

**HARRY WHARTON & CO. ARE TREASURE-SEEKING
IN SOUTHERN SEAS—JOIN 'EM, BOYS!**

No. 1,022. Vol. XXXII.

Week Ending September 17th, 1927.

The Magnet

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EVERY
SATURDAY.



THE "SEA-LAWYER" HOLDS THE WHIP-HAND!

(A dramatic incident in this week's remarkable story of Harry Wharton & Co.—inside.)

**Look Out for This
Cover on the Bookstalls
Next Saturday Boys!**



It's remarkable what a stimulating effect a rope's end has upon William George Bunter; he works as he has never worked before. But he likes neither the rope's end nor the work, and his fat wits seek a way out of his troubles that has an extraordinary and totally unexpected effect upon the fortunes of his companions, Harry Wharton & Co—
Mind you read

“THE TREASURE ISLAND!”

next week's grand story of the Greyfriars Chums.

**Order Your MAGNET To-day—
Saves Disappointment!**



Address all letters: The Editor, The “Magnet” Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me: you can be sure of an answer in return.

FOR THE FIRST TIME!

IT is surprising, since the first of our Free Gifts appeared, how many readers have written to me for the first time in their lives. And such letters of appreciation and praise that I have actually blushed. So I can't be an “ancient, wrinkled, and sour-faced old fossil,” as one charming correspondent was pleased to describe me a few months ago. But enough of him. These new chums, for most of these “first-timers” are new chums, are delighted with Frank Richards and his stories of Harry Wharton & Co. In the majority of cases they declare that from now on the MAGNET is going to be their paper. Good lads! It just shows that quality will tell in the long run. True these new Magnetites were attracted in the first place by our novel Free Gifts—most of my correspondents admit that honestly enough—but it was the high quality of the stories that amazed and fascinated them. Of course, they will go on reading the MAGNET now. One can't have too much of a good thing! And in response to the promises of these new readers, Frank Richards and I promise to keep that high quality which appealed to them on a consistent level. That's a go!

MANY THANKS!

Acknowledgments for their excellent letters go to Harry Scott, Knock, Belfast; L. Stone, Cromer; William Planner Jun., Battersea; W. Barlow, A. Jullien, G. Fowler, Sparkhill; L. Cavalier, Tottenham; Wilfred Burling, Birmingham; Claud Wileman, Colwyn Bay; Harold F. Godwin, Bath; Andrew Proctor, South Shields; R. Bromley, Leicester; Archie Shapiro, Johannesburg; T. Smithers, Cape Town.

THE BEST IN THE WORLD!

My Chat this week would be incomplete without a reference to those famous Annuals the “Greyfriars Holiday Annual” and “Every Boy's Hobby Annual,” which, as most of you must know, are now on sale at all the bookstalls throughout the kingdom. The “Holiday Annual” is just as bright and as cheery as ever. In it you will find some spanking stories of Harry Wharton & Co.—not forgetting the one and only Billy Bunter, of course—Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, and Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood. Those of you who like sporting and adventure stories will not be disappointed, either, for the H.A. contains them. In short, the “Holiday Annual” is a book that any boy or girl would be proud to possess. Have a look at it when you are passing by your newsagent next time. The “Hobby Annual” has been compiled for the special benefit of the boy with a hobby. It's a regular treasure-house of information and well worth its modest price of six shillings. You fellows with a hobby should make a point of seeing it. After that you'll want to buy it, take it from me.

Next Saturday's Programme:

“THE TREASURE ISLAND!”

By Frank Richards.

The next story in the popular series of holiday adventure yarns, featuring Harry Wharton & Co.

“GOLD FOR THE GETTING!”

Another long instalment of this grand tale of a gold-rush to the land of the Midnight Sun.

“THE HEAD'S PERSECUTION!”

Dicky Nugent's latest “shocker” will provide the laugh of the week.

“THE RACE FOR THE SCHNEIDER CUP!”

Look out for an interesting article on the amazing machines Britain has entered for this great aerial race. Don't miss this bumper treat. Order your MAGNET early. Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE REAL SOAMES! For years now, Soames, the sleek, obsequious manservant, patient and watchful as a cat, has been waiting his opportunity to "get rich quick." At last opportunity plays into his hands, and with its arrival comes a startling change in the character of Soames, the "ideal manservant!"

The Whip-Hand!



An Amazing Story of Peril and Adventure in Southern Seas, featuring the world-famous characters, Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

"Ua maomao ka Lani,
Ua kahasa Luna."

A MELLIFLUOUS voice sang the words to the twang of a ukulele. Bob Cherry glanced round, with his coffee-cup suspended in mid-air, like Mohammed's coffin.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he ejaculated. "Somebody giving us a serenade?"

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove, were breakfasting on the deck of the yacht Golden Arrow.

Mr. Vernon-Smith's yacht lay in the harbour of Taiohai, at Nuka-Hiva, the largest island in the Marquesas group.

It was quite early in the morning, but the sun was already hot, and the juniors were glad of the awning stretched over their heads.

Outside the bay, the vast Pacific glowed under the sun, the great rollers creaming over the isles at the entrance of the harbour.

Ashore, the French flag stirred in a faint breeze over the Residency, and black men and brown moved on the dazzling beach; beyond, the great hills rose to the sky.

Two or three other vessels lay in the harbour as well as the Golden Arrow; and innumerable canoes glided over the shining waters.

From one of the canoes came the singing which reached the ears of the Greyfriars juniors on the yacht.

A Hawaiian sailorman sat in it, twanging his ukulele, and singing from sheer lightness of heart:

"Ua pipi ka maka,
O ka hoku."

The mellifluous voice sang on, as the canoe glided over the bay, and the voice died away in the distance.

"I suppose that means something," remarked Bob, "but it's got me beat. I suppose you can construe, Bunter."

Billy Bunter did not take the trouble to answer.

He was busy with his breakfast. So far he had disposed of only enough for three, so the keen edge of his appetite was not yet taken off.

Most of the other fellows were giving as much attention to their surroundings as to their breakfast, for the yacht was anchored in what was a good deal like an earthly paradise.

But William George Bunter had no eye for scenery.

The shining waters, the gliding canoes, the gleaming beach, the great green hills rising to the fleecy clouds, had no attraction for Bunter. There was one thing about Nuka-Hiva that pleased him. The grub was good. Lesser matters did not trouble him.

"It's a real jolly South Sea island, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry, who was in great spirits that morning—as on all other mornings. "This is some vacation, you fellows!"

"Topping!" said Harry Wharton.

"The topfulness is terrific," concurred Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "and the esteemed warmth of the sun is grateful and comfortable. It reminds me of my own esteemed country."

Billy Bunter found time, between two mouthfuls, to make a remark.

"It's hot!" he grunted.

"Nothing to what it will be!" said Bob cheerily. "Wait for noonday before you grouse, old fat bean! You'll be melting then."

Grunt!

The prospect of melting at noontide did not seem to cheer Bunter.

"Anybody know what the chan in the canoe was singing?" asked Bob. "It sounded as mysterious to me as your lingo, Inky, though not so much like

cracking nuts. Do you savvy what it meant?"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh grinned a dusty grin, and shook his head.

"The esteemed lingo of the South Seas does not resemble the honourable speech of my country," he answered.

"I dare say Soames could tell us," said Mr. Vernon Smith, who sat plump and portly and perspiring at the table.

He glanced round.

"Soames!"

James Soames, the sleek, silent-footed valet, was at his elbow in a moment.

"Sir!"

"You've been in these seas?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, sir, before I had the advantage of entering your service, sir," said Soames, in his soft, sleek voice.

"Did you understand that sailor?"

"Yes, sir."

"My hat, Soames will have to be our giddy interpreter here!" said Bob. "Do they speak that lingo in the Marquesas, Soames?"

Soames shook his head.

"No, sir! It was Hawaiian. That sailor belongs to some vessel from Honolulu," he answered. "The song was about the fair wide sky and the eyes of the stars."

"Jolly poetical!" said Johnny Bull. "Is Honolulu far from here?"

"About three or four thousand miles, sir."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The Pacific's a big place!" grinned Bob Cherry. "What language do they speak here in Nuka-Hiva, Soames?"

"A Polynesian dialect, sir, which I think you would find somewhat difficult to understand. But most of the natives speak what is called beche-de-mer, or pidgin English."

"Soames knows nearly everything," said Herbert Vernon-Smith, as the sleek

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,022.

manservant stepped respectfully back. "He's worth his weight in gold, isn't he, dad?"

The millionaire nodded.

"He is invaluable," he said. "I shall miss him while he is away with you boys on your treasure-hunt."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

They fully appreciated the sacrifice the millionaire was making, in assigning his invaluable and trusty manservant to take care of the schoolboy party, when the search for Caca Island and the treasure commenced.

But, as a matter of fact, they would have preferred not to be taken care of by Soames or anyone else.

The chums of the Greyfriars Remove were fully persuaded that they were quite able to take care of themselves.

"It's rather a shame to take Soames," remarked Bob Cheery. "I'm afraid you'll miss him an awful lot, sir."

"I shall!" assented the millionaire.

"It's not what you'd really call necessary, is it?" said Nugent. "We should take jolly good care of ourselves."

"We should!" assented the Bounder.

Mr. Vernon-Smith smiled.

"I have no doubt you think so," he said. "But I am responsible to your parents, and I could not think of allowing you to wander about the South Seas on your own. Soames will take excellent care of you. Besides, he understands the native languages, and knows the manners and customs of the islands. He is even acquainted, he tells me, with the island of Caca, for which you will be searching. I can trust Soames to see that no mishap occurs."

"But it's rather rough on Soames, isn't it, sir?" murmured Johnny Bull. "Rather a bother to him—hem!"

"Soames made the offer himself," said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"But—" murmured the Bounder.

"There are no buts in the matter, Herbert. I cannot allow you boys to run unnecessary risks."

Tom Redwing glanced at the millionaire, and then at Soames.

But he did not speak.

Lingering in the mind of the sailor-man's son was the distrust and suspicion he had felt towards the sleek, silent, almost stealthy Soames. But it was not a suspicion he could utter, especially in the presence of Mr. Vernon-Smith, whose trust in the man was absolute.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, having finished his breakfast, rose, and looked at his watch.

"I go ashore in half an hour, to call on the governor," he said. "You boys may come if you like for a run ashore."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"What ho!"

And the millionaire went down to his state-room, to prepare for his call on the Governor of the Marquesas, whose official residence was at Nuka-Hiva. Soames disappeared silently from the deck.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Like the grub, Bunter?"

"Yes; it's good!"

"Then the voyage is a success!" said Bob gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's quite good," said the Owl of the Remove, blinking at the juniors through his big spectacles. "Not like what I'm accustomed to at Bunter Court, of course—if you don't mind my mentioning it, Smithy."

"Not at all," said the Bounder politely. "Why should I mind you gassing here any more than at Greyfriars?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,022.

"Oh, really, Smithy! That isn't the way I talk to a guest at Bunter Court," said Bunter, blinking severely at the Bounder.

"It's the way I talk to a fat chump. If you don't like it——"

"Well, I don't!"

"Then you can lump it!" suggested Smithy.

"Oh, really, you know——"

"The lumpfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Bunter," remarked Hurree Singh, "the cheerfulness is also a good idea!"

"Shut up, Inky, old chap—you talk too much," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, what about cannibals?"

"Cannibals?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes. Before I go ashore with you I want to know whether there are any cannibals about," said Bunter.

"Lots!" said Bob, at once.

"The lotfulness is terrific."

"The place is fairly crawling with them," declared Nugent.

"If you weren't so short-sighted, Bunter," said Johnny Bull, "you could see a chap on the beach yonder, cooking his grandfather."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Look here, I'm not coming ashore."

"Oh, do!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"I won't! Not that I'm afraid of cannibals, of course," said Bunter. "Don't you run away with that idea! Any fellow who knows me knows that I'm as brave as a——"

"A rabbit?" suggested Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! As a lion," hooted Bunter. "Still, I'm not going to be wolfed by a cannibal to please you!"

"Don't be selfish, Bunter. Think of the cannibal!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I jolly well won't come! If you land into any trouble, it's your own look out. I refuse to come!"

"Well, you wouldn't be finished breakfast, anyway!" said Bob. "We're going in half an hour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. went to their state-rooms to prepare for the trip ashore, leaving Bunter still at breakfast—not having yet satisfied an appetite that might have excited the envy of the most cannibalistic cannibal in the South Seas.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Way!

"SOAMES!"

Billy Bunter rapped out the name, and Mr. Vernon-Smith's man came on deck to order the boat for his master.

Bunter's tone was not pleasant; the Owl of the Remove never spoke to a servant without a tincture of unpleasantness creeping in. There was a peculiar strain of snobbery in William George Bunter, which made everybody, and especially servants, feel disposed to kick him.

But Soames turned at once, with his most deferential air. If he did not like Bunter's tone, his smooth, sleek face did not betray the fact.

"Sir!" said Soames.

Bunter had finished breakfast. He was toying with a few oranges as a wind-up when Soames came from below. Bunter's system of eating an orange was to half-bury his fat face in it, and chew. So there was a considerable amount of orange on his fat features, as he blinked at Mr. Vernon-Smith's man.

"You've been here before, I understand?" said Bunter.

"Quite so, sir!"

"Jolly odd thing, for a man in your position to have made voyages to the South Seas," remarked Bunter. Wild horses could not have restrained Bunter from impertinence. But perhaps Bunter did not consider it possible to be impertinent to a servant. His own skin was thick; and no doubt he considered that a servant's skin was thicker.

But Soames only smiled deprecatingly.

"I was not always a man-servant, sir!" he answered.

"Oh!" Bunter sneered. "You're one of those fellows who have come down in the world, what?"

"Not at all, sir!" said Soames smoothly. "I am very fortunate to have secured my present position, sir, and I prefer it very much to a rough seafaring life."

"Blessed if you look much like a sailor," said Bunter. "But if you've been here before, I suppose you know that island—Nuky-something?"

"Nuka-Hiva, sir! Yes, I am well acquainted with it!"

"Then you know whether there are any cannibals there?"

Bunter blinked inquiringly at Soames. It had dawned on his fat brain that perhaps the chums of the Remove had exaggerated the cannibals a little. It was barely possible that they supposed that they would enjoy the walk ashore a little more, if the Owl of the Remove remained on board the Golden Arrow.

"I believe there are very many, sir," said Soames. "But they do not practise cannibalism now, sir, under French rule!"

"Oh! Then it's safe to go ashore?"

Soames raised his eyebrows.

"Quite, sir!"

"I knew those beasts were pulling my leg," said Bunter. "Still, to make all safe, you can take your pistol, Soames."

"It is not my custom to carry arms, sir."

"Gammon!" said Bunter. "You jolly well know that I saw you with an automatic pistol one day, when you were packing a bag."

For an instant a gleam came into Soames' sharp eyes.

"You remember?" demanded Bunter.

"I recall the circumstance, sir, now that you mention it," said Soames smoothly.

"Well, then, you can take that automatic, or lend it to me," said Bunter.

"I fear, sir, that the French authorities would not be pleased if one carried deadly weapons about Nuka-Hiva," said Soames. "The place is as safe as Brighton or Worthing, sir. This is not one of the savage islands; it has been a very long time under French Government. There is no occasion whatever for alarm, sir!"

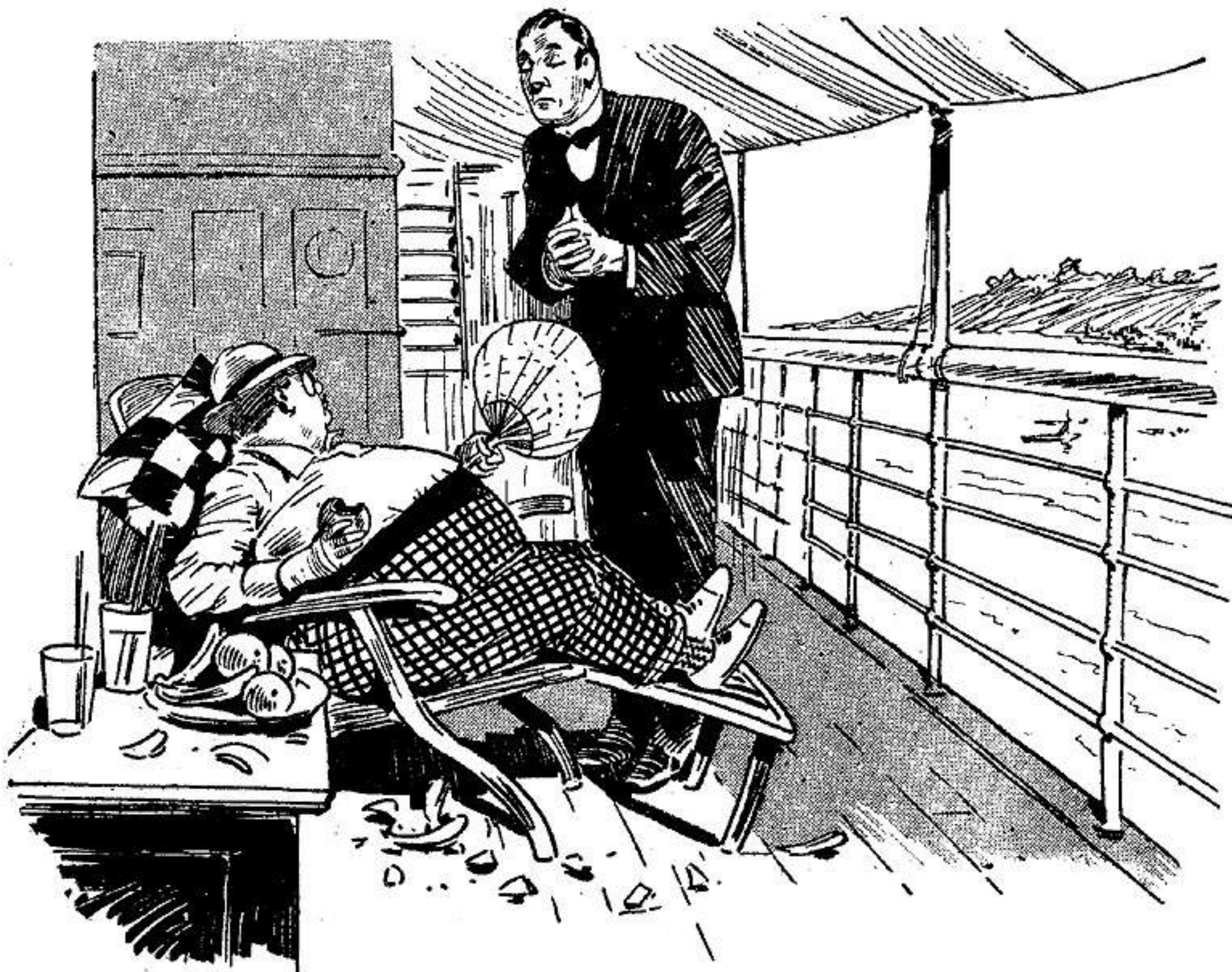
That was exactly what Billy Bunter wanted to know. But now that he knew it, it was not his way to render thanks for the information.

"Alarm!" he repeated. "I hope you don't think I'm alarmed, Soames. What the thump do you mean?"

"I beg your pardon, sir!" said Soames.

"I should jolly well think so," said Bunter warmly. "Alarm! Cheek! A fellow can't speak civilly to a dashed servant without being cheeked in return."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Soames.



"Nuka-Hiva is not one of the savage islands, sir," said Soames in response to Bunter's question. "There is no occasion whatever for alarm!" "Alarm!" repeated Bunter warmly. "Alarm! Any more cheek from you, Soames, and I'll jolly well complain to Mr. Vernon-Smith. Not a word! Shut up!" And he waved a fat hand in dismissal. (See Chapter 2.)

"Shut up!" snapped Bunter. "Any more cheek from you, Soames, and I'll jolly well complain to Mr. Vernon-Smith. My opinion is, that he goes too easy with you. Not a word! Shut up!"

Bunter waved a fat hand in dismissal.

Soames looked at him rather oddly for a moment, and then quietly retired. If Soames had any feelings, probably Bunter had wounded them. Perhaps he hadn't—Bunter certainly seemed to assume that he hadn't.

The Owl of the Remove rolled away to the companion, and went down below. He blinked in at the door of Smithy's state-room.

"I say, Smithy—"

"Hook it!" said the Bounder, without turning round.

"If you call that civil, Smithy!" roared Bunter.

"I don't!"

"Look here—"

"I've said hook it, and I mean hook it," said the Bounder, and to make his meaning clearer, if possible, he slammed the door on Bunter's nose. The Owl of the Remove jumped back just in time to save that feature.

Bunter rolled along the alley-way, breathing wrath.

Smithy's manners to his guest—this particular guest—could not be called polished. Smithy had agreed to allow the stowaway of the Golden Arrow to

become a member of the party, but he had not undertaken to waste any politeness on him. Certainly, any politeness bestowed on Bunter would have been a waste.

The fat junior rolled along to Wharton's room. Wharton and Nugent were there, getting ready for the shore.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter blinked in, "I'm coming ashore with you."

"What about the cannibals?" grinned Nugent.

"Blow the cannibals—I mean, that's why I'm coming—to protect you fellows!"

"Leave us to take our chance," said Wharton.

"Can't be done," said Bunter. "I came along on this voyage for your sakes, and I'm not going to let you get into trouble. You needn't be alarmed about going ashore. I shall be there."

"Nobody was alarmed, fathead, except yourself!"

"Don't get ratty, Wharton, because you're nervous of the cannibals."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"To come to the point," interrupted Bunter, "I'm going ashore with you. I suppose we shall go to the governor's house with old Smithy."

"Do you mean Mr. Vernon-Smith?" asked the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, rather grimly.

"Yes, ass!"

"Then you'd better call him that, and

don't be a cheeky, impudent little fat pig!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Now shut up and roll away."

"About clothes," said Bunter. "You know I came on board with only what I stood up in. You fellows have lent me a few things since. But I shall have to dress decently to call on the governor. Can I have your best trousers, Wharton?"

"No."

"What about yours, Nugent?"

"Nothing about mine," said Frank, laughing.

"After all, I shouldn't care to wear your trousers," said Bunter. "No room in them for a chap whose legs are properly developed. I remember I burst the last pair you lent me, Nugent. But I can wear your waistcoats, Wharton."

"You can't."

"I can if I slit them up the back. It won't be noticed under Smithy's jacket."

"You can settle with Smithy about his jacket," said Wharton, laughing; "but if you burgle my waistcoats, you'll get settled yourself."

"Look here, I suppose I've got to look decent to call on the governor," hooted Bunter. "What am I to do?"

"Wash," suggested Wharton. "It's not the thing to call on a governor, or anybody else, with grub smeared all over your face."

"You cheeky chump!" roared Bunter. "I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean. Buzz off!"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled along to Bob Cherry's room.

"I say, Bob, old chap, can you lend me a suit of clothes?"

"Only a boot," said Bob Cherry.

"I've got shoes. But I want——"

"A boot?"

"No!" roared Bunter.

"You can have it, all the same," said Bob, and he bestowed it on Bunter, with considerable impact, and the Owl of the Remove roared and departed.

He rolled to the room he shared with Hurree-Jamset Ram Singh. He blinked in at the Nabob of Bhanipur with a sulky blink.

"Pretty state of affairs," snorted Bunter. "I shall have to borrow some of your things, Inky."

"My esteemed fat Bunter——"

"Can't say I like wearing a nigger's things, but what is a fellow to do?" demanded Bunter morosely.

"Without!" suggested the nabob.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "Blessed if I know how I shall get your things on; you're the skinniest of the lot!"

"Do you mean slimmest, my esteemed Bunter?"

"No, I don't; I mean skinniest, scraggiest, boniest," amplified Bunter. "I'm the only fellow in the party with a figure. Luckily, your Panama hat fits me. I'll have that, and I say—— Yaroooooh!"

Bunter reached for the hat, but before he could grasp it the nabob's foot reached him.

Bunter sat down in the doorway.

"Yow-ow-ow! You cheeky nigger! I'll jolly well mop up the room with you!" he roared.

"Proceed with the mopfulness, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!"

"Yah! You're not worth a chap soiling his hands on. I refuse to wear your hat now—can't wear a nigger's thing. Go and eat coke!"

"You young fellows ready?" came Mr. Vernon Smith's portly voice, booming from the foot of the companion.

"Yes, sir."

"All ready."

"I shall have to come as I am," said Bunter. "Unluckily, my extensive wardrobe is all at Bunter's Court."

The millionaire looked at him.

"You certainly cannot come as you are, Bunter," he said.

"Oh, really, sir! The fellows refuse to lend me——"

"There is no need for your friends to lend you soap. An ample supply is in the bath-room."

"Soap!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Yes, soap," said Mr. Vernon-Smith. "If you are coming ashore with me, Bunter, go and wash your face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter, with feelings too deep for words, rolled away to wash his face. Mr. Vernon-Smith went on deck, and the grinning juniors followed him. The boat was ready, and the sleek Soames stood prepared to assist his portly employer into it. The Famous Five of the Remove, and Smithy and Tom Redwing, followed the millionaire into the boat, and then Bunter appeared. His wash had not taken him long. Bunter's ablutions never were very lengthy or extensive.

"I say, you fellows, wait for me."

Bunter plumped into the boat.

He blinked round at the juniors as

the seaman pulled for the pier of Taio-hae. He blinked specially at Tom Redwing.

"Redwing's coming ashore?" he asked.

"Looks like it," said Bob.

"I say, isn't it a bit thick, taking Redwing when we're going to call on the governor?" asked Bunter.

"What?"

"You don't mind my mentioning it, Redwing," said the Owl of the Remove, "but it will hardly do, will it?"

The sailorman's son looked at Bunter, but made no reply. Herbert Vernon-Smith answered for him, not in words, but in actions. He reached out and caught Bunter by the collar and shook him forcibly.

"Groogh!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo! Wharrer you shaking me for, you beast? Don't you make my—groogh!—specs fall off. Ooooh! I can't get new specs in the—groogh!—South Seas! Yarooooh! Leggo!"

"Good gad!" Mr. Vernon-Smith looked round. "What ever are you doing, Herbert?"

"Shaking a fat pig!"

"Grooogh!"

"Good gad!" repeated the millionaire.

"Ooooh! Leggo!"

Vernon-Smith let go at last.

"Look here——" hooted Bunter as soon as he recovered his breath.

"Another word, and I'll roll you over the gunwale into the bay!" said the Bounder savagely.

And William George Bunter, wisely, did not utter another word. He suppressed his wrath and indignation, and was silent till the boat pulled in, and the Greyfriars party landed on the pier of Taio-hae.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

An Isle of the Pacific!

MR. VERNON-SMITH proceeded to the Residency of Nuka-Hiva, and Harry Wharton & Co. strolled along the beach. Bunter's misgivings were without foundation, as the millionaire was not taking the juniors to call on the governor. They were to have a walk ashore while Mr. Vernon-Smith was seeing his Excellency, and making some calls on various business men in the little community. Mr. Vernon-Smith was in the South Seas on business connected with the copra trade, in which the millionaire was deeply interested, and with a project of cotton-growing in the South Sea Islands—a project which, if it could be made successful at all, could only be carried through by a man of Mr. Vernon-Smith's unlimited energy and great financial resources. As the great rubber industry was built up in the East by British capital and enterprise, so the millionaire hoped to see a cotton industry planted in the Pacific, to render the mills of Lancashire independent of the American monopoly and of price manipulations by American speculators. It was a great idea, and Mr. Vernon-Smith had given a great deal of his valuable time to it, including this voyage to the South Seas, which, happily, coincided with the long summer holiday at Greyfriars School.

Harry Wharton & Co. wished Smithy's pater the best of luck in the attempt to plant a great new industry in the Pacific Islands, most of them under the British flag; but their own thoughts were rather more given to their own special project—the seeking of the buried pearls on Caca Island, the

treasure of Black Peter, which, if discovered, was to make Tom Redwing a rich man.

Soames walked behind the juniors as they strolled along the beach. Mr. Vernon-Smith had assigned him the task of keeping an eye on the juniors, and Soames, with his respectful manners and obliging ways, made himself quite agreeable. His manner indicated that looking after the juniors was both a pleasure and an honour. There was, indeed, rather too much smooth deference about Soames to please the Greyfriars fellows, but they considered that he meant well, and were very kind accordingly.

Only Tom Redwing hardly ever addressed the man; somehow or other, Tom's distrust of him was growing, and sometimes it seemed to him that Soames' eye lingered on him, as if the man sensed his mistrust somehow. Yet sometimes Tom took himself to task for that distrust, and strove to dismiss it from his mind as a thing without foundation or reason.

"I say, you fellows, we can get coconuts here!" said Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hungry again already?"

"Well, I could do with a few coconuts," said Bunter. "I suppose we can knock them off the trees if we like?"

"Better ask the owners of the trees first."

"Oh, rot!" said Bunter. "Ask Soames. He knows, I suppose. Where's Soames? Where's that dashed manservant?"

"Here, sir!" said Soames, at Bunter's elbow.

"What about those coconuts?" asked Bunter. "Can't we shy pebbles at them and knock them down?"

"I think, sir, that they are private property," said Soames. "They are grown for the copra, sir."

"What the thump's copra?"

"The white lining of the coconut, sir. It is exported for the oil."

"You know all about it, of course!" sneered Bunter. "Sort of walking encyclopedia of the South Seas—what?"

"Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!" said Soames.

"You can kick Bunter, if you like, Soames!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Oh, sir," said Soames deprecatingly. "I should not think of taking such a liberty, sir!"

"I should jolly well think not!" bawled Bunter. "Don't you teach a servant to be cheeky, Smithy! Look here, Soames, I want some coconuts! What's the good of having a confounded servant following us about if he can't get us what we want?"

"Do kick him, Soames!" urged Bob Cherry.

"Oh, sir!"

"You shut up, Cherry!" said Bunter. "Soames knows his place!"

"I trust so, sir," said Soames. "It will be easy to get some coconuts, sir. Many of the natives sell them."

Soames signed to a native, clad in a scanty loin-cloth and a coral necklace, who had a basket of coconuts—the young nuts which are used for drinking. The Marquesan came up at once.

"Selling these?" asked Bunter, blinking at the coconuts.

"Plenty sell feller coconut!" said the native.

"How much?"

"Hundred francs," said the native.

"What!" roared Bunter.

"The natives are rather given to imposing upon unwary strangers, sir," said Soames. And he addressed the

brown gentleman. "You sell plenty good coconut one franc."

The native grinned. "Coconut one feller franc!" he said cheerily.

"That's better!" said Bunter. "Do they use francs here, you fellows? I suppose that's because the island belongs to France."

"What a brain!" said Bob Cherry admiringly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, don't cackle!" said Bunter. "Look here, I've only got English money. I suppose you've got some francs, Soames?"

"English feller money plenty good!" said the native.

"Change some of your hundred-pound notes, Bunter!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"I haven't any hundred-pound notes, Bull!"

"Not really?"

"No; and only a few for fifty pounds. You see, I left most of my money at home."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Pay the man a few francs, Soames!" said Bunter loftily.

"Certainly, sir!"

Soames produced francs, and Bunter selected coconuts. The juniors left him sitting under a palm-tree very busy when they walked on.

"Don't lose me," Bunter bawled after them—"I mean, don't lose yourselves! I jolly well shan't take the trouble to look for you!"

"Fathead!"

"Any sights to see here, Soames?" asked the Bounder.

"The convict prison is generally considered interesting by visitors, sir," answered Soames.

"Convicts here?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Numbers of them, sir."

"Let's have a look at them," said Bob—"that is, of course, if they wouldn't mind? Shouldn't like to hurt even a convict's feelings."

Soames smiled.

"The convicts are natives, sir, and they would not mind in the least. It is this way, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on with Soames, feeling considerable interest in the "sight" they were going to see. In that earthly paradise of the Pacific they had not expected to hear of much in the way of crime, and they were surprised to hear that there were "numbers" of convicts. The simple diet of the natives was obtained with scarcely any labour; the laziest and happiest people in the world had only to tickle the soil to induce it to turn out in abundance all they needed, and in every bay fish swarmed for the taking. Yet, as Soames told them, it was mostly for theft that the convicts were convicted. It was luxuries they wanted in the way of tobacco and spirits.

The calaboose of Nuka-Hiva stood on a promontory, and the juniors were surprised, as they drew near it, to see all the doors and windows wide open to the sea-breeze.

"That isn't the prison?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, sir. It is called the calaboose, from a Spanish word."

"But I should think it jolly easy to escape from," said Wharton, puzzled.

"Very easy indeed, if the prisoners desired to escape, sir."

"And don't they?" asked Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"Very seldom, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "This must be a jolly island, where the prisons are so jolly that a fellow doesn't want to

bolt! Not much like Dartmoor or Portland at home."

"Very different, sir," said Soames.

"A prisoner here is assured of his keep, very light labour being exacted in exchange. Outside the prison he would have to work harder."

The juniors could not help laughing at the idea. Convict life on Nuka-Hiva seemed to them to be run rather on comic-opera lines.

They reached the building and entered the courtyard by an open gateway. The building, with all the windows wide, was obviously untenanted; but in the courtyard, amid a mass of bright flowers, a Frenchman sat in a bamboo chair.

"That is the gaoler gentlemen!" said Soames. And he addressed the official in French. "Ou sont les prisonniers, monsieur?"

Evidently the inimitable Soames spoke French.

The gaoler rose, and lifted his hat politely. The juniors returned the salute with the same politeness, remembering that wherever the French flag flies good manners are "de rigueur."

"Monsieur veut voir les prisonniers?" asked the gaoler regretfully.

"Mais si," said Soames.

"Je suis desole!" said the polite Frenchman. "Mais aujourd'hui, ils sont alles!"

Harry Wharton & Co. remembered enough of Monsieur Charpentier's instructions at Greyfriars to comprehend that dialogue. Soames had asked where the prisoners were, and the gaoler had replied that he was desolated, but all the prisoners had gone out.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Do they let the convicts go for a walk whenever they like?"

The gaoler smiled.

"C'est jour de fete, monsieur," he said. And he went on in English: "They are going to make holiday, isn't it? Pourquoi pas?"

"But will they come back?" asked Wharton.

"Au soir, oui—they come back when sun sets."

"My word!" said Johnny Bull. "I rather think I should like to be a giddy convict on Nuka-Hiva. It seems an easy life."

"The easiness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Perhaps the prison system in Nuka-Hiva is better than in esteemed England. It must be much nicer to be a convict here."

"I am sorry that you cannot see the convicts, gentlemen," said Soames.

"But probably we shall see some of them as we return."

And the juniors did. As they walked back to the town, they sighted a dancing group of happy natives.

"Some of the convicts, gentlemen," said Soames.

"Oh, my hat!"

"We've seen some of them, after all, then," said Harry Wharton. "They look as if they thrive on it. I should say that the natives of the French islands find the French very easy masters."

The juniors walked back into Taio-hae, picking up Billy Bunter on the way. William George Bunter announced that he was tired. No doubt he had become fatigued by sitting under the palm-tree eating coconuts. His fat jaws, at least, had been given plenty of exercise.

"Let's get back on board," he said. "Mustn't be late for tiffin, you know. That's important. If old—"

Bunter broke off as he was about to mention Mr. Vernon-Smith, and blinked round to see if the Bounder was within hearing.

"If old Smith isn't through yet, we can go back without him. I say, you fellows, where's Smithy—and that fellow Redwing?"

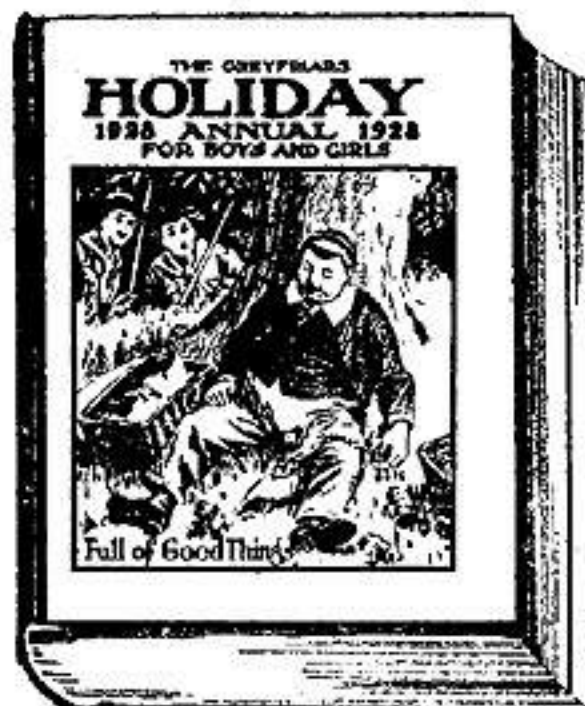
Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing had dropped out of the party as they walked back. Soames glanced towards the palms the juniors had passed through.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he said smoothly. "With your permission, I will go back and call Master Herbert. Mr. Vernon-Smith was very particular that no member of the party should wander away."

"Right-ho!" said Wharton, with a smile.

And the juniors sauntered on towards the pier, while Soames hurried back to look for the Bounder. And as Soames went his sleek face hardened,

"HALLO, HALLO, HERE WE ARE AGAIN!"



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and a glint came into his eyes which would have startled the chums of Greyfriars, had they seen his face just then.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nothing in It!

"WHAT name this feller game?" asked the Bounder, with a grin, speaking in the beche-de-mer of which the Greyfriars fellows had already heard a good deal.

Redwing stared for a moment and then smiled.

"Or, in common or garden English, what's the game?" asked Smithy. "You've jerked me away from the party, and rounded me up among these palms. You've got something to say you don't want the others to hear. Blessed if I can make you out, Reddy. You're the last chap in the world to be secretive or mysterious—too much the other way, in fact. In the name of goodness, what's the game?"

The Bounder did not speak impatiently, but he was very curious, and a little restive. He simply could not imagine why Redwing had drawn him away from the Greyfriars party, though with his usual quickness on the uptake, he had discerned at the first sign that Redwing desired to speak to him unheard by other ears.

"I've been thinking and thinking about it, Smithy," said the sailorman's son. "And I think I'd better speak out—to you, at least. You can use your judgment about speaking of it to the other chaps. But, specially, I wanted to speak to you without Soames hearing."

"Soames!" exclaimed the Bounder in surprise.

"Yes."

"I've thought several times that you had something up against Soames, Reddy. I fancy it's struck him, too."

"Only if he has a guilty conscience, I think," said Redwing quietly.

"My hat! What on earth has Soames done?" exclaimed the astonished Bounder.

"I can't say that he's done anything. I've a misgiving—a very deep misgiving. I shouldn't have spoken of it had not your father arranged to send Soames with us in search of the treasure island. We start in a few days from Nuka-Hiva—with Soames."

Redwing's face was thoughtful and troubled.

"Smithy, you know all about what happened on the yacht coming out here from England. After we got aboard we were done with Silvio Xero, the half-caste, and we thought it was all plain sailing. Instead of that, someone unknown attacked me and got the chart."

"I know."

"Owing to Bunter having stowed himself away on board, he found it where the thief hid it in the dark, in the baggage-cabin. I gave it to you to mind—and you were attacked later—the man nearly got it from you. The man, whoever he was, must have spied on us when I handed it to you."

"That's so."

"After that it was locked up in your father's safe, and one night your father was drugged, and the key of the safe taken—the rotter who was after the chart was only defeated by chance—Bunter happening to turn out at night to get a drink. Now your father bolts his state-room door of a night."

"Well?" said the Bounder, rather impatiently.

"Nobody knows who the man is," said Redwing. "It's still a mystery; but it's certain that he's still on the Golden Arrow, as no one has left the vessel. Smithy, suppose it is that very man that your father has picked out to go with us to the treasure island."

"Soames?" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Soames!" said Redwing.

Herbert Vernon-Smith stared at Redwing as if he thought that his chum had taken leave of his senses.

"You think Soames was the man?" he asked incredulously.

"No, no! How can I think so without any evidence? But it was some man on board the Golden Arrow, and

suspicion rests upon one man as much as another."

"In a way, yes; but that would apply to the lot of us—ourselves, and my father, and Captain Greene, and the mate," said Smithy.

"I've said there's no evidence," went on Redwing, unheeding the Bounder's answer. "But there are little things. Soames has sailed in the South Seas before, and knows the Islands—and that may make him take the treasure story more seriously. Your father laughs at it, and so do the captain and the mate."

"I fancy Soames does, too, only he's such a jolly polished manservant that he laughs only in his sleeve," said Smithy, laughing.

"It is scarcely possible that the unknown thief can be one of the crew, Smithy. Both of us were attacked aft, by a man who watched for a chance. The crew are generally for'ard. Then—the man know I had given you the chart for safe-keeping. We were aft of the cabin skylight when I gave it you. No man from the fore-castle would be likely to be hanging about there to spy on us. Then—the drugging of your father—no man for'ard could have got at his drink. And then—Soames offered your father to accompany us on the trip to Caca Island. Your father was glad of the offer; but very likely he would not have sent Soames had not the man offered. It all seems to fit in together."

"Rot!" said the Bounder tersely.

Redwing was silent and troubled.

"You figure it out that the unknown man was Soames—and that he's after the chart, and after the treasure! A manservant—the man who lays out my father's clothes and brushes his coats?" The Bounder laughed. "Not quite the character for a South Sea desperado, Reddy."

"You really think there is nothing in it, Smithy?" asked Redwing earnestly. "I know it's all vague; but we know there was somebody. And it seems to me that what evidence there is points to Soames."

"Utter rot! Take the giddy evidence, as you call it—suppose it was a man aft who was after the chart! Captain and mate are aft, as well as Soames! The steward is amidships—but he has the run aft, and he is the man who could drug my father easiest of all. Then there's the steward's man. The engineer, too, can get aft as much as he likes. Same with the second engineer. And each time an attack was made it was in the dark at night—when a man might have crept from for'ard without being noticed. It's all moonshine, Reddy!"

"There was somebody, Smithy—somebody after the chart, who was prepared to stop at very little."

"I know. Not Soames."

"You feel sure of that?"

"Absolutely," said the Bounder, with conviction.

"You see my point, Smithy? Your father believes that in leaving the Golden Arrow behind at Nuka-Hiva we shall leave behind the unknown man who attacked us for the chart. Yet, if it was Soames, he is sending that very man with us."

"Quite. Only it was not Soames."

"I give in, Smithy! You know the man better than I do. But I felt that I had to put it to you before it was too late."

"That's right enough, of course," said the Bounder, with a nod. "You'd never seen Soames before you came on the yacht. But he's been with my father

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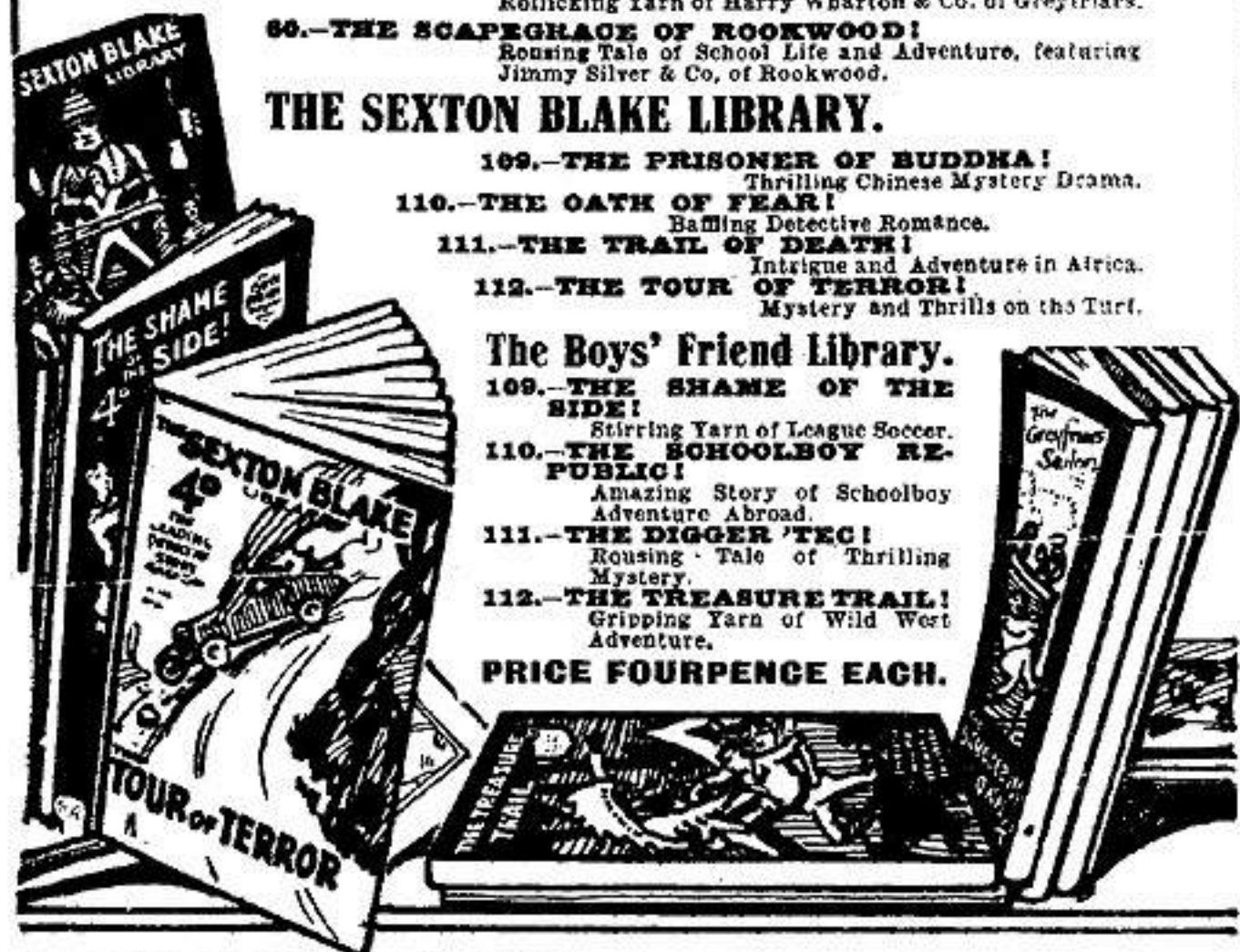
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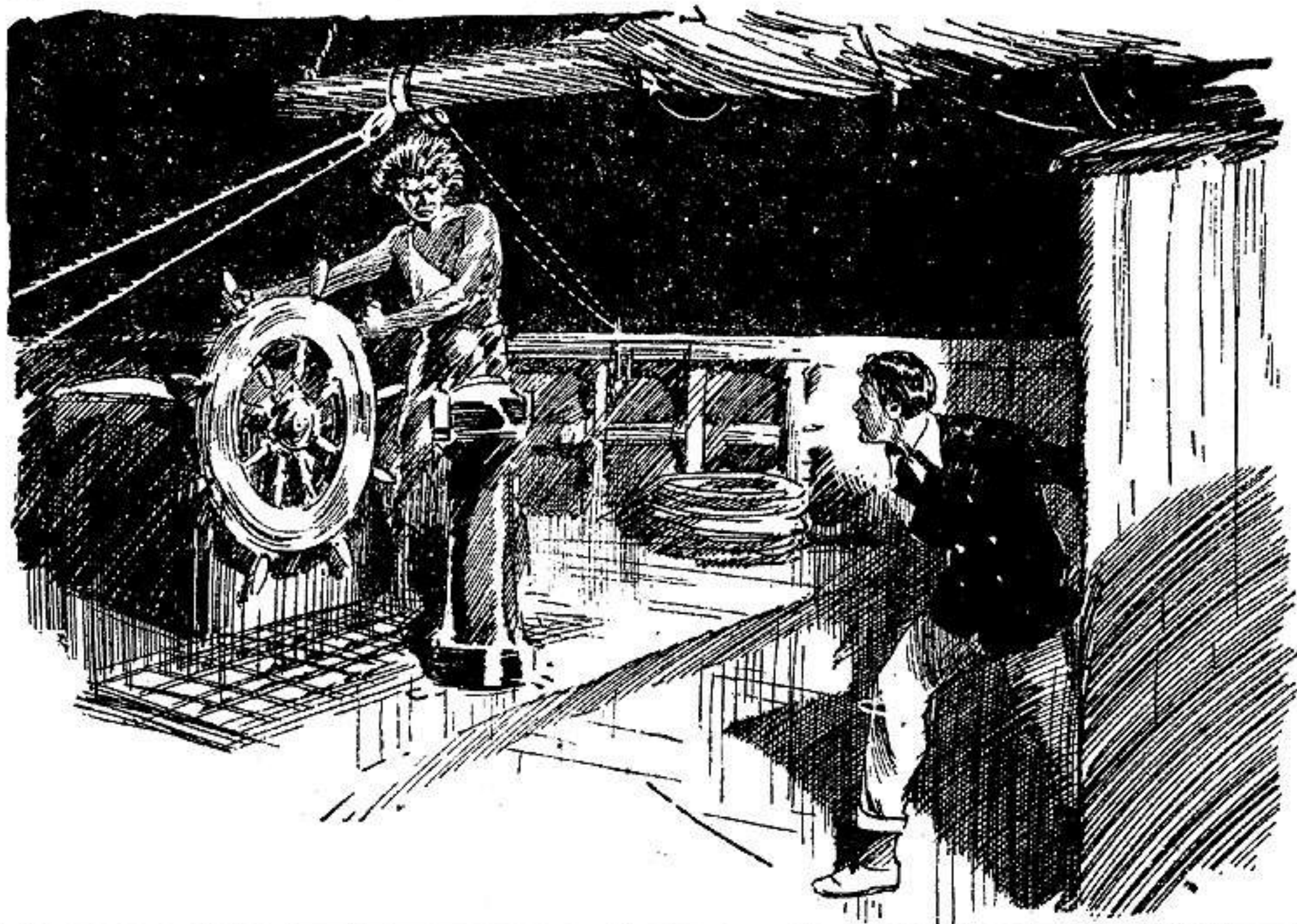
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There was a glimmer of the binnacle lamp as Tom Redwing crept on deck, and Tom made out vaguely the figure of the Kanaka boatswain at the wheel. His black eyes and white teeth flashed a smile as the sailorman's son came near. "Where is the captain?" asked Redwing in a low voice. (See Chapter 8.)

since I was a kid, and the pater trusts him absolutely."

"With large sums of money?"

Smithy laughed.

"The pater wouldn't trust any man with large sums of money. He trusts Soames more than he trusts anybody else."

"I give in, as I said. But think of it a little. If the man was Soames, and he came with us—"

"Well, what could he do, even then?" asked Smithy. "The pater is going to charter a vessel for us to play about in treasure-hunting. Captain and mate will be in his pay, and the crew will be reliable. Even if Soames was that giddy desperado what could he do?"

Redwing was silent.

It had seemed to the keen, observant, thoughtful sailorman's son that he had seen more in James Soames than anyone else had dreamed of seeing—that behind the smooth, sleek, deferential exterior he had had some glimpse of a hard, dangerous, ruthless character. It was rather by instinct than by reason that he felt as he did; but Tom was experienced enough to know that instinct is a safer guide than reason.

But he realised that it was useless to explain such vague, nebulous misgivings to the hard-headed Bounder. Indeed, his feelings were difficult to explain in words.

"Put it out of your mind, old fellow," said Smithy. "I'm glad you told me, if it's been worrying you. But I give you my word that there's nothing in it; and you know I'm no fool."

"I leave it to you, then, Smithy," said Redwing. "I feel a bit easier if you

think you can answer for Soames after what I've said."

"Right up to the hilt, old bean."

"Let it go at that, then. We'll say no more about it," said Redwing.

"Let's go after the others."

The two juniors walked on towards the town, the Bounder smiling, and Redwing still a little troubled, though certainly his chum's faith in Soames had reassured him very much.

"Hallo, here's our bird himself!" exclaimed the Bounder, as they came suddenly on Soames among the palms.

"Pray excuse me, sir!" said Soames. "I came back to look for you, as Mr. Vernon-Smith is particularly anxious that no one should wander from the party. I trust you will excuse the liberty, sir!"

"All serene!" said the Bounder.

Redwing compressed his lips. He could not help thinking that Soames had missed them and had come back to watch or spy—that perhaps he had lurked among the palms and overheard the talk there. Yet there was absolutely nothing in Soames' manner to give colour to such a suspicion. He dropped respectfully behind the juniors as they walked on, and once or twice when Redwing glanced round Soames' face was as expressionless as ever, as if no thoughts of any kind moved in his sleek brain. Even that, however, somehow made Redwing more distrustful, for was it possible for any man to be the machine that Soames appeared to be? And if hidden thoughts worked behind that sleek, impassive face what were the thoughts. Deep, and dark, and dangerous?

But Redwing had told his chum that

he would give in, and he resolutely dismissed the misgiving from his mind. It was destined to return later—but too late!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Bunter Is Not Satisfied!

"**B**EAUTIFUL!" It was a couple of days later.

Tom Redwing uttered that exclamation, his face bright, and his eyes dancing.

He was standing on the deck of the Golden Arrow, watching a little schooner tacking into the bay of Taiohae from the Pacific.

Tom had been bred to the sea, and his love of the sea and ships was a kind of ruling passion with him. Some of his happiest days had been spent at Greyfriars, as a junior in the Remove, but he would not have been so happy there had not the school been within sound of the sea. And on a half-holiday it had been Tom's keenest enjoyment to go out on the salt water in any kind of craft. Young as he was, Tom had a sailorman's eye for a ship; he could tell the quality of a craft at a glance. And as he watched the little South Sea schooner tacking into the bay his sunburnt face lighted up with sheer pleasure at the beauty of the vessel.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Look!" answered Redwing.

"A trader, I suppose," said Bob,

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glancing at the schooner. "Looks a pretty little thing."

"Beautiful!" said Tom. "Look at her lines! Look at the way she answers her helm! Look how she tacks! I should say she could almost tack into the teeth of the wind. Give me a schooner like that and you can keep all your steamers!"

Bob chuckled.

"Utility before beauty in these jolly old days," he said. "How long would it take you to get here from England in a sailing-ship?"

"Six months, I suppose," said Harry Wharton. "Not to be done in the longest vacation. All the same, that's a pretty little vessel."

The juniors watched the schooner with interest.

A strong wind was blowing off the hills, as was often the case at Nuka-Hiva, and the schooner had to enter the bay on a series of tacks. Captain and mate could be seen aft—the former dressed in white ducks with a peaked cap; the latter wearing little more than a bathing costume. The crew appeared to be all Kanakas, clad only in a single garment, not of much extent. Their bronze skins glistened in the sun as they handled the sheets, and some of them were singing, with the usual light-heartedness of Kanakas.

"Like the craft, my boys—what?" asked the fruity voice of Mr. Vernon-Smith as he joined the group of juniors at the rail.

"She's a beauty, sir," said Redwing.

"The charmfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Like to sail in her?" asked the millionaire.

"What ho!"

"Well, that's the Aloha," said Mr. Vernon-Smith with a smile. "She was at Hiva-oo, and I sent a message to bring her round here. That's the craft you're going treasure-hunting on."

Tom Redwing's eyes danced.

"That will be glorious!" he exclaimed.

"Tip-top!" said Nugent.

"Is that one of your ships, father?" asked the Bounder.

"Yes, my boy; she is in the copra trade, among the islands," explained Mr. Vernon-Smith. "I'm taking her off the business for a month while you young fellows are amusing yourselves hunting for treasure." Mr. Vernon-Smith smiled, as he generally did at the mention of Black Peter's treasure. "Her captain, William Lennox, is a man I know, and can trust; and with Captain Lennox in command and Soames to look after you when you go ashore, I don't think that even a crowd of schoolboys will be able to get into much trouble."

"It's jolly good of you, dad!" said the Bounder gratefully.

"Not at all, my boy! I want you and your friends to have a good time on your holiday; and you ought to have a jolly good time roaming among the islands, whether you find a treasure or not."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry, his eyes glistening. "It's a thing I've dreamed about lots of times, but never expected the dream to come true."

"Same here!" said Johnny Bull.

The Aloha glided into the bay and dropped her anchor at a little distance from the Golden Arrow. Her captain saluted Mr. Vernon-Smith as his vessel passed, evidently recognising the portly millionaire at a distance. The mate dived below, and was seen to emerge again clad in the trousers of civilisation.

A few hours later Captain Lennox came on board the yacht.

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Harry Wharton & Co. were presented to the skipper, with whom they were to sail in quest of Black Peter's pearls.

Lennox was a stocky little man, burnt almost to the hue of copper by tropical suns. He was, as his name implied, of Scottish descent, and obviously, at the first glance, a man of integrity and steady character. The millionaire, with the responsibility of the juniors on his hands, had been careful in his selection of the skipper who was to take them in charge. The skipper, a man of few words, was civil; though the probability was that he was not overjoyed at being given charge of a party of holiday-making schoolboys. He told them, however, that he would do his best to make them comfortable on board the Aloha, and would take his sailing directions from Vernon-Smith during the period assigned for the cruise in the Pacific. And at the mention of Caca, he added that he knew the island, having touched there for water on one occasion.

"Is it inhabited?" the Bounder asked him.

"One side of the island is inhabited, but the natives are cut off by a range of hills," said the skipper. "They seldom or never come across the island to the eastern side."

"That agrees with the chart," said Bob.

Captain Lennox stared.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, with a jovial grin, proceeded to explain to him about the chart.

For the first time, Captain Lennox smiled.

"Well, if the pearls are there, the young gentlemen shall find them," he said. "We can reach Caca in three or four days. I will take care that the coast is clear before anyone lands on the island. Probably you will see no one, though there are traces of someone having lived there at some time or other. I remember seeing the remains of a pae-pae-hae."

There was a general start among the juniors.

"That's marked on the chart!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Do you know what a pae-pae-hae is, sir?" asked Nugent.

The skipper blinked at him.

"Naturally," he answered.

"Then what?" asked Johnny Bull eagerly.

"If you've been ashore here in Taoi-hae, you must have seen plenty of them," said the skipper. "A pae-pae-hae is the high foundation the natives build their grass houses upon in the Marquesas. A hae is a house. Pae-pae-hae is a house on a high foundation."

"Oh! Simple enough when you know it," said Bob Cherry. "But a fellow has to learn these things. We don't get South Sea lingo at Greyfriars."

"The pronunciation is a bit of a corker," said Nugent. "I called the thing a pay-pay-hay when I saw it on the chart. But it seems to be a pah-ay-pah-ay-hah-ay."

"You pronounce every giddy syllable, it seems, in these lingoos," said Bob, "and there are lots and lots of them, nearly all vowels. Jolly musical to listen to, but a bit of a catch to understand."

"Did you ever hear of Peter Bruce, sir?" asked Redwing.

"I don't remember—"

"He was sometimes called Black Peter."

Captain Lennox started.

"That desperado?" he exclaimed. "He was killed on the beach by some other cut-throat. You don't mean to

say that this chart you speak of comes from Black Peter?"

Redwing coloured deeply.

"He was my uncle!" he said.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said Captain Lennox. "I—I dare say he was not so black as he was painted. May I ask how the chart reached you?"

"Ben Dance, a wooden-legged seaman, brought it to England. He is now on board this yacht," said Redwing. "He is coming with us to search for the pearls."

Captain Lennox nodded.

"I've seen the man—an honest sailor-man, as they go in the South Seas, Mr. Vernon-Smith." He turned to the millionaire. "If the chart was actually made by Black Peter and sent to this lad, there is very little doubt that it is genuine. Black Peter was well known to have a collection of pearls of great value, and it is fairly certain that he was killed by someone who was after them. He is said to have been stabbed by a half-caste named Silvio Xero."

"That's the man!" exclaimed Wharton.

When Captain Lennox returned to the schooner there was an eager discussion among the Greyfriars fellows. They had learned something from the skipper, and even Mr. Vernon-Smith seemed a little impressed at last. His skipper of the copra schooner was a man who had sailed the Pacific for thirty years, and knew what he was talking about. And it was clear that Black Peter and his treasure of pearls had been a general topic in the islands.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter butted into the discussion. "I've been looking at that ship."

"Go and look again," suggested Johnny Bull.

"I can't see any sign of the engines," said Bunter.

"The what?"

"Engines! There are no funnels."

"Funnels?"

"Looks to me as if it's a sailing ship," said Bunter, with a wise shake of the head.

The juniors looked at Bunter.

"You—you think that schooner is a sailing ship?" gasped Bob Cherry, at last.

"Well, it looks like it to me," said Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The powers of observation of the esteemed Bunter are terrific," murmured Hurree Singh. "Have any of you fellows noticed that the schooner is a sailing ship?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mean to say you knew?" demanded Bunter.

The juniors yelled. The schooner had tacked into the bay with bellying canvas and rattling boom, and it should have been obvious, even to the Owl of the Remove, that the Aloha was a sailing ship. But apparently that discovery had only just dawned on William George Bunter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," grunted Bunter. "Look here, I'm not satisfied."

"Oh dear!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter isn't satisfied. This is where we put on sackcloth and ashes."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I suppose we're not going fooling about in a sailing ship?" said Bunter warmly. "The least that Smithy's pater can do is to stand us a steamer, I consider."

"Fathead!"

"Well, that's my opinion," snorted Bunter.

"Fortunately, your opinion doesn't matter," remarked Nugent. "Isn't that lucky, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It's a blinking windjammer!"
 grunted Bunter.
 "A which?" inquired Frank.
 "A windjammer—seamen call a sailing ship a windjammer. I'm not satisfied with anything of the kind. Look here, you fellows had better suggest to Mr. Vernon-Smith that we take the yacht."
 "Mr. Vernon-Smith is using the yacht for business trips among the islands while we're gone," said Harry.
 "I suppose he can put that off?"
 "Eh?"
 "Or take one of the island steamers, or something?"
 "Dear old Bunter!" said Bob.
 "I think you'd better put it to Smithy's pater, Wharton. Put it to him plainly, you know."
 "I think you'd better put it to him yourself, Bunter," said Wharton, laughing. "Here's Smithy—put it to him."
 The Bounder came up and joined the group. He glanced inquiringly at the laughing faces of the Famous Five and the frowning countenance of William George Bunter.
 "Anything up?" he asked.
 "Lots," said Bob. "Bunter isn't satisfied. That being the case, we're rather afraid that the jolly old world will stop revolving on its axis and the skies will fall. Which would be a calamity."
 The Bounder grinned.

"What's the trouble, Bunter?" he asked.
 "Nothing," said Bunter promptly. His tenure as a "guest" of the Bounder of Greyfriars was rather precarious, and he did not like the look in Smithy's eye. "I was just saying how ripping it was of your pater to stand us that splendid schooner for our trip, and how—how lucky it was that we weren't going in a beastly, smoky, smelly steamer! That's all."
 "Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob.
 "Sure you're satisfied?" asked the Bounder genially.
 "Oh, quite!"
 "Because, if you're not——"
 "But I am," said Bunter, in a great hurry, "more than satisfied, in fact."
 "Because it is quite easy to take a passage home from here."
 "Eh?"
 "And I'll ask my father to pay your fare like a shot, if you're keen on getting back to Bunter Court!"
 Billy Bunter's face was a study for a moment.
 "Just say the word!" said the Bounder.
 Bunter had no intention of saying that word. Bunter Court, with all its glories, did not attract him in the least.
 "Go it, Bunter old man!" said Johnny Bull. "Take Smithy's offer while it's open. It will be too late when we've started on the windjammer."
 "Oh, really, Bull——"

"Think of the crowds of the nobility and gentry at Bunter Court, and how they miss your cherubic face—perhaps!" urged Bob.
 "Oh, really, Cherry——"
 "We'll all see you off—with pleasure!" said Wharton.
 "The pleasurefulness will be terrific!"
 "Shall I speak to the pater?" asked the Bounder.
 "Nunno!" gasped Bunter.
 "Sure?" persisted Smithy.
 "Oh, quite, old man! I wouldn't desert you for anything. Why, you may be going into danger—you'll need me!" gasped Bunter.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Rely on me, old chap," said the Owl of the Remove. "I'm sticking to you. Rely on me."
 And Bunter rolled away, to put an end to the discussion, leaving the chums of the Remove grinning. Bunter rolled down the companion just as Soames was coming up. There was a collision on the stairs, and as Soames stood as firm as a rock it was Bunter who sat down. He sat down hard.
 "Ow!" he gasped.
 Soames looked at him.
 "Sorry, sir!" he said softly. "You came down so very quickly, sir, I did not see you. I trust you are not hurt, sir?"
 Bunter glared at him.
 He was scared of the Bounder, but he was not scared of Soames. To a manservant, at least, he could say what he liked.



"Here, you Jacky!" rapped out Soames. "Yes, sar?"
 "You search that feller, turn out um pockets!" Redwing submitted quietly to the search. Jacky, the boatswain, soon turned out his pockets. But the treasure-chart was not there. (See Chapter 11.)

"You cheeky beast!" he gasped.
 "Oh, sir!" said Soames deprecatingly.
 "How dare you get in my way!" hooted Bunter. "Don't you know that a servant should stand out of a gentleman's way?"

"Pray excuse me, sir——"
 "Hold your tongue!" snorted Bunter.
 For one instant there came a glint into Soames' eyes. But it was only for an instant. William George Bunter never knew what a narrow escape he had just then of being kicked down the companion-way.

"I am truly sorry, sir!" said Soames smoothly. "I trust, sir, that you will realise that I was not to blame for the collision, as you rushed into me."

"Get out of the way!"
 "Certainly, sir!"
 Soames backed down the stairs respectfully, and Bunter rolled on his way. The Owl of the Remove derived some satisfaction from having, as he regarded it, put Soames in his place. Had William George Bunter been able to see a little further into the future he would have felt anything but satisfaction. Fortunately, he couldn't.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Under Way!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. spent a busy and happy day making their preparations on board the Aloha.

They explored the little schooner, and especially their own quarters on board, with great interest and delight.

There was no doubt that quarters would be close on the little vessel; she was not so commodious as the Golden Arrow. And the copra trader, of course, lacked all the modern gadgets with which Mr. Vernon-Smith's priceless yacht was furnished. On the Golden Arrow was electric light and a refrigerator worked by the yacht's electricity, and a bath-room with constant supplies of water, hot and cold, easy-chairs and writing-tables, bookcases and books—everything, in fact, that money could buy to add to ease and comfort. On the Aloha all these things were conspicuously lacking.

But no one in the party was likely to miss them much, excepting Bunter. The juniors, in point of fact, preferred the island schooner to a yacht that was rather like a floating hotel. They had come to the South Seas for change and adventure, and to see things as they really were, and they were not keen on bringing all the latest gadgets of civilised comfort along with them.

White Wings appealed more to the imagination than a steam-engine, and they were glad that the schooner was a "windjammer." They were in no hurry—in fact, they were glad to get away from hurry into the easy-going ways of the South. The Aloha—unlike very many South Sea traders—was scrupulously clean; her Scottish skipper saw to that. And that was the only point upon which the Greyfriars fellows were really particular. They had not reached the age when ease and comfort were necessities of life.

Instead of the spacious saloon of the yacht, they found a little cuddy, with lockers and bunks ranged round it.

Bunter declared that they would be packed like sardines, but nobody minded Bunter. Captain and mate had transferred their quarters to the little deck-house, leaving the space below for the seven juniors and Bunter. Even so, there was not too much room—much too

little, according to Bunter. Care had to be taken to keep down the baggage as much as possible.

Bunter declared that there was no room for a fellow's things. As Bunter had no baggage whatever, excepting what he had borrowed or annexed from the other fellows, that need not have worried him very much. But it did worry him, apparently. The delight of the Remove fellows had an incessant accompaniment of grousing from William George Bunter. But Harry Wharton & Co. were accustomed to that, and they let it pass them by like the idle wind which they regarded not.

Everything on the schooner delighted the juniors—even the fact that it was a schooner! What could be more delightful than sailing among the isles of the Pacific in a schooner? Bob Cherry asked his comrades. And they agreed that nothing could.

When a fellow was in a hurry steam was all very well; when a fellow was on a holiday hurry was out of place and spoiled the picture. Long, leisurely days bowling before the trade-winds, the rattle of spars and the clanking of the boom, white canvas banging over their heads as the happy Kanakas handled the sheets—it was a delightful prospect. The Kanaka crew were another attraction—it was "real South Sea" sailing, with a crew of grinning, brown-faced men, who spoke a strange, melodious language among themselves, and pidgin English when they addressed the whites.

The cook was a Tonga Islander; there was no steward, but Soames was taking on a steward's duties. It seemed to be Soames' one object in life to make himself of use—to his employer first of all; next, to his employer's son; and after that, to the friends of his employer's son. Even Bunter received inexhaustible courtesy from Soames. And Redwing felt ashamed of his lingering distrust, when he found that he was the recipient of many little acts of thoughtful attention from Soames, who was as unvaryingly courteous to the sailorman's son as to the millionaire's son.

With quiet, unobtrusive thoughtfulness Soames did so much to make the juniors' quarters on the Aloha more comfortable, that they could not help feeling grateful, and they came to the conclusion that it was rather a good thing, after all, that Soames was coming with them.

Possibly that was the conclusion to which Soames wished them to come.

Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman, messed amidships with Soames, and he, too, received many polite attentions from Mr. Vernon-Smith's man. He regarded the neat, sleek manservant with something like respectful awe. He had talked to Soames sometimes, and discovered that the man had a thorough knowledge of seamanship and navigation, and was capable of sailing the vessel himself. Yet, with all his gifts—which seemed really innumerable—Soames was so unassuming that no one would have suspected that he possessed such gifts.

It was not without some misgiving that Dance had joined the crew of the schooner. He was convinced that the pearls would not be lifted without a struggle with Silvio Xero, the half-caste; and there was a note of dread in his voice whenever he mentioned the man with the earrings. He was a brave man, as the juniors knew; but the ferocious half-caste terrified him. The desperado who had "got" Black Peter was a man to be feared, though the

Greyfriars fellows gave him little thought.

"What about arms?" Billy Bunter wanted to know, when the juniors had packed their possessions in the lockers.

"Which?" asked Bob Cherry.
 "There're cannibals on Caca Island," said Bunter. "And we may run into that half-caste villain again. We shall want arms."

"Never mind arms," said Bob cheerily. "You rely on your legs in the hour of danger, you know."

"Beast! I had better have a revolver, at least."

"Impossible! The 'Daily Mail' doesn't circulate in the South Sea Islands," answered Bob.

"Eh! What's the 'Daily Mail' got to do with it?"

"We should want to sign the Insurance Coupon, if you had a revolver," explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Look here, I'm not going among cannibals unarmed!"

"If you went unlegged, it would be serious," said Bob. "But what good would arms be to you when you were running?"

"I believe you want me to be cooked and eaten by cannibals!" hooted Bunter.

"No fear! I wouldn't give even a cannibal such a nasty morsel!"

"Beast!"

"It's all right, Bunter," said Harry Wharton laughing. "Whatever arms are necessary will be on board. Captain Lennox knows how to take care of his ship."

"Not so well as Bunter does," said Johnny Bull. "Bunter could give him a lot of tips."

"I daresay I could," sneered Bunter. "I don't think much of the skipper, or the mate either. As for the crew, they're a lot of niggers, like Hurree Singh."

"My esteemed Bunter——"

"Very likely cannibals, the lot of them," said the Owl of the Remove. "Still, I suppose Soames is bringing his automatic."

"Not likely!" said Nugent. "Soames doesn't strike me as a man to carry firearms."

"That's all you know. I saw him one day packing a revolver."

"Rats!"

"I saw him!" roared Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"You silly chumps, I tell you——"

"Dry up, old fat bean!"

"You can ask him," said Bunter. "I say, Soames! Confound that servant—where is he? Soames!"

"Here, sir!" said a sleek voice.

"These fellows don't believe that you've got an automatic pistol, Soames," said Bunter.

"Quite so, sir!"

"Why, I saw you packing it, on the yacht, one day!" hooted Bunter.

"I have left it there, sir," said Soames smoothly. "It will not be needed on this schooner. The captain and mate are armed; and they are fully capable of protecting us!"

"I daresay you want to be protected—I don't!" said Bunter, with a sneer. "But, of course, a valet wouldn't understand that."

"No, sir. I beg your pardon, sir. Is there anything more, sir?"

"No; get out!"

Soames got out.

"What beats me," said Bob Cherry, in a tone of wonder, "is why Soames has never kicked Bunter."

"The kickfulness is the proper

caper," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "as the esteemed and obsequious Soames does not kick him, I suggest that we bestow the necessary kickfulness."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob heartily. "I say, you fellows—yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as he received what was coming to him.

"Now shut up," said Bob. "And if you check Soames again, you'll get another. Be civil to the man, you fat outsider!"

"Check a servant!," gasped Bunter. "You silly idiot, you can't check a servant. You'd know that, if you were accustomed to a horde of menials as I am at home."

"Kick him again!"
"Yaroooh!"
And Bunter ceased from troubling, and the weary were at rest—for a little while.

All was ready at last; and one bright morning, Mr. Vernon-Smith bade farewell to the treasure-seekers, and went back to his yacht and his business enterprises; and the Aloha weighed anchor and stood out to sea.

The Greyfriars fellows lined the rail, looking back at Nuka-Hiva as the schooner bowled out to sea. The town of Taio-hae sank from sight, and slowly the great hills sunk into the waves.

"We're really off at last!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "Got the chart safe, Reddy?"

Redwing smiled, and tapped his pocket.

"Safe as houses!" he said. "Nobody here to try to get it off you," said Bob. "Whoever that mysterious johnny was who tried to get hold of it, we've left him behind on board the Golden Arrow."

Redwing nodded, without replying. His distrust of Soames had faded a good deal, but it was not quite forgotten. At all events, he was on his guard, and if the mysterious enemy was, indeed, now on the schooner with the Greyfriars party, Redwing was determined that he should obtain no opportunity of getting at Black Peter's chart.

The Bounder looked at Redwing, smiling slightly, as he remembered what the sailorman's son had said in the palm grove on Nuka-Hiva.

"All serene, Reddy," he said. "All plain sailing now—unless we hit up against Silvio Xero once more."

"This craft is a beauty for sailing," said Redwing. "We're doing eight knots now. It's a ripping craft."

"The ripfulness is terrific."

Under the blazing sun, with brown canvas filled by the trade-wind, the Aloha glided gracefully and swiftly on her way, and the summits of Nuka-Hiva sank below the waves. The vast Pacific, trackless, boundless, lay round the Greyfriars treasure-seekers—the next land they were to see was the Island of Caca, where lay Black Peter's treasure. It was a thrilling thought to Harry Wharton & Co.; and they little dreamed, at that moment, of what was to happen before they sighted the treasure island.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

More Mystery!

"SUPPOSE—" "Too hot for supposing!" said Bob Cherry.

"But suppose—" "The hotfulness is grateful and comfortable," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Suppose—"

"Have you been oiling your supposer, Bunter?" inquired Bob. "If you're keen on supposing suppose you leave off grousing?"

"I'm only supposing—" "Bow-wow!"

It was the second day out of Nuka-Hiva, and undoubtedly it was hot. The juniors had canvas chairs on the deck of the Aloha, on the shady side of the big mainsail. They had already learned to keep an eye open when the boom swung over. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh basked in the heat. Bob Cherry fanned himself with a palm leaf. It was hot, there was no mistake about that; but, as Bob remarked with undiminished cheerfulness, fellows didn't come to the Equator to keep cool.

"But suppose," persisted Bunter. "Suppose we get becalmed!"

"Why suppose anything of the kind?" yawned Bob. "There's plenty of wind at present, though it feels rather as if it is blowing out of a baker's oven. But it's making us move!"

"Sailing ships do get becalmed!"

here, Bunter, I'll tell you what! If the water runs out and we perish of thirst, you'll have to dry up. Suppose you dry up now?"

"Good idea," said Nugent.

"Well, don't say I didn't warn you!" said Bunter. "I told you plainly not to come on this trip in a sailing-ship. My idea was to have a steamer!"

"But suppose the engines blew up?" asked Bob.

"Eh?"

"Suppose we broke the propeller, and the engineer died of measles, and the Kanakas ate the coal—what should we do then on a steamer?"

"You silly ass!"

"You'd be jolly glad for a wind-jammer to come along to the rescue," said Bob, shaking his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I warned you," said Bunter. "If you'd put it to old Smith—"

"To whom?" asked the Bounder.

"Eh? I didn't see you Smithy, old chap!"



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urged Bunter. "We had it in some poem or other in a lesson at Greyfriars, when Quelchy was bungling English literature at us. Something about being as lazy as a painted idol on a painted ship."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was hot, but not too hot to laugh. Bunter's rendering of Coleridge would have made the figure-head of the Aloha smile, could the figure-head have heard it.

"Do you mean as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean?" chuckled Bob.

"No, I don't!" retorted Bunter. "I mean as lazy as a painted idol on a painted ship. You don't know much poetry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle," said Bunter. "But you won't cackle if we get becalmed, and the water runs out and we perish of thirst, and—"

"Oh, come!" said Bob. "If we perish of thirst that will be the end of our troubles. There won't be any 'and' after that!"

"And suppose—" went on Bunter.

"My hat! Still supposing! Look

"There's nowhere to kick you to, Bunter," said the Bounder. "I can't very well kick even you into the Pacific!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"But I can kick you down the companion," said the Bounder thoughtfully, "so you had better mind your manners!"

"I like that!" sneered Bunter. "Manners! You've got the manners of a Hun, Smithy, and I'm sorry I ever accepted your invitation for this trip!"

The Bounder looked at him. As the schooner was a day out from the Marquesas, it was, of course, too late to put Bunter ashore to be sent home in a homeward-bound vessel. For that reason the Owl of the Remove felt entitled to spread himself a little.

"Look what I've given up to come with you!" pursued Bunter warmly. "My old pal, D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, wanted me to go out to Canada with him (his vac!)"

"Rats!"

"Mauly begged me almost with tears

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

in his eyes to go home to Mauleverer Towers with him!"

"Can it!"

"If that's the way you talk to a guest, Smithy, I can only say you're a bounder and a rank outsider, as all Greyfriars thinks of you!"

Bob Cherry winked at the Bounder.

"We're not pressed for time, you fellows," he said. "Smithy gives the sailing orders on the Aloha. Smithy can tell the skipper to turn back to Nuka-Hiva if he likes. What about it?"

"Good idea!" said Wharton. "If Bunter's sorry he came—"

"His sorrowfulness is only equalled by ours," remarked Hurrec Singh. "The turn-backfulness is the proper caper."

"We only lose a couple of days," said Johnny Bull, entering into the game, as it were. "We can afford that—we are not pressed for time. Anything to oblige Bunter?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good!" said the Bounder, with a grin. "I'll speak to Captain Lennox at once."

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped as he looked at the juniors. It had not occurred to his fat mind that he might be taken at his word like this. As a matter of fact, nothing would have induced the treasure-seekers to turn back before reaching the treasure island. But Bunter was not aware of that.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"It's a go!" said the Bounder.

"He, he, he!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's got an alarm-clock about him?" asked Bob, Cherry, glancing round.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter feebly.

"Oh, it's Bunter! What on earth are you making that weird row for, Bunter?"

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, I was only joking, of course," said Bunter. "I wouldn't think of deserting my old pals. You needn't speak to the skipper, Smithy! I'm not going back!"

"You jolly well would if there were any way of getting you back!" said the Bounder. "But there isn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors. It dawned upon him that his fat leg had been pulled.

"Look here—" roared the Owl of the Remove.

"Shut up!" said Vernon-Smith. "We wouldn't lose time by turning back with you, but there's still the cabin stairs to kick you down. Take a tip from me and don't talk too much!"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter. But he took the tip and was silent—for some minutes.

"Warm, and no mistake," yawned Bob Cherry. "I think if I lived in the South Seas I should take a tip from the Kanakas in the matter of clothes. A little is a lot too much."

His eyes rested on the mate of the schooner as he spoke. The mate, once

out of port, was again clad in the sparse attire of a short pair of linen trousers and a hat. Captain Lennox had discarded jacket and shirt, and sported a thin cotton vest, and his feet were bare in his shoes, the mate's feet being entirely bare. As for the Kanaka crew, all they wore was a cotton strip, and not much of that.

Soames came on deck, in his usual silent way. Soames was still clad in his respectable clothes, and his sleek, clean-cut face showed little sign of feeling the heat. Bunter sighted him, and bawled:

"Soames!"

"Sir!"

"Bring me a lemon-squash."

"Certainly, sir!"

"And look sharp!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Don't talk so much—just get about it!"

"Very well, sir!"

Bunter blinked triumphantly at the juniors as Soames glided noiselessly away. To Soames, at least, he could talk as he liked—at least, so he believed. The Bounder had already told Soames that he was not under Bunter's orders, and added that he could kick Bunter if he liked. But Soames seemed quite incapable of entertaining such a disrespectful suggestion.

The silent-footed manservant brought the lemon-squash, and Bunter sipped it with satisfaction. He did not trouble to say "Thank you" to Soames. So much politeness to a servant would have been a sheer waste, in Bunter's opinion.

"I say, is there a row going on?" remarked Bunter, blinking round at the captain and the mate.

The latter seemed a little excited. He had come on deck with a flushed face, and his tones were angry as he addressed Captain Lennox.

"You must have mislaid it," the juniors heard the captain say.

"No, sir; I keep that revolver under the pillow in my bunk," said the mate. "I've looked below; but I knew it was not there. It's been taken out of my bunk, sir!"

"If you're sure, that's serious," said the skipper. "It must have been one of the Kanakas."

"It couldn't have been anybody else."

"You'd better inquire—and search, if necessary."

The mate went forward, and there was a jabbering among the Kanaka seamen as he questioned them. Apparently, none knew anything of the missing revolver; but the mate was not satisfied with their denials, and he went into the fo'c'sle to search.

He came back again, looking hotter and angrier than before. He reported his ill-success to the skipper, who shrugged his shoulders. Then he came over to the group of juniors.

"I suppose you young gentlemen haven't been larking with my revolver?" he asked.

"No fear!" said Bob.

"It's been taken out of my bunk by somebody," grunted the mate. "Must have been one of the Kanaka boys, I suppose—though I can't find it anywhere. It's dashed queer!"

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And the mate went away to look again for the missing firearm. The juniors exchanged rather curious glances.

"My hat!" murmured Bob. "Is there going to be a giddy mystery on board this schooner, as there was on the yacht?"

Redwing drew a deep breath, and his eyes involuntarily met the Bounder's. Of all the ship's company on the Golden Arrow, only Soames was with the Greyfriars party on the Aloha. Was it possible, after all, that the secret enemy had not been left behind at Nuka-Hiva?

The Bounder knitted his brows.

"Don't be an ass, Reddy!" he said abruptly. "One of the black boys has sneaked the pistol, of course."

"Couldn't have been anybody else," said Bob.

"The man who was after the chart wouldn't want to pinch a thirty-bob revolver, I suppose!" said the Bounder tartly.

"Whoever he was, we've left him behind at Nuka-Hiva," said Bob. "He can't have stowed himself away on the schooner, as Bunter did on the yacht."

Redwing did not speak, but his face was dark. That incident renewed his strange misgivings and forebodings. On the Aloha, the captain and the mate were armed with revolvers; and there was a case of rifles, with cartridges, in the deck-house. The Kanakas, of course, were not allowed weapons; but when in dangerous waters, rifles were served out to selected members of the crew. At other times the case was kept locked, and the key never left the captain's possession. Of the two armed white men on board the schooner, only one was now armed.

Tom glanced at the skipper.

Captain Lennox carried his revolver, when at sea, slung in a holster to his belt. It was impossible for anyone to get at it without his knowledge, and the skipper would have been a tough nut for anyone to crack. And yet—Redwing remembered Bunter's story of having seen Soames packing an automatic. Soames had stated that he had left that weapon on the yacht; but if Soames was the secret enemy, his statement was worth nothing.

In the incident of the mysterious loss of the mate's revolver, it seemed to Redwing that he had a glimpse of terrible possibilities. If his misgiving was well-founded—if Soames was the man who had attempted to steal the chart—what then? The juniors were not on board the Golden Arrow now, manned by English seamen. They were on the Aloha, where the Kanaka crew were absolutely certain to take orders from any white man with a pistol in his hand.

Redwing drew a deep breath.

As in a glass darkly, he seemed to catch a glimpse of terrible possibilities on board the copra schooner. And yet it was so wild and visionary that he could not believe it.

But he made it a point, later, to ask the mate, Parkins, whether he had found the revolver. Parkins had not found it; he had only ascertained, by rigorous search, that it was not to be found. One of the Kanakas had purloined it and dropped it overboard, in his opinion, perhaps in resentment of some rough word from the mate.

Redwing was very thoughtful when he went to bed that night. He went to bed, but he did not sleep.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

What Happened in the Night!

SPLASH!

Redwing heard the sound from the sea swiftly flowing along the side of the schooner, as he lay sleepless in the dark.

He started.

It was past midnight, and the captain's watch on deck.

The mate was asleep in his bunk in the little deck-house; Captain Lennox was in charge of the schooner. For'ard, the Kanaka crew were sleeping on deck, except those on the watch. In the bunks ranged round the cuddy of the Aloha, Harry Wharton & Co. were asleep, and through the darkness rumbled the sound of Billy Bunter's deep and resonant snore.

Redwing lay with beating heart.

That sudden, heavy splash had come from the sea astern of the schooner. A splash was not an unusual sound. It might have been made by the tail of some great fish disturbed by the passage of the schooner; it might have been some loose block that had dropped into the sea; it might have been garbage thrown overboard by the cook—if the cook was still up.

But to Redwing's ears it had a sinister sound.

He told himself that it was nerves—that nothing could have happened. What could have happened? If a man had gone overboard, there would have been an alarm—at least a cry.

But Redwing was too deeply disturbed to calm his misgivings. The purloining of the mate's revolver had fixed his vague suspicions, and brought the matter to a head in his mind.

He turned out of his bunk at last, and hurried on his clothes. There was no light in the cuddy, and Redwing did not think of lighting the swinging lamp. He dressed in the dark, and groped his way to the companion. His mind was filled with forebodings, and yet he could scarcely believe that anything was wrong on board the quiet schooner, gliding peacefully through the calm, hot, tropic night.

What was it, he asked himself, that he feared? Had a man fallen overboard there would be an alarm. Had a man been pushed overboard, secretly, in the darkness, no doubt it might have passed unseen by the drowsy Kanakas forward, and the man at the wheel. But that was murder, and Tom's thoughts balked at the terrible word.

But he crept up the companion to the deck, determined to see for himself that all was well.

The night was dark; there was no moon, and few stars glimmered in the sky. Velvety blackness wrapped the ocean and the gliding schooner. Ahead of the Aloha, the head-lights gleamed out red and green across vast darkness. There was a glimmer of the binnacle-lamp, and Tom made out vaguely the figure of the Kanaka boatswain at the wheel. The boatswain, whose name was unpronounceable by white men, was called Jacky on board the Aloha—a big, burly, good-tempered man, devoted to the "white feller captain." His black eyes and white teeth flashed a smile to Redwing, as the sailorman's son came near.

"Where is the captain?" asked Redwing in a low voice.

"Captain feller him keep feller watch."

"Is he on deck?"

"Captain feller always on him deck in watch."

If anything had happened, obviously the boatswain had seen nothing of it.

Redwing moved away.

The deck-house stood wide open in the hot night. Redwing glanced into it, and he could dimly make out the sleeper in the mate's bunk. The other bunk was empty. Not that it was possible to imagine that the skipper had turned in while the mate was asleep.

But nowhere aft could Redwing find the skipper.

The darkness was baffling; but he searched every inch of space, and Captain Lennox was not there.

Redwing went forward, and two or three sleepy Kanakas looked at him curiously. Among them was the Tonga Island cook, who slept in the open, as the seamen did.

"Captain feller, he this way?" Redwing asked.

"No, sar," said the Tonga Islander, evidently surprised by the question. "What name you tink captain feller he foward? Find um captain feller him place."

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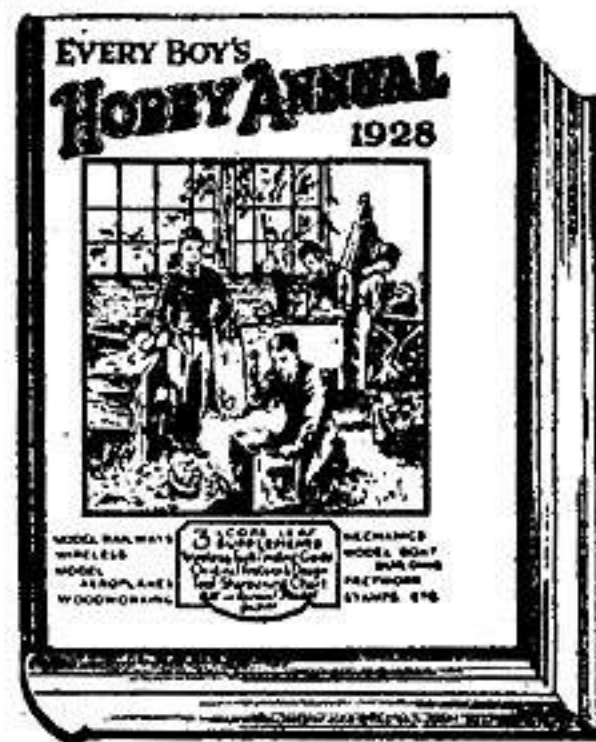
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"He is not aft," said Redwing. "No can find captain feller him ship." He dropped into the beche-de-mer English to make himself understood. "What name no find captain feller?"

"No savvee what name no find white marster," said the Tonga Islander indifferently.

Redwing moved about forward, eyed by the Kanakas; but evidently the skipper was not there. He returned aft at last, and went into the deck-house, where the mate, Parkins, was still sleeping soundly. No sign of the captain was to be seen, and the splash he had heard seemed to ring in Tom's ear like a knell. The helmsman must have heard it, but he was a Kanaka, not given to taking heed of any happening that did not immediately concern himself or his duties. Redwing resolved on waking the mate, at the risk of being considered a nervous fool if it turned out that all was well.

"Mr. Parkins."

The mate opened his eyes, and stared from the bunk.

"You don't say it's eight bells, sir!" he exclaimed. Evidently he supposed that the skipper had called him.

"It's I—Redwing," said Tom. "I can't help thinking that something has happened, Mr. Parkins. The captain is not on deck."

"Eh? What? Rubbish!" said Mr. Parkins; but he turned out of his bunk at once. He did not need to dress. His single garment served him day and night, and at night he did not need his only other article of attire, his wide-brimmed hat. He turned out quickly enough, and his hand went under his pillow for the revolver he usually kept there, and he uttered a word as he remembered that it was no longer there.

He brushed past Redwing to the deck.

"Captain Lennox!"

There was no answer to his call.

"Captain Lennox!"

The mate, in great surprise, shouted the name. His voice rang easily from

end to end of the seventy-five feet of the schooner.

Mr. Parkins shared Tom's surprise now, if not his alarm.

"Jacky!" he called to the man at the helm.

"Sar!"

"What name captain he no here?"

"No savvee, sar!"

"He took his watch as usual at eight bells—midnight!" said Mr. Parkins to Redwing. "He must have gone below for something."

He shouted down the dusty companion. "Captain! Captain Lennox!"

Only the echo of his voice answered him.

The mate ran forward, and called to the crew. The watch on deck knew nothing of the captain, and the other watch—sleeping on deck—woke up, and there was a babble of excited voices. No one knew why the captain was not there; or, as they put it in beche-de-mer, "what name captain feller he not there."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,022.

But the Tonga Island cook volunteered a suggestion.

"Splashee splashee in um water, plaps captain feller he overboard."

"Rubbish!" snarled Mr. Parkins.

Two or three of the Kanakas declared that they had heard a splash, now that the Tonga man mentioned it.

The mate scouted the suggestion; but his face was alarmed and troubled as he went back aft. It was beginning to be clear that Captain Lennox was no longer on board the Aloha; and if he was not on board, he was overboard, that was certain.

"There's some devil's work on board this craft!" Parkins muttered to Redwing. "My revolver was stolen to-day—and now the captain is overboard. He wasn't the man to fall overboard."

"I heard a splash—that's why I came up," said Tom, in a low voice.

The mate gritted his teeth.

"If he's over the side, he's been put over the side—in the dark. A crack from behind, I reckon—he wasn't the man to fall over—and on a calm night, too. There's some sea-lawyer aboard this craft. I reckoned it meant some kind of trouble when my shooter was pinched. Now I know it's coming. But I'd have sworn to the crew—all good Kanaka boys. That man Dance—"

"Ben Dance! He's as true as steel, I'm sure of that."

"I can't make it out. If the Kanaka boys mean mischief, why ain't they started on it? They had a chance while I was asleep, and the skipper gone. It beats me. But there's trouble coming, and we want to get ready. I'll break out the rifles, and you can call up your friends."

The mate stepped into the deck house to break out the case of rifles that was kept under the captain's bunk there. The next moment Redwing heard him rap out an oath.

"They're gone!"

"Gone!" repeated Redwing breathlessly.

The mate swore savagely.

"That sea-lawyer, whoever he is, has got in here while I was snoozing, and taken away the case of guns. Slipped them over side through a porthole, very likely. They're gone!"

Tom Redwing breathed hard.

"That means—"

"It means that there ain't a firearm left on the schooner," said the mate, between his teeth. "It means that if the man, whoever he is, has got a gun, he's the master of the Aloha. That's why my gun was stolen—and that's why the skipper has been put over the side in the dark. Wake up your friends—tell them to get hold of anything that they can—the Prince of Darkness only knows what's going to happen now, but we'd better be ready for it."

Redwing, with beating heart, hurried below.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Unknown Foe!

HARRY WHARTON & CO.
turned out.

A word from Redwing was enough for them.

By this time, there was a pale glimmer of dawn on the Pacific, a rift in the blackness from the East.

The chums of Greyfriars hastily dressed, gathered in the little cuddy, with startled faces, as Redwing told them in a few words how the matter stood.

Their faces were startled, and a little pale; but there was no trace of fear in

them. Whatever the situation was, the chums of the Remove were prepared to face it with courage.

"But this is terrible!" Wharton muttered. "It's certain that the captain is gone?"

"Quite!" said Redwing.

"You mean that he has been murdered," asked Nugent, with a shudder.

"He must have been—he has been put overboard," said Redwing. "The case of rifles has been taken from the deck-house, and either hidden or slipped into the sea. There is no firearm left on board the schooner—unless the man who has done this is armed, as is pretty certain."

"But who—" breathed Johnny Bull.

The Bounder met Redwing's eyes.

"You think—" he muttered.

"I no longer think—I know!" said Redwing, between his set lips. "We've placed ourselves at his mercy now. Bunter saw him packing an automatic on board the Golden Arrow. That automatic makes him master of the Aloha."

"Soames?"

"Yes."

"Redwing!" exclaimed Wharton, in blank astonishment.

"I have suspected Soames for a long time," said Redwing quietly. "I told Smithy so before we left Nuka-Hiva. It matters little now—we shall soon know the worst. Get hold of any kind of weapons you can, and let's get on deck. Parkins thinks it may be some of the Kanakas—he may be right. We shall soon see."

"It's a mutiny of the Kanakas," said the Bounder. "It can't be anything else. You're mad to think of Soames, Redwing."

"We shall soon see!" repeated Redwing.

"Anyhow, there's going to be trouble," said Bob Cherry. "I think you're dreaming if you suspect Soames, Reddy; but let's get on our guard. Whatever the trouble is, we've got to back up the mate, and we may have to fight for our lives."

"Nobody will find it easy to handle us," said Johnny Bull. "We're not little kids to be scared. Let's get out of this."

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter blinked out of his bunk. "I say, what are you turning out for?"

"Oh, you go to sleep!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Waking a fellow up, in the middle of the night!" grumbled Bunter. "I really think you might be more considerate."

Without answering Bunter, the juniors went on deck. Each of them had grasped something that might serve as a weapon in an emergency. Billy Bunter sniffed, and settled down to sleep again.

Vernon-Smith did not accompany the others. Redwing's fixed belief that Soames was at the bottom of the mischief on board the schooner staggered him, but he simply could not believe it. He went to call Soames and Ben Dance, who berthed amidships. A sliding door from the cuddy opened into their room.

"Soames!" he called out.

"Sir!" came a smooth, silky voice.

The customary soft tones of James Soames had a reassuring effect on the Bounder, who had begun to doubt, in spite of himself.

"Turn out, Soames. Something's happened."

"Indeed, sir!" came the soft murmur.

The Bounder started.

Soames' soft silky voice was the same; yet it seemed to Vernon-Smith that he could detect an undercurrent of mockery in it.

"Call Dance, and come on deck!" said Smithy abruptly.

"Certainly, sir."

"If you have a weapon, Soames—"

"A weapon, sir?"

"Yes, you'd better bring it. The skipper has been shoved overboard, and Mr. Parkins is expecting trouble with the Kanakas."

"Oh, sir!"

"You had an automatic on the yacht. I think," said Smithy, "but I think you said you left it there."

There was a faint sound in the darkness, like the ghost of a chuckle. But Soames' voice came smooth as ever.

"That was an error, sir. Fortunately, I brought the automatic with me. It may be very useful in these circumstances, Master Herbert."

The Bounder breathed hard and deep.

"Hand it me, Soames."

"To you, sir?"

"I'd better take it to the mate. If there's going to be trouble, he's the man to deal with it."

There was an instant's pause, and Smithy felt his heart beating almost to suffocation. If Soames handed over the pistol, it was a proof that Redwing's suspicion was, after all, unfounded—that James Soames was not the "sea-lawyer" who was plotting to gain control of the schooner. The pause was only for an instant, but it seemed an age to the Bounder before the sleek, silky voice replied.

"You are right, sir. I will unpack it immediately and bring it on deck."

"Very well. Dance!" called out the Bounder.

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the husky tones of the wooden-legged seaman. "I'm turning out, sir. I'm your man if there's trouble with the crew."

"Get hold of a belaying-pin, or something, and get on deck," said Vernon-Smith.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith went back through the cuddy to the companion and ascended to the deck. Black doubt was in his mind now. But Soames had said that he would unpack the revolver and bring it on deck. The Bounder clung to that.

He joined the juniors. The light of sunrise was strengthening. A pale, rosy flush was in the eastern sky. Round the Aloha rolled the vast billows of the Pacific, with no sign of land, no sign of a sail. The crew and passengers of the Aloha were alone on the vast ocean, to fight out their destiny unseen, unaided, and how tragic that destiny might be was demonstrated by the fate of the captain. Many a mile behind the swiftly-gliding schooner the unfortunate captain had gone to his fate, his last cry, if he had uttered one, uttered only to the deaf winds and waters.

Parkins, with a belaying-pin in his hand, stood near the binnacle, his bronzed face dark and troubled and uneasy. Now that the skipper was gone, he was in command of the Aloha, and so far his command had not been questioned. The Kanakas were jabbering to one another in their own tongue, in a state of great surprise and excitement, but none had offered to dispute the authority of the mate. Trouble, if it was to come, did not seem to be coming from the Kanaka crew. But from where else could it come?

Ben Dance came stumping on deck. He joined the Greyfriars party and the mate. Mr. Parkins gave him a searching look; but, even in his doubt and uneasiness, he could not doubt the honest face of the wooden-legged seaman. But who? Even in that hour of utter perplexity the mate did not think of the



Billy Bunter had the pleasure—or otherwise—of cleaning out the galley, scouring pots and pans, and making every inch of metal shine. It seemed like an awful dream to Bunter—only it was real, terribly real! He panted and sweated in the stuffy galley, and whenever he slacked down, a kick or a cuff from the cook set him going again. (See Chapter 12.)

sleek manservant as a possible dangerous enemy.

"Is Soames coming up, Dance?" the Bounder asked quietly.

"Ay, ay, sir. He told me to say he was coming up in a few minutes."

"Soames has an automatic," said the Bounder quietly to the juniors. "He is going to hand it to Mr. Parkins."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "But I remember he told us he'd left it on the yacht."

"He seems to have brought it aboard the Aloha, after all."

"I thought it would turn out so," said Redwing bitterly.

"It's lucky, as it happens," said Nugent.

"Is it?"

"Reddy, old chap, you must be potty to think that Soames—" began Nugent.

"Why doesn't he come on deck?" asked Redwing quietly. "What is he waiting for? I think I can tell you."

"Well, what, then?" asked the Bounder, with a snap in his voice.

"He is waiting for the light to be clear enough for shooting," said the sailor's son.

"Redwing!"

"Well, you will soon see," said Redwing wearily. "I hope I'm wrong. I'd give Black Peter's treasure, and everything else, to be wrong. But I'm afraid I'm right."

The Bounder compressed his lips.

"Why doesn't he come?" he muttered savagely.

The juniors waited anxiously.

It was an entirely new idea to the Famous Five that Soames was not to be trusted. They could not believe it.

The mere idea seemed to them preposterous. Soames, the sleek servant, the obsequious valet, the suave machine, he the "sea-lawyer," the desperate man who had flung the captain into the sea in the darkness—the secret enemy who had striven to steal the treasure chart on board the yacht—the desperado who was planning to seize the schooner—it was impossible to believe it. And yet, impossible as it was, conviction grew in the minds of the juniors. For if the unknown sea-lawyer was not Soames, who was he? Who had purloined the mate's revolver, put the skipper over the side, and abstracted the case of rifles from the deckhouse? Not one of the Kanakas babbling forward. Not one of the party grouped about the binnacle aft. And there remained only Soames.

Sunrise was swift in the Pacific. The rosy glow was followed by a golden light. The sun's rim appeared above the wide waters, and very quickly the whole orb was seen. Day was bright on the Pacific once more.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's voice was tense. "Here he comes!"

James Soames stepped on deck.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Whip-hand!

SOAMES glanced at the quiet, tense group by the binnacle, and then at the Kanakas forward. His glance came quickly back to the group. He looked his usual self—quietly, neatly dressed, his clean-shaven, clean-cut face sleek and impassive as ever. Yet there was a change in the man. The lines of his face seemed to

have hardened. His eyes had a glint in them that the juniors had never seen before. The smooth, well-kept fingers of his right hand grasped the automatic. And even his grasp upon the weapon showed that he was a man to whom deadly weapons were not new or strange. James Soames had used weapons before in his time.

The Bounder looked at him and knew. Before a word had been spoken he knew, and the other fellows knew, that Redwing had been right. James Soames was master of the Aloha now, and the time had come for throwing aside all disguise. Quietly, patiently, treacherously the man had played his cunning game, till the hour came to step out into the open. Now that hour had come. The sleek manservant, in a moment, had changed into the ruthless, resolute sea-lawyer.

His thin, well-cut lips curved in a smile as he read that knowledge in the faces of the Greyfriars fellows.

Mr. Parkins stared at him. He did not understand as the juniors understood, but he was conscious of a subtle change in the man.

"Here, you, give me that shooter!" he said.

Soames smiled.

"Hand it to Mr. Parkins, Soames," said the Bounder, with a last effort, as it were, to throw conviction aside.

"I fear that I cannot obey that order, Master Herbert," said Soames.

"What do you mean?"

The Bounder's voice faltered in spite of himself. Now that he had shown himself in his true colours there was something more terrifying in this quiet,

catlike man than in any loud-voiced desperado.

"I think you know what I mean," smiled Soames. "Before we go any further, I had better warn you all that I am a dead shot. I have never missed my aim yet, and I am not likely to begin now. I am master of this schooner—master of the life and death of every soul aboard. I am not a man of violence, and not a hair of anyone's head shall be harmed so long as my orders are carried out without question or resistance. But at the first sign of dispute or resistance I shall shoot, and I shall shoot to kill! I trust I make myself clear, gentlemen."

"You hound!" broke out the Bounder, while the mate Parkins stared in blank bewilderment at the smooth-faced, silky-voiced scoundrel.

Soames made a deprecatory gesture.

"Better language, please, Master Herbert!"

"Are you mad, Soames?" asked the Bounder hoarsely. "You, my father's valet—"

"No longer so, Master Herbert. After this, I fear that my respected master, Mr. Vernon-Smith, would have no use for my service. Neither shall I have any occasion to remain in service, as the treasure of Caca Island will make me a rich man.

"So that's your game?" hissed the Bounder.

"That is my game, Master Herbert!" assented Soames.

"It was you—you who tried to steal the chart on the Golden Arrow; you who attacked Redwing, attacked me, drugged my father!"

The Bounder's voice was husky with rage.

"Quite so, Master Herbert!"

There was something indescribably mocking and sardonic in Soames' still continuing to address the millionaire's son as "Master Herbert." It seemed as if his habit of suave obsequiousness was a cloak that he could not throw off—that had become second nature to him. Yet through it the desperate and determined ruffian could be seen.

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands.

"And you think you'll get away with this, you villain?"

"I think so, Master Herbert, otherwise I should not have made the attempt," said Soames. "I am a patient man. I have served your father for many years, looking for an opportunity of making my own way. I regret to say that my object was to enrich myself, such being the weakness of human nature, and not wholly to make myself useful to Mr. Vernon-Smith. But your respected father was always, if you will excuse the expression, too wide for me. He has many millions, but he takes remarkably good care of them. Believe me, during the many years I have been in his service, I have not succeeded in feathering my nest to more than the tune of a few hundred pounds beyond my wages, which I grant were liberal."

"You scoundrel!" muttered the Bounder.

"But my chance came when I heard of the chart," said Soames. "In my old rough days in the South Seas I knew Black Peter; I may even admit that I was concerned with him in many proceedings that would scarcely bear legal investigation. I was with him in kidnapping Kanakas for the plantations and in many other deeds which it would only shock you to mention. Had Master Redwing not been so exceedingly wary, I should have obtained the chart

on board the yacht, and that probably would have been a better solution for all concerned. I should have left Mr. Vernon-Smith's service, with the chart to guide me to a fortune. Unfortunately, I was defeated, and there remained only this means. I assure you that I am sorry to cause you inconvenience and discomfort, but in the same breath I must tell you that I will shoot you dead if you attempt to place the slightest difficulty in my way!"

The Bounder's eyes blazed.

"You scoundrel! You hound! I—"

He made a spring forward. Redwing grasped his arm, and dragged him back only just in time, for the automatic flashed up to a level, and in another second the bullet would have sped.

"Smithy, stop!"

Redwing dragged the Bounder back, at the same time interposing his own body between his chum and the threatening pistol. Had the bullet sped, Redwing would have received it.

But Soames did not pull the trigger.

"I warn you to keep your temper, Master Herbert!" he said smoothly. "I take my life in my hands in doing as I do, and I cannot afford to take chances! I will gladly spare your life and the lives of your friends, but you must

DUKE'S SON AND DUSTMAN'S SON!

(Continued from page 15.)

"My name is Herbert Binns, sir, though you may call me 'Erb, or Bert, if you wish. I was sent here by the Muggleton Council!"

"Ah! You are the dustman's son?" said the Head, with cutting scorn. "You have come here to reseeve your education at my hands?"

"That is so, sir!"

"I'll eddicate you all right—with my birchrod!" said Doctor Birchmall grimly. "I'll make you roo the day you first set foot in St. Sam's, you common, ill-bred son of a scavenger!"

"Shame!" cried Jack Jolly & Co. indignantly.

"Play the game, sir!"

"Give the new fellow a chance!"

The Head frowned.

"Silence, you young welps!" he thundered. "If you eggspect me to show any consideration to the son of a dustman, you are gratefully mistook! Binns, you will get down from that dreadful vehicle and proceed to my study, where I shall have something to say to you later—with my birchrod!"

"But—but what have I done, sir?" asked Herbert Binns, in dismay.

"Don't back-answer me, you brat!" said the Head savvidgely. "Do as I tell you! As for your honner"—and he turned fawningly to the duke's son—"may I request the plezzure of your honner's company at my tea-table?"

The Honnerable Algernon grinned.

"I'm on, grandpa!" he said. "I'll join yer as soon as I've found an 'ome for this 'ere bus of mine!"

"Your honner may use my garridge!" said the Head, beaming all over his dile.

And then, with another sollum sallaam to the duke's son, he turned away, leaving Jack Jolly & Co. to discuss the eggstraordinary situation, and to marvel at the Head's widely different treatment of the Duke's Son and Dustman's Son!

THE END.

(Another Dicky Nugent "shocker" next week, chap, entitled: "The Head's Persecution!")

understand that if a finger is raised against me I will shoot to kill!"

"Smithy!" breathed Redwing.

The Bounder shook off his detaining hand.

"It's all right! I've got sense!" he muttered.

"That villain means every word he says!" muttered Redwing. "For goodness' sake, keep your temper! We're at his mercy now!"

The Bounder noddod, and gritted his teeth. He was cool again, and he did not mean to throw away his life.

Harry Wharton & Co stood silent.

They were almost dazed by the turn affairs had taken; but it was very clear in their minds that they were at the mercy of this scoundrel, whose steady hand grasped the only firearm on board the schooner. That he would kill if forced to do it they did not need telling. The fate of the skipper proved that he was prepared to shed blood, if necessary, to gain his ends.

Soames was master of the Aloha, and for the present, at least, the chums of Greyfriars could only submit to the inevitable and bide their time.

Mr. Parkins had stood in silence, staring at Soames, and listening to him like a man in a dream.

Even the evidence of his own eyes and ears seemed hardly to convince the astounded mate that this sleek manservant had turned to piracy on the high seas—that the cat had turned into a tiger.

But he found his voice at last.

His bronzed face was almost mottled with rage as he glared at the cool, sleek, self-reliant man who was facing such enormous odds single-handed, relying only on his weapon and his desperate courage.

"You—you—you sea-lawyer!" hissed the mate. "You durned scoundrel! You put the captain over the side!"

"Who can answer for what happened in the night?" said Soames, with a slow, deadly smile. "Let us take it that the skipper fell overboard. What we have to deal with is the situation as it now stands! I am master of this schooner, Mr. Parkins!"

"The devil you are!" hissed the mate.

"You will take my orders, and so long as you obey me as your captain, no harm shall come to you, and you will continue to receive your pay! I shall see that you are put to no loss!"

The mate stared at him almost wolfishly. His fingers closed on the belaying-pin he held till the veins of his hand stood out.

"Bear in mind," said Soames quietly, but with deadly intensesness, "I hope to pull through this without staining my hands with blood. I am not a man of violence, as I have said, though there have been times in my earlier days when I have killed. If I am driven to use this weapon, I cannot afford to leave any witnesses to swear my life away at a later date! Once I am forced to shoot, take it from me that not a soul on this schooner will ever see home again! Every soul will be marooned on a solitary island, to live and die far from home and friends! Bear that in mind!"

"You—you sea-lawyer! You reckon that I will take orders from you—after you've pitched my skipper over the side!" The mate turned towards the staring Kanakas. "You feller Kanaka, you seize that man plenty quick!"

There was a movement from the Kanaka crew. The mate, with rage-inflamed face, sprang at Soames.

In a second more the belaying-pin would have crashed on the desperate

man, and the rush of the Kanakas would have overwhelmed him.

Bang!

The report of the pistol was followed by a heavy fall on deck. Parkins, the mate, fell fairly at the feet of James Soames, the belaying-pin clattering from his hand. The automatic swung round at the crew.

"Back, you dogs!" Soames' voice rang in a savage snarl. "Back, or you feller Kanaka make plenty kai-kai him shark!"

The Kanakas hardly needed the order; the fall of the mate had been enough for them. With almost ludicrous haste they scrambled back, some of them diving headlong into the fore-castle in their terror.

Soames' eyes glinted at the juniors. They had made an instinctive movement, though only for a moment, for they knew there was no chance.

They stared in horror at the mate. Parkins had not moved or uttered a sound since he had fallen to the deck. Soames' statement that he was a dead shot was no idle boast.

The sleek face of the manservant set in hard lines. The last rag of disguise, or habitual hypocrisy, was thrown aside now. The South Sea desperado, the black-bird, the slave-trader, the sea-lawyer and sea-thief stood revealed at last.

"You feller Jacky!" snarled Soames.

"Yes, sar!" stammered the boatswain.

"You pitch feller mate to um shark plenty quick!"

"Yes, sar!"

There was a splash under the rail of the gliding schooner.

Soames snarled at them.

"I've been driven to this!" he said. Some rag of conscience, perhaps, made the villain seek justification. "I warned the man—you heard me! My neck's at stake now! Take warning by what has happened! I will spare your lives if you let me! You will be marooned! No living being on this schooner shall ever see a white man's country again to put the rope round my neck! But if you would live even as maroons, take care! I warn you for the last time!"

There was silence.

"Redwing!"

"Well?" said Tom Redwing, his eyes meeting Soames' snarling look with quiet fearlessness.

"The chart!"

Redwing smiled grimly.

"The chart!" he repeated.

"Black Peter's chart—mine now," said Soames, with glittering eyes. "It would be of no use to you, if that is any consolation, marooned on a lonely isle to live and die. Give me the chart."

"You scoundrel!" said Redwing. "The chart is out of your power. I cannot give it to you, even if I would."

Soames showed his teeth in a snarl. "Don't bandy words with me, you cub! Give me the chart!"

"I cannot!" repeated Redwing.

"And why?"

"Because I dropped it into the sea when you came on deck," answered Tom Redwing steadily.

Not for a moment had they doubted that the chart was now at the mercy of their rival for the treasure. Not for a moment had Soames doubted it.

Redwing's lip curled.

Into Soames' eyes came a blaze of murderous fury, and the automatic swung up, pointed at the sailorman's son.

"You lie, you cub, you lie!" hissed Soames. "Hand over the chart before I scatter your brains on the deck!"

"Shoot if you like!" said Tom Redwing, without flinching. "That will not bring back the chart."

"You—you have dared——" Soames almost choked with rage. "You dared, with your life in my hand, to make away with the chart!"

"I dropped it into the sea more than ten minutes ago," said Redwing composedly. "I knew you had the upper hand, and I knew what you wanted. Look for it in the Pacific!"

The automatic bore full upon Tom Redwing. His fate was sealed if Soames fired; there was no chance, no hope. But he never flinched. Steadily and fearlessly he faced the sea-lawyer. From the beginning Tom Redwing's mind had been made up; he had resolved what he would do if Soames turned out to be what he suspected, if he gained the upper hand—as he had done. The chart—the only existing clue to Black Peter's buried pearls—was gone.

The Greyfriars juniors stood with tense faces.

Every fellow there approved of what Redwing had done—was glad to hear what he had done. This scoundrel, who had stained his hands with blood for the sake of the pearls, was not, after all, to lift the treasure of Caca Island! There was grim satisfaction in that thought to the chums of Greyfriars.

And if Soames fired they stood ready for a desperate rush. They were ready to stand by Redwing to the bitter end, hopeless as the contest seemed. Their faces were pale and tense, their hearts beating fast.

For some moments a terrible tragedy hung in the balance.

The rage in Soames' face was almost demoniac. He knew that Redwing was speaking the truth; he knew that the chart was gone. In revenge for the loss he would have shot the sailorman's son dead on the deck, without a twinge of compunction. But, enraged as he was, Soames had not lost his cool judgment. The chart had gone; but of what it had told Redwing had knowledge—and remembered. Redwing now was his only hope of finding the treasure. That circumstance alone saved Tom Redwing's life.

The thought came into Soames' mind that the chart, engraved on wood, must have floated. He gave one glance back in the wake of the Aloha. Somewhere on the vast Pacific, behind the gilding yacht, the disc of teak was floating. But he knew that it was hopeless to seek it—a disc a few inches in diameter, floating on the boundless rollers of the Pacific. That was hopeless; but Tom Redwing remained.

"You cub!" said Soames at last, between his teeth. "You cub! You have dared to do this—with your life in my hand! Do you know why I do not shoot you dead as you stand?"

"I know," answered Tom contemptuously.

"You remember what was engraved on the chart—much of it, at least," said Soames.

"That is true."

"You will be my guide, then," said

Soames. "To-morrow we touch at Caca. You will guide me—you will tell me all you know, all you remember. If I find the treasure, it will be well for you. If I fail, you will die by all the tortures known to the savages of the Pacific!"

He paused.

"But I do not take your word," he said. "Here, you Jacky!"

"Yes, sar!"

The Kanaka boatswain was prompt in obedience. If the juniors had entertained any hope of the crew turning on Soames they had very soon abandoned it. The Kanakas, accustomed to take orders from a white man, were as submissive to Soames as they had ever been to Captain Lennox. They turned from one master to another like cattle.

"You search that feller, turn out um pockets."

"Yes, sar."

Redwing submitted quietly to the search. Jacky, the boatswain, soon turned out his pockets. The chart was not there.

"Very well," said Soames, between his teeth. "You will repent this, you cub! Go below, the lot of you!"

There was a momentary pause. It went bitterly against the grain with the juniors to take orders from this scoundrel and to obey them.

Soames' eyes glittered.

"Jacky!"

"Yes, sar."

"Kickee them feller below plenty quick."

"Yes, sar."

"Come on, you chaps," said Harry Wharton quietly, though his eyes were gleaming with anger. "We're helpless; no good making a fuss."

Jacky the boatswain was reluctant to obey the order, but evidently intended to do so, in his terror of Soames and the automatic. Harry Wharton & Co. went down the companion stairs.

Ben Dance made a movement to follow them; but Soames rapped out an order. "Stay where you are, Dance. You will be wanted on deck."

The wooden-legged seaman drew a deep breath.

"You'll remember that I am skipper of this craft now, and you are under my orders!" snarled Soames.

"Ay, ay!" said Ben Dance, with an effort.

"Take the helm."

"Ay ay!"

Ben Dance went to the helm. In the cuddy below the juniors heard Soames rapping out orders, and the swing of the boom, and the banging of the canvas. The course of the schooner had been changed a little. Soames knew exactly where Black Peter's island lay, and he hardly needed to calculate latitude and longitude. The juniors could guess that this was not the first time that he had commanded a vessel. More sail was shaken out, and the Aloha glided more swiftly through the waters of the Pacific.

"Well, this is a go!" said Bob Cherry, breaking a long silence in the cuddy.

"The go-fulness is terrific!" murmured Harree Jamsset Ram Singh. "That esteemed scoundrel is monarch of all he surveys—at present."

Wharton set his lips.

"He has the upper hand now," he said. "But our turn may come. He hasn't found the treasure yet. Redwing's put a stopper on that. We mayn't have a chance on board the schooner; but on the island when we get there—who knows?"

"And that fellow is my father's valet his trusted servant whom he sent to

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Soames Takes Command!

SILENCE followed Redwing's startling words.

Soames stood staring at him blankly, as if unable to believe his ears. Harry Wharton & Co. stood dumb.

watch over our safety!" said the Bounder bitterly. "Good gad! What would the pater say if he knew? And Redwing foresaw this—and I never believed him."

"He has taken us all in," said Nugent. "But—but who'd have thought it? Who could have suspected such a thing?"

Johnny Bull clenched his hands. "We'll get a chance yet," he muttered.

"My esteemed chums," murmured Hurree Singh, "we must watch and wait for a chance; but it is necessary to toe the line and to keep the temper. It would be terrifically useless to kick against a stone wall. At present we are under orders; and though we may not like it, we must lump it, and bear it grudgingly! The game is not lost until it is won—and the esteemed and execrable Soames had not won it yet."

"I say, you fellows."

Bunter rolled out of his bunk. During the exciting scene on deck Bunter had been snoring, and he was still quite unaware of the dramatic change that had taken place on board the Aloha.

He jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose, and blinked at the serious, troubled faces of the juniors.

"I say, you fellows, what about brekker?"

"Oh, blow brekker!" said Bob Cherry. "Dry up!"

"I'm hungry!" said Bunter indignantly. "Why hasn't that fellow Soames turned up with brekker? You don't keep your manservant in order, Smithy. I can tell you that I'd manage him better."

The Bounder gave a sardonic laugh. "You're welcome to try," he said.

"What are you hanging about for, like a lot of moulting fowls?" demanded Bunter peevishly. "Look here, call Soames, or the cook, or somebody, and tell him I want my breakfast. Where's Soames? I'll jolly well talk to him!"

Bunter hurried on his clothes. He was deeply indignant at the bare idea of being kept waiting for his breakfast.

"Don't go on deck, Bunter," said Wharton, as the Owl of the Remove rolled to the companion. "There's been a change on board this vessel. Soames is master of the schooner now."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"It's mutiny, you fat fool!" snapped the Bounder. "Soames has got rid of the captain and mate, and—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "Do you think you can pull my leg, Smithy? Don't be an ass!"

And Bunter rolled out on deck.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Change for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round the schooner in the bright sunshine. Ben Dance was at the wheel, and Soames was standing by the binnacle. Most of the Kanaka seamen were on deck, and they assuredly did not look as if a tragedy had happened on the Aloha. Their brown faces were cheery as ever, and two or three of them were singing at the ropes.

With infantile simplicity, the unthinking children of the south had changed from one master to another, giving no thought to the change. Captain feller and mate feller had disappeared, and a new "white marster" trod the deck in their place—a "white marster" whom no Kanaka there dreamed of disobeying. That was all there was to it, in the infantile minds of the native sea-

men. So long as their rations were handed out, they did not dream of making any fuss. Even without the automatic, Soames would have succeeded in imposing his authority on the Kanaka crew, now that the captain and the mate were gone.

Billy Bunter blinked round. He did not see the captain or the mate, but he attached no importance to that circumstance. He was thinking about his breakfast.

"Soames!" hooted the Owl of the Remove.

Soames glanced round. Probably he had forgotten Billy Bunter's existence, in the pressure of more important matters. Bunter reminded him of it, rather unfortunately for himself.

A glint came into Soames' eyes.

During his long period of patient waiting Soames had never displayed a sign of resentment towards the Owl of the Remove; all the fat junior's impudence and bullying having had, apparently, no more effect upon him than water on a duck. But circumstances had changed now, as Bunter was to discover.

But he had not made the discovery yet, and he was still in the happy belief that matters were unchanged on board the Aloha.

"Soames!" He rolled up to the millionaire's servant.

Soames looked at him in silence, only a slight smile a very unpleasant smile, twisting the corners of his mouth.

"Where's my brekker?" demanded Bunter.

"Your breakfast, sir?" said Soames, in his old smooth tones.

"Yes," hooted Bunter. "It's late."

"Late?" repeated Soames.

"What sort of a servant do you call yourself?" exclaimed Bunter. "My hat! If you were my valet I'd sack you fast enough!"

"Oh, sir!" said Soames deprecatingly.

It amused him, somehow, to assume his old fawning manner, and give Bunter his head, as it were. And Bunter proceeded to spread himself as usual.

"You were sent on this ship to look after us!" he snapped. "Your master sent you for that special reason."

"Quite so, sir."

"I haven't had to complain about the grub so far," said Bunter. "You're a cheeky fellow, and you don't know your place. But so far the grub has been all right. That's got to continue."

"Oh, sir!"

"Brekker isn't ready now. I want you to understand, once for all, that I'm not to be kept waiting for my meals. Got that?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Well, get down to it!" snapped Bunter. "I don't want any more talk—I want my breakfast, and I want it sharp! Get a move on!"

"Is that all, sir?"

"That's all!" snapped Bunter. "Look sharp! I'm hungry!"

"I regret, sir," said Soames, with mocking deference—"I greatly regret that I shall be unable to prepare your breakfast, Master Bunter, as my time is now taken up with other duties."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Don't be a silly idiot!" he said. "And don't answer me back! I don't like it. I never take back-chat from servants, I can tell you."

"I fear, sir, that you will have to become accustomed to it, so long as you are on board this schooner," smiled Soames. "Jacky!"

"Yes, sar."

"You get um rope and knock seven bells outer fat feller plenty quick!"

"Yes, sar."

Jacky the boatswain cheerfully provided himself with a rope's end. Then he grasped Bunter by the collar.

The Owl of the Remove twisted his head round to blink at the black boatswain in alarm and amazement.

"Hands off, you black beast!" he yelled.

Jacky grinned.

He had been very unwilling to handle Harry Wharton & Co. at Soames' orders. But he was more than willing to handle Bunter. It was Bunter's happy way to inspire in everyone he encountered a desire to kick him. Not more than two or three times had he ever spoken to the boatswain; but each of those times his remarks had been unpleasant. Jacky was more than ready to give Bunter what he had asked for.

"White marster say give um five-five!" grinned Jacky.

"You black idiot!" howled Bunter. "That fellow isn't your master—he's our servant."

"There has been a little change on board this schooner," smiled Soames. "You will now become aware of it, Master Bunter." Then his silky manner dropped from him. "You impudent dog, you will learn now who is master here!"

"What?" stammered Bunter. "You cheeky cad—"

"Silence!"

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter, struggling with the boatswain. "Help! Lend me a hand, you fellows! Yaroooh!"

Soames stepped to the companion. In the little cuddy the chums of the Remove could hear every word that was spoken on deck.

"Below there!" rapped out Soames. "Keep below till I give you leave to come on deck. I shall put a bullet through the first head that shows up without leave!"

There was no answer from below. But the Removites did not think of coming on deck. Had Bunter's life been threatened the matter would have been different. But a thrashing for the fat junior was not a matter calling for desperate measures. In fact, the general opinion in the cuddy, as on deck, was that a thrashing was just what Bunter wanted. It could not be denied that he had asked for it often enough.

Bunter's struggle with the powerful Kanaka boatswain did not avail him much. He was twisted over on the deck, face down, in the Kanaka's sinewy grip, and the rope rose and fell.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

Jacky counted five, a number that was quite sufficient for his arithmetical powers. Then he counted five again.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

Bunter struggled and roared and bellowed.

It seemed like some fearful nightmare to the Owl of the Remove. Soames in command of the schooner—the boatswain obeying him as if he were captain—and thrashing Bunter at his order! It was like a nightmare—only more so; for the hefty lashes of the knotted rope were real! They were painfully real, and they made Bunter wriggle and squirm and howl.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

Soames looked on grimly. Ben Dance, at the wheel, eyed the thrashing of Bunter with indifference. The Kanaka seamen stared at the scene,



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The juniors stared at Bunter as the Owl of the Remove carried a tray into the cuddy, and set it on the table. Perspiration streamed down his fat face, and he was greasy from head to foot. "I say, you fellows, isn't it awful?" he groaned. "That beast Soames has given me to the cook for a servant." (See Chapter 13.)

grinning and chuckling, obviously entertained. Billy Bunter's roaring rang from end to end of the Aloha, and far over the shining waters of the Pacific.

"Yaroooh! Help! I say, you fellows! Yooop! Captain Lennox! Where's the captain? Yaroooh!"

"Captain feller him kai-kai for sharks!" explained Jacky.

"Oh, dear! Yaroooh!"

Jacky counted five for the fourth time, delivering a stroke for each. Bunter roared frantically. But Soames' order had been five, and for the fifth time the boatswain counted five, keeping time with the rope's-end.

Then he looked inquiringly at the new captain of the Aloha.

Soames dismissed him with a gesture.

Bunter struggled to his feet.

He set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at Soames, in rage and terror.

"Look here—" he spluttered.

"Haven't you had enough?" asked Soames.

"Listen to me! I am master of this schooner now. You will be the ship's boy so long as you sail with me. You will go to the galley now, and report yourself to the cook for duty."

"What?" gasped Bunter.

"Cooky!" rapped out Soames.

The Tonga Islander came up at once.

"You take fat feller um servant. Fat feller no obey, you knock seven bells outer him. Savvee?"

"Savvee plenty, sar!" grinned the cook.

"I advise you, Bunter, to obey your master's orders," said Soames. "Make yourself useful on the schooner, and it will be well for you. Otherwise you will be thrown to the sharks!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"Get out!"

Billy Bunter limped after the cook.

There was no breakfast yet for William

George Bunter. That meal was gone

from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

The Tonga Islander was not only

pleased, he was fairly gloating, at

having a "white marster" under his

orders. He made his orders clear to

Bunter, accompanying each one with a

kick or a clout. Bunter's first duty

was to take up Soames' breakfast to the

deck, and wait on him while he dis-

posed of it. And if Billy Bunter had

been a born waiter he could not have

carried out his duty more anxiously

and sedulously. After that, he waited

on the crew, amid much laughter and

mockery from the Kanakas. Then he

was set to waiting on the cook himself.

After which, he had the pleasure—or

otherwise—of cleaning out the galley,

scouring pots and pans, and making

every inch of metal shine. A few

scraps thrown to him, and disposed of

while he laboured, constituted his

breakfast.

Only the day before, Bunter had

cheeked Soames as much as he liked,

and had called the cook a clumsy black

brute. There was a change now, with

a vengeance. Billy Bunter, like Lucifer,

Son of the Morning, had fallen from

his high estate, and great was the

fall thereof.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
In Desperate Hands!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

The juniors stared at Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove

carried a large tray into the cuddy,

and set it on the table.

Bunter was looking the picture of

woe.

Perspiration streamed down his fat

face, and he was greasy from head to

foot. And he was tired.

Work never had appealed to Bunter.

Now he was cramming into one morn-

ing more work than he had probably

done in a year before. There was no

doubt that he felt the change.

"Is that our brekker?" asked

Nugent.

"Yes," groaned Bunter.

"Thanks! We're getting jolly

hungry!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter wiped his damp brow with

his damp sleeve.

"I say, you fellows, isn't it awful?

That beast Soames has given me to the

cook for a servant."

"Serve you jolly well right!" said

the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You asked for it," said Harry

Wharton. "You insulted the man a

hundred times for nothing. You kept

on checking him so long as you could.

You can't be surprised at getting some

of it back now that he has the upper

hand."

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"We're not going to be starved, at

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,022

BRAVO, SKOOKUM! Jack didn't stand an earthly of getting out of the rapids alive, for he was unconscious - victim of a coward's blow. But his dog wasn't unconscious, and neither was he ungrateful for what his young master had once done for him. And Skookum, in his own way, levelled the account!

Gold for the Getting!



By Stanton Hope

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

Simons Takes Revenge!

GOING down the left bank of the creek, Jack noticed the fresh footprints of heavy nailed boots in the dark-coloured sand, some broken twigs, and several signs which clearly revealed to his alert eye that someone had but recently passed that way.

The matter did not worry him; except that he wondered why the stranger had not called at the cabin, which could easily be seen. For never a wayfarer came by Starvation Creek without making a call on the three partners, either for a grub stake, or to exchange news and views.

Down by the rapids Jack saw Skookum yapping on a high flat rock. The cause of his excitement was a number of trout which leaped among the swirling eddies with the spray sparkling from their silvery, crescent bodies.

Occasionally, the husky flipped the water with a forepaw, and the note of his yapping changed to chagrin as he failed to land any of them. But on a rock not far away was a fine four-pound trout, which either he had caught himself or which had flopped out of the creek and had been prevented by him from getting back.

"Bravo!" cried Jack, as he saw it. "That makes fish for supper a cert!"

By further antics, Skookum plainly showed his young master that he wished to make him a present of the trout.

"Thanks, old boy," said Jack, "take it back to the cabin and Uncle Clem can be preparing it."

Skookum wagged his tail vigorously, picked up the fish in his mouth and bounded away with it. Left to himself, Jack baited his hook and made a cast with a grasshopper into a swirling eddy. Immediately, a trout shot upward like a small torpedo, and Jack hooked it with a dexterous backward nick of his rod.

It was a fine fish and the youngster played it for more than ten minutes before he was able to land it. He was about to make another cast when a slight, crackling sound in the bushes

near the creek, made him glance sharply round.

For an instant he caught sight of an evil, gloating face in the bushes, and then it vanished.

"Great smoke! Lefty Simons, or I'll eat my boots!"

Jack dropped his rod and hurried among the bushes and rocks near the creek, anxious to confirm his impression that it was indeed Bull Morgan's unscrupulous pardner. But a short time before, a passing prospector had said that Morgan and Simons were in Dawson; yet Jack was almost certain that this was the half-breed himself.

In some soft, blackish sand among the rocks, he saw foot-prints similar to those he had seen farther up the creek. Certainly someone was lurking in the neighbourhood, but why this mysterious game of hide and seek?

Looking for the fugitive among the rocks was an almost hopeless task, and Jack returned to the creek.

At first, he kept glancing back over his shoulder, but deciding that the fellow had gone, he resumed his fishing and speedily hooked another trout. In the excitement of playing his catch among the swirling rapids, he failed to notice a figure come creeping from the bushes to the rear of him. It was Lefty Simons, and his swarthy face was twisted into an evil leer as he crept nearer to the boy to take a dastardly revenge.

The heavy handle of a miner's pick was grasped in his right fist, and one blow of it would be quite sufficient, in his opinion, to settle his account with Jack for good and all.

Barely five yards from the boy, who had the fish almost beaten, Lefty Simons paused and glanced nervously round as a yapping bark came from somewhere close at hand.

"Come on, Skookum, old man!" shouted Jack. "Come and— Great snakes!"

He suddenly caught sight of Simons, who, baulked of the chance of getting in his foul blow unseen, hurled the pick handle from him with all his force. It struck Jack full behind the ear, and, with a little gasp, the boy plunged headlong from the rock into the creek. Like a furred fury, Skookum with

bared, yellow teeth, launched himself at Lefty Simons as the rogue turned to run. The husky's fangs tore through cloth and flesh, and the wound in his right thigh set Lefty Simons yelping madly.

"By heck! I'll slaughter you, y' dern jackal!"

He whipped a gun from his belt—the gun he had not cared to use before for fear of attracting attention. Skookum hurtled sideways, and, with a twist of his neck, got his fangs into Lefty's right wrist.

Crack!

Simultaneously a shot went echoing over the creek, and then the gun clattered down to the rock.

Pale as death, Lefty Simons feared a terrible fate from the wolf-like fangs of the husky, and Skookum might well have upheld his reputation for ferocity had not another matter occupied the attention of his intelligent mind.

Leaving Lefty Simons to go squealing like a wounded boar into the bushes, the husky took a swift plunge from the rock into the swirling rapids.

His affair with the half-breed had taken but a brief second or so, and his keen, brown eyes caught a glimpse of his young master as the boy was swept downstream.

Swimming strongly and skilfully avoiding the rocks, Skookum got his teeth into his master's jacket and battled gallantly to drag him to the bank.

Once he was driven hard against a smooth rock, but his grip did not relax. And Jack, unconscious from the fell blow, was a dead weight, which the husky, powerful as he was, could only just sustain.

A swift current swept boy and dog nearer the bank, and, as Jack's drooping legs touched sand, Skookum, though half-dead himself by this time, made a splendid effort and towed his master through the shallows.

Though Jack's body was still in the water, his head was on shelving sand, and, his main task done, Skookum staggered weakly to his feet. Swaying dizzily, he panted for breath and shook himself violently; then, throwing back his handsome, wolflike head, yapped feebly.

Gradually his strength returned to him. His barks grew louder and louder till they echoed back and forth among the Yukon hills.

"Skookum! Skookum! Where are you, ould boy?"

As Terry's voice rang out from the distance in response, the intelligent husky took a swift, anxious glance at Jack's pale face, and then, barking louder than ever, began to limp along the bank of the creek.

Soon Terry and Uncle Clem came running into view, the Irish boy well in the lead.

"Bedad! Ould Jack's laid out!" yelled Terry in distress. "Jack! Jack! Rouse yourself!"

Sprinting to his chum's side, he dragged him farther up the creek bank and examined him.

With an anguished cry, Uncle Clem threw himself down on his knees by the prostrate boy.

"By heavens, he's drowned—he's drowned!" he gasped out hoarsely.

"No," cried Terry; "'tis just breathing he is! Haul him over on his face, Uncle Clem!"

They did so, and afterwards resorted to vigorous methods of reviving the unconscious lad. It was nearly twenty minutes, though, before Jack opened his eyes, and the first person he saw was Uncle Clem, whose face was even more ashen than his own.

"Uncle Clem," said Jack weakly. "And you, too, Terry boy!"

The wet nose of Skookum thrust itself into Jack's face, and the touch of the faithful dog called back to his mind the memory of his fateful fishing expedition. He raised himself on one elbow, and threw his other arm affectionately round the wet, powerful body of the big husky.

Having heard how Terry and Uncle Clem had been alarmed by the shot, and, later, attracted down the creek by the barking of Skookum, he told of Lefty Simons' murderous attempt on his life.

"The dirty spalpeen!" muttered Terry, gritting his teeth. "And, faith, if it hadn't been for old Skookum you'd shure have crossed the Great Divide that toime, Jack!"

How Lefty Simons came to be in the neighbourhood, or where he had gone, were matters that they left for solution at a later date. Directly Jack could walk they took the trail up-stream, with Skookum, who had a badly bruised leg, limping at their heels.

They paused at the flat rock to collect the trout, and then went on to the cabin, where Jack had a brisk rub-down and a change into dry clothes. Fresh trout, deliciously fried in bacon fat, with flapjacks and maple syrup, and a mug of tea, which formed the evening meal, quickly put him to rights again. And gallant Skookum was given the feed of his life of his favourite dish—dried salmon, of which they had bought a good supply from the Indians.

The long, apple-green twilight of the Yukon was deepening to violet as they yarned together in the cabin while Uncle Clem smoked his pipe.

Then, on the sudden, Skookum, who had been sleeping on some sacking in the corner after his big feed, rose erect, with his shaggy, grey fur bristling all over. Baring his teeth, he looked towards the door, snarling viciously.

Quickly Jack hitched him to a stout buckskin leash, and Uncle Clem, rising without a word, picked up his gun. The same thought occurred to all the pardners—possibly Lefty Simons had returned and was lurking in the vicinity.

Uncle Clem. "I guess we won't take any chances."

Terry turned down the wick of the oil lamp and crossed to the side of Uncle Clem, who, keeping well back in the darkness of the cabin, was peering through the wire mosquito netting of the small window. As they watched a man stepped out from the darkness of a clump of fir-trees into the pale light of the early evening stars, and came ambling drunkenly towards the cabin.

The Lure of Dawson!

"WELL, it isn't that skunk Lefty Simons," muttered Jack.

There was disappointment in his tone, as though he hoped it might have been.

"Shure, I can see it isn't the spalpeen," said Terry; "and yet there's something about the fellow that's sort of familiar."

Uncle Clem lowered his gun. "Some passing prospector, probably," he said, with relief.

They went out to meet the man who came staggering towards them. His clothes were in rags, his boots worn through, and he carried nothing but a roll of dirty blankets. And then Jack and Terry recognised him. He was none other than the American skipper who had first inoculated the virus of the gold fever in their veins.

"There was gold for the getting"—that is what the old oyster pirate had told them in 'Frisco, after he had dragged them out of the waters of the harbour. Yet he himself had not found it so. Surprised and pleased to recognise the two boys, he stated quite frankly that the North Country had got him beaten, and he sighed only to get back and poach oysters down the Californian coast.

Over a hot meal in the cabin he told the story of his heart-breaking struggles and disappointments. He mentioned, too, that now he sought only to work for wages for the remaining days of the fall and get out before the winter ice stopped the boat traffic.

When, in the course of the conversation, Jack spoke about his adventure of the evening, and how Skookum had saved his life, after Lefty Simons had knocked him into the creek, the American said:

"I heard a deal about that skunk in a camp on the Stewart River. He went

INTRODUCTION.

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

DAVID ORCHARD, is missing, having apparently absconded with a bag of gold which had been entrusted to him by an old friend named

SIMPSON. In consequence of this Jack is forced to apply for a job. In the city he falls in with a cheery Irish boy,

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

CLEM HARDY, an old prospector, whom they come to call Uncle Clem. At times during their rough journey the three are troubled with a pair of bullies named Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons, and on one occasion Jack fights Bull for a dog, which he wins after a struggle.

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

One day, hearing Skookum, the dog, barking excitedly down the creek, Jack sets out to investigate, taking with him his fishing tackle.

(Now read on.)

up with his pard, Bull Morgan, to Dawson, and opened a pool saloon; but they started too early to rake in much money, so I guess Simons has been making a living—and a mighty fat living, too—playing cards."

"Maybe he's hitting it back to Dawson now," remarked Uncle Clem. "And if he comes this way again"—laying a hand on the muzzle of his gun—"he might meet with a nasty accident."

For a time longer they chatted together, and then Skookum left the cabin to keep guard for the night, while the three partners and their guest curled up in their blankets.

As it was now September, and the freeze-up of the country might be expected about the middle of October, it was important that they should get as much work as possible done in the little time that remained to them. And, with Uncle Clem's permission, the boys offered the old sea-skipper eight dollars a day in wages for working on the claim. This would mean no profit for themselves from his labour; but, because of his former kindness to them, they wanted to help him out.

So the ex-skipper helped them to work their claim until the first week in October. At the end of that time he packed up, and they weighed out his wages to him in gold-dust, small nuggets, and amalgam, wished him luck, and gave him provisions enough to last him for several days on the trail. In parting, he mentioned that if ever they were hard up again, and wanted a few tips about the gentle art of oyster stealing, he would be pleased to give them some, if they looked him up in 'Frisco.

Next day a bitter wind came keening down the valley from the mountains to the north—the first warning breath of the approach of grim winter, which would soon have the Yukon in its iron grip.

"I think," remarked Uncle Clem, after a chill day's work, "that at the end of this week, you two boys had better hit the trail for Dawson to buy furs, snow-shoes, and other winter supplies, for you'll be able to get them more readily there than at McLennan Crossing. Afterwards, you can return here, and we can go on working our claim."

"But we shan't be able to use the sluice-boxes in the winter," said Jack.

"No, my boy. But we can thaw the ground, and get out a good heap of pay-dirt, and after the thaw in the spring wash it out then."

"But why not come to Dawson wid us, Uncle Clem?" inquired Terry. "Shure 'tis a foine gay town, I've heard tell, and the change would do you good after the work of the past few weeks."

Their old pard shook his head. "No," he answered quietly; "I will remain right here and look after things while you are away."

He gave no other explanation, yet both boys felt he had some definite reason for not wishing to go to the big centre.

The boys hit the trail a few days later, leaving Uncle Clem behind and Skookum as guardian; and, after a long and tough journey over the trails and by river steamer, came to the big town.

The city of Dawson was booming—booming as in the distant days of the Klondike gold-rush. Indeed, many men, disappointed with the Stewart River district, had come farther north to try their luck in this other region.

The two chums were delighted to set foot on solid sidewalks again, and they felt, too, the warm satisfaction that the possession of ample funds brings. For

they had brought with them some of the gold mined on their claim, neatly done up in little moose-skin bags, which they wore under their coarse grey shirts. The rest of the gold had been hidden on the claim itself, for Uncle Clem had not wished it to get around yet that they had made any sort of lucky strike.

"Shure 'tis good to set foot in a town again, Jack!" cried Terry, after they disembarked from the boat. "But 'tis too late to buy any of the stuff we want to-day, and after we've booked at an hotel, we'll take in a movie show, if you're so minded."

"Topping!" exclaimed Jack. "It does my eyes good to see a place like this after the wilds. See, there's a cinema, and a picture of good old Harold Lloyd in his giglamps outside. And there's a hotel across the road. 'The Last Chance!' Queer sort of name."

In buoyant spirits, the chums joined several other new arrivals in Dawson who were entering the hotel.

"Nothing doing—nothing doing!" the hotel clerk was calling. "Full up!"

The would-be guests turned back into the street, and then Jack and Terry began to wear out their shoe-leather looking for a place to lay their heads. They tried all the hotels and rooming-houses, and even the station of the volunteer fire brigade. There was not a bed to be had in Dawson. It was dark and coming on to rain when they wearily plodded back to the Last Chance.

"Say, pard," said Jack to the clerk, "what about giving me and my pal a doss in the billiards-room?"

"Nothing doing. Full up!"

"The wood-shed, then?"

"Full up!"

"The bath-room?"

"Ain't got one!"

"Faith," moaned Terry, as he and Jack turned away, "thin 'tis no slaps we'll be getting to-night, begorra!"

"Rot, old man!" retorted Jack. "We've slept out in the open many a time, and we can do it again. I'm so jolly tired now that I could easily snooze, rain or no rain!"

"I have it!" cried Terry. "Let's go and forget our troubles by seeing good ould Harold Lloyd. At least, it'll be snug and warm inside the picture-house."

All the cheaper seats had been taken, and the chums had to pay a dollar-fifty each to go inside; but they soon forgot their woes laughing at the antics of the great comedian. And when they had seen that film, they slept through the rest of the performance, until the uniformed attendant woke them up and told them to "beat it."

To their dismay, it was pouring with rain outside, and in desperation they suggested to the attendant that they might be allowed to sleep in the picture theatre all night.

"I guess it 'ud be more'n my job's worth," answered the man. "But I heerd someone say as there's still a bit o' room left to loss at the High Life Pool Saloon down on Seventh Street. The slate-bed of a pool-table is mighty hard, but I guess you could put up with it for the sake o' getting a roof over your heads."

They thanked him, and found their way to the High Life Saloon, a freshly painted garish place built of wood, and containing a dozen pool-tables of the small American kind. The place was not well patronised to-night, possibly because it was new and not in a central part of the town. The score of rough-necks distributed among the three tables in use took no notice of the newcomers, but after a minute or two an unpleasant-looking Chinaman shuffled towards them across the sawdusted floor, and, after learning their desire for a doss, told them to wait.

"Me go askee boss," he said.

Away he went to the rear of the premises, and as he opened a door, Jack and Terry caught a glimpse of a green table and a number of card players through a haze of tobacco-smoke. A couple of minutes later the Chinese returned to say that they could have a doss on a pool-table at the price of five dollars each for the night.

That was sheer robbery, of course, but outside it was raining cats and dogs, and, after talking things over, the chums decided that they would stay. When paying, however, they took good care not to show their pokes of gold, but used dollar bills they had exchanged for some of their gold-dust in McLennan Crossing.

Tired though they were, there was little chance of sleep till after midnight,

for a quarrel broke out among the pool players. Finally, they departed, and the cat-footed Chinese turned out the lamps, and passed out of view down a narrow passage to the side of the gambling den in the rear of the premises. The only light now was from a small, partially screened window high in the rear partition which separated the two apartments.

In spite of the hard slate bed which obtruded even through their Hudson Bay blankets, Jack and Terry quickly fell asleep. They were awakened even more suddenly by a terrific clatter of feet and someone sprawling heavily across the table. It was one of the gamblers endeavouring to find his way out of the High Life, and from the torrent of abuse he loosed off at the unoffending boys, he had only too evidently been relieved of his "wad."

The boys heard him crash his way out into the street, and a rumble of voices from the now half-open door of the gambling den, where play was still in progress.

"'Tain't sportin' to squeal," rose a gruff, familiar voice. "The skunk wouldn't have tried to draw a gun if we'd ha' lost a poke o' gold to him, I guess, boys."

Jack's hand tightened spasmodically on Terry's arm.

"Did you hear, Terry?" he whispered hoarsely. "That was Bull Morgan, or I'll eat my gum-boots!"

"It shure sounded like his voice," agreed Terry. "And if he and that dirty crony of his are running this joint, 'twould have been better if we'd slept in the rain, ould son."

The door shutting the rear room from the pool saloon itself was closed, but as the boys listened they could hear a deal of quarrelling.

"I think," murmured Jack, "we'll try and make sure whether that really is Morgan and his pal in that room. If so, I guess p'r'aps we'd better beat it in the morning before they come around, or there'll be a row for a cert."

Quietly he rose, and in his stockings feet procured a ladder used by the Chinaman when turning out the lamps. This, Jack leaned against the wooden partition, and, mounting it, was able to peer through a small clear space in the window upon the scene inside.

There were Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons right enough! And round the green-baize table with them were several men of the prospector class. Glasses and mugs were at the elbows of the players and a good deal of liquor had been spilled on the green cloth. Money, gold and nuggets, were arrayed in little heaps before each player—and the biggest heaps were before Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons.

"Hop up, Terry!" whispered Jack. "It's those two rotten sharks, and you can bet they're skinning the other chaps with 'em in their own dirty way."

Terry crept up the ladder and balanced himself beside Jack. And by keeping their heads close together, both boys could see through that narrow space of the window which was not covered by the blind.

As they watched, they saw Lefty Simons, lean and greasy-looking as ever, dexterously shuffling the cards, and noted, too, his right wrist, which was badly scarred as with a dog's fangs.

They saw Bull Morgan, bulking large and ominous, in his chair, rake in more

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it gave him the chance he wanted to escape. But the cannibals did not lose their feast, for the "GEM" provided them with the best feast they had ever had!

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Plunging into the swirling rapids, Skookum's keen brown eyes caught a glimpse of his young master as the boy was swept down stream. Swimming strongly and skilfully avoiding the rocks, the husky battled gallantly to reach Jack. (See Page 24.)

and more gold, and the smile broaden on his evil, pock-marked face. Only too plainly, the two rogues were finding it easier to fleece the foolish miners of their earnings than to win the gold by the sweat of their brows from the Yukon rocks and sandy river bars. Now and again, the Chinaman entered the gaming-room and plied the dupes with more drink, and the liquor dulled the pain of parting from their wads.

The boys quietly crept back to their pool table-bed, and soon after another attempt at a quarrel, the badly "stung" visitors to the High Life were ushered out into the unsympathetic night. Then, with many chuckles, Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons clattered back through the darkened pool saloon, scarce noticing the two huddled forms on one of the tables, and shut themselves in their den.

When the rogues were safe inside again, Jack and Terry once more rose, and, ghost-footed, mounted the step-ladder. Peering in, they saw the crooks empty one small poke of gold after another into the centre of the green-baize table, roughly scattering a pack of playing-cards to make room for more.

The voices of the two rascals in muffled accents came through the glass to the boys, in tones of unholy glee.

"There's fifteen thousand dollars' worth if a cent, Lefty," gloated Morgan. "By heck, the rough feel of it does me good! For the first time since we've come up to this forsaken land, I'm glad we sold up the Red Rat, in 'Frisco, and beat it North with that stampede of boobs. The poet said there was a sucker born every minute, and by the Great Mackinaw, a whole flock of 'em accepted our li'l invitation to-night! We can sure be proud of the right smart way we relieved 'em of their pokes."

"You mean I did!" retorted Lefty Simons. "I wasn't aware, Bull, as you could manipulate the cyards? And if I hadn't ha' dealt you a fistful, you'd ha' stood nowhere in that li'l poker game."

Bull Morgan was too intent upon the gold pile to note the tone of his crony. The pile of Yukon gold, shimmering red under the lantern on the green-baize cloth seemed to hypnotise him. His great mottled hands plunged among it, and he lifted handfuls of the coarse gold and nuggets aloft and laughed like a maniac as they cataracted back on to the heap.

Then he began roughly to divide the pile into two halves, and Lefty Simons, a wolfish gleam in his eyes, amused himself by taking up half a stack of cards and by clever sleight-of-hand dealing himself a hand which contained four aces.

"There y' are, Lefty," said Bull Morgan, at length. "There's your share, and here's mine."

Simons glowered. "Say, what do you call this?" he demanded. "I guess you've taken darn good care, Bull, to keep the best of the nuggets in your pile—worth more'n this loose stuff, I guess."

The close-set eyes of Morgan reflected the fiery gleam of Simons'.

"Aw, cut that out!" he growled. "You always was a greedy hawg, Lefty, and don't you in no wise start gettin' fresh with me now. Fifty-fifty was what we agreed. You know mighty well that even if ye're the cyard conjurer, ye've got me right handy to butt in if anyone starts a rough-house. Where'd ye be if trouble started and I weren't here to give y' moral support, beh?"

Upon the step-ladder outside, Jack and Terry could not repress a momentary smile at the use of that word

"moral" by the big soul-less rogue who had just helped in the robbery of half a dozen hard-working miners.

The next words of Lefty Simons came shrilly to their ears, for Lefty was getting annoyed. He had had a few glasses of firewater himself and he had sufficient Dutch courage in his composition to openly resent what he considered the unfairness of his pardner.

"If it's a case o' fifty-fifty, you hand me that other pile, Bull," he squealed. "It ain't the first time I've noticed that all the best nuggets stick to your big paws! I never got me fair share on that last big deal."

The great hands of Bull Morgan gripped the sides of the card table as he leaned toward his accomplice.

"You swab!" he exploded. "Didn't I warn you afore to quit whining about that?"

As he spoke, he edged round the table, and the watching boys saw the lean face of Lefty Simons assume the dead colour of old parchment. The slick card-sharper, who, beneath all his bravado, had a cringing fear of his powerful pard, read danger in the big fellow's glowering eyes. On the impulse his hand dropped into his pocket and he leaped up, with a gun in his hand.

Emitting a growl like an angry grizzly, Bull Morgan kicked viciously at his crony's arm. Simons, at the same time, pressed the trigger, but the hammer fell harmlessly on an empty breech, and a fraction of a moment later, the weapon went clattering down on to the card-strewn floor.

(A most amazing surprise is in store for the two chums . . . and what it is you will learn in next week's long instalment of this powerful story of the Yukon.)

"THE WHIP-HAND!"*(Continued from page 23.)*

any rate," said Bob, sitting down to the table. "Tuck in!"

Bunter leaned on the table, wiped his perspiring brow, and groaned.

"I say, you fellows, that awful beast has picked on me for some reason. He's letting you fellows alone!"

"We let him alone, when it was the other way about," said Bob.

"He's given me to the cook, and the cheeky, black brute kicks me, and clouts me, and makes me work."

"A little work may do you good!" suggested Bob comfortingly.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

The voice of the Tonga Islander was heard calling.

"You fat feller, you show a leg, or I knock seven bells and a dog-watch out of you, plenty quick!"

"That's the way he talks to me!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, you've asked for it often enough!" said Harry Wharton. "Better make the best of it!"

"If anything could make me forgive Soames, it's the way he's treating Bunter!" remarked the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy, you beast!"

"You feller Bunter!" came the cook's threatening voice.

"Better hop it, Bunter!" advised Nugent. "Your boss is calling you!"

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, "this can't go on, you know! That awful villain Soames has got rid of the captain and mate somehow and seized

the ship! He's a pirate! He will be hanged if he's caught! Look here, you fellows, it's up to you! Rush him somehow and collar him, and—"

"You feller Bunter!" came the cook's no come when marster call you? By golly, me knock seven bells out of you!"

And the Tonga Islander came into the cuddy by the door on the lower deck, staring round for his "boy."

He grinned at the Greyfriars fellows.

"Fat feller belong me!" he explained. "White marster give um to me for boy! You Bunter come along plenty quick!"

And the bare foot of the cook helped Bunter out of the cuddy, and he went with a bump and a roar.

The cook followed him, and more roars were heard from the galley as the black man impressed upon Bunter the necessity of obeying orders, using a rolling-pin for the purpose.

"My hat, Bunter's getting all he's asked for, and a little over!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Serve him jolly well right!" growled the Bounder.

The juniors finished their breakfast without Bunter that day.

From the deck Soames' voice came to the juniors.

"Below there!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called back Bob Cherry.

"Come on deck!"

The Bounder gritted his teeth. Tom Redwing gave him an anxious look.

"Keep your temper, Smithy, old man! We've got to knuckle under—for the present!"

"I know!" muttered the Bounder. "But—"

He broke off, and followed the juniors on deck.

Soames greeted them with an ironical smile. The Aloha was bowling along with all canvas out before the trade-wind. Ben Dance, at the wheel, gave the juniors a rather grim look, but did not speak. He, as well as the Greyfriars fellows, realised that the new commander of the Aloha had to be obeyed. Soames fixed his eyes upon Harry Wharton & Co., his hand resting on the automatic slung in a holster at his side.

"I think you understand by this time how matters stand!" he said. "Give me no trouble, and I shall deal with you gently! The first who shows a sign of insubordination goes over the side! To-morrow we reach Caca! Till then you are free to do as you like! That is all!"

He turned away, the juniors making no answer. Soames went into the deck-house, of which he had taken possession as his quarters. Harry Wharton & Co., in silence, with feelings that were too deep for words, leaned on the rail and watched the sea as the swift schooner glided on over the Pacific, ever nearer and nearer to the treasure island. They were silent, but their thoughts were busy—desperate thoughts of yet, somehow, turning the tables on the desperate man who held their lives at his mercy.

THE END.

(There's a thrill in every chapter of next week's stirring long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in Southern Seas. Don't miss: "The Treasure Island!" By Frank Richards.)

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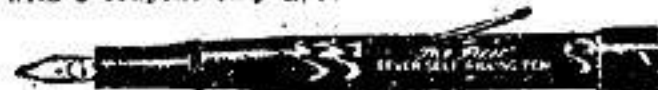
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"H, my dear 'Lickham!' merrimed Doctor Birchmell, as he poured over his mourning correspondence. 'What have we here? Judging by the dual cross which is engraved on the back of the envelope—three brass balls rampant—it is a letter from my old friend, the Duke of Stony Stratford.'"

"Indeed, sir?" vouchsafed Mr. Lickham.

"Yes, indeed!" vociferated the Head. "I was not aware that you numbered among your acquaintances, sir," vouchsafed Mr. Lickham.

"Well, you are aware of it now!" vociferated the Head. "The Duke of Stony Stratford is a man of considerable substance—forty-two inches round the waist, to be precise. He is also a very powerful and influential gentleman—one of the pillars of the realm, in fact."

Mr. Lickham seemed quite impressed. He looked on with grating interest while the Head ripped open the dual envelope with a grubby, four-fingered (his silver paper-knife having recently been pawned) Doctor Birchmell took out the letter and unfolded it. He raised his eyebrows and wagged his beard as he perused the document.

"Alas, my dear Lickham!" he eggs-claimed, when he had finished reading. "I fear that my friend the duke has fallen or evil days. Listen to this!" And Doctor Birchmell rested the duke's letter:

"My Dear Birchmell,—Just a few lines hopping you are quite well as it leaves me at present in a very delicate state of wealth. Owing to the crushing burden of taxation which we poor dukes have to suffer, I have been obliged to sell my castle, and earn my keep."

"You would be doing me a grate service if you would take my son—the Honorable Algernon—off my hands, by admitting him to St. Sam's as a pupil. I find him a grate ink-bus at the moment. He is a noble and devoted son, but he is always going on the razzle—you will know from personal experience what this means—and his eggstravagant and wasteful habits are bringing down my dear old hares in sorrow to the grave. I feel that the boy will be in good hands if I send him to you to receive his education. But use him kindly, and don't fog him more than three times a day. He has a somewhat frail and delicate constitution. 'I am not in a position to pay you the necessary term-fee, but as soon as my ship comes home I will see that you are handsomely rewarded for your trouble."

"Now I must close, with love from all."

"Your affectionate friend,
"STONY STRATFORD."

"Dear me! How very distressing!" merrimed Mr. Lickham. "Fancy a go and earn his keep!"

"Yes, it's most pathetic!" merrimed the Head, dashing a sob from his eye. "It is very true, Lickham, that one half of the world duzzent know how the other three-quarters lives. Poor old Stony Stratford! I can feel for him in his eggstremity, for I am in the same boat myself!"

"You will admit the duke's son to St. Sam's, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham. "Not half! Think what it will mean, Lickham, having a real live duke's son among my skollers! It will raise the THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 1,022.

tone of the school, having a blue-blinded aristocrat here. I am not a snob, but I've no use for the common herd—the sons of pork-butchers and poets, and drapers and dustmen, and half-pay Army officers. I prefer to have pupils with long and noble pedigrees. I shall welcome the Honorable Algernon with open arms!"

"But he seems to be a bit of a scamp, sir, judging by his father's letter."

"Tut, tut! You can forgive a duke's son anything. I shall place the boy in your Form, Lickham, and I shall eggs-poo you to treat him with civility and respect. Severilly costs nothing, you know. I will telephone to my friend the duke, and tell him to pack the boy off to St. Sam's as soon as he likes."

For the next few hours the Head was engaged on the tellyphone. Meanwhile, Mr. Lickham, who was a bit nosy by nature, opened the rest of the Head's correspondence.

At last Doctor Birchmell laid down the receiver, and turned to the master of the Fourth.

"It's all serene, Lickham! The Honorable Algernon will arrive this afternoon. The duke's Rolls-Royce has not yet been pawned, so the boy will arrive in that. He will drive it himself. What are you looking so startled about, Lickham?"

"I have had news for you, sir," was the grave reply. "On going through your letters—cause the liberty—I came across this!"

Mr. Lickham held up an ominous, offshal-looking document.

"Give us it!" commanded the Head tersely. And, with trembling fingers he took the document. It was a demand for the payment of the Head's rates, and the envelope was marked, "Final Notice."

"Oh, blow!" snapped the Head crossly. "This is about the tenth 'Final Notice' I've received during the last month or so. It will go the way of all the others—into my waist-paper basket!"

"Star!" cried Mr. Lickham. "You cannot dispose of your liabilities so easily, sir. This is indeed a final notice—the last warning you will receive. Unless your rates are paid by midday to-day, the local Council will

An "eggsiting naratiff" of the boys of St. Sam's by Dicky Nugent, the genius of the Second Form at Greyfriars.

"You persecuted in a Court of Law!"

A garstly paffler spread over the Head's face. His knees knocked together, and the inspiration stood out in beads on his forehead. In his mind's eye, he saw himself arranged before the magistrates, cowering and cringing in the dock; and he saw himself lissening to the dreaded sentence of a month's hard labour for not paying his rates. It was a trooly terrifying prospect!

Wild-eyed and haggard, the Head turned to Mr. Lickham. He rung his hands in despare.

"This is a hom-shell, Lickham!" he cried hoarsely. "What shall I do? My rates are due—very much overdue, in fact—and I haven't a penny in the wide! Can you help me, Lickham?"

The Form master shook his head.

"I shant!" he replied. "I don't believe in lending munny, sir. You know what Shakespeare says? 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be; for if you look after the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves.'"

"Blow Shakespeare!" cried the Head irritably. "Do you dare to quote stodgy maxims to me at a time like this, when I am fairly done, and unfortunately dunned? What do you advise me to do? Quick, man! It is nearly twelve o'clock, and if my rates are not paid by then I shall be put in chokey!"

Inwardly Mr. Lickham reflected that "chokey" was the best possible place for the Head. But he did not voice his thoughts aloud. Instead, he pulled out his thinking-cap from his pocket, and put it on. For some minutes he was rapped in a reverry. Doctor Birchmell watched him, clawing impatiently at his beard.

"I've got it, sir!" cried Mr. Lickham at length. "There is only one way out. It is hopeless to try and raise the munny, in so short a time. I suggest that you go and interview the local council at once, and make them an offer."

"How can I make them an offer, when I haven't two ha'pennies for a penny?" shouted the Head in a wack.

"Calm yourself, sir! I do not mean a munetary offer. This is my idea. Tell the Council that you will except the son of one of their employees as a St. Sam's scholar, by way of squaring matters."

"Oh?"

"I believe they will jump at it, sir," said Mr. Lickham. "It will mean a free education for the lad they choose to nominate. And as your rates only amount to a few shillings, the Council will be getting by far the best of the bargain."

Instantly the Head snatched up his mortar-board and his oilskins—for the English summer had not yet expired—and whisked out of the study. Mr. Lickham, from the window, caught a glimpse of him peddling furiously out of gates on Burleigh's bike, which he had calmly commandeered.

The Head was absent an hour. When he returned his face was flushed and triumphant. Mr. Lickham was waiting for him in the quad, and he almost ran the Form master down in his eggsitement.

"Loud cheers, Lickham!" cried the Head. "I have worked the giddy oracle! The Council jumped at my offer, as you professed they would. They have agreed to waive the payment of the rates, on condition that I reserve the son of one of their employees as a pupil!"

"Ripping!" cried Mr. Lickham.

"The only fly in the ointment," said the Head, making a grimace, "is that they have nominated the son of the local dustman. It is painful to think of such a grubby little brat rubbing shoulders with a duke's son. He will contaminate the school by his presence. However, I suppose I ought to be thankful to have got out of my predicament so easily. I owe it all to you, Lickham. Come and have lunch with me."

So saying, the Head hurried Burleigh's bicycle away from him, and linked his arm in Mr. Lickham's, and waltzed him away to his dining-room.

JACK JOLLY & CO., the heroes of the Fourth, were playing football with a prefect's "topper," when a magnificent Rolls-Royce car, purring and honking into the quadrangle. Fossil, the porter, was standing at the school gates, and he touched his four-looks respectfully as the car flashed past him.

"Look out, you fellows!" shouted Jack Jolly, as the Rolls-Royce bore down upon them.

The juniors scrambled aside in the nick of time, forming a sort of guard-of-honour for the car to pass.

Seated at the steering-wheel was a youth who had seen about two summers and thirteen winters. His features were clear-cut and classical, and there was "class" written all over him.

The youth was dressed to kill—as all true road-hogs should be. He wore a motoring-coat with a fur collar, a pair of enormous gloves, and a shining silk topper. The lofty eggspression on his well-chiselled face signified that he was dignified. Anyone would have recognised him on sight as the son of a duke.

But Jack Jolly & Co. were not the sort of fellows to kow-tow to the sons of dukes. True, they made sweeping bows, with their hands on their hearts, but this was merely in mockery.

"All hail, your Highness!" said Jack Jolly meekly.

"All hail!" ekkeed Merry and Bright.

"I kiss your feet!" merrimed Frank Fearless.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A frown came over the hansom, automatic features of the duke's son. He spoke for the first time, and his words startled the juniors.

"Ere, none o' yer blinkin' cheek! I'll clip yer ears for yer, if yer starts playin' the giddy ox with me!"

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Jack Jolly, in amazement. "What choice and refined language! Who and what is this fellow, I wonder? He looks like the son of a duke, but he duzzent talk like one!"

"You 'old yer jaw!" snapped the newcomer, glaring down at Jack Jolly.

"I AM a duke's son, d'you 'ear? I'm the Honorable Algernon Fitzboode, the son and ar of the Duke of Stony Stratford! An' if any covey doubt wot I say, I'll give 'im a dot on the boko!"

"Grate Scotty!"

The juniors blinked in amazement at the Honorable Algernon. And then Jack Jolly solemnly produced a pocket-knife and handed it to the fellow in the car. "Wot's this 'ere for?" demanded the duke's son.

"To cut your axcent with!" eggsplained Jack Jolly.

And there was a roar of laughter, which died away abruptly as Doctor Birchmell came stalking on the seen.

"Make way, there!" commanded the Head. "Stand back, you sons of dogs! I wish to welcome his honner to St. Sam's!"

The juniors fell back, with wondering faces, as the Head approached the car.

And then Doctor Birchmell did a remarkable thing. He swept off his mortar-board with a flourish, and made a low and solemn salaam. So low did he stoop that his long beard swept the flagstones.

"Welcome to St. Sam's, your honner!" cried the Head, in wedding tones. "I am rejoiced to witness your safe arrival at this seat of learning over which I have the honner to preside! Pray accept my felicitations!"

"The Honorable Algernon sneered.

"Cut the cackle, grandpa!" he said roodly. "Give us your paw, and let's shake! I don't wait no speechifyin'!"

The juniors chuckled, and they fully eggspected the Head to fly into a rage. But he did nothing of the sort. With a growling jesture, he held out his hand, and the duke's son took it in a crushing grip that made the Head yelp.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

When his hand was released, the Head caressed it tenderly with the other. Then, like a fawning menial, he threw open the door of the car, and invited "his honner" to step fourth.

Jack Jolly & Co. looked on with scorn and content.

"The artful old hanting!" growled Jack Jolly. "He's loadyng up to the new kid just because he happens to be a duke's son! The Head's the biggest snob that ever snobbed! Now, if the son of a dustman was to arrive at St. Sam's—"

Almost before the words were out of Jack Jolly's mouth there was a new sensation in the quadrangle.

The local dustcart, drawn by a very tired-looking, bow-legged horse, came rumbling in at the school gates. It was driven by a freckled-faced, snub-nosed youngster in a shabby suit, with a muffer round his neck.

Fossil, the porter, held up his hands in plus horror, and shouted to the youthful driver of the dustcart to draw rein. But the freckled-faced youth ignored Fossil, and drove on until the dustcart halted alongside the magnificent Rolls-Royce car. The contrast between the two vehicles was so comical that the juniors roared with laughter.

"After the Lord Mayor's Show comes the dustcart!" ejuchked Jack Jolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head, having assisted the duke's son to alite from the car, glared at the intruder as if he had no right to be on the earth.

"Who are you, you course, low-down raggermuffin?" he demanded.

The freckled-faced youth replied in a refined, cultured voice of eggscellent timber.

(Continued on page 20.)

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