THE SHIPWRECKED SCHOOLBOYS

THE Magnet LIBRARY 1d. 2

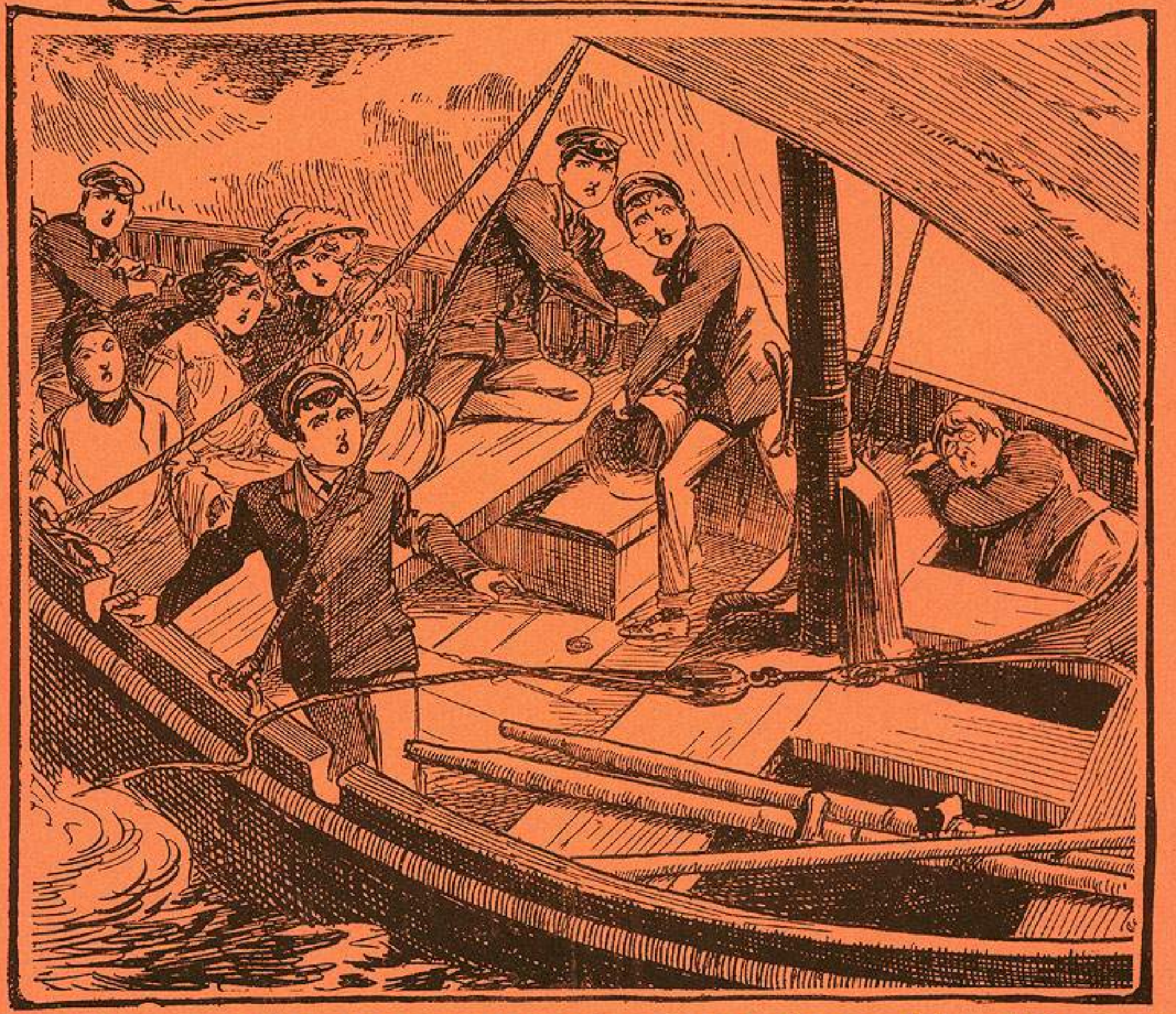
No. 62. Vol. 3.

COMPLETE STORY FOR ALL

A Grand School Tale of

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

By FRANK RICHARDS



CRACK! Harry Wharton & Co. turned in alarm as the gale carried the sail away.

NEXT TUESDAY: A School Tale of **Harry Wharton & Co.**, and the Opening Chapters of a **Splendid Army Story.**

EVERY TUESDAY — *ONE HALFPENNY*

THE

Magnet

LIBRARY

A Complete Story-Book, attractive to all Readers.

The Editor will be obliged if you will hand this book, when finished with, to a friend.

The Shipwrecked Schoolboys

A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Surprise for Bunter!

"GOOD! Oh, good!"

Billy Bunter uttered those words in tones of the keenest satisfaction, as he came into No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

The fat junior had been looking somewhat discontented; but his expression changed the moment he entered the study. He stopped, and looked at a pile of things stacked on the table, and his eyes grew big and round behind his big spectacles.

"My word!" said Billy Bunter. "No, it isn't a dream, it's real. My word!"

There was no one else in the study. Billy Bunter came closer to the table, and looked over the stack of good things in joyful amazement.

"Good! Ripping! Half a ham, bag of eggs, tin of biscuits! My word! I suppose this was meant as a surprise for me? My word!"

It was certainly a surprise. The Famous Four—Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh—who had the honour of sharing that study with Billy Bunter, had not been so chummy lately as Billy might have desired. Even now they were getting up a boating expedition on Pegg Bay, and hadn't asked Bunter to join them. Billy had taken it as a matter of course that he was to go, especially when he heard that Marjorie Hazeldene was going, and he had been astounded to learn that he had been left off the list.

Hence the dissatisfaction on his fat face, till it was removed by the sight of the good things in the study. There wasn't any dissatisfaction in Billy Bunter's visage now. His face beamed like the full moon. He walked round the table, looking at the things, conning them over as a miser might his golden treasures.

"A whole plum cake—ripping! Six tins of salmon—good! Cold shoulder of mutton—spiffing! Eight rabbit pies—glorious! Twelve bottles of currant wine—splendid! Bag of apples—excell—— Ow!"

Bunter broke off, as he received a slap on the back from a junior who had just entered the study.

"Ow! Really, Wharton——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Oh, is it you, Bob Cherry? I wish you wouldn't thump me like that. It disturbs my nerves, and I'm in a weak state owing to want of sufficient nourishment. But I say, this is all right."

"What's all right?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"This little surprise you've got up for me." Bob Cherry grinned, and Harry Wharton and Nugent, who had followed him in, grinned, too. And a gentle smile overspread the dusky features of Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

But Billy Bunter was short-sighted, and he went on unheeding. "It's really decent of you. Upon the whole, I won't come with you this afternoon. I'd rather stay at home and have a feed on my own."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything in that to cackle at, Bob Cherry," said the fat junior peevishly. "Was it your idea to get these things as a joyful surprise for me?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Was it yours, Wharton?"

"Not as a joyful surprise for you, Bunter. Ha, ha!"

"Yours, I suppose, Nugent?"

"Not a bit of it!"

"Then it was Inky. It was really decent of you, Inky, and——"

"My worthy chum is mistaken," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, in his soft voice. "The surprisefulness of the esteemed Bunter is not due to my honourable self."

Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove. A doubt began to creep into his mind.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I suppose you got these things as a joyful surprise for me, didn't you?"

"Not much," said Bob Cherry, grinning. "They're the provisions we're going to take with us this afternoon. Why, you young ass, we've had to pool all our week's pocket-money for that little lot. We're likely to do that for the pleasure of feeding an amateur porpoise, I don't think."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Where's the bags?" said Bob Cherry, looking round the study. "It's time we were off, as we have to meet Marjorie and Clara near Cliff House before we go down to the boat. Pack up! I think this lot will be enough for us."

"I hope so," said Wharton, laughing. "Enough there for one afternoon, I imagine, though the sea air makes one hungry. If we take one bag each we shall manage the lot all right. Careful with the jam jar!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Four bags will be enough. Wun Lung will have his umbrella to carry. He won't go anywhere without that. They'll be a good weight. Don't forget to shove the knives and forks into your bag, Frank!"

"Don't you forget the tin mugs and the coffee-pot!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Don't bother, Billy! Can't you see we're busy?"

"I'd like to help you carry the things, you know," said Bunter. "I'm an awfully obliging fellow when——"

"When there's something to eat about."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You can't carry anything. You have all your work cut out to carry your own weight, I should think. Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Look here, you fellows, I don't want to fish for invitations," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "If you like to leave a study-mate out, I don't mind, but——"

"It isn't that, Billy," said Harry Wharton. "You see, we're going out in a boat, and you would be in the way, and you'd be uncomfortable, too. Besides——"

"I suppose I'm the best judge of that, Wharton. But if Marjorie Hazeldene is coming, that's what I was thinking of. She may expect to see me."

"Why should she?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! You know perfectly well that—that——"

"Well, what?" said Bob Cherry quietly, but with a dangerous gleam in his eyes, as Billy Bunter paused and simpered.

"Well, I'm not a conceited chap, but you fellows must have seen—— Well, I don't want to brag, and I know you're jealous of me, Cherry, so there! But if I don't go, you'll see that Marjorie won't enjoy the trip much, and I don't think a girl ought to be disappointed. You see, one ought to think of the lady first in a matter like this, and put all feelings of personal jealousy aside. I say—— Wow!"

Bunter had not intended to say "Wow!" but he said it involuntarily as Bob Cherry's heavy hand descended upon him. Bob had been going to put a bag of tarts into his portmanteau, and they were in his hand as they smote Bunter. The effect was a horried squelch as the tarts burst through the paper bag, smashed on Bunter's fat face and head, and jammed his features beyond recognition.

"Ow! Groo-o-o-o-h! Gr-ah!"

"There, you fat little worm," said Bob Cherry. "If you weren't too silly to be worth licking, I'd wipe up the study with you. Don't you say another word, or I'll do it, anyway!"

And Bob Cherry, jamming his bag angrily shut, strode from the study with an angry brow. Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh followed him with their packed bags, without a glance at Bunter. The latter held on to the table with a fat hand, gasping for breath. The jam was over his face, over his hair, over his spectacles. Bunter was fond of jam, but he did not like it taken externally.

"The—the beast!" he gasped. "The—the horrid beast! It's amazing what a beast a chap can become when he's jealous of a fellow's good looks. It's the same all the world over. A good-looking chap can't keep his friends when a girl comes by. It's not my fault. I never do anything to encourage 'em. Ow! I shall never get all this jam off! Ow!"

Bunter disconsolately left the study for the nearest bathroom, to wash that jam off. As he steamed under a hot tap, his fat face was red and wrathful.

"I'm jolly well not going to be left out," he grunted. "They're an ungrateful lot of beasts! They know I'm going to stand a series of extensive feeds when I begin to get my three pounds a week from the Patriotic Home Work Association, and I think they might treat me with common gratitude. I'm too generous, that's what's the matter. But I'm not going to be left behind. If they've got to meet the girls near Cliff House, I shall have time to cut ahead, and get in the boat."

Meanwhile, the chums of the Remove, heavily laden, went down the passage, and Nugent kicked at the door of Russell's study. In that study dwelt Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, who was to make a fifth in the expedition, and Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, whom Wharton intended to ask.

Linley, the "scholarship kid," as he was often called, was probably the poorest fellow in the Remove—the Greyfriars Lower Fourth. His pocket-money was smaller than even Billy Bunter's. For that reason the chums of the Remove had said nothing to him yet on the subject of the outing, as he would have felt called upon to contribute towards the stores, which he could not possibly have done. When all was arranged, and the stores were all purchased, it was possible to ask him as a guest. Linley, too, was very useful in a boat, and was one of the keenest members of the Junior Naval Cadet Corps, of whom Wharton was captain.

That April afternoon, while most of the Greyfriars fellows were at cricket or up the river, Linley was in his study. He knew that the chums of No. 1 Study were going out, and cricket practice was sometimes made unpleasant to the scholarship boy when Wharton was not there. But he had plenty to do, and he was busy with his Xenophon when the chums of the Remove looked in.

Wun Lung, the Chinee, was folding up his wonderful umbrella—a "gamp" of amazing dimensions, of brilliant colours, and unique design. Wun Lung seldom went out without his "umblella," as he called it in his quaint pidgin English. He grinned cheerfully at the Famous Four.

"Me leady," he remarked.

"Come on, then!" said Wharton. "I say, Linley, are you busy this afternoon?"

Mark Linley looked up with a cheerful smile.

"Not very," he said. "I thought I'd have a go at this."

Bob Cherry, who did not take Greek, looked at the Anabasis, and blinked expressively.

"You're welcome to it," he yawned. "My hat! Fancy digging up Greek roots on an April afternoon! Let's look

at it! Dareiou kai Parusatidos gignontai paides duo! What on earth does it mean?"

Mark Linley laughed.

"Darius and Parysatis had two sons," he replied.

"Well, Darius and Parysatis and their two sons can go and eat coke!" said Bob Cherry irreverently. "You're coming with us!"

"We're going on the bay, Linley," said Harry. "Will you come?"

"Yes, rather. It's a glorious afternoon, though it looks like bad weather presently," said Linley, as he rose and closed Xenophon with a snap.

"Stuff!" said Bob Cherry. "It's ripping weather. We're going to have a fine afternoon and a fine evening."

Linley did not contradict him. He only smiled, and took down his cap. The six juniors went on, and Hazeldene joined them in the passage. This made up the whole of the party. In the Close a burst of sunshine greeted them, which certainly seemed to give the lie to Linley's prediction of foul weather to come. There was no sign of Bunter, and Wharton was glad of that. It was painful to him to refuse anybody, but he could not help feeling that Bunter would be out of place in the boat that afternoon. The chums of the Remove tolerated the fat junior, but there were times when they felt that they could not quite stand him.

Wharton glanced up at the sky as they left the gates of Greyfriars behind, and took the road round the Black Pike towards the sea.

"It looks all right, Linley," he said, half-interrogatively. "I was thinking we might have a run out as far as the Seagull Island."

Mark nodded.

"I dare say it will be all right," he said. "I don't like that little mist over the top of the Black Pike, that's all. But it may be nothing."

"Oh, the weather's all right," said Bob Cherry. "It's the best afternoon we've had this year."

And the juniors, chatting cheerfully, tramped down the road to the sea. Outside Cliff House School for Girls a bright patch of colour caught the rays of the sun. It came from two parasols, and the chums broke into a run to overtake Marjorie Hazeldene and her chum Clara.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
The Stowaway!

THE bay was rolling wide and blue in the bright afternoon. A gentle breeze fanned the waves, and filled the sails of a dozen or more skiffs that glided on the sunny waters. At the end of the bay rose the giant Shoulder, the scene of many a wreck in the storms that swept the German Ocean. From the summit of the Shoulder, on fine days, could be seen a rock jutting up from the wide blue of the sea. It was called the Seagull Island, and parties from Pegg sometimes picnicked there. It was too far out for a row, but a sailing boat covered the distance easily when the wind was favourable.

The schooner in which the Naval Cadets of Greyfriars did their sea-training was anchored in the bay. Closer in shore was the boat in which the chums of the Remove intended to sail that afternoon. A wooden-legged sailorman was in charge of it, and he rolled his quid and looked up the path towards Cliff House. Captain Stump was a thirsty soul, and the afternoon was warm, and the Anchor Inn was inviting. The old sailorman was employed to look after the training schooner, and to help the juniors generally in their naval trips. He had been instructed to have the sailing-boat ready this afternoon, and he had it ready, and was waiting for the juniors from Greyfriars.

A fat little body, and a round face adorned by a large pair of spectacles, came into view on the rugged path, and the old mariner gave a grunt of satisfaction. He recognised Billy Bunter, and naturally thought that he was the first of the juniors to arrive.

Bunter was warm and perspiring as he came down to the boat. He meant to go on that afternoon's sail, and he had hurried from Greyfriars to make sure of being first in the field. He started as he saw the old sailorman on guard. He had not counted upon Captain Stump.

The mariner touched his forelock.

"Bust my topsails," he said, "it's warm and dry to-day, sir!"

"Yes, isn't it?" said Bunter, taking his cue at once. "Is everything quite ready, Stump?"

"Ay, ay, sir! Everything all ataunto! I've put in the extry canvas for rigging up a tent, in case the young gents get to the island. It's awful dry weather, sir!"

"It's all right; I'll stay with the boat now," said Bunter. "You're to go to the Anchor and have something to drink."

"Thanky kindly, sir!"

"Tell them to chalk it up, as Wharton will settle it afterwards," said Bunter. "He—he forgot to give me the money. Don't stint yourself, Stump. You can have as much as you like."

"Bless 'is kind 'eart!" said the delighted mariner. "He knows that a true-blue sailorman has a big thirst on dry days! Bless 'is 'eart!"

And the wooden-legged seaman stumped away up the shore and disappeared into the Anchor Inn—and did not come out again. He was having as "much as he liked" of mine host's good ale, on the comfortable assurance that Harry Wharton was going to settle for it; which meant that Captain Stump would be carried out of the inn later on, and laid in the garden to recover himself.

Bunter blinked after the sailorman, grinned, and stepped into the boat. It was a big, roomy, old-fashioned craft, with extensive lockers. The mast was already stepped. In the stern of the boat was the canvas Captain Stump had placed there for the juniors, and as Bunter saw it, his eyes glimmered.

"Just the thing!" he murmured.

He looked landward. A glimmer of colour from a parasol appeared on the path from Cliff House. They were coming!

Bunter dived under the canvas, and drew it over him. There was plenty of it, fold on fold, and the fat junior was easily concealed. Chuckling to himself, the fat stowaway lay in darkness, waiting the turn of events. If, as he expected, the Greyfriars sailors cast off as soon as they were in the boat, it would be too late to put him ashore when they discovered him. They could not very well throw him into the sea, though they might be inclined to do so. If all went well, Billy Bunter was booked for the voyage.

There was nothing in the appearance of the canvas to indicate that the fat junior was hidden there when the chums of the Remove reached the boat.

The juniors were chatting, and Marjorie and Clara looked very bright and pretty as they came down the sands. There was a stretch of wet sand between the boat and terra firma, and the water, curling up round the moored craft, ran over the pebbles and made it necessary to jump to get into the boat dry-shod.

Bob Cherry wanted very much to help Marjorie in, but the big, sturdy junior was strangely diffident in the presence of the fair sex. He had bothered his chums considerably that afternoon in getting his necktie straight, and in inquiring whether they really thought a yachting-cap suited him better than a cricket-cap. As he turned to the smiling Marjorie, his face was very ruddy.

Marjorie would have preferred a surer aid, but she would not have declined Bob Cherry's assistance for anything. As he felt the little hand in his own, Bob Cherry blushed more than ever, and that was what did it.

His foot slipped as he was wondering whether Marjorie noticed that he was turning red, instead of thinking about what he was doing. In a second, Marjorie would have fallen upon the wet sand and the curling foam of the waters, but Harry Wharton was on the look-out. He knew what Bob Cherry was like on such occasions. His strong arm caught Marjorie, and saved her from the fall and her pretty dress from irretrievable disaster. Bob Cherry himself sat down, but that did not matter.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Marjorie smiled with an effort.

"It is all right," she said. "I'm so sorry you've fallen down!"

Bob Cherry jumped up. He was wet, but he didn't care! It was curious that something always went wrong when he wanted to be nice to Marjorie! Harry Wharton helped the girl into the boat, and Miss Clara—who was laughing—followed her in. The girls took their seats in the stern, and Bob Cherry hid his blushes by being very busy about the boat. The juniors were quickly aboard, Wun Lung bringing his umbrella carefully into the boat, and giving it to Marjorie to mind while he helped with the sails. Hazeldene cast off, and the boat glided out into deep water.

The Greyfriars sailors were very good hands with a boat by this time, and they handled the craft well, big and heavy as it was. The mainsail and topsail were shaken out, and as the wind was brisk off the shore, the boat was soon well under way. Right out to sea she ran at a spanking pace, and the two girls uttered little exclamations of delight.

"By—by Jove," said Miss Clara, who had picked up all sorts of curious expressions from the Greyfriars' fellows, "this is—er—ripping!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Stuff!" said Miss Clara. "You say, 'Oh, Clara,' every time I speak! It is ripping, so there!"

And Marjorie laughed.

Mark Linley was looking back towards the land, where the summit of the Black Pike showed to the left of the Shoulder, and there was a slight shade on his face. The Lancashire lad knew much more of the weather signs than the others, but he felt a natural diffidence about impressing his views upon his comrades—especially as he was not sure.

To the rest, the day seemed ideal. Out on the waters the wind seemed much stronger than on shore, but the ocean was rolling peacefully, and the skies were intensely blue, save where that patch of mist hung over the Pike, and for a pale stretch of sky over the far-off open sea.

"We shall make the island all right!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Look, you can see it from here!"

He pointed to the distant isle, rising like a bare rock from the bosom of the German Ocean. Miss Clara rose to look, stepped on the pile of canvas, and gave a shriek.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"Oh, there's something alive under the canvas!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Foul Weather.

MISS CLARA was looking quite pale. As she stepped on the canvas she had felt something move under it, and it had naturally startled her. The juniors for the moment were inclined to attribute the matter to feminine imagination, but Nugent pointed to the canvas. It was moving, as if something wriggled underneath.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Clara. "It's—it's something alive—some horrid animal!"

"Don't be afraid!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, seizing a boathook. "I'll smash the brute, whatever it is!"

"Hold on," came a gasping voice from under the canvas; "hold on! Ow! Don't let that dangerous maniac start, you fellows!"

"Goodness gracious! It's a boy!"

"It's Bunter!"

"Billy Bunter!"

The canvas was flapped aside, and the red, perspiring face and glimmering spectacles of Billy Bunter came into view. Bob Cherry dropped the boathook in his amazement. They all stared at Bunter blankly, and he blinked at them in return.

"I say, you fellows——"

"How did you get here?" demanded Wharton sternly.

"I—I came on first," said Bunter. "I—I got under the canvas as—as a little joke. Ha, ha, ha!"

A chilling silence greeted Bunter's laugh, and it died away somewhat feebly. The Removites stared at him grimly.

"It-it-it was a jo-jo-joke!" stammered the fat junior. "Awfully funny, wasn't it? I thought you would be surprised! Ha, ha, ha!"

But no one laughed beside Bunter.

The fat junior rose unsteadily to his feet and put his spectacles straight. He was somewhat dusty, and very rumpled and red and breathless

"Of course, I knew you wouldn't like to go without me!" he said. "You want me to cook for you on the island. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you making that row about?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! What row?"

"That row like a hen with the croup!"

"I—I was laughing!"

"What were you laughing at?"

"Well, it's funny, isn't it?"

"What's funny?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"There's no room for stowaways on board this craft!" said Nugent. "Chuck him overboard!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Over he goes!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, as two or three pairs of hands laid hold of him. "Ow! Don't! You may make my glasses fall into the water, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them! Oh, really, you fellows——"

"You young rascal," said Wharton, "I never thought of this! Mind your p's and q's, that's all, or you will get warmed!"

"Of course, I knew you fellows were only joking!" said Bunter, beaming round upon the Removites. "It's all right!"

"Is it!" murmured Bob Cherry. "If there wern't ladies present, I'd jolly soon show you whether it was all right!"

"I say, you fellows, where's the grub? I may as well begin to get lunch ready, and, if you don't mind, I'll take just a snack to go on with, as——"

"You'll go overboard if you go near those bags, Billy! We're going to have the grub on the island. 'Nuff said!"

And Bunter grumbled and was silent. He sat down in the stern with the two girls, and proceeded to make himself agreeable. Strange to say, his agreeable manners only had the effect of making Marjorie and Clara desirous of helping with the ropes, and Bunter was left alone on the stern seat. He sat there in astonishment for some little time, and then, feeling that as the girls were so curious to know how to manage the sails he ought to show them, he went forward to help the juniors in the task of instruction. Bob Cherry whisked a loose rope along, and it caught in Bunter's ankles, and the fat junior went staggering.

"Ow! Help, help! Ow!"

He stumbled over a thwart and rolled in the boat. He sat up and blinked in the sunshine in almost speechless indignation, and groped blindly for his glasses.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, you—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "Where are my glasses? Mind you don't tread on them, you dummies! I'm jolly sorry I came on this rotten sail now! I might have known you wouldn't look after me properly! Where's my spectacles?"

"Just by your elbow, ass!"

"Oh, so they are!" Bunter jammed the glasses on his fat nose. "If you do that again, Cherry, I shall never speak to you!"

"Then I'll jolly soon do it again!" said Bob Cherry.

Whereat Billy Bunter blinked indignantly, and retired to the stern. Mark Linley was steering, and Bunter offered to relieve him, an offer which was declined without thanks. The wind was growing stronger off shore now, and Mark uttered an exclamation as a drop of rain fell upon his face.

"Rain!"

There were dismayed exclamations from the girls, and dark frowns from the boys. A shower was exactly what they might have expected on a bright April day; only they had not expected it Marjorie and Clara had parasols which were very pretty and useful in the sunshine, but worse than useless in rain. Not one of the juniors had brought an umbrella—excepting Wun Lung!

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry. "If it comes on worse, we'll rig up the canvas to shelter you two, and——"

"Allee light!" said Wun Lung.

He picked up his famous umbrella, and proceeded to open it. That required care, and could not be effected by an unskilled hand. Wun Lung's umbrella was a triumph of Chinese workmanship. It spread out to a huge size, as if intended for the use of a whole family, as, perhaps, it was! The Chinee grinned from under the shelter of the huge umbrella.

"Loom for two mole," he said, in his quaint pronunciation in which the "r's" were changed into "l's." "You comee undel."

The rain was coming down more heavily, and Marjorie and Clara, in deadly terror of having their pretty blouses soaked, gladly accepted the shelter of the umbrella. Wun Lung sat down, with a girl on either side of him, and the ornamental fringe of the Chinese umbrella dropped round the three, and effectively kept off the rain. There was plenty of room for three, but for no more, and the juniors turned their collars up and stood the rain like Britons.

The little Chinee, with his quaint, yellow face glimmering between the two fair, girlish countenances, grinned contentedly. Bunter squirmed under the canvas again, and was accidentally trodden upon by all the juniors in turn, till he squirmed out again. There seemed to be no rest for Bunter that afternoon. But little jokes at the fat junior's expense soon gave place to more serious considerations.

With the rain, as was frequently the case, the mist thickened over the Black Pike and the towering Shoulder, and swept down upon the sea. When the juniors, through the blinding sheets of rain, thought of looking shoreward, they were startled to find that the land had disappeared.

Instead of the gleaming sands and the rugged rocks they had seen in the distance five minutes before, a roll of wet mist filled the view. Shore and village, boats and cliffs had vanished like a dream. But for the knowledge that they were scarcely a mile from the land, the juniors might have believed themselves alone in the heart of the great ocean, so lonely and desolate was the aspect of the sea.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That looks a bit thick, Harry."

"It does! Linley was right after all."

Wharton's face was serious. The rain might not last long, and it seemed absurd to turn back for a shower. But the veiling of the land in that wet mist might easily mean danger. And the wind was changing, too. It had been brisk on the water, and blowing off shore, but in a way that made it quite easy for the boat to tack into the bay again if the juniors wished. Now it was changing, blowing more and more directly off the shore, and bringing rain and mist with its gusts.

Linley had given the tiller to Hazeldene. He came along to Wharton and tapped him on the arm.

"I don't want to chip in, Wharton, but——"

"Go on," said Harry quietly. "You knew better than we did, as it turns out."

"I wasn't sure," said Linley. "But it looks black now.

It won't be easy to get back into the bay, with the wind chopping round like that."

"No, I suppose not."

"You can run before it, and get a landing down the coast," said Linley. "The boat's a pretty good sailer, and will stand some knocking about. I had a job once on a craft belonging to Birkenhead, and I used to go through rough weather up and down the Mersey and in the Irish Sea. I know when a thing's serious."

"And it's serious now?" said Wharton, forcing a smile.

"I think so," said Mark quietly.

"Hallo! Look out!" cried Frank Nugent. "Hold on!"

A sudden, sharp gust caught the boat, and it rocked violently on the waves. There was a rending, snapping sound, and the topsail went down the wind like a rag. As the boat oscillated, a splash of salt water came over the gunwale, and swamped over the feet of the juniors. There was a slight cry from Miss Clara, but Marjorie Hazeldene was silent, though the colour had wavered for a moment in her face

---

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Squall.

HARRY WHARTON set his teeth hard.

The Greyfriars juniors were "in for it," there was no doubt upon that point now. The pleasure sail of the April afternoon had turned into a serious matter—and it might yet turn into a terrible tragedy!

Wharton realised it, and though his own courage did not fail him for a moment, he thought of the two girls with a sinking heart. If only Marjorie and Clara had been safe ashore, then he would have faced the wildest gale on the Atlantic with a stout heart. But the thought that the girls were in danger—that he had all unknowingly brought them to what might be their death, almost unnerved him.

But there was no time to think of that. The mainsail was swelling and roaring, and threatening every moment to follow the topsail into tatters, if it did not first plunge the boat bows under.

From the wet mist of the shore the wind was blowing hard. It was no April shower, this—no temporary storm that would blow over and leave sunshine behind it. It was real bad weather, and Wharton remembered the night when the schooner was wrecked, as the sudden squall swept round the dancing boat.

Mark Linley put his mouth close to Harry Wharton's ear, to speak in the howling of the gusts.

"We're blowing out to sea, Wharton!"

Wharton nodded.

"We can't beat up the coast as I was thinking! It's too rough. It's as sudden a squall as I've ever seen. I——"

Crack!

"The sail's gone!"

What was left of it was blowing out in tatters before the wind. With the canvas blown to shreds, the attempt to beat to the southward had to be abandoned. With her bare mast swaying and groaning, the boat sped before the wind, and to save her from being swamped, the juniors were forced to allow her to run free. With the bows pointing almost directly seaward, the boat ran before the wind, through curling waves that seemed like monsters seeking to overpower and devour her.

There was little rain now, but the wind was growing stronger every moment. Wun Lung had folded up his umbrella, and put it into a place of safety. With his thin, loose clothes and his pigtail blowing out before the wind, the little Celestial looked a curious object

The two girls were wrapped in their coats now, and bending their heads to the furious wind. Marjorie looked up as Wharton came towards her, clinging to a rope to keep his footing in the rocking boat.

"We are in danger?" she murmured.

Wharton hesitated for a moment.

But it was useless—or, rather, impossible—to disguise the truth. And Marjorie was so quiet and calm that he was encouraged to be frank.

"I fear so," he said.

"We are being blown out to sea?"

"Yes."

Marjorie was silent.

"I am sorry," said Harry quietly. "We did not foresee this."

"It cannot be helped. It was so sudden, and——" Her words were drowned in a roaring gust that swept down on the boat, and sent it spinning.

Harry threw his arm about Marjorie, clinging to the mast with the other. Bob Cherry was holding Clara, who was far less able to look after herself than Marjorie was. Clara's face was very white, and there were tears mingled with the rain and the spray upon her scared face

Wharton turned a little pale himself as the boat rocked on the waves.

All the crew were holding on fast now, or they would have been hurled into the frothing waters. The mist of the rain, thicker and thicker, shut off the land like a curtain. The boat drove out to sea, and as they left the bay behind, the waves became larger round them, higher and wilder and more threatening.

Under them now were the deep waters of the open sea, round them the wide billows that rolled with a force great enough to smash the craft like an eggshell.

In the bottom of the boat Billy Bunter lay moaning, and clutching at a rope. The fat junior was very frightened and very sick. But no one had eyes for Bunter then. They clung to rope and thwart and mast, and watched the wild sea. How was it to end?

Under a bare pole the boat scudded on. Harry Wharton slowly and carefully passed a rope round Marjorie and fastened her to the mast The girl understood, and lent him aid. The water was gushing over the gunwale, and all hands were wanted now to bail.

Hazeldene, at the tiller, was keeping the boat before the wind, but the force of the gusts almost stunned him, and once or twice he had let the tiller sag, with the result that the boat was almost swamped.

Harry scrambled aft and took it from his hand, and the exhausted junior reeled away amidships, and clung on.

Bob Cherry had caught up a bowl, and holding on with one hand, was baling with the other, tossing the spraying water back whence it came. The other juniors followed his example, and only their activity prevented the boat from being swamped.

Harry Wharton started suddenly and listened.

Amid the wild wash of the waves a deeper sound had boomed up from seaward.

For the moment he thought that it was a signal gun from some ship in distress.

But the continuous booming could not come from a gun.

It was the sound of water beating on hard rocks; and the junior remembered the islet for which they had set sail that afternoon. The boat had been blown out to sea at such a speed that they must be near the rocky isle now.

As near as they could judge, they were making directly for the Seagull Island, and the booming of the breakers sent a chill to his heart.

The sound, tossed and echoed by the raving wind, was little of a guide, and the mist shut out all view of the island.

If they escaped the rocks, they would be blown out into the heart of the North Sea, otherwise the boat must be hurled upon the isle, with a result he could guess. Wreck—and what chance of life in the wild waters?

And he groaned aloud as he thought of Marjorie.

Better the open sea than that; and he steered, as far as he could rely upon his judgment, to pass the isle to the south.

But now it seemed only a choice of doom.

For, as they sped further and further to sea, the waves rolled round them like foam-capped mountains, huge and mountainous to the view from the boat, and the little craft ploughed into the trough of the sea as if it were shooting down illimitable precipices, into gulfs from which it could never emerge.

Bob Cherry scrambled aft to Harry.

He put his mouth close to the steerman's head to bawl out his words, to make them audible in the raving of the wind.

"The island's ahead, Harry."

"Yes, I know it."

"Better go ashore than be swamped."

"It's death!"

"Perhaps. But we can't bail out for long. The boat's being swamped. That last wave almost had us."

"Look out!" shrieked Hazeldene.

A huge wave was surging down upon the boat. If it had struck her broadside, the boat would have gone under like a smashed straw. Wharton jammed the tiller round, and the wave came thundering down on the stern.

It swamped over him, and for some moments he was blind with rolling water, blinded and choked.

It surged past, leaving the boat half swamped, and the juniors struggling in the water, clinging to the boat and to each other. They bailed away desperately, but it was evidently useless.

The boat was going under.

In that terrible moment, the louder roar of the breakers on the isle sounded like a promise of hope in their ears. Through the mist a black shape loomed up ahead.

"The island! Look out!"

It was too late to look out. The boat was rushing

headlong to destruction, and no power on earth could have saved it now. The waves were swamping it on all sides, and to the agonised minds of the juniors who were not too dazed to see what was happening, it seemed even chances whether it sank before it was hurled upon the rocks.

Harry Wharton fought his way through wind and water to Marjorie. He tore her loose from the rope, and held her in his strong grip. Bob Cherry had his arm round Clara, and from Clara came neither sound nor movement. She had fainted, and Bob was glad of it. There was no danger now of her struggling, and she was unconscious of the awful danger of the moment.

"Look out!"

Crash! The boat, hurled like a stone from a giant's hand, crashed into soft, swamping sand, and the mast was whipped over the side like a stick. The next second the juniors were struggling in the foaming waters.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Shipwrecked.

HARRY WHARTON'S grasp tightened upon Marjorie as the wild waters swept round him, and the wet sand lashed up under his feet. He half swam, half scrambled to the shore, driven on by the force of the water behind him, and with Marjorie in his arms he staggered blindly on to firmer land.

He almost fell as he reeled from the reach of the waters. Marjorie tore herself loose; she had not fainted, and her eyes were strangely bright through the tangle of her wet, loose hair.

"Clara!" she whispered. "My brother!"

Wharton could not hear the words, but he understood what she meant.

"I will save them," he said.

He left her there, partly sheltered from the wind by a great rock, and rushed back to the water.

The boat was firmly fixed, its bows jammed deep into the soft, yielding sand, and the billows raving over its uplifted stern.

Some of the juniors were still clinging blindly to it, but Bob Cherry was staggering up the shore with Clara in his arms.

Wharton rushed to his aid.

In a few moments Clara was carried to Marjorie. Wun Lung and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had scrambled to terra firma, and Hazeldene staggered out of the reach of the waters, and fell senseless upon the sands.

But where was Nugent? Where was Billy Bunter, and Mark Linley?

Nugent came fighting through the billows, and Harry and Bob grasped him as he was about to be torn away by the receding waters, and dragged him to safety. Nugent sank on the ground breathless.

"Bunter!" he gasped. "Save him!"

They rushed into the water again, leaving Nugent exhausted, too exhausted to even look after them. Through the swirl of the waves and the thickening dusk, they could see Mark Linley clinging to the half-submerged boat, and he was grasping and holding something—which could only be Bunter. As Wharton and Bob rushed to his aid a furious billow came sweeping in. It caught them with terrible force, and they were hurled back upon the shore, half stunned by the shock. The wave receded, and Wharton staggered up, and dashed the water from his eyes with his hand, and looked towards the boat with horror at his heart.

That wave had covered the boat, and covered the two who were clinging to it. The wrecked craft was wholly under water now, driven deeper by the sea. But a head was visible amid the foam—and then another. Linley was fighting for his life, and he was still holding Bunter.

Wharton dashed through the swirling water, and grasped Bunter. The fat junior was almost unconscious. Linley was almost at his last gasp. How he got Bunter ashore Wharton never knew, but he landed again at last, and as he sank down exhausted, he saw Bob Cherry helping Linley out.

Bob gave a feeble shout.

"All saved!"

Wharton called back, but the pounding of the wild waves on the sand drowned his voice. He sank upon the ground, barely beyond the reach of the waters, the foam curling over his feet as he lay there utterly spent. His senses were reeling, and he was only dimly conscious that he was seized and pulled further back up the shelving beach. He opened his eyes—the pale face of Marjorie was bending over him. It was Marjorie who was dragging him from the waters. Then for a time he knew no more.

Through a short, fitful unconsciousness Wharton was dimly aware of the beating of the wind, the roaring of the sea and the sand. Gradually he came back to himself. His first clear consciousness was of cold—cold and wet. He started up into a sitting posture, and for the moment he thought he was dreaming. All was dark round him, save for the glimmer of the foam on the wild sea.

But recollection came in a flash. He staggered to his feet, and looked round for his friends. It was dark; night had set in while he was unconscious. The squall had almost passed away, but the sea was wild and boisterous. In the gloom he could see nothing, and a terrible fear was at his heart. Had all been saved?

"Marjorie!"

"I am here, Harry."

It was a soft, quivering voice. In the shelter of the big rock the two girls were crouched, shivering.

"You are safe! And Clara?"

"She is here."

"All you fellows safe?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's voice, still cheery. "I'm all right—and here's Nugent and Vas—Hazeldene. Where are you, Inky? Can't expect to see you after dark, you know. Here's Linley, safe and sound; but I can't see Inky."

The soft voice of the nabob replied:

"My worthy self is here, my esteemed chum, and perfectly secureful. The alive and kickingfulness is terrific."

"Wun Lung?" called out Wharton.

"Me allee light."

"Good! Where's Bunter?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, Bunter! You're all right?"

"No, I'm not, Wharton," groaned Bunter.

"What's the matter?" asked Harry, in alarm. "Hurt?"

"Ye-e-es."

"I thought he bumped hard on the tiller when I collared him," said Mark Linley, in a low voice. His strength had not returned to him yet. "I did my best for him."

Billy Bunter groaned, as if his injuries had taken encouragement from Mark Linley's words. Wharton made his way towards him. Bunter was sitting on the sand with his back against the rock, and he groaned again in a heart-rending way.

"What is it, old chap?" asked Harry. "Bones broken?"

"Oh, I'm hurt!"

"Where is it—the leg?"

"N-no, I don't think it's the leg."

"In your arm, then?"

"N-no, it's not the arm."

"The neck, perhaps?" grunted Bob Cherry, who knew Bunter of old. "Perhaps his neck is broken."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Where are you hurt, Bunter?" asked Harry, rather less gently. "If you're not hurt, what are you groaning about?"

"But I am hurt," said Bunter indignantly. "It—it isn't in any particular spot, but I—I feel very bad all over."

"You young ass! Do you think we don't all feel bad all over? I thought you had some bones broken."

"You seem to wish I had some bones broken, Wharton," said Billy Bunter peevishly. "I must say I think it's heartless of you. I've lost my spectacles, and I'm fearfully hungry."

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"It's all very well for you to say 'b-r-r-r-r-r,'" grunted Bunter. "But I'm perishing of hunger. You've brought me into this——"

"Well, I like that," said Bob Cherry.

"You've let me in for this," said Bunter. "I only came with you because I felt that you needed somebody to look after the grub. I wish I hadn't come now."

"I wished that long ago."

"Oh, really, Cherry! But as I was saying, I'm hungry, and some of the bags must have come ashore with the grub. Can't you fellows look for them, and get me a snack?"

"Why on earth can't you look for 'em yourself?"

"I'm too exhausted. Unless I have food pretty soon, I feel that I shall not recover from this. A snack may be the means of saving my life."

"Then I'm jolly sure I'm not going to get you one," said Bob Cherry, who knew very well that Bunter's life was in no danger. "Give us a rest, and if you're going to perish, for goodness' sake perish quietly."

Bunter's suggestion was not, indeed, of much use. The night was intensely dark, with no glimmer of a star in the sky. The shipwrecked juniors, with as much patience as they could muster, waited for dawn.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Crusoes.

THE night had never seemed so long. Sleep was impossible. If the tired youngsters dozed off for a few minutes, it was only to wake again, cold and shivering. They waited for dawn; and glad enough were they when a glimmer in the sky announced that it was coming.

The sea was still rolling in heavy waves, that broke on the swishing sand with a dull murmur. The wind whistled among the rocks of the little island, though the worst of its violence was gone. In the strengthening light of the April morning the Greyfriars juniors stretched their cramped limbs, and looked about them.

As the sun rose higher came greater warmth, and the wind sank more and more. The blaze of the morning sun seemed to put new life into them. Far away to the west rose a dim, dark mass against the horizon, and Harry Wharton knew that it was the Shoulder. But the coast and the bay were out of sight, and not a single sail could be seen upon the waters.

When he looked seaward, he saw the German Ocean rolling, wide and shining, under the morning sun. Afar the smoke of a steamer dimmed the sunlight, as some great ship ploughed on its way to distant climes.

"My hat!" said Nugent, in a low voice. "This is a ghastly fix, Harry. What on earth will they be thinking at Greyfriars?"

"They will think we went down in the gale."

And Nugent nodded gloomily.

No one had been told that it was their intention to reach the isle and camp upon it; and, indeed, it was only by a miracle that they had succeeded in getting ashore. The natural assumption at Greyfriars would be that they had gone down, and they could imagine the consternation it would cause. They would be searched for, of course, but it was doubtful if anybody would think of paying a visit to that lonely islet, far out in the German Ocean. How should they suppose that the juniors were there?

"It's a serious situation, and no mistake," said Bob Cherry. "There's no blinking that. We may be here for days, or——"

"Or weeks!" said Nugent.

"Or we mayn't get off at all," said Hazeldene gloomily. "Boats never come to this island, except sometimes camping parties in the summer."

"Looks lively, doesn't it?" remarked Bob Cherry, with an attempt at humour. "We shall have to settle down here as Robinson Crusoes."

"We may have to, in sober earnest, for a good long time," said Harry seriously. "We must make the best of it, that's all."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Anyway, it's a lark," said Bob Cherry, whose spirits were never depressed for long, and who was growing quite cheerful now that the sun was shining again. "I'd rather be here than grinding Latin with Quelch in the Remove-room."

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, with unusual emphasis

"I say, you fellows——"

"It's the girls," said Harry, his brows contracting a little in troubled thought. "We can rough it all right, but the girls can't. We must manage to look after them somehow."

"I say, you fellows, that's all very well, but I'm jolly hungry. Has anybody seen my glasses?"

"They're just by your elbow, ass!"

"Oh, really, so they are!" Bunter clutched up his spectacles, and wiped them, and adjusted them upon his fat little nose. "I say, you fellows——"

"You needn't go on, Bunty," said Bob Cherry kindly. "We know all about it. You're fearfully hungry, and if you don't have something to eat quick you will probably never recover. It's all right; we don't mind."

"Is it all right!" spluttered Billy Bunter indignantly. "Look here, you fellows——"

"Oh, ring off, Billy! We've got to think out what to do."

Mark Linley had gone down to the water's edge, and was looking at the wreck of the boat. It still lay with the bows jammed deep in the sand, and the waters washing over it. On the shore were strewn various loose articles—the mast, which had been snapped off like a stick, the boom and jibboom, rugs and coats and canvas. The stern of the boat was badly smashed, but the bows were intact, and the forward locker seemed to be uninjured. And as it was water-tight, it occurred to Mark that the provisions stacked in it were probably uninjured too.

But as the bows were jammed in the sand, it was no light task to get at the locker. The sand could be scraped away, but then the water would rush in, and the bows as well as the stern would be under.

"We shall have to drag it out," said Linley. "Everybody lend a hand!"

"Right you are, Linley!"

Marjorie and Clara were still shivering under the shelter of the rock, too dazed by the shock, by their fatigue, and by want of sleep to think clearly of what was passing. Wharton came towards them, and the girls looked up, with pale and worn faces. Harry's look was very troubled.

"I needn't say how sorry I am for this," he said. "It was I who brought you out yesterday, and I suppose it's my fault, but——"

"It isn't your fault," said Marjorie, trying to smile. "You couldn't possibly foresee this. Nonsense!"

"Bosh!" said Miss Clara. And that word showed that she was beginning to recover.

"But what are we going to do?" asked Marjorie. "I suppose the boat is too injured to take us back to Pegg Bay?"

"It is smashed nearly in half. The stern was broken in like an eggshell by the waves. We may be able to mend it—or to build another. Meanwhile——" He paused.

"We must stay here?"

"Yes. It may be for a few days. It know it's rotten—for you. We shouldn't mind it for ourselves—we can rough it. But you——"

"Stuff!" said Miss Clara. "Girls can rough it as well as boys, so there!"

Wharton smiled.

"I'm glad to see you getting cheerful again," he said. "After all, it mayn't be so bad. We're going to get the boat out of the sand, and get some grub, but it looks like being a tough job. While we're doing it, you could take some exercise in the sun, and get warm again. It's going to be a fine day, though the sea's rough. I've heard the fishermen in Pegg say that there are caves in these rocks, and we might fix up one to make a shelter for you——"

Miss Clara clapped her hands.

"That will be ripping!" she declared. "But can't we help you with the boat?"

"Oh, no; there's enough of us."

The girls took Wharton's advice, and a walk in the sun, already growing warmer, restored the circulation to their aching limbs. As a matter of fact, it was necessary for the boys to get into the water to move the imbedded boat, and as their clothes were already half-dried, they did not want to wet them again. When the girls were gone they removed their things and plunged into the sea, and commenced work upon the boat.

The task was a hard one. The bows were jammed deep in sand, and it had to be scraped away with the hands, and then the heavy timber had to be dragged and shoved up the shore. But the work was invigorating, and the boys felt the benefit of the exercise when it was at last done. And by that time, too, their clothes had dried in the sun, and they were able to don them again with more comfort.

The locker was opened, and most of the provisions brought from Greyfriars the previous day were found there, intact. Glad enough were the juniors to see the good things. Billy Bunter's eyes seemed almost to start from his head as he beheld bread and cheese and butter, and cold mutton and sausages in abundance. He rubbed his fat hands.

"This is all right!" he exclaimed. "There's enough here to last us all day, if you fellows are careful."

"The carefulness will be terrific."

"I'll begin with the sausages——"

"You'll begin on half a sausage," said Harry Wharton quietly, "and you'll finish with it, and some bread."

"I say, Wharton——"

"We've got to be careful of the grub, you young ass. Do you know we may be here for weeks, and there's nothing to eat on the island?"

"Oh, there will be sea birds' eggs and shellfish and things," said Bunter. "It's no good starving ourselves the first day. That's sheer rot!"

"My worthy chum, if the hungerfulness should grow terrific, and we should be last resourcefully driven to eat an esteemed member of the party, the fattest person will be the first to go, and therefore——"

Billy Bunter turned quite pale.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Therefore it is wiseful to make the grub last longfully," said the nabob solemnly. "Matter of factfully, the worthy Bunter would make rippingful cutlets, if we had some means of cooking his esteemed carcase."

"Me cookee," said Wun Lung eagerly. "Me cookee Buntel allee samee labbit. Me cookee fat labbit, and me cookee Buntell allee samee."

"You—you Chinese cannibal!" gasped Bunter "I—I—I——"

"Allee light. Me no cookee unless Whalton give oldel."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Of course, in case of necessity Bunter will have to go first," he said. "He'll last as long as any two others——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"So you'd better be careful with the grub, Billy, that's all. I say, Hazeldene, get on the rock and call to the girls."

Hazeldene clambered on a rock and hallooed to Marjorie and Clara, who returned, quite dry now and with bright colour in their cheeks. They sat down on the beach and joined in the meal, and it was a very cheerful one under the circumstances. In the bright sunshine the scene around them was very cheery, and there were enough of them to banish any feeling of loneliness. Billy Bunter finished half a sausage, and half a loaf, and looked longingly at the rest. But he did not venture to take more than his allowance. The others were moderate from common-sense. The meal was washed down with currant wine; the juniors had not seen any fresh water so far, but as they knew there were springs on the island, they were not in any uneasinees on that point. The breakfast finished amid merry talk and laughter, and they rose at last in a cheery mood.

But as Wun Lung rose, something on the rocks inland of the isle caught his eyes, and he uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"Lookee!"

"What is it?"

Wun Lung pointed, and the juniors followed the direction of his finger. Standing on a rocky ridge not fifty yards away, and staring towards the group on the beach, was a foreign-looking sailor.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Foreign Foes.

THE Greyfriars juniors stared at the apparition in blank amazement. Knowing that the isle was uninhabited, they had never dreamed of meeting anyone there beside their own party. It immediately rushed upon their minds that theirs had not been the only wreck of the previous night. Some other craft had come to grief on the rocks, and this sailor was a survivor of the wreck.

"My hat!" said Nugent. "So we're not alone here."

Wharton frowned a little. It was not a wholly pleasant discovery. True, a sailorman would have been an invaluable ally to the juniors then. An experienced man of the sea might have helped them in many ways to effect their return to the mainland. But this man upon whom their eyes now rested was not a British sailor. His dark skin, his keen, black eyes, the rings on his fingers and in his ears, all told of foreign blood. He was evidently an Italian, or at least a member of some southern race, and Harry Wharton guessed at once that there might be trouble. Was the man alone, or——"

The question was answered almost before he had formed it in his mind. The dark-skinned man on the ridge turned back whence he had come, and waved his hand to someone as yet unseen, and gave a sharp whistle. A second and a third burly form appeared on the ridge, and stared down at the group of juniors.

"Three of them!" muttered Linley.

This appeared to be the whole party. They came down the ridge towards the beach, speaking together in a language of which the juniors caught a few words. Its soft tones told of the Italian, and Harry caught a word he knew to be in that tongue—and it was a word terrible to hear under the circumstances. It was "coltello"—meaning "knife."

The expression that came over Harry's face warned his comrades of what was in his mind. Nugent picked up a boathook, and Bob Cherry a fragment of the broken tiller. The three foreigners grinned as they came up. The man who had first appeared—the man with the earrings—took off his ragged cap to the group with a bow of exaggerated politeness.

"Good greeting, signorini!" he exclaimed, in very fair English. "It is a surprise that we meet. Is it you are also wrecked?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Our ship go down," said the man with the earrings, with a gesture towards the seaward side of the isle. "We are wrecked. We have no food."

"There is food here, Marco," grunted one of the others.

Marco grinned.

"True, Beppo, and the signori intend to invite us to eat. Is it not so?"

Harry Wharton hesitated. There was a mockery in the man's manner, as if he knew he could take by force what he chose. And the looks of the three Italians plainly enough showed that they would not stand upon ceremony. Nor would Harry have wished to refuse to share with a shipwrecked seaman. Every additional mouth was a serious matter, under the circumstances, but that could not be considered. But the boy doubted much if the Italians would be willing to take their share only.

"Come, signor," said the ear-ringed seaman, who seemed to have some authority over the others. "Is it not so?"

"You are welcome to share with us," said Harry. "We have only the quantity of food that you see, and it must last us until we are taken off."

"And when will that be, signor?"

"I do not know. It may be days, or weeks, or even months."

Marco laughed.

"What you have there will not last many days."

"We are using small allowances."

"I fear that will not content me. We are hungry, signori. Comrades, fall to!"

Harry Wharton stepped in their way.

"Hold on," he said quietly, but with a glitter in his eyes. "This food belongs to us. We are willing to share with you, but only on our own conditions. An allowance ——"

Marco grinned again.

"Stand aside, boy! Do you think we shall be allowanced by infants? Bah! All that is here is ours!"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"You will find that it isn't! Stand back!"

The grin vanished from Marco's dark face. An evil light glittered in his black eyes.

"Come," he said; "I shall lose patience. Stand aside!"

"I won't!"

And the Greyfriars juniors closed up round Wharton. There was trouble, as they had half expected, but they were not afraid. They were only boys, but the odds at least, were upon their side.

The two parties glared at one another for some moments. The girls were trembling now with apprehension. Marco muttered a word or two to his companions in Italian, and they drew their knives. At the glimmer of the clear steel Marjorie and Clara cried out in terror, and even the juniors turned pale. There was no telling to what lengths the three ruffians might proceed; and they had no weapons to use in such a struggle. Yet Wharton did not move. His eyes blazed, and his hand clenched hard upon a boathook. All the obstinacy of his nature was aroused, and he would have been killed where he stood rather than have retreated one inch.

But Marjorie ran to him and caught him by the wrist.

"Harry! Come—you shall not——"

And Bob Cherry dragged him away.

"It's no good, Harry; we can't buck against cold steel," he said, in a low tone. "Don't play the giddy goat! Those scoundrels are ready to jab you like a porker!"

There was no help for it. There was no hope of success in a struggle with three armed ruffians, belonging to a race to whom the use of the knife is as natural as the use of the fist to the Anglo-Saxon. The juniors furiously and unwillingly drew back, and the three Italians sat down where they had breakfasted, and commenced eating a hearty meal—which left very little of the provisions that were to have lasted the castaways for days.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "This is rather too rich for Crusoe life. I'd rather be in the Remove-room at Greyfriars, thank you."

"The ratherfulness of my worthy self is also great."

"The hounds!" muttered Harry Wharton. "The cowardly thieves! If we only had a chance!"

"But we haven't," said Hazeldene uneasily. "We'd better keep clear of them."

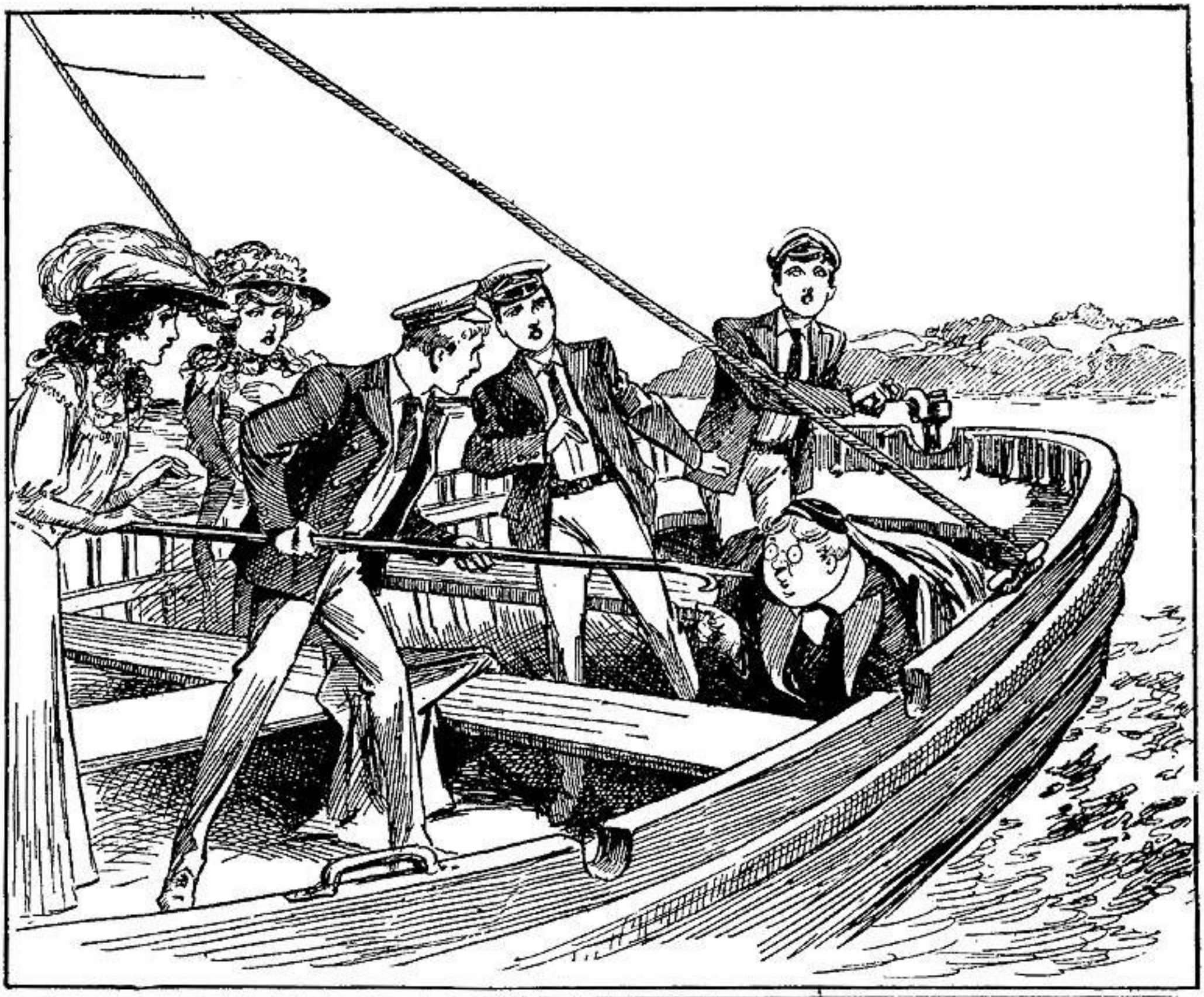
"I say, you fellows, you might as well have let me make a good meal," said Billy Bunter tearfully. "Oh, it's enough to break a fellow's heart to see the grub going down those thieves' throats!"

Bunter's lamentations were not answered. The juniors were in a gloomy and savage mood. To have to knuckle under to foreigners was naturally irritating to English lads, at any time; and to see the precious provisions that were required so urgently, wasted so carelessly by the three ruffians, was exasperating in the extreme. But they were helpless. And Harry Wharton could not help thinking that there might be worse to come.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Soup!

THE castaways spent the remainder of the morning in exploring the rocky islet, taking care to avoid the Italians. The latter, having finished a greedy meal, were lying on the sands in the sun, smoking, apparently untroubled by the fact that they were shipwrecked on a barren rock. With the great Shoulder rising to view on



"It-it-it was a jo-jo-joke!" stammered the fat junior. "Awfully funny, wasn't it? I thought you would be surprised! Ha, ha, ha!"

the western sea-line, the mainland seemed near, and they doubtless had expectations of an early rescue. The Greyfriars juniors knew better; they well knew that, unless they saved themselves, they might linger on that lonely rock in the German Ocean for weeks, or even until they perished of hunger and exposure.

To find food and shelter in case of a return of bad weather, were the first necessities. At the same time, Harry Wharton was thinking of making some signal to the land. Unfortunately the isle was only in sight of Pegg Bay in clear weather, and from the summit of the cliffs. A flag had no chance of being seen, and it was doubtful if even a column of smoke from a fire would attract attention. But the latter idea was evidently the only useful one.

Bob Cherry looked round the barren rocks expressively when Harry suggested it. No tree or bush grew on the isle, only moss and seaweed could be seen glimmering on the weather-worn rocks. But in the hollows of the shore heaps of driftwood were gathered, rotting in the shallow water. Harry pointed to that.

"It's wet," said Nugent.

"It will dry in the sun. We can spread it out on the rocks, and make a fire with it presently."

"Right you are!"

And the juniors set to work. To drag the masses of wood out of the water and sand, and spread them on the rocks, was no light task, but nobody grumbled except Bunter. Billy declared that the work was too hard for him, and that without sufficient nourishment he could not be expected to labour like a navvy. And while the others were busy he disappeared. The two girls gathered shell-fish while the boys were at work, for it looked as if the castaways would have to depend upon that for food. Wun Lung, the Chinee, gathered some curious weeds, too, and explained when he was questioned that they would make edible soup. As the Chinee could make delicious soups and stews of the most unpromising materials, the juniors did not doubt him; though as they looked at the greenish weeds, they could not help thinking that a great deal of skill would be required to make them palatable.

The amount of rotting wood upon the shore was a sufficient evidence of the number of craft that had found their doom upon the islet in times gone by. There was ample for the juniors' purpose, and it was only a question of the labour of salving it. At a hint from Harry, the juniors took care to select fragments that could be fashioned into handy cudgels with their pocket-knives. The three foreigners were pacific enough at present, but there was no telling how soon there might be more trouble.

The juniors were busily engaged when a call from the girls down by the water's edge attracted their attention, and Harry looked round to see Marjorie waving her hand. In a few moments he had joined her.

"Look!" she said, pointing.

Wharton uttered an exclamation. On the half-sunken rocks of a little cove lay the remains of a wrecked brig, evidently a recent wreck, and he guessed at once that it was what was left of the vessel the Italians had belonged to. The brig had been simply smashed on the rocks, and the sunlight glimmered through the hulk from side to side, and the water was washing in and out of the cabin-windows. On the fragment of the bows, visible in shallow water, Harry read the name of the vessel—Cavour, and then Palermo.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's the craft those rotters came ashore in. There isn't much

left of it. Clumsy asses to get it here at all, I should say!"

Wharton looked attentively at the wreck.

"We may be able to get something useful out of her," he said. "It's worth while trying, anyway."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Tit for tat," he remarked. "They've had our grub, and we're entitled to what we can lift here. But if we get anything out that's worth having, those rotters will drop on us again, Harry."

"Wharton's face set grimly.

"They won't find it so easy next time," he said.

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "We can't tackle fellows who are ready to use knives, you know. We shall have to draw a line at that."

"There are eight of us, and we have cudgels," said Wharton. "My idea is to get the things into a place where we can hold our own. Look here, it's no good blinking the facts. If we're not taken off here pretty soon we shall have to fight those scoundrels. There isn't any grub—and after a few days, what will they be like?" He lowered his voice so that the girls should not hear him. "If those brutes are famishing, we shall have to fight for our lives perhaps."

Hazeldene was as pale as death.

"Good—good heavens!" he stammered. "But——"

"It's likely enough," said Mark Linley quietly. "We shall have to be ready for them, that's all. The scoundrels have enough for to-day; they will not molest us yet. By to-morrow we ought to be fixed up somewhere where they can't touch us—where we can hold our own."

"That's the idea."

And the juniors nodded assent.

It was a terrible possibility that Wharton had outlined; yet, as he said, it was no use blinking facts. Terrible as it was, they had to be on their guard.

"There are caves among the rocks here," went on Harry. "I've heard about them from the fishermen of Pegg. That's what we want."

It was evidently useless to labour at rescuing supplies from the wrecked brig until they had a place of safety to stow them in. It was already noon, and the sun was blazing down upon the isle. The heat was pleasant and cheering, and but for the thought of the enemy the juniors would have been light-hearted enough. But all of them felt that there was danger in the air.

A little cloud of smoke rose up among the rocks. It came from a fire, lighted by Wun Lung, of dried wood. He had arranged three spars leaning together over it, in gipsy fashion, and his materials were all ready for cooking. All he wanted was a pot to sling over the fire, but that was lacking. But it was not lacking for long. The little Chinee scrambled into the wreck of the brig and brought a big iron pot out of the galley, which at once answered his purpose. With a grin of satisfaction, he washed it in a spring he had discovered near at hand, and then proceeded to sling it over the fire with his wonderful soup in it to cook. And curious as his materials were, a very savoury smell was soon rising from the pot.

Bob Cherry, who had begun a lunch on shell-fish, stopped, and looked towards the Chinee's gipsy-like arrangement with an appreciative sniff.

"By Jove!" he said. "That doesn't smell so bad, kids."

"Good!" said Nugent. "What's it made of, Wun Lung?"

The Chinee grinned.

"Kind of seaweed," he said. "Velly good, and shellfish and——" He paused.

"What else?"

"No askee. Good soupee!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"It's safer not to ask," he said. "It would only take our appetites away. It's only a matter of prejudice. Snail soup is as good as turtle soup if you could only get used to the idea."

"Ugh!"

"Well, I'm going to try it, for one, without asking questions."

"Neally donee!" said Wun Lung.

And, as a matter of fact, the odour of the soup attracted all the juniors to the spot, and they all forbore asking questions as to its composition. Miss Clara clapped her hands.

"I'm sure it's very good; nicer than the soup at Cliff House," she said. "It smells very nice, indeed. What a clever boy!"

"Me goodee cook," said Wun Lung, beaming. "Me cookee lipping."

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where have you been, porpoise?"

Bunter grunted discontentedly.

"I've been resting," he said. "I'm exhausted! Those Italian rotters are finishing our grub. I asked them for just a snack, and that chap they call Marco kicked me in a beastly brutal way. Fancy that! I say, what have you got there? It smells nice."

"Velly good!" said Wun Lung. "You findee shell, me servee you!"

Plates and spoons, of course, were conspicuous by their absence. Such utensils as the juniors had brought from Greyfriars were still in the wreck of their boat. But large shells from the shore served the purpose of plates, and they drank their soup from the edge of them—bad manners that could not possibly be helped under the circumstances. As Bob Cherry remarked, Robinson Crusoe must have had some pretty rough-and-ready manners and customs, too.

Wun Lung served the soup with a big, hollow shell, carefully washed for the purpose. The soup was really delicious to the taste, and decidedly invigorating. Everybody wanted a second helping, and Bunter a third and fourth. On such an occasion, as there was only one course, it was excusable to ask for soup twice. And there was still a great deal remaining in the big iron pot when the meal was finished.

"My word!" said Nugent. "The heathen is worth his weight in oysters. If we have to begin cannibalising, I vote that we leave Wun Lung to the last. When I think of what he could make of Bunter——"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look there!"

Three burly forms came into sight over the rocks. Either the Italians had caught the scent of the soup on the wind, or else they were on the prowl in the hope of finding something more to steal. Their dark faces brightened up at the sight of the fire and the swinging pot, and they quickened their pace towards the party. Harry Wharton set his teeth.

"It's the same game over again," he said. "They'd be welcome to it if they asked, but——"

"No mattel!" said Wun Lung, with a curious grin. "Lettee them lob us again; no mattel!"

"Yes, but——"

"Me tinkee they no likee soup."

"Why shouldn't they like it?"

Wun Lung grinned, and showed a little ivory box he took from an inner pocket. He lifted the lid with his thumb, and a pink powder was revealed. He had his back to the approaching Italians, and they saw nothing.

"What's that?" asked Wharton, startled.

The Chinee was so Oriental in his ways that Harry would not have been wholly surprised to learn that it was poison. But Wun Lung's silent chuckle reassured him.

"Allee lightee!" murmured the little Celestial. "Allee light! No killee, only makee feel pain, velly muchee pain!"

He dropped the powder in the soup, and concealed the box in his garments. The juniors chuckled. If the Italians robbed them again, they were likely to pay dearly for it this time. And there was no doubting the intentions of the three swaggering foreigners as they came up.

Marco made his exaggerated bow, as if it amused him, as, doubtless, it did, to mock the boys who were defenceless against his rascality.

"We are much indebted to you, signor," he said. "We have finished all that there was, and we are still hungered. We will eat this soup with pleasure."

"You will touch it at your own risk!" said Wharton.

Marco grinned at his companions, and spoke to them in Italian. They all grinned, and Beppo touched the haft of his sheath-knife significantly.

"We shall risk it, signori," said Marco. "I think we can manage the whole of it, so you bambini can go."

And the juniors not unwillingly left the spot. The three Italians seated themselves on the rocks round the fire, and slung down the pot to the ground between them. Then they commenced to eat from the pot, using the shells for spoons. The juniors watched them from a distance with great interest. The foreigners seemed to enjoy the soup as much as the juniors had enjoyed it. The powder added by the little Celestial had not made the flavour any worse. They smacked their lips over it, and by the sound of the shells scraping on the iron, it was clear that they were taking out the last drop of it from the pot.

"Look here! Have you been pulling our leg, you image?" demanded Bob Cherry, taking Wun Lung by the pigtail. "They don't seem to be suffering much."

"No pullee leg! Wait a little!"

"Oh, I see, it begins to work later."

"Allee light! What you tinkee?"

The three Italians rose from the feast, and looked mockingly towards the juniors. Marco removed his ragged cap in a profound bow. Beppo made a gesture towards the

group of youngsters, and Harry Wharton knew that he was making some remark to his companions concerning Marjorie. The girl was quite unconscious of it, however, and Wharton did not enlighten her. He half-expected the ruffians to come towards them, but they strolled away over the rocks, and disappeared.

"Waitee a little!" chuckled Wun Lung.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
A Painful Penalty.

"HERE'S the very place!" exclaimed Mark Linley.

The juniors were exploring the big rocks that sheltered the cove wherein the brig had been wrecked. In the bright, warm April afternoon the rambling in the rocks was pleasant, and for the time they had almost forgotten the Italians. Billy Bunter was asleep on the beach, in the shade of a cliff, but the others were all active enough.

Mark Linley's exclamation brought them all to him at once.

The junior was standing looking into the opening of a deep cave in the cliff, that extended back further into the shadows than the eye could penetrate. The cliff below the cave sloped down abruptly to the beach, so that the ascent was not easy. The cave was not more than three feet wide at the opening, but further on both sides receded, and it was evidently of considerable interior dimensions.

"Good!" exclaimed Wharton, as he peered into the shadowy hollow of the rock. "That will suit us down to the ground! Let's explore it!"

"Look out for pitfalls, then. It's jolly dark in there."

It looked dark from the outside, but within, out of the blaze of the sun, it was only twilight. When the juniors became used to the dim light, they could see about them very well. The daylight glinted in through clefts in the rock above. Wharton crunched fine sand under his feet as he stepped towards the back of the cave. Here it narrowed again to a width of less than two feet; but beyond this it again broadened into a second cave larger than the first. The ground was thick with a fine white sand, and from fissures in the rock overhead the sunlight glimmered in upon the sand with a curious effect.

The juniors looked about them with glistening eyes. The love of adventure, of "roughing it" in wild lands, is deeply implanted in the breast of the average British boy. After all, it was ripping to be wrecked on a lonely isle, and to find a dwelling in a shadowy, silent sea-cave. Less than ever the juniors were inclined to regret the class-rooms at Greyfriars.

"My word!" said Nugent. "This is ripping! We can camp out here splendidly, and stack anything here we want to. We could easily keep the Dagoes out of the cave if they tried to get in."

"That's the idea."

"We could roll some of the rocks across the entrance," remarked Linley, "and get some little jagged chunks to pelt them with if they attack us."

"Stunning!"

"The stunningfulness is terrific!"

There was a sudden call from outside the cave.

"I say, you fellows! Come here, quick!"

As a rule, Bunter's calling was not likely to be much regarded; but his voice was so excited now that the juniors ran out of the cave, grasping their cudgels. There was no telling what to expect from the three ruffians who shared the isle with them. But it was not an alarm of danger. Bunter was standing on a high rock, and grinning.

"They're at it!" he exclaimed. "The row woke me up! They're at it!"

"Who're at what?" demanded Hazeldene.

"The Foreigners—look at them wriggling. Can't you hear 'em?"

From beyond the rocks could be heard strange sounds. There was a succession of hair-raising groans, faint shrieks, and cries, and the sound of a voice speaking Italian, and though the juniors, fortunately, did not know what the words meant, the tone was sufficient to show them that the speaker was uttering "swear-words" in the musical tongue of Dante and Tasso.

Wun Lung executed a sort of hornpipe in his delight, hugging himself with mirth.

"What you tinkee?" he gurgled. "They feellee painee, velly bad."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors clambered on the high rock beside Bunter. They could see the Italians from that coign of vantage. Beppo was stretched upon his back on the ground, with both his large hands pressed to his stomach, and groaning away as if against time. Marco was staggering to and fro, and his was the voice that used the emphatic words that were audible all over the islet. The third man was in a sitting posture, swaying to and fro in silent agony."

"My only hat!" gasped Wharton. "Are you sure you haven't overdone it, kid?"

"What you tinkee? No dangel. They all light to-night."

"To-night! Do you mean to say they'll be like that all the rest of the afternoon?" demanded Wharton.

"What you tinkee?"

"By Jove!"

Knowing that the Italians were not in danger, the juniors could afford to laugh at their absurd antics, as the inward pain worried them. What the pain was like they did not know, but it was pretty plain that it was a severe one.

"Ah-h-h-h-h!" gasped Marco, between his gritting teeth. "Ah-h-h! Maladetto! Gr-r-r-r! Cospetto! Br-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

And his comrades answered him with groans.

"Serve 'em jolly well right!" said Nugent. "They'll learn to keep their hands from picking and stealing, perhaps!"

"It will do them good," assented Wharton. "What a row they're making! It's not so funny to them as it is to us. But while they're doubling themselves up like that, they can't interfere with us, and we may as well go and gather up what's left of our property."

"Good wheeze!"

"Will you stay in the cave?" said Wharton, looking at Marjorie and Clara. "And if those brutes should happen to come this way, call out, and we'll be back in a jiffy. Come on, kids; now's our chance!"

It was a chance too good to be lost. There were many things from the wreck of their boat that might be useful to the castaways. They hurried to the spot where they had come ashore, where broken bottles and empty salmon tins remained to show where the ruffians had demolished their little store of provisions.

On the shore lay the canvas they had spread there to dry, with several utensils and their bags, and the spars of the boat. The tide was low, and the broken boat lay quite exposed to the sun now, and deep in the wet sand were jammed many articles the juniors had been unable to recover before. One of them was a portmanteau full of provisions, and Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles as he dragged it to safety and opened it.

"Any good?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather! The bread and cheese are no good, but there's some tins of salmon and corned beef, and a tin of pineapple, and a jar of jam. I may as well start on the pineapple now; it will do for a snack——"

"You may as well let it alone, you mean!" said Nugent, snapping the soaked bag shut. "I'll carry this!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Come on!" said Wharton. "We've got about the lot, I think."

And they hurried back with their salvage to the cave. As they went, the groans and cursing of the Italians still sounded in their ears. Marco & Co. were still paying the penalty of their robbery.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
The Camp in the Cave.

MARJORIE'S eyes danced as she looked round the caves a little later. Few as were the articles saved by the juniors, they were enough to give the place a much more comfortable look, arranged by a deft feminine hand.

Big chunks of wood were all they had to serve as chairs, but, covered with the canvas and the boys' coats, they were comfortable enough as chairs. In the outer cave Wun Lung had re-erected his gipsy cooking arrangements, and the smoke of the fire rose steadily to a wide fissure in the roof of rock, and poured out into the open air.

The little Celestial already had another soup "on the go," and he had enriched it with the contents of some of the tins. Although he had made so excellent a lunch of weeds and shellfish and other edible articles supplied by the island itself, there was no doubt that corned beef improved the present soup. And as the sun went down, and the juniors grew fatigued and hungry, the smell of that soup was refreshing to them.

Just outside the cave a spring bubbled among the rocks, one of the many that existed on the island, so that a supply of fresh water was always at hand. And in the cave the boys had discovered a fragment of an old coat, and by the spring a tin mug, which showed that the place had been occupied before. Whether by shipwrecked mariners, or by a picnic party from Pegg, they did not know—most likely the latter.

As the dusk deepened the glow of the ruddy fire was very cheerful in the cave. The juniors had been very hard at work, and they had really accomplished wonders. There were huge stacks of sun-dried wood now under the shelter

of the cave, and several big rocks had been dragged to the entrance to block it up in case of necessity.

Just inside the narrow opening was a pile of jagged stones about the size of ducks' eggs, ready to be used as missiles in case of an attack. They were likely to inflict ugly wounds if thrown with any force, but that was for the assailants to think of. In a conflict with lawless foes armed with deadly weapons, the castaways could not afford to stand upon ceremony.

It had been arranged that the inner cave was to be kept for the two girls, and at night the canvas was to be taken there to make up such beds as was possible. The juniors were to sleep round the fire in the outer cave, to keep it going, and to be ready to repel an attack. So long as the fire was kept blazing, the heat of it was spread through the whole place, and cold was not to be feared, in spite of the scarcity of bedclothes.

The juniors gathered in the cave at dusk, very well satisfied with themselves. They had indeed done very well. If the Italians were looking for more trouble, they were ready to stand a siege in the cave. And the smoke of the fire, rising in a dense column through the fissure in the rock overhead, was a signal—the best they could devise—to the land. Sooner or later it must be seen by someone on the Shoulder, or by a fisherman in his boat, and then rescue would come.

Meanwhile, although naturally concerned about the alarm that would be felt at Greyfriars, the juniors were not disposed to grumble. Things might have been very much worse.

"How long's that soup going to be?" said Bunter, as he sat down upon a lump of driftwood, with a sigh like the gasp of a pair of bellows. The fat junior might have been doing a navvy's work all day by the manner he had at that moment. As a matter of fact, he had been doing very little beside sitting or sleeping in the sun. "I'm fearfully hungry, and quite fagged out. If you don't mind, I'll have this tin mug instead of a shell, as I want a rather large helping."

"Velly good!"

"Put some of the chunks of meat into it, too——"

"Me keepee chunkee meat fol next soupee!"

"That's a good idea, in one way, but you may as well give me some. The other fellows don't need a nourishing diet as much as I do. If you don't mind, you can bring it to me here, and save me getting up; I'm tired!"

"Me blingee!" said the obliging Wun Lung.

When Wun Lung was very obliging it often meant trouble for somebody, but Bunter was too lazy to move. Wun Lung served the two girls, and Marjorie said the soup was delicious, and Miss Clara declared that it was ripping. Then the little Chinee took the tin mug for Bunter, and Bunter watched him with an anxious eye.

Wun Lung came towards him with the tin mug half-full, and handed it to him—and let go before the fat junior fairly had hold of it.

There was a wild yell from Bunter.

The hot soup splashed over his trousers, and he sprang up and danced in the cave as if he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"Ow! Wow! Ow! Groo!"

"Go it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, clapping his hands. "Go it, Bunter!"

"Bravo! Keep it up!"

"You—you rotters!" howled Bunter. "I'm scalded! I'm seriously injured!"

"Well, go on dancing, then; it will relieve your fearful injuries. And it's funny."

But Billy Bunter did not go on dancing.

He received absolutely no sympathy, and he rubbed his trousers dry, and sat down again, looking very sulky. By that time all the other juniors had been served, and when Bunter asked for his helping, Wun Lung shook his head.

"You servee!" he explained.

"Oh, really, you rotten heathen! You spilt the stuff over me!"

"Wastee good soupee!"

"It was your fault!"

"No savvy!"

"I want some more!"

"No savvy!"

"Give me some more soup!" howled Bunter, growing excited.

"No savvy!"

The juniors roared with laughter. Bunter blinked round at them, growing as red as a turkey-cock in his excitement.

"You—you rotters! I'm famished! That heathen brute spilt the soup over me on purpose! I'm going to have some more!"

"P'raps me givee some if goodee boy!" said Wun Lung.

relenting graciously. "Must keepee Buntel nicee fat, in case cookee Buntel some day!"

Bunter shuddered. He never quite knew how seriously to take Wun Lung, and he was half afraid that the Chinee was really looking forward to an opportunity of making soup of him. However, he accepted his new helping, which was a plentiful one, and his fat face grew more contented as he travelled through the soup.

It was quite dark in the cave now, save for the ruddy glow of the fire. The sky was no longer seen through the fissures in the rocks overhead. Night had fallen upon the isle—the second night of the Crusoes' stay there. But this was a much more comfortable nightfall than the previous one. All things considered, the Removites and the Cliff House girls had very little to complain of. They had almost forgotten the Italians again, but as they finished their meal a sudden sound brought the ruffians back to their minds.

From the silent shore came only the wash of the sea, but through the silence rang the clink of a falling stone.

The juniors were on their feet in a moment.

They knew that the stone must have moved under human tread—the enemy were at hand.

In the ruddy gleam of the fire the boys exchanged startled glances. Their hearts were beating very fast.

"The Italians!" muttered Mark Linley.

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"We are ready!"

He ran towards the entrance, and the others followed him. There would be no more surrender to the three bullies. Wharton looked out of the opening upon the shore. The sun had gone down, and it was almost completely dark outside. He could see the glimmer of the sea, and the dim shapes of the great rocks.

Among the rocks were three moving shadows, and as Wharton caught sight of them, he also was sighted at the opening of the cave, for there was a sharp exclamation in Italian. Then the footsteps of the ruffians sounded on the sloping rocks as they came quickly towards the cave.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Facing the Foe.

HARRY WHARTON stood in the opening of the cave. A flush of ruddy firelight behind him threw his sturdy figure into relief. He raised his hand as the Italians came clambering up the ascent.

"Stop!"

So sharp and commanding was his voice that the three ruffians involuntarily stopped. They looked towards him, and the ear-rings of Marco glimmered in the dim light. There was a glimmer, too, in the hand of Beppo. Wharton knew that it came from the ever-ready knife, and though his heart beat a little faster, he was not afraid.

"Stop where you are!" he went on, in a steady voice. "You have robbed us twice, and that is the end of it. You cannot come here!"

Marco laughed.

"We are hungry, signor."

"Then find food, as we have done!"

"It is easier to take it than to find it, signor!" said the Italian, with a scoffing laugh. "You will not be fool enough to try to stop us!"

"If you take another step this way, you will suffer for it! I give you fair warning!"

"Young fool!"

"Take the warning, that's all!"

Marco spoke in a low tone to his companions, and the three of them came quickly on. Harry stepped back into the cave, and the juniors, shoving all together, shifted a big boulder into the spot where he had been standing. The entrance was now blocked nearly breast high, and the juniors stood behind their defences, ready for battle.

Marjorie and Clara were very pale, but quiet; it was Billy Bunter who was more frightened than anybody else. The fat junior had left off eating, a sure sign that he was very much disturbed. He was now looking helplessly round in search of a hiding-place, blinking excitedly to and fro through his big spectacles. Nobody took any notice of Bunter. All the other juniors were ready to back up Wharton, and even Hazeldene, who was not brave as a rule, was grasping his cudgel with an air of firmness.

Mark Linley jammed a fresh heap of wood on the fire, to dim the glow of it, so that the enemy should not have the advantage of seeing the defenders. The interior of the cave was now darker than outside, and the juniors were able to see the shadowy figures of the Italians more clearly as they came on.

Wharton's voice rang out again as the three dusky forms came close to the entrance.

"Will you go back?"

An oath, in Italian, was the only response, and they came on.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

It was war now—war to the knife, only too literally—and no time for half-measures. He caught up a jagged stone, and aimed it with sure aim at the nearest Italian. The stone flew with an accuracy natural to the best junior bowler at Greyfriars.

There was a yell from Marco.

He reeled back, clasping his hand to his breast where the stone had struck him. Harry could have crashed it into his face as easily; but he still hoped that the ruffian would take warning.

Marco reeled for the moment, and then sprang forward furiously. His black eyes were blazing with rage. A knife gleamed in his hand.

If he gained entrance——

But the juniors did not falter. Five or six jagged stones whizzed together through the air, and three of them struck the Italian full in his dusky face.

Hard and jagged, and hurled with all the force of strong arms, the stones were terrible missiles at close quarters. Marco staggered back, his face streaming with blood, and shrieking with the pain of his wounds.

Wharton's face was pale now, but hard as iron.

"Keep it up," he said shortly.

The stones flew fast and hard. Beppo shrieked as one caught him on the chin, and hurled him on the rocks, and the other rascal dodged out of the way. Marco sprang forward again with blazing eyes. Stone after stone struck him, but he came on, grinding his teeth. The murderous gleam in his eyes showed only too plainly what the boys were to expect if he got to close quarters. But though the stones did not stop him, the defence was still good. He came up to the barricade of rocks, and, not expecting it there, he crashed against it, and reeled back. And as he reeled, Nugent leaned over the rock, and dealt him a terrible blow with his cudgel. The Italian groaned, and dropped as if he had been shot.

The other two were rushing on. They stumbled over Marco, and as they stumbled, a whizzing shower of sharp stones cut into their skin, and they yelled with rage, and raced back to shelter.

But Marco still lay where he had fallen.

"Hurrah for us!" roared Bob Cherry, his pent-up feelings finding vent in an uproarious cheer. "Licked, by Jove!"

"Hurrah!"

The shouts rang and reverberated through the hollow cliff. And a cry of relief from the girls joined in the shouting. But Nugent was pale and silent. A terrible fear was tugging at his heart. He had struck hard, and the ruffian had not moved since he had fallen.

But he was relieved in a few moments more. As the cheering echoed away, there was a groan from Marco, and he staggered to his feet. He had been stunned, and there was already a lump as large as an egg under his dark hair. He put his hand mechanically to it, and stared dazedly at the boys.

Wharton pointed to the shore.

"Go!" he said crisply.

The Italian broke into a volley of oaths. Wharton's hand rose with a stone in it, and the ruffian broke off suddenly and ran.

He joined his comrades among the rocks, and there was silence, save for a faint muttering of voices, in which the juniors could not distinguish the words.

"Licked!" said Bob Cherry. "I rather think we've kept our end up pretty well this time."

"The pretty-wellfulness is terrific, my worthy chum."

"Lickee hollow," murmured Wun Lung. "Velly good. Keepee watchee nightee or comee back, p'l'aps."

"Yes, rather; we shall have to sleep with one eye open to-night."

"I say, you fellows, are they gone?"

"They're gone, Bunty."

"Good! I'm sincerely sorry I couldn't help you. I was looking round for a stick or something, and I was just going to——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Bunter peevishly. "I was just going to——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I'm jolly glad they're gone, as I want to finish my supper. I suppose you fellows are going to keep watch to-night It won't be safe for me to keep watch, as I never can stay awake. Gimme some more soup, Wun Lung."

And the fighting being over, the fat junior ate contentedly, and then rolled up some canvas and several coats to form a bed, near the fire, and stretched his plump limbs upon it. He put his spectacles carefully into their case, and stowed it away, and blinked round sleepily at the grinning juniors.

"Call me if there's any danger," he murmured drowsily. "But don't make a row if you can help it. I'm fearfully exhausted, and what I'm in need of now is a really good, sound sleep. Mind you keep up the fire."

And he sank into slumber.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Curious how some chaps like to be comfy," he remarked, as he stepped towards Bunter's cosy bed. "But how that fat chap can imagine that we're going to let him have our coats to snooze on, is more than I can understand."

Bob calmly stooped, and jerked at the folded canvas that formed the foundation of Bunter's bed, dragged it away, and rolled the fat junior out on the cold ground. Bunter spluttered, and awoke.

"Ow! What's the matter? Ow! Woorooh!"

"Jump up!" shouted Bob Cherry, in alarming tones. "Quick! Quick!"

"Ow! Wow! Mercy!" howled Bunter, thinking at once that the enemy were in the cave, and unable to see for himself till he got his glasses on. "Mercy! Don't kill me! You can have all Wun Lung's soup! I'll show you where Wharton has put the tins of salmon!"

"Well, you young rotter!" murmured Harry, in disgust. But Billy was too possessed with his terrors to hear him.

"Ow! Don't! I give in!" he roared. "Mercy! You'll—you'll be hanged for this, I tell you! Let me off, and you can go for the others if you like! I—I—I'll show you where the grub is, and where Wun Lung keeps his money."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, unable to restrain himself any longer. The juniors were all laughing, and Marjorie and Clara were almost weeping with merriment.

Bunter blinked round in amazement. The laughter told him that his fears were groundless, and he groped for his spectacles and jammed them upon his little fat nose. Then he glared at the yelling juniors wrathfully.

"Ain't they here?" he gasped. "I—I thought—I mean, it was all a joke, of course. I knew they weren't here! I was taking you fellows in! I'll bet you thought I was really frightened."

"I'll bet we did," chuckled Bob Cherry. "You did it marvellously well, Bunter. If it wasn't genuine, you ought to be on the stage. You could be put on to play the part of a mean-spirited, cowardly, dirty little rotter, and you wouldn't have to make up for the part."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Scat! I've a jolly good mind to roll you out of the cave! Dry up!"

Bob Cherry collected the canvas and coats, and carried them into the inner cave, and the two girls bade their friends good-night. They were tired out, and early as the hour was, quite ready for sleep. Billy Bunter watched his cosy bed disappear with a grumpy glare, but he did not venture upon a word of remonstrance. Bob Cherry was looking too dangerous. The juniors gathered round the fire to sleep on the sandy floor, and with their feet to the embers, they were quite warm enough for comfort. Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh took the first watch, and they sat at the opening of the cave with their cudgels in their hands, ready for the enemy if they should come.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Rescue at Last.

THROUGH the night the Greyfriars juniors slept and watched by turns. Billy Bunter could not be trusted to keep watch, but he was dutifully awakened whenever the watch was changed. He grumbled more loudly every time, but Bob Cherry said that it wasn't playing the game for him to sleep all the time, and so Bunter's slumbers were considerably broken that night. He could always drop asleep at a minute's notice, however, so he was never awake for long on these occasions.

There was no attack from the foreigners during the night. Once or twice the watchers heard them moving, and once a dim form loomed up near the opening of the cave. Mark Linley caught it with a sharp stone, and there was a muttered oath, and the shadow disappeared. Then there was silence till morning. The Italians had evidently had enough of attacking.

Morning flushed over a calm sea and blue heavens. The light stole into the cave through the fissures of the rocks, and the juniors awakened. Bunter stirred, and looked round to see if there were any signs of breakfast, and went to sleep again. The fire was still burning cheerily, having been fed whenever the watch was changed, and the smoke poured out of the fissures above. Bob Cherry yawned and rubbed his eyes.

"I should like a jolly good dip in the sea," he remarked. "We shall have to cut the morning tub this time. But, I say, Harry, what about those rotters? We can't be cooped up here all day."

Wharton shook his head.

"Not much! But let us have breakfast now."

Wharton stepped out of the cave to the spring for water.

He could see the three Italians on the shore, and they seemed to be still asleep on the soft sands. They must have passed a cold night there, and, as Wharton gazed, he saw Marco sit up, and shiver and knuckle his eyes. The man's face was not a pleasant sight. It had been laid open in half a dozen places by the stones in the fight, and the dried blood had not been washed from the skin.

He looked round and caught Wharton's glance, and scowled savagely. The others woke and rose, and they stood staring towards the cave, but they did not offer to approach. But it was pretty clear that trouble was to be expected when the juniors ventured out.

The trouble to come did not affect their appetites for breakfast. Wun Lung was early busy with his famous soup, and that, with the addition of some of the tinned salmon, made a good meal. It was washed down with cold water, and though the juniors missed their breakfast cups of tea, that was not worth troubling about. Marjorie, in her contented way, declared that it was better than tea, and Miss Clara was of opinion that it was ripping.

Wharton rose with a serious face when breakfast was over. Marjorie looked at him uneasily.

"You are not going out?" she said.

Harry smiled.

"We can't remain cooped up here," he said. "We've got to try to build a boat out of that old hulk on the shore, if we're to get off the island."

"But—but they——"

"We shall stick together, and I dare say they'll let us alone. If not, we shall have to tackle them at close quarters. It's all right, Marjorie; there's enough of us to manage the rotters."

The girl's lips trembled, but she was silent. Wharton was right; it was impossible to remain in the cave for an indefinite time. But the Italians in their present mood—hungry, savage, and smarting from their wounds and their defeat—were capable of anything.

"You will remain here, and Bunter," said Harry, with a glint in his eyes as he picked up his cudgel. "It's no good beating about the bush, you chaps. We've got to master those scoundrels or knuckle under to them. Come on!"

There was no dissentient voice. After all, it was quite probable that the rascals would hesitate to go to extremes. The juniors stepped out of the cave together, and moved down the slope towards the beach.

The three Italians saw them coming, and drew closer together. Their glances were turned savagely towards the boys. The Greyfriars juniors did not flinch.

"Come on!" said Harry quietly.

They strode straight towards the Italians. With their cudgels in their hands, they were a dangerous party to tackle, and the ruffians seemed to realise it, for they hesitated. Wharton spoke as soon as he was near enough.

"We don't want any trouble with you," he said, in his crisp voice. "We only want to be left alone. If you like to keep on the other side of the island, we sha'n't quarrel. We're not going to have you hanging about here. What do you say?"

Marco put his hand up to his gashed face.

"Look at that! Ah, I will punish you for that!" He added a word to his companions in Italian, and sprang towards the juniors.

"Line up," shouted Harry Wharton, "and hit your hardest!"

"Right-ho!"

And a crashing blow from Harry's cudgel sent the knife whirling from Marco's hand. The ruffian sprang upon him, unheeding a fierce blow across the face, and grasping him in his powerful arms, bore him to the earth.

The other two were rushing on, and in a few seconds a terrible, and perhaps a deadly, conflict would have been raging, but at that moment came a shout from the sea.

"Ahoy there!"

There was a cry from Marjorie, as she waved her handkerchief at the opening of the cave.

"Help, help! Help is coming!"

A white sail glanced on the sea. There was a shout from a dozen voices as a big sailing-boat swept shoreward in the cove. In the boat could be seen Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, and a dozen other fellows. The Italians looked round at the shout, and changed colour at the sight of the rescuers, and darted away among the rocks like frightened rabbits. Marco was still grasping Harry Wharton, too enraged to see or to hear. Bob Cherry and Nugent seized him, and dragged him off, raining fierce blows upon him. The Italian, half-stunned, rolled on the earth.

"We're coming!" roared Wingate.

The boat thudded into the sand, and the Greyfriars fellows poured ashore. Marco staggered dazedly to his feet, and stared blankly at them, then turned and fled just before Wingate reached him. He disappeared among the rocks after his flying companions.

Wingate clapped his hand on Wharton's shoulder as the junior rose breathless.

"Hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"No," gasped Harry. "Only winded. Lucky you came, though!"

Marjorie and Clara were almost crying with relief. Wingate glanced his eye rapidly over the party, and was relieved to see that they were all there. There was a rapid volleying of questions and answers.

"We thought you had gone down in the gale," said Wingate gruffly. "Somebody thought of the island, but it didn't seem possible you had landed on it in such weather. The wonder is you're not all drowned. But somebody from a boat yesterday declared that he saw smoke on the island at sunset, and then we guessed there was a chance some of you had got here. We should have come to look, anyway—not that you're worth the trouble," went on Wingate, relieved enough by the safety of the juniors to slang them as much as he liked. "The boys I mean, of course." He turned red as Marjorie smiled. "We came off first thing this morning, and we seem to have come at a lucky time. Who were those scoundrels?"

Wharton explained breathlessly. Wingate frowned as he listened.

"The brutes! Well, they can't get off the island, and we sha'n't take them off. They can wait here till the police send a boat for them," he said. "You kids jump in now, and quick about it!"

The rescue had come at an opportune moment, yet it was not without a pang of regret that the juniors stepped into the boat, and looked their last upon the island where they had lived their short experience as Crusoes. After all, it had not been such a bad time, though the element of danger had not been wanting.

The boat glided swiftly under mainsail and jib towards the village of Pegg, and there was a concourse on shore to greet and stare at the returned castaways. Miss Primrose, the head-mistress of Cliff House, wept over Marjorie and Clara as she greeted them. Dr. Locke did not weep over the Removites—he came very near to giving them reason to do the weeping. But, after all, they were not so very much to blame, and beyond forbidding such expeditions in the future, the Head let the matter pass. The heroes of the adventure were not let off so lightly by their schoolfellows, who made them relate at endless length their exploits and sufferings on the rocky isle when they were shipwrecked.

THE END.

(Another long, complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday. Also the opening chapters of a grand Army Tale.)

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.

READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father, Jack Dashwood finds to his astonishment that he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard. He consequently enlists in the 25th Hussars, under the name of Tom Howard, and soon becomes a corporal. Dominic Dashwood's death occurs just as the 25th are sailing for India. On their arrival there, Leonard joins the Ploughshires. A frontier war breaks out, and the 25th receive orders to mobilise for the front. A trooper named Sligo is bribed by Dashwood to drug Tom Howard one night while the young corporal is on picket duty. Tom falls asleep at his post and is told that in due time he will be court-martialled. One day Sligo has a letter from his wife, describing how, while cleaning out a certain set of offices in Lincoln's Inn Fields, she discovered a dusty document under a safe, relating to Tom Howard's affairs, and that Sergeant Hogan, a former servant of Colonel Dashwood's, with whom Mrs. Sligo was acquainted, had joyfully affirmed that it established Jack Dashwood's claim to the Colonel's estates. This letter Sligo maliciously shows to Leonard Dashwood, who manages to destroy it, together with one from Sergeant Hogan to Tom Howard, who has been promoted to sergeant. An I O U for £95, which Dashwood had given to Sligo as hush-money, falls into Colonel Greville's hands.

A general advance is now ordered, and the column moves to the camp at Nawagai. There much of Leonard Dashwood's villainy is exposed, and he is placed under arrest to await court-martial. A letter containing proof of Dominic Dashwood's fraud, however, is brought to him in mistake for Tom Howard, and he tears it up. Tom is just having a stormy interview with his cousin, when Sergeant Hogan, who has travelled post haste from England, appears. That night the Mahmunds make a fierce attack on the camp. During the fighting Leonard Dashwood, a prisoner in his tent, stands with folded arms, looking bitterly out in the direction of the firing.

(Now go on with the story.)

What Colonel Martin Saw!

Private Johnson, who was still on guard, implored Leonard to lie down, unheeded; but when the Ghazis stormed the parapet, and, in the light of the star shells, Leonard Dashwood saw three white figures vault over, sword in hand on to our side, and scatter the handful of Ploughshires like sheep, he suddenly drew his revolver, shot two of them, and blew a rally note on his whistle.

"Come on, you scum of the earth!" he shouted savagely. "We can't stand this, you know! Who'll follow me and drive those fellows back?"

He was not popular, by reason of his manner, and still less so by the rumours that had filtered among the ranks of his regiment; but it was no time for nice distinctions, and a score of voices answered to his call.

His sword was in the hands of the adjutant; but he had still four shots remaining in his revolver, and, without thinking, perhaps without caring, perhaps even hoping that he might meet his death, Leonard Dashwood sprang over the parapet, firing right and left, followed by his men.

As the whole camp was attacked almost simultaneously, no one paid any particular attention to what was going on in front of the Ploughshires. Each regiment had its own work cut out for it, and very hard work, too; but nevertheless, a whisper ran along the line that the camp had been forced, and that some of the defenders were out on the plain, charging with the bayonet in the good old British way.

It reached Colonel Martin's ears, and the fiery little man, springing to his feet with an exclamation that is not to be found in the Army regulations, ran to the spot where the lieutenant and his men had leapt over the parapet.

"What is the meaning of this? What is this I hear?" he demanded sternly.

"Enemy rushed the wall, sir," said a wounded private, who was pressing a thumb on a vein in his wrist. "Mr. Dashwood called for volunteers, and went over like a rocket!"

"Thank Heaven the scoundrel has got some pluck in him at last!" he muttered to himself. "If he wants to go out, I don't know a better way. And, upon my soul, it is all that is left to a man in his predicament. And the regiment will not be disgraced after all."

And the wish in Colonel Martin's heart, almost amounting to a prayer, was that Lieutenant Dashwood might never come back alive.

The onset of the disgraced man and his handful of followers had been so sudden and so strong, that the Mahmunds had recoiled. But now the little band was fighting wildly in the centre of a circle of fanatical swordsmen, and there was little doubt as to the result.

Colonel Martin glared grimly over the top of the parapet, a little uncertain what to do.

"Will you let me take half a company, sir," said Dick Vivian, "and bring our fellows off? They can't do any good, and we can't fire as long as they are there."

The colonel looked sharply at the boy beside him, with his face flushed, and the revolver which he gripped in his hand making dangerous circles.

"Forward, F Company!" he at last shouted. 'I want you to bring those fellows back! You must not go a yard further than the hill—just out and in again, that's all!"

And the words were no sooner out of his mouth, than Montgomery and Vivian leapt over the barrier, with the company at their heels, roaring like mad, and delighted to have the opportunity of rushing.

Private Johnson, having no prisoner now, slipped away from the colonel's side, and vaulted over the wall in the rear of the company.

"Come back, you there!" roared the colonel, who had an eye like a hawk, and knew the face of every man in the regiment.

But for once in his life Private Johnson disobeyed the voice of authority, and did a mighty sprint, coming up with the Ploughshires before they had gone twenty yards.

Montgomery and Dick emptied their revolvers in a twinkling, and, drawing their swords, set a grand example to their men, plunging into the thick of the foe, and knocking over half a dozen Asiatics apiece. But for all that, it was not destined to be a walk over.

Gun-butt and bayonet, foot and fist, flashing tulwar and murderous Afghan knife, all showed in the light of the star shells, plying and prodding, hewing and slashing, in a medley that would have brought joy to the heart of Bill Sloggett had he only witnessed it.

Dashwood and his handful of men had reached the hillock, when they heard the British cheering behind them, and, looking back, saw the Ploughshires, with Montgomery and Vivian leading, and turned to join them.

A chance bullet rolled one man over as they started. Three others were more successful, and gained their comrades unscathed. The fifth man stayed where he was. A trailing rocket showed him distinctly for a moment, standing at bay, with a clubbed rifle in his hands. Then the light died away, and they saw him no more. But the colonel had a vision of a pair of arms thrown up, a rifle dropping from fingers rendered suddenly nerveless, and the bugler beside

him heard the chief clear his throat with a noise something between a snort and a gasp.

"By gum, he's got it!" said Colonel Martin, half aloud.

And Leonard Dashwood had got it, and got it badly!

The colonel blew a signal on his whistle to retire, and Montgomery, hearing it, rallied the men, who were just getting out of hand, and came back leisurely behind them.

The men ran up, leaped into the trench, and laid down. It had been "nuts and gingerbread" to them. But seven or eight of them remained behind, and two they carried in, badly slashed.

"Surely that was Dashwood, sir?" said Montgomery in a low voice, approaching the colonel. "He must have broken his arrest!"

"Hush! Not a word, Montgomery!" said the chief. "I saw him just now when they fired that rocket, and I believe he has gone to the bar of a higher Tribunal than that of a district court-martial!"

As yet Sir John Dashwood was in ignorance of the happening which bore so nearly upon his own fortunes. Although the hillock to which Leonard Dashwood and his men had sped was directly in front of the parapet held by the 25th Hussars, the rush of the Ploughshires had come between the hillock and his vision at the moment that Colonel Martin had seen Leonard Dashwood fall. But Jack's attention was riveted on an incident that quickened his pulses, and filled him with an uncontrollable longing to vault over the barrier of sand and biscuit-boxes and rush out on to the plain.

The Ploughshires were coming back at the double. Behind them the tall form of Captain Montgomery, and, a few paces in his rear, Dick Vivian, who had lost his helmet, and was loading his revolver as he ran.

The ground was strewn with white-robed tribesmen, and here and there a khaki heap; and as Dick reached one of the latter it struggled up into a sitting position, and pressed two hands to its head.

Dick stopped short and bent over the wounded man, his back to the plain. He did not see three slinking figures that stole after him, crouching low. But Jack saw them, and on the impulse of the moment put his hands to his mouth and shouted:

"Look out, Dick, you idiot! They'll be on top of you in a minute!"

"What the dickens are you talking about?" said the Hon. Algy, who, in common with the rest of the men about him, heard the warning.

"My friend Vivian, of the Ploughshires, yonder, sir—look! Great Scott!"

Jack broke off suddenly, and even the Hon. Algy ejaculated an enthusiastic:

"Bai Jove!"

Dick Vivian, when the foremost of the Mahmunds was within a short distance, fired, and dropped the man in his tracks. A second crack of the revolver, and Mahmund No. 2 shared the fate of his companion. But the third man remained, and out of the darkness came several more to join him. And, with a groan of despair, Jack knew that his friend was snapping his revolver to no purpose, for the two cartridges were all it had contained.

They could not succour him; he was too far away. Jack raised his carbine with a sudden impulse, and lowered it again with a groan. The Hussars cheered, for Dick pounced on a rifle which lay upon the sand, and standing astride the wounded man—who was none other than Private Johnson—loosed the shots in the magazine one by one.

One, two, three savage foemen fell. Again the rifle spoke, and with a cry of sudden panic, the two last turned and fled towards the mountains.

Montgomery and his company, oblivious of what had been going on behind them, had already reached the trenches, and the captain was speaking to Colonel Martin, when a burst of cheering drew the attention of them both to the plain outside the parapet.

Then they knew why the Ploughshires cheered, and why the 25th Hussars away on their right cheered, for Dick Vivian, with the burly form of Private Johnson on his back, was staggering towards them, rifle in hand, turning round every few paces, lest any slinking Pathan might be stalking them in the rear.

Half a dozen men, without waiting for orders, jumped out to his aid; but Johnson's arms were so tightly locked round about the youngster's neck that Dick had the honour and glory of bringing his prize up to the very nose of his own colonel.

Little by little the attack on the camp slackened. Our fire was too terrible for even the Ghazis to face, and by degrees, as their courage cooled, they drew off, and contented themselves with firing from a little distance, until just before morning broke they went away into the hills, taking a large number of wounded with them. How many they lost we never knew, but it could not have been far short of seven hundred.

"One of the Ranks"

Another Splendid Story of Army Life, starts Next Tuesday.

Morning came suddenly, as things do come in the East, and we had time to count our losses, and to discover what serious havoc the enemy's fire had accomplished overnight.

We had thirty-two casualties of all ranks, including Brigadier-General Wodehouse, severely wounded in the leg. The cavalry-horses had suffered badly, also the transport animals; and Colonel Greville, with contracted brow, was listening to the sergeant-major's report, when orders were sent from the general for the cavalry to go out, clear away any prowling bands, and discover the direction in which the Mullah's army had retreated.

The Hussars were instantly on the alert, and as they mounted a roar of laughter arose from "B" Squadron, for they had received a most unexpected and curious reinforcement.

Sergeant Hogan, by the aid of a biscuit-box placed on the ground, had managed to get his game leg into a stirrup once more. And there he sat on a troop-horse, which he had appropriated, with a sword he had picked up goodness knows where, and the old look of battle was in his time-ravaged countenance.

His costume was extraordinary. He came out from England in anything he could pick up, and the sight of the old man, sitting erect with the cavalry seat of his day, in an old frock-coat, a check waistcoat of marvellous pattern, and a pair of sandshoes—which he wore because his feet hurt him—made even Colonel Greville smile.

"Don't stop me, colonel—for the love of mercy, don't stop me! Let me go with the bhoys, for it's the last chance I will be having, and I'm just mad to ride with the old regiment agin!"

(This story will be concluded. Next Tuesday another grand tale of Army Life will commence, entitled "ONE OF THE RANKS." Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance.)

Printed and published weekly by the Proprietors at 23, Bouverie Street, London, England. Agents for Australasia and New Zealand, Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Melbourne; for South Africa, Central News Agency, Cape Town. Subscription, 4s. 4d. per annum.
Saturday, April 17th, 1909.

Take note of the announcement at foot of this page!

Some of the Contents:

THE ART OF BATTING,
By M. A. Noble.

HOW TO BOWL,
By Albert Trott
and
F. Tarrant.

FIELDING,
By A. C. McLaren.

CHOICE OF POSITION,
By Robert Abel.

The Boys' Realm CRICKET BOOK
1D

Out on Saturday next, April 17th.

Some of the Contents:

THEORY AND PRACTICE,
By Arthur Lilley.

THE CARE OF YOUR BAT,
By a prominent Athletic Outfitter.

HOW TO FORM A CLUB.

FIRST-CLASS COUNTY FIXTURES.

Etc., etc., etc.

TOM SAYERS, a young Britisher, is the principal character in "THE GENTLEMAN BOXER," by Arthur S. Hardy, one of the Two Long, Complete Stories in this week's number of THE MARVEL, price One Penny. Read about Tom Sayers. You will like him!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

No. 79: NOW ON SALE!
No. 80: NOW ON SALE!
No. 81: NOW ON SALE!

'THE BOYS' FRIEND'

3D.

COMPLETE LIBRARY.

No. 79.
"PETE'S STRANGE EXPEDITION."
A new and original long, complete tale of Jack, Sam & Pete.
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

No. 80.
"THE SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS."
A splendid long, complete tale of Canadian life.
By ALLAN BLAIR.

No. 81.
"GORDON FOX, DETECTIVE."
A thrilling, complete story dealing with this famous character.
By MURRAY GRAYDON.