cedar Creek with his fat person, when the three chums rode up. He seemed to be waiting there for Frank Richards & Co. to arrive.

"All O K, you galoots?" he asked, as they dismounted.

"Why shouldn't we be?" answered Frank Richards.

"Then you haven't seen anything of the half-breeds?"

"Oh, you know about them, do you?"

"You bet!" answered Chunky Todgers. "There's a lot of talk about them in the Thompson. Black Louis—man named Lorange—is the king-pin of the gang. They're down from the North-West ranges, and they're a tough crowd. There's talk of hosses missing already."

days, since his gambling escapade with Kern Gunten, of Hillcrest School, Yen Chin had been on his best behaviour—at all events, so far as Frank Richards & Co. had been able to observe. But it was very probable that the little heathen's repentance was not much more than skin-deep.

Frank Richards & Co. found that the traders were the subject of a good deal of talk at the lumber school that day. Black Louis and his crowd had camped in the timber on their way back to the North-West, after a trading round of the settlements, and they were not the kind of neighbours the good folk of the Thompson Valley desired. And all Cedar Creek agreed that the sooner Black Louis & Co. took the trail for the North-West the better it would be for everybody concerned.

The 2nd Chapter. Yen Chin's Confession!

"Flanky!"

"Hallo, kid?"

"Good-bye, Flanky!"

Frank Richards looked curiously at Yen Chin, the little Chinese of Cedar Creek School.

Yen Chin's little yellow face wore the most lugubrious of expressions, and his almond eyes were sad and sorrowful.

He seemed to be in the lowest depths of doleful dumps.

"Good-bye, Flanky!" repeated Yen Chin.

"Where are you going, then?" asked

"What's the matter, kid?" asked Beaulere.

Yen Chin sighed deeply. It was evident that something weighed very heavily on his conscience, which was not a new experience for Yen Chin of Cedar Creek. The heathen's ways were not as the white man's ways, and Yen Chin, though he had his good points, was a pretty thorough young rascal in a good many respects.

"Get it off your chest!" said Frank Richards encouragingly. "Have you been gambling again, you young rascal?"

"Playee piecee card," confessed Yen Chin.

"You young scallywag!" growled Bob. "Didn't I promise you the trail-rope if you played poker again?"

"You promised not to, Yen Chin," said Frank.

"Chinee keepee promise," said Yen Chin. "No playee pokee. Playee euchre."

"Well, that comes to the same thing. Does Miss Meadows know?"

"No knowee yet."

"Well, she needn't know," said Frank. "We'll keep it dark; not that you need have told us. And don't do it again!"

"Never no mole!" said Yen Chin. "Downee in cleeck. Chinee velly bad boy. Playee euchre, and losee all money. Stonee bloke!"

"Serve you right!"

"Me knowee," said the little Celestial. "Chinee velly bad. Me tief!"

"What?"

"Steealee piecee dollee."

Frank Richards & Co. became very seri-

ous as the little Chinese made that startling confession.

"You've stolen somebody's dollars?" exclaimed Vere Beaulere aghast.

"Me velly bad boy."

"You awful young rascal!" said Frank. "Me velly solly; go downee in cleeck."

"You won't drown yourself in the creek, but you'll get a jolly good hiding!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "And you'll take the dollars back at once! Do you hear?"

"No can."

"And why not?"

"Losee dollee; playee piecee card."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

It was no wonder that the little Chinese was in a lugubrious and repentant mood if he had stolen dollars and lost them at cards. The Oriental passion for gambling seemed a part of Yen Chin's nature, and although Frank Richards & Co. had done their best to cure him of it—even to the extent of a friendly application of the trail-rope—Yen Chin was always sure to break out again sooner or later.

"Whose money was it?" asked Frank at last.

"Missy Meadee."

"You—you've stolen money from the schoolmistress?" gasped Frank, in almost helpless dismay.

"Me velly bad boy."

"How much?" asked Bob.

"Twentee dollee."

"And you've lost it?"

"Losee allee lot."

"Great gophers!" said Bob Lawless. "Blessed if I don't think we'd better take him straight to Miss Meadows!"

Yen Chin gave a howl.

"No takee to Missy Meadee. Allee light if me go downee in cleeck."

"Shut up, you little idiot!" said Frank impatiently. "Where did you get the money?"

"Missy Meadee desk."

"Miss Meadows always keeps her desk locked," said Beaulere.

"Me findee key."

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The 3rd Chapter. The Way Out.

Frank Richards & Co. had plenty of food for thought that afternoon—not all furnished by the invaluable instruction they were receiving from Miss Meadows. Yen Chin and his crime weighed heavily on their minds.

Somehow they felt a sense of responsibility for the wretched little heathen. They had chipped in vigorously to break off his connection with Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy of Hillcrest, for his own good. Not that Gunten of Hillcrest felt anything like friendship for the little Celestial, whom he despised as a "Chow." Yen Chin's passion for gambling made him an easy victim of the unscrupulous Swiss, and the chums more than suspected that Gunten did not even give his victim a "square deal" with the cards.

Yen Chin's confession seemed to indicate that he had been gambling again with the Swiss, and that thought made the Co. bitterly angry. Yen Chin was a benighted heathen, but Gunten knew better, and his own schoolfellows were as much down on him as Frank Richards & Co. Only a few days before Yen Chin had extracted money from the Co. by an elaborate series of falsehoods, and they had discovered that it was for the purpose of playing poker with the Swiss.

Now the young rascal had apparently gone a step farther. That source of wealth having dried up, he had helped himself—at least, that was his own statement. And if he had lost the money it could not be replaced; and even if it could have been replaced, the chums doubted whether they had a right to keep the matter secret and shield a thief.

"I shall do nothing of the sort!" answered Beaulere angrily. "And if you do not release my rein at once, I shall use my whip, I warn you."

The half-breed's eyes gleamed.

He dropped one hand to his belt, where the haft of a long hunting-knife was visible. Whether he intended to draw the weapon or not, he had no time. Frank Richards and Bob Lawless came dashing up, and Bob reached out with his whip, lashing at the half-breed's arms with the heavy butt.

Crack!

Louis Lorange uttered a howl of pain, as he received that sudden and unexpected crack on the elbow. His arm dropped to his side, and he released Beaulere's rein, and spun round. Bob and Frank drew in their horses.

It was no wonder that Miss Meadows found them somewhat absent-minded in class, and was rather sharp with them that afternoon. They could not help thinking of what would happen if the schoolmistress went to her desk and missed the money.

Glad enough were the three when the class was dismissed at last. They joined Yen Chin in the playground. The little Chinese was looking very lugubrious, but his eyes watched their faces with curious intention. He seemed to have forgotten his intention of "downing" himself in the creek.

"You tinkee what do, nicey ole Bob?" he asked. "Blessed if I know what to do," answered Bob Lawless gruffly. "I suppose it was Gunten you've been gambling with?"

"Me velly bad boy," said Yen Chin humbly. "Was it Gunten?" demanded Bob. "Gunttee velly bad boy."

"Will you answer my question, you heathen? Tell me whether it was Gunten won the money from you?" "Oh, yes," said Yen Chin, driven to a direct reply at last.

"The awful rotter!" said Frank Richards, setting his teeth. "Last week we made him hand back what he'd got out of this little idiot, and now—"

"We'll do the same again," said Beauclerc. Yen Chin looked alarmed. "No speakee to Gunttee!" he exclaimed. "Why not?" snapped Bob.

"Me no wantee." "It doesn't matter a rap what you want. If Gunten's got the money, he's got to refund it."

"But—but—" stammered Yen Chin. "Well, but what?" The Chinese blinked helplessly at the chums. Evidently he was nonplussed, and dismayed, too, at the idea of Gunten being asked for the money.

"Suppose—suppose—" he stammered. "Well, suppose what?" grunted Bob. "Suppose Miss Meadee goee desk, finde money gonee!" mumbled Yen Chin.

"Velly angly." Bob knitted his brows. "I—suppose she might miss the money any time," he muttered. "Oh, you awful little villain! There may be no time to get it back from Gunten before—" He paused.

"Me go dlownee in cleek—" "Oh, shut up!" said Bob irritably. "Enough of that, Yen Chin," said Beauclerc quietly. "Talk sense. The question is, what's to be done?"

"Me knowee." "Well?" "Nicey ole Bob givee me twentee dollee, and me puttee in desk, allee samee," suggested Yen Chin. "Then allee light."

"We've not got twenty dollars," said Frank Richards. "Borrow him," suggested Yen Chin. The three chums looked at the Chinese and at one another. Yen Chin seemed to be satisfied that theirs were the right shoulders to bear the burden.

"Borrow the money!" repeated Bob. "I—suppose we could do that. But—but— Look here, Yen Chin, if we raise the money, and trust to getting it back from Gunten, will you go straight to Miss Meadows and confess what you've done, and hand her the dollars?"

"Miss Meadee velly angly with pool lil' Chinee." "You've done wrong—awful wrong, Yen Chin," said Frank Richards quietly. "You don't seem to understand it, but what you've done is a crime. It's up to you to confess to Miss Meadows, and hand the money back. If we find the money, will you do it?"

The little heathen's eyes glimmered for a moment. "Flanky tinkee all lightee if, do?" he asked. "Yes, yes."

"Me do as nicey ole Flanky say." "Well, I suppose that's good enough," said Bob Lawless. "Give Miss Meadows the money, and tell her you're sorry, and hope for the best. It's the only thing now. And we'll see you go into her room, too, you young rascal."

"Me goey." "Wait here for us," said Frank. The Cedar Creek fellows were starting for home, and there was no time to lose. In their own possession the chums had half the amount required, and it was necessary to borrow ten dollars.

Fortunately, their credit was good at the lumber school. Tom Lawrence, Dick Dawson, and Hopkins had the honour of making contributions—to be paid back the following week. And the chums rejoined Yen Chin, with the whole sum of twenty dollars in their possession.

The Celestial's almond eyes glittered at the sight of the money. Bob Lawless took him by the pigtail. "Now you'll come to Miss Meadows," he said. "We'll see you as far as her door."

"Nicey ole Bob!" murmured Yen Chin. "Oh, dry up with your soft sawder!" grunted Bob. He led the Chinese into the lumber school; Yen Chin was not exactly to be trusted. Bob Lawless tapped at the door of Miss Meadows' sitting-room.

"Come in!" came the voice of the schoolmistress. "Go in!" whispered Bob. Yen Chin nodded, and entered the sitting-room, closing the door after him. Bob rejoined his chums outside the building.

"All right now," he said. "I've landed him with Miss Meadows. We'll wait till he comes out." And Frank Richards & Co. waited, somewhat troubled in mind by the heavy financial liability they had incurred, but feeling that they had done the best thing possible under the circumstances.

They would not have felt so satisfied on that point, however, if they could have witnessed the interview between Yen Chin and the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek. Well as they knew the deceptiveness of the little heathen, they were far from fathoming Yen Chin's duplicity on this occasion.

"What is it, Yen Chin?" asked the Canadian schoolmistress kindly, as the little Chinese presented himself. "Yen Chin velly sorry—" "What have you done?"

"Me losee nicey ole book Missy Meadee givee me," said Yen Chin tearfully. "Losee nicey ole book in cleek. Me velly bad boy."

Miss Meadows smiled. "That is not very serious, my boy," she answered. "Me velly bad boy. You givee me stickee."

"Not at all. I shall give you another book," said Miss Meadows kindly. "You will take more care of this one, Yen Chin?"

"Me takee velly gleet care. Missy Meadee velly good to pool lil' Chinee." "Which book was it, Yen Chin?" "Jolaphy."

"Oh, geography." "Nicey ole jolaphy bookee." Miss Meadows rose, and selected a new schoolbook from a shelf and handed it to the Chinese.

"Me tanky Missy Meadee velly muchee!" murmured Yen Chin gratefully. And he tucked the book away inside his loose garments, and left the schoolmistress' sitting-room. Outside the door he grinned and gave a silent chuckle. But his yellow face was very serious as he joined the chums, waiting for him in the porch. Arrived there, he rubbed his hands together hard, and sobbed a little.

"Well?" said Frank Richards. "Allee light!" moaned Yen Chin. "Me givee money, and Missy Meadee velly mad with pool lil' Chinee. Givee me muchee stickee!"

"Well, if that's all you've got, you've got off cheap," said Frank Richards, with a deep breath of relief. "You'd better keep straight after this, Yen Chin."

"Me keepee velly stlaight." "And now we'll get off to Thompson and see Gunten," said Bob Lawless grimly. "He owes us twenty dollars. What are you grinning at, Yen Chin, you Chinese image?"

"Me feelee velly happy now allee light!" "Better keep it all right, then, now it is all right. Come on, you chaps! You're going home our way, Yen Chin. Come on!"

"Me comee with nicey ole Bob!" The four schoolboys rode away together, last out of the gates ere Black Sam closed them for the night. They rode up the Thompson trail; but Yen Chin soon dropped behind. Frank Richards looked back at him.

"Get a move on, kid!" he called out. "Pool ole hoss tired," answered Yen Chin. "Allee light—me follow!" "Right-ho!"

Frank Richards & Co. rode on at a gallop, and the little Chinese was soon out of sight behind. When the Co. had disappeared, Yen Chin turned from the trail. His horse seemed lively enough now, and there was a grin on the little yellow face, as he followed a rough track through the timber, in the direction of the half-breeds' camp.

The 4th Chapter. Light at Last!

"Here we are!" Frank Richards & Co. rode up with a clatter to the door of Gunten's store in Main Street at Thompson.

It was too late to catch Kern Gunten as he left Hillcrest School; but the business the chums had with him did not brook delay. They had determined to visit him at his home.

They left their horses tethered to a post outside, and strode into the store. There was the usual crowd in the store, and Old Man Gunten was at a counter. His son was not to be seen.

"Is your son about, Mr. Gunten?" asked Bob Lawless. "We've called to see him." "I guess you'll find him inside," answered the storekeeper, without turning his head.

"Thanks!" Frank Richards & Co. passed into the back parlour, where they found Kern Gunten at tea, with his chum Keller. Mrs. Gunten was not present, for which they were thankful.

Gunten jumped up in surprise at the sight of his visitors. Frank closed the door into the shop. "What the thunder do you galoots want here?" demanded Gunten.

"I guess we've called for twenty dollars!" answered Bob Lawless. Gunten stared at him blankly. "Twenty dollars!" he repeated. "Sure!"

"I reckon you've come to the wrong shop, then," said Gunten, with a laugh. "You won't get any dollars out of me."

"I'll put it plainly," said Bob. "Last week we made you give back the money you'd won from Yen Chin at cards. We're here now on the same stunt."

"Do you want it twice over?" sneered Gunten. "Nope! We want twenty dollars this time, that you've swindled out of him. And we're not going without it. You can call in your father if you like, if you want him to know."

"I'll call in my father fast enough if you try to buldoze me!" answered Gunten disdainfully. "I've not played with Yen Chin since that time, and not even seen him, except once at the half-breeds' camp in the timber. You won't bully twenty dollars out of me, I reckon!"

Bob Lawless started. "You've seen Yen Chin at the half-breeds' camp!" he exclaimed. "Yep. Some galoots go there to play poker with the traders—they're pretty well heeled!" grinned Gunten. "I saw Yen Chin there yesterday; he'd been playing euchre with Black Louis, and lost every cent he had. Louis Leronge is a tin terror with the pastebords—I've found that out!"

"My hat!" murmured Frank Richards. "Has he been raising money from you again?" asked Gunten, greatly amused. "Ha, ha, ha!—and losing it at the half-breeds' camp. You've been finding money for Black Louis to spend in fire-water. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Keller. Bob Lawless stood dumb. He had not doubted for a moment Yen Chin's statement that he had lost the money to Gunten; the previous affair had made him take that much for granted. But he remembered now the hesitation the Chinese had shown in naming Gunten. And the manner of the Swiss was not that of a guilty party. He evidently did not care whether his father was called in or not—and if he had been the guilty party, he would certainly have shrunk from that.

In fact, a glimmering of the truth was dawning on Bob's mind now. Once more the cunning little heathen had fooled the good-natured chums of Cedar Creek.

"We can't take Gunten's word," said Frank Richards, breaking the silence. Gunten gave a sneering laugh.

"You can suit yourselves about that," he answered. "Keller here knows that I haven't played with the Chinese. You can ask Dicky Bird, if you like, whether Yen Chin has been anywhere near our school. If Yen Chin says I've won his money, he lies. By gum, he hasn't had any money for me to win that I know of—he only had a dollar about him when he played with Black Louis, and he lost that on the game."

"Only a dollar!" repeated Beauclerc. "Sure!" "He had twenty dollars—" began Frank Richards.

Gunten laughed again. "He's been stuffing you," he answered. "You made me give him back his ten dollars last week, so he's spun you a yarn about twenty dollars, thinking you could screw it out of me. You jolly well won't, though."

Bob Lawless shook his head.

"It's not that!" he said. "He didn't want to give us your name. I—I think now—"

"Where is he?" asked Gunten. "Let him come here and say to my face that he's played with me since that row last week."

"He was coming with us, but he dropped behind on the trail—" "Most likely to go to the half-breeds' camp!" grinned Gunten. "If he's got any money about him, that's where he's bound for, you bet!"

Frank Richards jumped. "Bob—" he ejaculated. "Oh, he has some money then, has he?" asked Gunten, grinning. "Have you been lending him any? Ha, ha, ha! Did you give him the twenty dollars you thought you were going to squeeze out of me?"

And Gunten roared. Frank Richards & Co. looked at one another with sickly looks. The duplicity of the rascally heathen was dawning upon them at last. Gunten and Keller chuckled explosively.

"Look here, Gunten," said Bob, at last; "Yen Chin confessed to us that he'd taken twenty dollars from Miss Meadows' desk, so we handed him—" "You handed him the money?" howled Gunten.

"Yes, and saw him go to Miss Meadows to give it back, and then we—" "Ha, ha, ha! He was stuffing you!" roared Gunten. "I remember when I was at Cedar Creek, Miss Meadows was always careful with the key of her desk. I'll bet you the imp never bagged any money there. And he never handed it back, either. Were you present—?"

"We waited in the porch—" "Ha, ha, ha! And Yen Chin went in alone, and spun Miss Meadows some yarn to account for the visit—and left with your twenty dollars still in his pocket!" roared Gunten.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Keller. "And no wonder he dropped behind on the trail!" chortled Gunten. "He's gone to see Black Louis—with your twenty dollars. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get out of this!" muttered Frank Richards. The three chums left the store, followed by the mocking laughter of Gunten and Keller. The two young rascals were evidently highly amused, but the chums of Cedar Creek were sick at heart. They understood now, to the full, the treachery of the wretched little heathen. His confession, and the supposed robbery of Miss Meadows' desk, were false from beginning to end—there had been no theft of twenty dollars at all; the whole story was simply a cunning device to extract money from the Co.—to play poker at the camp of the half-breed traders!

In the street, the three chums looked at one another with sickly looks in the falling dusk. "We've been done!" said Frank. "It's too late now—"

Bob Lawless' eyes gleamed. "I know my way to the half-breeds' camp," he said. "Are you fellows game to come with me?"

"Phew! But—" "We may catch Yen Chin there before he's gambled away our money."

"But the half-breeds—" "I'll borrow a gun, and then I guess they won't chip in!" said Bob determinedly. "I'm not letting that money go without a tussle. Hallo! Billy Cook! Billy Cook!"

The stalwart figure of the ranch foreman loomed up in the light of the store-front. "Hallo, young Bob! What are you young scallywags doing in Thompson?" asked the ranchman, eyeing them.

Bob Lawless explained hastily. Billy Cook chuckled. "You're a set of young jays!" he remarked. "I guess I'll come with you. I've got my rifle on my saddle, and I rather reckon Louis Leronge won't argify with that! Get on your horses, and I calculate I'll see you through!"

And in a minute more the three schoolboys and the ranch foreman were riding away into the timber, heading for the camp of Black Louis.

The 5th Chapter. Caught in Time!

A flare of red flame danced on the dark foliage. In the midst of the timber, the camp of the half-breed traders was pitched in a little grassy glade. Half a dozen rudely-built shacks stood close by a trickling spring, and close by them a camp-fire blazed and roared.

Five or six figures moved about in the ruddy glare of the fire. As many horses and two or three pack-mules were tethered close at hand. It was a wild, picturesque scene that burst upon the view of Frank Richards & Co. as they came in sight of the half-breeds' camp.

A pony they knew well was cropping the grass in the glade, and it was evidence enough that Yen Chin was there. And as they came towards the camp-fire, walking their horses, they caught sight of the Chinese. He was seated on a log near the fire, and a black-browed half-breed was seated on the other end of it, shuffling a pack of greasy cards.

The game did seem to have commenced yet. Yen Chin had apparently found the half-breed traders at their evening meal. Some of them were still eating as Frank Richards & Co. came up.

Black Louis looked up, and scowled as he saw the Cedar Creek fellows. He evidently remembered his previous meeting with them.

His hand made a movement, which seemed instinctive, towards the hunting-knife in his belt. Billy Cook dismounted, and carelessly lifted the rifle from his saddle. The ranch foreman was ready for trouble, if trouble arose.

"That's your antelope, I guess?" he remarked, jerking his head towards Yen Chin. The little Chinese spun round on the log.

His yellow face was the picture of dismay at the sight of Frank Richards & Co. "Flanky!" he muttered. "You heathen!" shouted Bob Lawless, grasping him by the shoulder. "Get up! You're coming away with us!"

Yen Chin wriggled. "No can come!" he gasped. "And you'll give us the twenty dollars, you swindling little rascal!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

Bob Lawless dragged the Celestial to his feet, and there was a plaintive wail from Yen Chin: "You lettee lone! You go away, ugly ole Bob! We wantee playee pooke!"

"I'll give you playing poker!" growled Bob, shaking him. "You awful little rascal—" "Yaroooh!" Black Louis sprang to his feet, his eyes glittering under his beetling brows.

"Let up!" he rapped out savagely. "Let the Chow alone! What business is it of yours?"

"This much—that he's fooled us into handing him the money you want to win from him!" retorted Bob hotly. "And he's not going to lose a cent of it here! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Hands off, I tell you!" growled the half-breed. "You'll see!" answered Bob; and he swung the yelling Yen Chin towards his pony. "Get on that hoss, you rascal!"

"No gettee! Me no goey way!" howled Yen Chin. Black Louis made a savage stride towards Bob, the hunting-knife half drawn from his belt. Billy Cook thrust his rifle forward. His finger was on the trigger, and his steady eye gleamed along the barrel with a deadly gleam.

"Go slow!" said the Canadian ranchman laconically. "I guess you'll find trouble if you don't, my Injun friend!" Black Louis halted, and the other half-breeds, with lowering looks, gathered round him. Billy Cook eyed them coolly.

"Nope, I reckon I wouldn't try a rush if I was you," he remarked. "Cause why? Black Louis gets the first ball, and I reckon I've another for some of you! And the sheriff of Thompson has a rope for the whole crowd if there's bloodshed in this section. I reckon I'd go slow!"

Billy Cook's advice was too good not to be taken. The half-breeds went slow—very slow indeed. Black Louis jammed the knife back into his belt and turned away with a muttered oath.

The hapless Chinese was thrown upon his pony, with a woebegone face. Then Bob Lawless held out his hand. "Twenty dollars," he said briefly—"and sharp, before I start on you with my whip!"

"Nicey ole Bob—" "Whack!" "Yow-ow-ow!" yelled Yen Chin. "Allee light! Me wantee payee nicey ole Bob!" "Sharp, then!"

With a dolorous face, the heathen handed out the twenty dollars—fortunately, still safe in his pocket, owing to the prompt pursuit. "Now, you goey way!" he said consolately.

"We're going," agreed Bob, "and you're coming, too!" "Me stayee—" "Whack!" "Lettee up!" yelled Yen Chin. "Me comee! Me wantee comee!" "Come, then!"

And Yen Chin came! The next day, at the lumber school, Yen Chin was all repentance and pathetic looks. But his pathetic looks were wasted on Frank Richards & Co., and when he sidled up to them, Bob Lawless' heavy boot cut short his remarks, and he fed. The heathen Chinese had passed the limit this time, and there was no more forgiveness for him.

THE END.

(Another splendid complete tale of Frank Richards & Co., entitled "Condemned by the School," by Martin Clifford, in next week's BOYS' FRIEND. Order early.)

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN! Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, the BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4."

FOR NEXT MONDAY!

A really splendid and particularly amusing story of Rookwood School is on the programme for next week. The title of it will be sufficient indication to keen readers of the state of affairs which has been reached at the old school since Bulkeley, the popular captain, fell into disgrace. The story is called

"CAPTAIN TUBBY MUFFIN!"

By Owen Conquest.

The next magnificent instalment of our rousing adventure story will again be of extra length, in deference to the enormous interest that has been aroused by that wonderful old character, Captain Bones, and by the schoolboy treasure-hunters.

None of my readers should miss next week's instalment of

"SKULL ISLAND!"

By Duncan Storm

The chums of the School in the Backwoods have won a place for themselves in the BOYS' FRIEND, and next Friday's long, complete story will reveal Frank Richards staggering under a cruel and unexpected blow, which requires all his pluck and fortitude to withstand.

My readers will find a special interest in

"CONDEMNED BY THE SCHOOL!"

By Martin Clifford.

Lastly, I will mention that my cricketing chums can look forward to some more really helpful hints about their favourite game in next week's

GRAND CRICKETING ARTICLE

By George Gunn.

Every follower of cricket knows the name of Gunn, which is a name to conjure with, in Nottinghamshire cricket circles especially. Gunn is a player with a style about him—and happy those amateur players who can say that—like a certain famous make of bicycle—they are "made like a Gunn!"

A LETTER FROM PERSIA.

It was a pleasure to get a letter from a Persian girl reader the other day. She told me she had read the Companion Papers for several years. By the way, she did not live in Persia. Hong-Kong was her temporary home, and she could speak English as well as anybody born within the sound of Bow Bells. If we do not hear much about Persia these days it is our loss. To many people the

country is simply the land where the "Arabian Nights" was inspired. But the Persia of to-day is a most progressive country. I wonder if any of my friends have read the amusing story by James Morier about Hajji Baba and his adventures in the world? My Persian friend is typical, I fancy, of many representatives of the famous empire of the East—up to date, and with as wide an acquaintance with the world as most folks in the West.

UP A TREE.

A correspondent tells me that his first meeting with one of the Companion Papers was when he climbed a tree. He was a Scout, and there was the paper fixed and fluttering in one of the top-most branches. He picked it, so to speak—the paper, not the branch—and since then he has been a constant reader. This happened in Australia, the great island continent which some folks speak of as "Down Under."

But what about that tree! Of course, it is an exceptional thing to have to climb a tree to get the paper you want, but after all this method is a lot more exciting than tramping round to the corner newsagent.