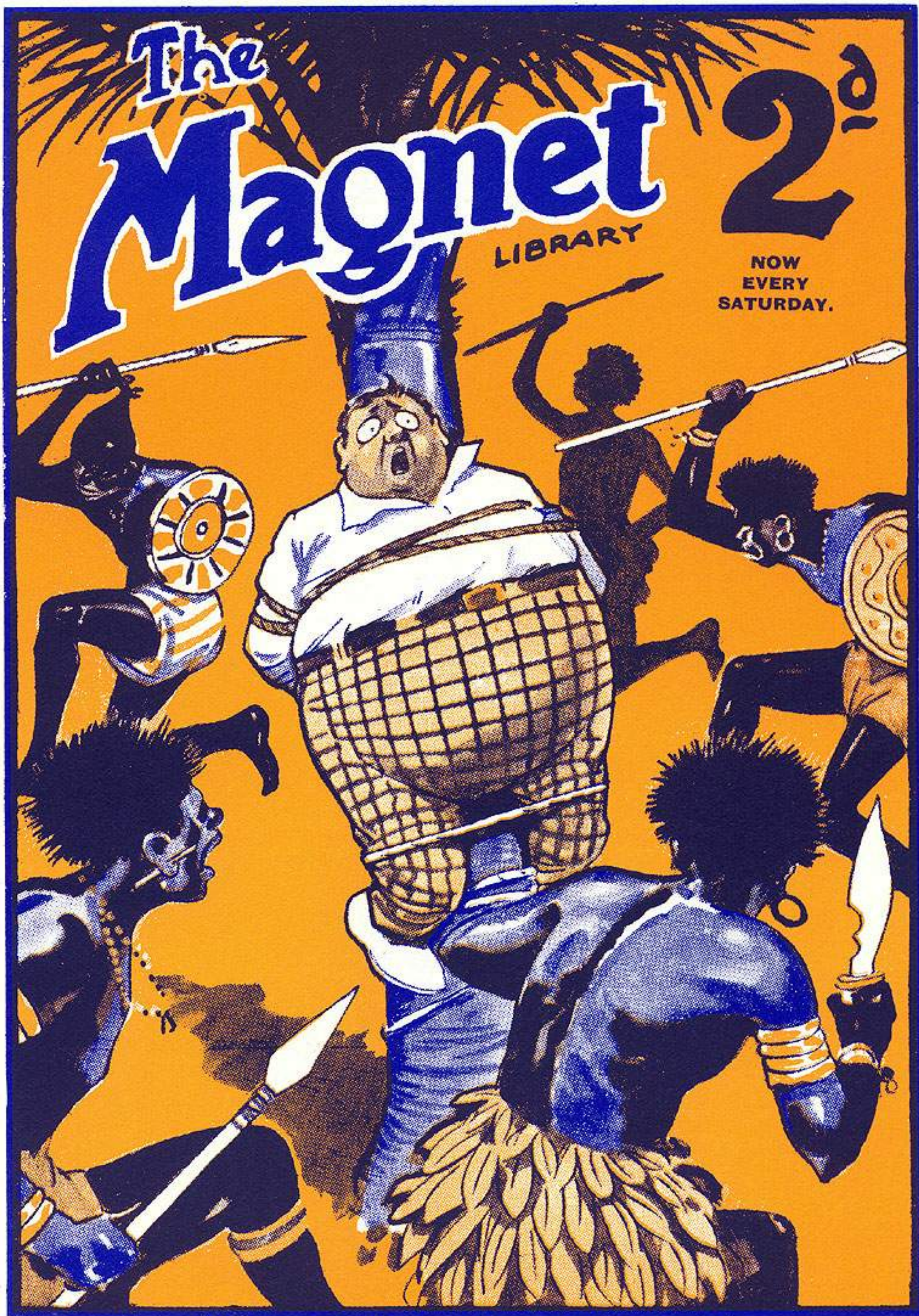


IN SOUTHERN SEAS! "THE RIVAL TREASURE-SEEKERS!" CHASED BY CANNIBALS!

(This week's grand story of the clumsy of Greyfriars.)



NEXT ON THE CANNIBALS' MENU!

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Week Ending October 1st, 1927.



No. 1 CARDIFF CITY.

Interesting facts about
the Welsh side which
holds the English Cup.

A FEW years back—if you like your history to be exact, it was 1910—a prominent Cardiff man had what was called a “mad idea.” He decided to start a real Association football club in Cardiff. The “mad” part of the idea was that Cardiff people generally then seemed tied to Rugby football.

To-day Cardiff possesses one of the most prosperous football clubs in the British Isles, and from the “mad idea” there has grown a wonderful enthusiasm. The Cardiff team which was got together quickly fought its way into the First Division. Enthusiasm advanced a step further when the side reached the English Cup Final in 1923; and last season the “mad-idea” club won the Cup by beating Arsenal. That, as they say in certain places, is distinctly the material to hand out to them.

There were people in England, as well as in Cardiff, who laughed at the idea of a Soccer side in the Rugby centre. If the people of England had taken Cardiff City seriously as a football proposition they would probably not have allowed the club to enter for the so-called English Cup. Now the English Cup adorns the sideboard—or the safe—of the Cardiff City club. At Wembley last April it went out of English keeping for the first time in history.

A Powerful Half-Back Line.

I could fill two books with the stranger-than-fiction story of the Cardiff City Football Club, but it is the men who are doing now, rather than those who have done in the past, who are interesting to modern folk.

These Cardiff “bluebirds” don’t mind what the copy-books say on football. Superior people tell us that in the winter game attack is the best defence. In winning the Cup last season Cardiff scorned this principle. First of all, they made sure that their defence was like granite. “No team loses a Cup-tie unless the other fellows score a goal,” they seemed to say. In seven Cup-ties only two teams managed to get the ball into the Cardiff City net. That’s rock-like defence, if you like. Not for years have I seen a defence better organised; better equipped for stopping the other

fellows, or containing more of the bulldog grit than that of the present Cardiff City team.

Even watching from the stand, you could see those half-backs—Keenor, Sloan, and Hardy—setting their teeth, and you could almost hear them saying, “Only over our dead bodies do you advance to our net!” In this half-back line is the strength of the Cardiff side.

Fred Keenor is the captain, a Cardiff man, whom nobody has ever seen tired. What others think of him was shown a little time back. Moses Russell was elected to skipper a Welsh International side. An hour before the start of the match Moses went to the other Welsh players and asked them if they would mind if he turned over the captaincy to Fred Keenor. They all agreed that it would be the proper thing to do, and Fred Keenor captained Wales in his native city. Wales is proud of him.

The Ideal Mixture.

You can point to half-backs who are more “finished” than Keenor, but you can’t point to a player whom it takes longer to “finish.” When the team was doing badly some time back Manager Fred Stewart asked Keenor if he would play at centre-forward. “I’ll play in goal and do my best if you say so!” That’s the spirit which deserves success, even if it can’t command it.

Mention of this Manager Stewart reminds me. He has been with the club from its earliest days. He went from Stockport, and the first thing he did when he got the job was to get a single

ticket to Cardiff for himself and “Billy” Hardy, the right-half. Hardy has grown bald in the service of Cardiff City—probably through heading the ball so much. He is the greatest half-back who never played for England, but there is only one reason why he hasn’t played for the country of his birth, and that is because he is associated with a Welsh side.

Of course, Hardy would have liked International caps, but, as he said when they carried him off the field at Wembley last April, “life is full of compensations.”

Jimmy Sloan is the centre-half of this Cardiff side—an Irishman; and thus you have a half-back line from England, Ireland, and Wales. Welsh enthusiasm, English doggedness, and Irish impetuosity. How’s that for an ideal mixture, my bonnie boys?

A Wheeze that Paid.

Another Irishman in the team is goal-keeper Tom Farquharson. Cardiff City didn’t find him ready-made, though. When “Long Tom” went to live in Wales he had scarcely seen a football. But now ideas just sprout from him, as he showed during the Cup-ties last season, when he thought of a new way of saving penalty-kicks. “Andy” Wilson, of Chelsea, is a “never miss” type of penalty-kicker, but he missed with one at Cardiff last season. Why? Not because Andy didn’t shoot true as he always does, but because Farquharson, after taking up his stand at the back of the net, made a sudden leap and turned the ball aside. As there is no copyright in ideas, others have adopted the Cardiff goalkeeper’s method, but he thought of it first.

Don’t you believe it when they tell you that the “pro” footballer doesn’t mix brains with his play.

The Right Spirit

Between the half-backs and the goal-keeper there are two full-backs who can “hit it.” I don’t know how hard a mule can kick. I would soon be kicked by a mule as get in the way of Jimmy Nelson when he is making a big clearance. Both Nelson and Tom Watson, his partner, believe in getting the ball away from their own goal. (Continued on page 28.)

THE FAMOUS CARDIFF CITY TEAM AND PRESENT HOLDERS OF THE F.A. CUP



Left to right (standing): Watson, Hardy, Ferguson, Farquharson, Nelson and Curtis.

Left to right (sitting): Irving, Sloan, Keenor (captain), Len Davies, and McLachlan.

PEARLS WORTH A FORTUNE! Under the glare of the tropical sun the schoolboy treasure-seekers set foot on Caca Island to follow up the clues that will lead them to Black Peter's buried treasure. But there are others who covet and seek that treasure—desperate rogues who will stop at nothing to gain their ends, and to overthrow their youthful rivals!



A Magnificent Story dealing with the further adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, who are treasure-seeking in Southern Seas.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Far from Greyfriars!

DAWN on the Pacific. Harry Wharton came up the companion-ladder of the Aloha as the round, golden sun rose over the sea.

Scarcely moving on the calm waters of the lagoon, the schooner lay at anchor, her cable dropping straight as a string to the coral bottom.

In the clear, pellucid waters of the lagoon, the anchor could be seen hooked in the coral, with fishes swimming round it, and crabs crawling over the rusty iron.

Ashore, the beach of white sand and coral was beginning to gleam and shine in the sun. Beyond rose graceful, nodding palms, and, farther still, the line of hills that ran like a backbone across the island of Caca from north to south.

Harry Wharton glanced at the shore.

Nothing was stirring there save the land crabs crawling lazily on the sand and the tall palms nodding in the breeze of morning.

"All's well, skipper!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

And Hurree Janset Ram Singh, rubbing his eyes, remarked that the well-fulness was terrific.

The other Greyfriars juniors were turning out. It was to be a busy day for the schoolboy treasure-seekers; and Harry Wharton & Co. were up early. From the little cuddy of the Aloha the fellows on deck could hear the deep, resonant snore of Billy Bunter. Bunter was not turning out yet. Even the thought of treasure could not draw the Owl of the Remove from his bunk at an early hour. There were many drawbacks, in Bunter's opinion, to this vacation in the South Seas. But there was at least one advantage, there was no rising bell in the morning.

Bob Cherry put his hands to his mouth, making a trumpet of them, and shouted:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You feller cook! You show a leg lively, you feller Talupa."

The juniors had already fallen into the way of using the "beche-de-mer" English, the general language of the South Seas, to the Kanakas who manned the Aloha.

"Yes, sar! Feller Talupa he comee."

And the Tonga Islander, who was cook on the Aloha, turned out of the caboose to receive his orders from the "white marsters."

"You cookee breakfast plenty quick," said Bob.

"Yes, sar!"

Harry Wharton looked out seaward.

Across the line of barrier reefs, where the Pacific creamed in lines of white foam, the great ocean could be seen, stretching away apparently to infinitude.

The island of Caca lay solitary in the waste of waters, far from any other land, far from the track of trade. The juniors might have fancied that that fertile isle was the only land in the wide world and themselves and the brown-skinned crew of the schooner the only inhabitants.

Not a sail, not a blur of smoke, not a native canoe, appeared on the boundless spaces of the ocean.

He looked to the shore again.

The Aloha was anchored in the lagoon on the eastern side of the island. The western side, beyond the hills, was inhabited, as the juniors knew from Tom Redwing's chart, by cannibal tribes. But as far as the eye could reach there was no sign of human life.

Of other life there were plenty of signs. Innumerable crabs crawled along the coral on the beach. Many-coloured birds could be seen fitting among the trees as the sun rose higher, and their whistling could be heard on the schooner. Sea-gulls winged through the air, incessantly calling. In the bush by the stream that flowed into the lagoon wild pigs were stirring from their lairs. Insects had awakened in myriads;

butterflies, inches in extent, fluttered in the sunshine.

"Looking for the giddy cannibals?" asked Bob.

Wharton shook his head.

"There was no sign of them on this side of the island when we landed yesterday," he said. "I was thinking of—"

"Soames?"

"Yes."

"He's gone," said Vernon-Smith, "and a good riddance to him!"

Wharton was staring hard at the shelving beach, fifty yards away from the schooner.

He was wondering what had become of Soames, Mr. Vernon-Smith's valet on the yacht that had brought the schoolboys out from England, and mutineer and sea-lawyer on board the schooner which the millionaire had provided for the juniors.

At long last the tables had been turned on the desperado, and Soames, disarmed and powerless, had plunged into the lagoon at night, and Wharton had caught a glimpse of him swimming for the beach. But he had glimpsed also the fin of a shark.

As he looked over the side now he could see the "fish-sharks" groping along the coral bottom for their prey, and, nearer the surface, the "tiger" sharks, swimming, wary, watchful, ravenous. Soames had dared their terrible teeth in making his escape from the schooner.

"Ten to one he's gone for good!" said Frank Nugent, shuddering a little as a shark glided below the rail of the Aloha.

"It doesn't matter much, anyhow," said the Bounder. "He's disarmed now, and we are armed; he can't do any more mischief. We shall have to keep an eye open for him on the island, that's all."

Harry Wharton took the binoculars that had belonged to Captain Lennox,

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the skipper of the Aloha. Skipper, and mate, and bo'sun of the schooner had met their fate at the hand of the desperado sea-lawyer, and the Greyfriars juniors were "on their own" now on the Aloha.

Wharton turned the glasses on the beach.

The dazzling sand and coral, the crawling crabs, the buzzing insects, rushed into near and clear view in the glasses.

From the lapping sea, up the slope of the shelving sand, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove picked up tracks on the beach by the aid of the powerful glasses. Track after track, in the soft sand and coral, pounded almost to powder by the waves.

"Soames escaped!" he said.

Wharton hardly knew whether to feel relieved or not.

It was terrible to think of even the unscrupulous, desperate sea-lawyer torn by the jaws of tiger sharks. But if he had escaped he was a constant menace to the schoolboy treasure-hunters when they came to land on the island and search for the buried pearls.

But the track in the sand proved beyond question that someone had dragged himself from the water and tramped up the shelving beach to the palm-trees beyond. And it could only have been Soames.

The Bounder took the glasses and gazed through them, and nodded.

"That settles it," he said. "He escaped the sharks, and he's alive on the island."

"He can't hurt us now," said Johnny Bull. "We've got the revolvers, and we know how to use them. Now he's not got a pistol we can handle him easily enough, if he shows up. The Kanakas will obey our orders, too. They'd collar him at a word from us."

"That's so," assented Wharton. "I'm glad he escaped, villain as he is. We shall have to be watchful that's all."

"Breakfast him ready sar!" said the Tonga Islander.

And the juniors sat down to breakfast on the deck of the Aloha while the sun climbed higher in the cloudless sky and the tropical heat of the day grew more and more intense.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Does Not Go!

"I SAY, you fellows." Billy Bunter rolled out of the companion and blinked round in the sunlight through his big spectacles.

The Greyfriars juniors had finished their breakfast, and made their preparations for going ashore, when Bunter turned out.

Wharton was speaking to Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman. It was necessary for at least one trustworthy man to remain on board the Aloha during the absence of the treasure-seekers. The Kanaka seamen could be trusted to obey orders so long as a "white marster" was on board to give them; that was all. Had Soames, from the shore, seen her left to the Kanakas by themselves, he could have returned and resumed his sway, even unarmed.

"You'll stay on board, Dance, and keep your eyes open," said Wharton. "The Kanakas will play up so long as there's a white man here."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Dance.

"Soames isn't likely to show up again, but if he should—"

Ben Dance's eyes gloamed.

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"I wish he would, sir," he answered. "I reckon I'd deal with that sea-lawyer short and sharp. If I'd had my way last night, he'd have been knocked on the head while we had him."

Wharton smiled.

Ben Dance was an honest and kind-hearted man in his way, but he had learned rough-and-ready methods in sailing with Black Peter, the one-time black-bird and desperado of the Pacific.

"I've got a belaying-pin ready for his skull if he shows up, sir," said Dance. "That's all right, sir. I ain't worrying about Soames. If he knows when he's well off, he'll keep clear of our hawse. But you young gentlemen want to keep a watch out when you're ashore. I ain't afraid of Soames, but I'm thinking of that half-caste, Silvio Xero."

"Silvio is most likely hundreds of miles from here," said Harry.

Dance shook his head.

"You don't know that half-caste, sir," he answered. "He killed Black Peter for the pearls, and he's after them, like a dog that's got his teeth into a bone and won't let go. Silvio knows that the pearls are on Caca, and my belief is that he is around."

"You think that he headed for the island?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I'm sure of it, sir."

"What could he do here without the chart?" said Tom Redwing. "He can know nothing of what happened on the schooner, and he will expect to find us a well-armed party, if he knows we're here. And without the chart he cannot search for the pearls."

"Jest as you said, sir, he knows nothing of what happened on the schooner, and so he don't know that you pitched the treasure chart into the sea when that Soames got the upper hand of us," said Ben Dance. "He will reckon on getting the chart away from us."

"Redwing's made a copy of it; but Silvio won't get hold of that in a hurry," said Bob Cherry. "We can handle him, if he shows up."

"I ain't so sure of that sir," said Dance, shaking his head again. "He's a demon, that half-caste is; and he will be armed to the back teeth, and you may lay to it that he will shoot you down from the bush if he gets half a chance."

"We'll be careful, of course," said Harry.

"The carefulness will be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh reassuringly.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter. We're just off, fatty," said Bob. "Leave some grub for us when we get back."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Ben Dance's eyes turned uneasily towards the shore. It was evident that the wooden-legged seaman feared that Silvio, the half-caste, might be already on the island, watching from the cover of the bush for the schoolboy treasure-seekers. It seemed unlikely enough to Harry Wharton & Co., but they had seen enough of the ferocious half-caste to realise the necessity of keeping on their guard.

"I say, you fellows, I'm coming ashore, you know," said Bunter.

"Jump into the boat, then," said Bob.

"I haven't had any grub yet."

"You want us to wait while you grub?" asked Bob, with a grin.

"Certainly. I shan't be more than an hour or so," said Bunter cheerfully. "Where's the cook? Where's that black scoundrel? Talupa?"

"Get into the boat, you fellows," said Harry.

"Wait for me!" bawled Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Do you think I'm coming ashore without my breakfast?" roared Bunter in great indignation.

"Ass!"

"Talupa! Where's that black rascal of a cook? You feller Talupa, you show a leg, or I'll knock seven bells out of you!" shouted Bunter.

"Yes, sar! Me comey, sar!"

"Get my breakfast, you black beast!" snarled Bunter.

"Yes, sar! Plenty quick, sar!"

"You'd better be quick, if you don't want your black hide tanned!" snapped the Owl of the Remove.

"Yes, sar!"

Bunter glared at the Tonga Islander. He was not likely to forget that under Soames' rule he had been made "cook's boy," and that Talupa had led him a dog's life. Bunter had the upper hand now, and it was Talupa's turn to lead a dog's life. As the black cook went forward Bunter strode after him and aimed a hefty kick.

"Chuck that, Bunter, you fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Rats!"

And Billy Bunter put all his beef into a tremendous kick, which would certainly have damaged Talupa had it landed.

But Talupa dodged in time.

He was quick enough to escape, but Bunter was not quick enough to stop the terrific kick, which had already started on its way.

His foot flew into the air, and, meeting with no resistance, flew on; and Bunter sat down suddenly on the deck.

Bump!

"Yarooooh!" roared Bunter as he landed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!" roared Bunter. "Oh dear! I'm hurt! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

There was a cackle of laughter from the Kanaka seamen. Talupa grinned as he dodged down into the caboose. Billy Bunter scrambled up and glared round him with a wrathful glare.

"You cackling idiots!" he howled. "What is there to cackle at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now Bunter's done his funny turn, let's get going," said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, you've got to wait for me," howled Bunter. "I'm not coming ashore hungry, I can tell you; and I'm not sticking here—see?"

"Bunter had better come," said Bob, with a wink to his comrades. "Buck up, Bunter! Dance thinks that half-caste Silvio is on the island."

"Eh?"

"Waiting for a chance to pot us from the bush. He couldn't possibly miss a target a couple of yards wide, so he would be bound to give you the first shot. We really want you this time."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He blinked at the juniors and blinked at the island. The idea of the ferocious Silvio lurking in the bush, with a watchful eye and a ready rifle, seemed to take away, all of a sudden, Bunter's desire to go ashore.

"I can't come till I've had my breakfast," he said. "You can't expect it. Don't be selfish, Cherry. Look here, you fellows can get off if you like, and I'll come later, when I've had a feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With Bunter's permission—which was really not needed—Harry Wharton & Co. got off in the whaleboat. Billy Bunter devoted his attention to the important subject of breakfast, and Ben Dance kept watch on deck, while the



As Talupa went forward, Bunter strode after him and aimed a hefty kick, which would certainly have damaged the black cook had it landed. But Talupa dodged in time, and Bunter's foot, meeting with no resistance, flew on; and the fat junior sat down suddenly on the deck. Bump! "Yaroooooh!" (See Chapter 2.)

Kanaka seamen lolled and sprawled in idleness, and chewed betel-nut, or smoked trade tobacco. And Harry Wharton & Co., with excited faces and beating hearts, pulled across the shining waters of the lagoon, and ran the whaleboat ashore on the glistening sands of the treasure island.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Skull in the Bush!

"AND now for the chart!" said Bob.

The whaleboat was beached high and dry, and as a further precaution the oars were taken out of her, and carried away. Harry Wharton & Co. stopped under the nodding palms at a little distance from the beach. There they gathered round Tom Redwing.

The search for the treasure was beginning in earnest at last, and the juniors were keenly excited. It had looked, at one time, as if the treasure would fall into the hands of Soames, and the schoolboy treasure-seekers would be marooned on the lonely isle where they had come to seek for Black Peter's cache. But all seemed plain sailing now. Soames, an unarmed fugitive, had disappeared; and although the juniors paid some heed to Dance's misgiving that the half-caste Silvio might be on the island, they did not really expect to see anything of the man with the earrings. The only real obstacle in the way was the fact that Redwing had flung Black Peter's chart, engraved on the disc of toak, into the Pacific, to save it from Soames. But the copy he had made from memory was a good one—exact or

almost exact—and the chums of the *Remove* had every hope that it would guide them to the hidden cache.

"Trot it out, old bean," said Frank Nugent.

Redwing spread the paper, on which he had made the copy of the chart, on a flat rock.

The juniors scanned it eagerly.

Caca Island was carefully drawn, the whole coastline marked, as they remembered it in the original chart. The lagoon, guarded by the lines of reefs; Shark Bay on the South Side; Pirate Point on the north; the line of hills running from north to south, with the Peak at the north, and the volcano at the south end; the stream that flowed down from the slopes of the Peak; the "pae-pae-hao" on the bank of the stream; the great head-shaped rock across the stream called the Kanaka's Head—all the details they remembered were there. And along the stream sprawled the word "CACHE," with a cross over each letter.

What the five crosses implied they did not know; but they could easily guess that each cross indicated some sign that was to be found, guiding to the cache.

"I believe you've got it exact, old chap," said the Bounder. "So far as I remember the chart, this is the same thing over again."

Redwing nodded, with a thoughtful look.

"If there's any error it's only a slight one," he said. "But it may not be easy. Anyhow, it's clear that we have to pass the pae-pae yonder, and start from the left bank of the stream."

"Let's get to it," said the Bounder.

And the juniors, leaving the oars of the whaleboat concealed among the

palms till their return, walked across to the bank of the sandy, shallow stream that flowed into the lagoon.

There was thick herbage along the stream, with patches of coconut palms, and larger trees from which hung clustering lianas. Somewhere on the bank, they felt certain was the first clue to the cache of pearls. On the schooner, while they talked it over, it had not seemed a very difficult task to pick up the signs, whatever they were. But on the ground itself the matter was difficult enough.

There could be little doubt that the line of crosses marked the path to the treasure. Black Peter could scarcely have intended them to mark anything else; and only on that supposition was there a clue to the cache at all.

But what were the signs?

The juniors examined the barks they passed, with the idea that crosses might be cut in the bark. But there was nothing to be seen of anything of the kind.

The way lay roughly up the stream, the chart told them. But that was of little use.

For some hours the juniors searched and scanned, till at last, in the heat of noon, they took a rest.

They had brought lunch with them, and they gathered ripe coconuts and bananas close at hand to supplement the fare. The water from the stream was clear and fresh and cool, and all they needed. Two or three thick-branched trees, looped with clinging lianas, and backed by thick bush that grew between them and the stream, afforded a grateful shade from the blaze of the tropical sun. From where they sat they could

see the schooner in the distance, anchored out in the lagoon, and the whaleboat drawn up on the dazzling beach. Round about them, many-coloured parrots cackled, hardly heeding the juniors, and the innumerable wild birds in the island woods were in full song.

"Treasure or no treasure, it's ripping here!" said Bob Cherry as he detached a banana from a ripe bunch.

"The ripfulness is terrific," declared Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "The warmth is remindful of my esteemed native land."

"It does rather remind me of our trip to Bhanipur," said Bob, with a grin. "It's a bit over-done, I think. What price an ice-cream now, you fellows?"

"It looks to me as if this is going to be a longer hunt than we fancied," said Harry Wharton.

"What's the odds so long as you're 'appy?" said Bob. "Lots of worse places than a South Sea island."

"I wish your jolly old uncle had made it a bit clearer, Reddy," said the Bounder.

Redwing nodded.

"Peter Bruce know, of course, that the chart might be spied upon or stolen," he said. "He did not want the clue to stare anyone in the face who glanced at the chart. The clue is there right enough—it's only a question of picking out those five signs—whatever they are."

"But what are they?" asked Nugent.

"Ask me another," said Redwing, with a smile. "We shall have to find out."

"Oh, we'll find out all right!" said Bob. "Who says more coconuts?"

"More coconuts," yawned Nugent, half dozing with his back to a tree trunk.

"Climb up and get a few, then."

Nugent grinned.

"I'll watch you climb, old chap."

"Slacker!"

"This is the climate for slacking," said Nugent. "It's lovely here, but I think a fellow would grow jolly lazy if he lived here long."

"The natives are lazy enough, that's certain," said Bob. "And I believe the beach-combers aren't far behind them in that line. I've still got a little energy left over from Greyfriars, though."

And Bob jumped up cheerfully.

Climbing the coconut palms was a difficult feat; but it was easy to knock down the nuts with a missile. Bob looked round for a chunk of coral.

"Look out for your nappers!" he said.

"Fathead! Get a bit farther off!" said Johnny Bull. "You might crack a chap's head with a falling coconut."

"You're all right, old man—nothing in your head to damage."

"Ass!"

Bob Cherry grinned cheerily, and moved a little farther off, to a tall palm that bore clusters of nuts. He swung up the lump of coral, and sent it whizzing at the nearest cluster.

Plop, plop, plop! came the sound of the falling nuts, whizzing to the ground, some of them cracking open with the concussion. One or two fell

in the open, the rest in the bush behind the trees under which the juniors were encamped.

Bob Cherry plunged into the thick bush to sort them out. Bush and creepers, and thick, juicy lianas twined together, in an almost impenetrable mass. Bob forced his way in, here and there slashing through a juicy stem with his knife, to clear the way. He tossed out nut after nut as he picked them up.

Then, all of a sudden, he came out of the bush with a leap, and a cry on his lips.

"Oh!"

"What—"

Wharton leaped to his feet at once, his hand on the automatic at his belt. "A snake?" asked the Bounder, revolver in hand.

Bob shook his head. His ruddy face had gone white for the moment. The juniors—all slackness gone now—hurried to him.

They could see that Bob had seen something in the bush—something that had startled him strangely.

"What was it, Bob?" asked Nugent.

Bob Cherry caught his breath.

"A skull!" he answered.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The First Clue!

"A SKULL!"

The juniors repeated the word in startled tones.

Bob Cherry was breathing rather quickly. The strange and grisly sight in the thick bush had given him a shock.

"I—I was picking up a coconut, and my hand touched it," he said, in a low voice. "It—it was horrid! Who'd have thought—"

The juniors stared at the thick, green mass of the bush. The discovery of the skull was startling enough, made suddenly; but there was, after all, nothing surprising in it.

The eastern side of Caca Island, now uninhabited, had once been populated by natives who held life cheap. The population had been cleared off by Black Peter and his kidnapping crew, save those who had fled to the hills, and probably fallen victims to the cannibal tribes that dwelt beyond, on the western side of Caca. It was probable that many a man had fallen in savage warfare in the old days in the spot that was now so peaceful and solitary.

The colour returned to Bob Cherry's cheeks.

"It was a bit of a shock," he said. "But I dare say there are lots of skulls about the island, if a fellow rooted after them. I think I'll leave the rest of the nuts there. I don't want to see that thing again!"

"Hold on!" said Redwing quietly.

"You don't want to see it, Reddy?"

"No. But—"

"But what?" asked the Bounder, seeing at once that the discovery of the skull had started some thought in the mind of the sailor's son.

"We are looking for a clue," said Tom quietly. "From what I've heard, I'm afraid my uncle was a rather desperate old character. He seems to have had a tough reputation all through the South Seas. It would be like what I've heard of him to leave such a clue."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"Reddy, old man, you've got it! Ten

to one it's what we've looked for. I'm jolly well going to see!"

"Likely enough," said Wharton, with a nod, and shivering a little.

Well the juniors realised that such a ghastly clue would be quite in keeping with the grim, ruthless character of the old South Sea desperado.

Bob Cherry led the way back into the bush. In a couple of minutes the juniors were looking down at the skull.

It gleamed white from the thick, tangled green at their feet.

There it had lain for many a long year, bleached white, and the creepers had grown round and over it, and the thick bush hidden it from the light of the sun.

It was not a pleasant sight; but the juniors did not allow that to affect them. They were there to search for the clue to Black Peter's treasure.

The Bounder, who had shown more indifference than the others, stooped and cleared the thick grass and twigs and lianas away—a carpet of vegetation on the fertile soil. He uttered an exclamation:

"The whole thing's here!"

"The skeleton?" asked Nugent in a low voice.

"Yes."

"Don't disturb it," said Redwing. "The position may tell us something, if that is Black Peter's clue."

"Right."

With their knives the juniors hacked away the vegetation, till the bones of the man long dead and gone were revealed to the view.

It was the skeleton of a man of massive frame, preserved intact, unbroken, save for a part of the skull, where—as they could guess—a bullet had crashed. Of scientific knowledge of the subject the juniors had little or none, but they thought they could be sure that it was the skeleton of a native, not of a white man. Long, long ago, the hapless man had been shot down there, and lay where he had fallen, and his whitened bones remained to tell of his fate.

The skeleton lay on its back, and strangely, oddly, both arms were drawn above the skull, as if the dead man had lain with his arms stretched as far above his head as he could reach. The Bounder eyed the grisly relic thoughtfully.

"It's the clue," he said.

"How do you make that out for certain, Smithy?"

"Look at the way he's lying. He never fell in that position when he was shot down," said Herbert Vernon-Smith. "He must have been placed with his arms stretched above his head in that way."

"But, why?"

"To point," said the Bounder quietly. Wharton gave a start.

Now that he observed it, he could see that the skeleton was lying in a line parallel with the course of the stream, the feet down-stream, the skull towards the source. The skeleton arms extended beyond the head pointed up-stream. And up-stream, as the juniors knew must be the case, lay the path to the hidden treasure.

"That's it," said Wharton, in a low voice. "The way lies up the stream—and that poor fellow is pointing it out to us!"

Redwing shuddered.

He could not help but have a grateful memory of his uncle, who had remembered him and sent him the treasure-chart by the hand of Ben Dance, when he lay dying under the thrust of Silvio's knife. But it was terrible to think that

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his uncle, a man of his own blood, was capable of deeds like these.

In infancy he had a recollection of the man—black-bearded, grim, silent, forbidding, yet a quiet and law-abiding man when he was in his own law-abiding land.

In the South Seas, it was clear, he had been strangely changed. All through the Pacific, from Honolulu to Nuka-Hiva and the Paubotus, Black Peter was remembered as a hard and desperate man, and many, doubtless, had rejoiced when he met his fate at the hands of Silvio Xero. A feeling almost of sickness came over Redwing as he looked at that grisly relic of the man who must have fallen by Black Peter's ruthless hand.

And why? Redwing remembered what Dance had told of the five black "boys" who had gone ashore with Peter Bruce when the pearls were buried, and who had never returned.

This was one of them, beyond question. And the others? Their fate had been similar, and somewhere on Caca the thick green underwoods hid their bones.

Redwing stepped out of the shadowy bush into the sunlight. He wiped the perspiration from his brow.

The juniors followed him in silence.

They had found the first clue to the treasure, they were assured of that now. Not for nothing had the old desperado laid out the body of the man he had slain, with the outstretched hands pointing.

"By gad!" muttered the Bounder. "He was a card, and no mistake! Something like the old buccaneers, I fancy."

"A tough old character," said Bob Cherry. He clapped Redwing on the shoulder. "Buck up, old bean! No good letting it get on your nerves, you know!"

Redwing's lips twitched. "I'm half-sorry we came after the treasure," he said, in a low voice. "It almost seems to me as if a curse must be on it."

"That's all rot, old chap! The treasure won't do anybody any good, lying buried on a Pacific island; and it will do lots of good in the right hands."

"Yes; but it's terrible!" said Redwing, his voice shaking. "We know now what other clues to look for."

"How do you mean?"

"You remember what Dance told us—five black men came ashore with my uncle when he buried the pearls. Not one of them returned to the ketch. According to the chart, there are five clues, one after another—marked by crosses on the chart—leading to the treasure. We have found the first; when we find the rest we shall have found the five men who came ashore with Black Peter."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

The Greyfriars juniors looked at one another.

They knew that Redwing was right. "He was a dashed old ruffian, and no mistake!" muttered Bob Cherry uneasily. "But we didn't come here to be squeamish, you fellows; we're going on."

"Yes, rather!"

"We've got our bearings now," said the Bounder. "As we thought, the way lies up the stream towards the hills; and that's our way."

The discovery had given the juniors a shock; and they could not think of the grim old man, in whose footsteps they were treading, without something like terror. But they had, at least, found what they had been seeking—the first of the succession of clues to the cache of pearls. A dead man's hands pointed the way they were to follow, and they started again on the quest with renewed hope.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Has His Way!

"DANCE!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Tell the Kanakas to lower the boat for me!"

Billy Bunter rapped out the order in commanding tones.

BLACK PETER'S CHART—



—WHICH PROVIDES THE CLUE TO HIS HIDDEN TREASURE ON CACA ISLAND!

It was the place of Ben Dance, as a common sort of person, infinitely inferior to William George Bunter, to jump to instant obedience.

But Ben Dance didn't.

Perhaps he did not realise that he was a common sort of person, bound to obey unquestionably the orders of so superior a person as William George Bunter.

At all events, he did not stir.

He sat where he was, in the shadow of the deck-house, chewing stolidly a quid of tobacco, his wooden leg stretched out before him. He eyed Billy Bunter thoughtfully, not disrespectfully, but indifferently.

"Deaf?" hooted Bunter.

"No, sir."

"Well, then, you heard what I said."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"I'm waiting for the boat!" said Bunter, with dignity.

Dance shook his head.

"No orders, sir," he answered.

"What?" roared Bunter.

"No orders, sir."

"Ain't I giving you orders?" demanded Bunter.

Dance permitted himself the relaxation of a grin. Then he stolidly resumed the chewing of his plug.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, red with wrath. Besides the whaleboat, now beached on the shore, the Aloha had a little gig slung up to the davits. That was the boat that Bunter now required, but which, apparently, he was not to have. That his lofty will and pleasure should be resisted by a common sailorman was extremely irritating to Billy Bunter. His own view was that the Greyfriars juniors ought to have elected him skipper of the Aloha; which would have happened, of course, had the election gone by merit. But Bunter's merits, as usual, had been passed over regardless.

"I'm going ashore!" hooted Bunter. "Think I'm going to stick on this stuffy little tub all day without stretching my legs! It's all gammon about that half-caste fellow being on the island. Utter rot! The fellows just wanted to leave me out."

Dance grinned again. He did not doubt that the chums of Greyfriars had not exactly yearned for the society of William George Bunter. He was not yearning for it himself. Nobody ever seemed to understand what a fascinating fellow William George was, excepting William George.

"Well, I'm going," said Bunter. "Got that?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Bunter had loafed about all the morning, and eaten an enormous dinner, and taken an extensive nap after it. Now he wanted to run ashore. If the fellows hadn't been utter beasts they would, of course, have come back for him in the whaleboat just when he was ready. But they were beasts; Bunter did not expect them to be anything else. So he was going ashore in the other boat.

"Lower that boat!" he snapped.

"No orders, sir," said Dance stolidly.

"You silly owl! Do you think that silly chump Wharton is the only fellow to give orders on the Aloha?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Well, I'm giving you orders now!" hooted Bunter. "I'm fed up with this, and I'm going ashore—see?"

"Tain't safe for you, sir," said Dance. "The young gentlemen are out of sight, and you may not be able to find them."

"Rubbish!"

"You may run into danger."

"Rot!"

"Well, I'm waiting for Master Wharton's orders," said Dance.

"You're a cheeky ruffian!"

"Thanky kindly, sir."

"And a low common sailor!" roared Bunter.

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

"Mean to say you won't order those Kanakas to lower that boat?"

"Jest that, sir."

"Then I'll order them," said Bunter.

And the fat junior turned to the lolling Kanakas forward. He had picked up enough South-Sea English to address them.

"Here, you feller Kanaka, you lower boat plenty quick, washy-washy for shore!" rapped out Bunter.

The lazy Kanakas blinked at him, and one of them looked inquiringly at Ben Dance. The wooden-legged seaman shook his head. Kalashti, the Kanaka, settled down again to loll.

"You feller Kanaka hear me?" roared Bunter. "You lower boat plenty quick, or I knock seven bells out of you!"

The Kanakas grinned, but did not otherwise heed William George Bunter. As for knocking seven bells out of them, Bunter did not think of venturing to that length.

"Dance, you cheeky rotter, I'm going ashore!" said Bunter. "I want that boat lowered and a crew to row me ashore!"

"No orders, sir."

"You wooden-legged idiot!"

Ben Dance looked at Bunter. He was a respectful and good-tempered man. But his look warned Bunter that he had better leave off calling him names.

The fat junior turned away with an angry snort.

He wanted to go ashore, and he was absolutely determined now to go ashore, to show Dance that he could do as he liked. As the Kanakas did not heed him, he went to look for Talupa, the Tonga Island cook.

The cook, so insolent while Soames was lord and master of the Aloha, had been reduced to servility now. He had lorded it over Bunter while he had the chance, and now Bunter was lorded it over him, and repaying with interest all the kicks he had received. Bunter glared through his big spectacles into the galley.

"You feller Talupa!"

"Yes, sar!"

"Get on deck, you black beast!"

"Yes, sar!"

The Tonga Islander came obediently on deck.

Bunter pointed to the little gig.

"Get that boat into the water for me. I'll help."

"Yes, sar!"

The Tonga Islander's eyes gleamed. The tide was running out now, and the current was strong off the shore. If Billy Bunter ventured away from the schooner in the little gig, he was not likely to be able to row to the shore; he was much more likely to be swept out into the dangerous channel among the coral reefs. Kicks and cuffs and fancy names had not made the Tonga Islander love Bunter. He was quite keen to see him start on a voyage that would, in all probability, land him into the jaws of the sharks. Bunter, of course, had no idea of the cook's thoughts. His belief was that he had bullied the Tonga Islander into a proper state of submission.

It was easy enough to drop the little gig into the placid water, but Bunter contrived to let slip a fall, and the gig shipped a good deal of water as it slid into the lagoon. Bunter blinked down at it.

"Get in and bale that out, you black beast!" he said.

"Yes, sar."

The Tonga Islander meekly obeyed. Ben Dance came stumping across the deck, with a frowning brow.

"Look here, sir—" he began.

"You shut up!" rapped out Bunter.

"The tide's turned, sir, and you can't handle a boat," said the wooden-legged seaman. "I don't rightly know as whether Master Wharton would want me to lay hands on you—"

"Why, you—you cheeky beast!"

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gaped Bunter, greatly enraged at the idea of a common seafaring man laying hands on him.

Dance eyed him thoughtfully.

"I ain't got any orders," he said. "Without orders, I ain't taking it on me to stop you. But I warn you that it ain't safe for you."

"Mind your own business."

"Can you handle a boat?" asked Dance.

Bunter sneered.

"Better than any other fellow on the schooner, and chance it," he answered. "Better than you can, you cheeky rotter."

He turned to the Tonga Islander.

"You're going to row me ashore, Tapula. Savvee?"

"Plenty savvee, sar."

Ben Dance stood in doubt. The Tonga Islander could have rowed the gig ashore easily enough, in spite of the turn of the powerful tide. But it was not safe ashore for Bunter, Dance knew that. Harry Wharton & Co. were out of sight among the tropical vegetation of the island, and Bunter was not the fellow to find them. He was the fellow to get lost, and give the other fellows endless trouble in consequence. Dance was strongly tempted to pitch him down the companion-way neck and crop.

But, after all, Bunter was his own master. Had Harry Wharton left instructions for him to be kept on board, Dance would have kept him, heedless of his objections. But Wharton had left no orders; he had, indeed, probably forgotten the existence of the Owl of the Remove. Dance did not feel that he could stop the fat junior by force.

And as Bunter refused to listen to advice, the wooden-legged seaman finally decided that he could do nothing but leave him to his own devices. He had done all he could.

He returned to the shady side of the deck-house and sat down again, and resumed chewing his quid. His business was to keep a close watch on the shore for any sign of danger, and to that business he attended, leaving Bunter to do as he chose.

Bunter stepped down into the gig, the Tonga Islander standing in it and holding on to the schooner. Placid as the lagoon still looked, there was a strong tug of the tide, and the Aloha was rocking at her cable. The little gig, floating beside the schooner, rocked also, and seemed to seek to fly away from the vessel. But it was held, so far, by the Tonga Islander. Bunter sat down in the stern.

"You feller Talupa, you sit down and washy-washy for shore," he rapped out.

The black cook did not reply.

Only the grip of his feet kept the gig from darting away on the tide, and all of a sudden that grip was withdrawn.

Talupa, clinging to the side of the schooner, lifted his feet from the little craft rocking underneath.

In the twinkling of an eye, the gig shot away from the Aloha as if a giant's hand had dragged at it.

Before Bunter knew what was happening, he was six or seven yards away from the schooner, rocking wildly. Tapula, clinging to the ship's side, grinned after him.

For the moment Bunter was not alarmed, only angry.

"You black idiot!" he bawled.

"White marster leave Talupa on ship," grinned the Tonga Islander. "White marster comey back for Talupa. Talupa row um shore."

Bunter grasped an oar to tool the gig back to the schooner. Then he made the discovery that it was impossible for

him to make an inch of headway against the strong tide pouring out of the lagoon and gurgling among the coral reefs seaward.

"Ow! You black fool!" gasped Bunter. "Swim out to me—do you hear?"

Talupa, as a matter of fact, did not hear; Bunter had already been swept out of hearing. Not that he would have heeded. He climbed back on the schooner, and dived into the caboose, with the conviction in his fussy mind that he was done for ever with that particular "white marster."

"Ow! Help!" yelled Bunter.

He was alarmed now. As a boatman, Bunter was about as good as he was at anything else. He could have managed a boat on a pond. Managing a little skiff on a strong tide was quite a different proposition, as he discovered at once. The gig fairly bowled along on the tide, and as Bunter's terrified glance swept round, he was amazed and alarmed to see the schooner already small in the distance.

"Help! Yarooop! Help! Murder! Help!" roared Bunter.

His voice did not reach anywhere near the schooner. Two or three of the Kanaka seamen had been watching his departure, grinning. They had not the slightest doubt that the fat junior had gone to his death, but it did not affect their cheery carelessness in any way. Whether Bunter or anyone else went to death or to life, was a matter of absolute indifference to the unthinking children of the South.

"Fat feller he make kai-kai for shark," Kalashti remarked to one of the Kanaka hands.

And the Kanaka seaman nodded, without stopping chewing his betel-nut.

And that was all the crew said or cared about the matter; excepting the Tonga cook, who had a personal reason for feeling interested, inasmuch as he detested Bunter. The Tonga cook, greasy and grinning in the caboose, rejoiced, until in ten minutes or so he forgot about the matter.

The only man on the Aloha who would not have been indifferent was Ben Dance, and he was unaware of what had happened. Sitting in the shade of the deck-house watching the shore, he did not see what had happened. He supposed that the Tonga cook had got into the gig with Bunter, in which case the fat junior would have been quite safe; Tapula could have rowed him ashore easily enough.

It was about ten minutes later that Dance, who expected the gig to come into his line of vision as it made for the shore, rose to his feet to glance round for it. He supposed that the Tonga man was making a wide sweep in the gig, to land further along the shore, in order to avoid pulling direct against the outgoing tide. Still, he thought he might as well see just where the gig was. He stared round, and was unable to see it—either on the lagoon or along the sun-blazing shore.

He puckered his brows, and shaded his eyes with his hand, to stare through the sunny glare. Then he called forward.

"You feller Kalashti."

"Yes, sar."

"You see um gig?"

"No, sar."

"You savvee where um go?"

"Um reefs, sar," said the Kanaka calmly.

"Into the reefs?" exclaimed Dance, in alarm. "What the thunder was that fool Talupa doing to get into the reefs?"



Bob Cherry led the way into the bush, and in a couple of minutes his chums were looking down at the skull. "Why, the whole thing's here!" exclaimed the Bounder. "The skeleton?" asked Nugent in a low voice. "Yes." "Don't disturb it, then!" said Redwing. "The position may tell us something, if that is Black Peter's clue!" (See Chapter 4.)

"Talupa him no go, sar," said Kalashti.

"What?" roared Dance.

"Talupa him cookee in um caboose."

Dance stared at the Kanaka. For the first time it dawned upon him that Bunter had gone alone in the boat. He strode along to the caboose. There was the cook, humming an island chant as he scoured pots, already forgetful of his part in the tragedy of Bunter. Dance's red and angry face recalled it to his mind.

"You feller Talupa, why you no go washy-washy in boat?" roared the seaman.

"Fat marster Bunter tellee me stay ship," answered the Tonga man, fully convinced that Bunter would never live to contradict him.

"You fool, you let him go alone?"

"Talupa 'bey white marster."

Dance strode away, and Talupa's shining pot reflected a grinning black face.

The wooden-legged seaman stared across the lagoon seaward. There was no sign of the gig or Bunter. The tide had swept it far out of sight; and the chances were a hundred to one that the gig was already smashed on the coral rocks, and Bunter at the bottom. Dance scanned the sea with a fixed eye for several minutes. There was no other boat on the Aloha in which to follow and seek Bunter, even if he could have left the schooner—which he could not. Bunter had had his wilful way, and there was no help for him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Half-caste!

BILLY BUNTER had collapsed into the bottom of the gig.

He lay there palpitating with terror.

The little boat danced and rocked, and it swept on again.

on the water, and the speed with which it moved dazed and terrified the fat junior.

He had made a feeble attempt to row, and the oar had been torn from his grasp and swept away in the water. The other oar lay idly in the boat.

Almost fainting with terror, Bunter lay in the bottom of the little gig, giving himself up for lost.

The desertion of the Tonga Islander had been quite unexpected. After so many kicks and so much slanging the black man should have been tamed to such an extent as to be ready to feed out of hand, so to speak. That was Bunter's idea. Instead of which, the rascal had taken the first opportunity of serving Bunter an ill turn. Bunter could no more have managed the dancing skiff on the racing tide than he could have commanded a battleship. When he ventured a peep over the bobbing gunwale he glimpsed the Aloha, at a great distance, tiny to the view, across the expanse of the lagoon. But that movement on his part caused the gig to wallow dangerously, and he did not venture to look again. In a state of collapse, in the bottom of the little boat, Billy Bunter gave himself up to his doom.

The gig was being swept out to sea, and had there been a clear seaway Bunter would have gone adrift on the vast Pacific. But on the seaward side the lagoon was shut in by the long lines of coral reefs, and a narrow channel was the only outlet. That narrow channel was gorged by the out-flowing water, which raced, and rumbled, and roared among the rocks. The gig was carried on it like a cork.

Again and again Bunter felt the frail craft beneath him jar and tremble against a rock; but its very lightness

He dared not look over the gunwale again; he dared not move. Keeping quite still was the best thing he could have done, had he only known it. But it was sheer terror that kept him still. Had he been able to reflect, doubtless he would have repented that he had not listened to Ben Dance. But for his wilful obstinacy and folly he would have been safe now on the schooner. But he was incapable of thought now—capable only of feeling horribly afraid. Every plunge of the gig he expected to be the last. Yet the little craft still danced like a cork on the hurrying waters. Where he was going, how far he had gone, Bunter did not know. But he knew that he could not save himself, and that there was no one to save him, and he lay quivering with helpless funk.

It was a terrible situation, that might have scared a braver fellow than Bunter. The gig was now dancing in the narrow channel between the island shore and the razor-edged reefs, the channel by which Soames had brought the Aloha into the lagoon. A well-manned boat would have been in peril there; and Bunter was not even steering. It seemed to be by a series of miracles that the gig did not plunge gunwale under every second, and swamp. Sometimes it ran broadside on, and water washed over the side, drenching the fat junior. He did not think of baling, even when he lay in several inches of water. He did not think of anything. He lay paralysed with funk, incapable of thought or action.

But he became conscious at last that the motion of the gig was a little less violent. It was no longer dancing, threatening every moment to plunge beneath the water. Bunter at last ventured to raise his head and blink round dully through his wet spectacles.

Vaguely he saw that land was near; he had a dim impression that he had been swept far out to sea by this time. But a bunch of coconut palms nodded almost over the gig.

He sat up and wiped his spectacles, his teeth chattering. He blinked round him dazedly. The gig was twirling round on an eddy, and round Bunter was the circling shore of an inlet of the island. He did not realise it, but the gig, as it swept past the inlet, had been caught by an eddy and twirled like a cork into the inlet, missing the rocks by inches.

He blinked round him. The tide, racing down the channel from the lagoon met the tide that was going out from the inlet, and boiled and foamed in collision, with a thousand wild eddies. By a chance in a thousand an eddy had caught the gig and twirled it into the inlet, where the water was calmer. Bunter was now not a dozen yards from a shelving beach, on which his startled eyes discerned a large canoe drawn up out of reach of high tide, with several black men gathered about it. A man with a dark olive face, dressed in white man's clothes, stood on the beach, staring towards the gig, amazement on his face. The eddy was driving the gig right on to the beach.

Bunter had no time for thinking, even if he had been capable of thought in his terror. He sat, frozen with fear, while the gig dashed on to the shelving beach directly to the spot where the olive-skinned man in white ducks stood staring. Another eddy caught the gig when it was almost on the sand and twirled it away. There was a shout from the olive-skinned man, and the black men at the canoe came running down to the water's edge. Bunter did not hear or heed. There was a sudden crash as the gig was hurled by the eddy against a coral rock, and the next second the boat was smashing on the coral and Bunter was struggling blindly in the water.

He was conscious, the next minute, of a sinewy grasp, and of being dragged up and out of the water. He hardly knew what was happening to him. But his dizzy brain realised suddenly that he was no longer in the water; he was lying on his back in the shelving sand, with the fierce sun beating down on his face, blinding him as he opened his eyes. He groaned.

With an effort he sat up. He was drenched to the skin, but he did not heed it at the moment. He had been saved from the sea; two or three of the black men stood near him with water streaming down their bare limbs. They had plunged in at the olive-skinned man's order and dragged him out. He understood that. And the olive-skinned man stood regarding him with a strange expression. Even in those dazed moments there was something familiar about the man to Bunter's eyes; he knew that he had seen that olive face somewhere before.

He wiped his spectacles and jammed them on his fat little nose again. Then he had a clearer view of his rescuer.

A shudder ran through him.

Well he knew now the olive face, the gold ear-rings glistening in the dusky ears. The man who stood before him was the man he had seen in the canoe when Ben Dance had been rescued on the Pacific. It was Silvio Xero, the South Sea half-caste. The desperate rascal who had tracked Ben Dance to England, seeking Black Peter's chart—whom he had seen at Greyfriars, whom he had seen again on the Pacific, whom Dance had feared might have reached

the treasure island to contest the prize with the schoolboy treasure-seekers. The half-caste had saved his life, for undoubtedly Bunter would have gone down like a stone when the gig smashed on the rocks had not Silvio ordered his black crew to drag him out. But Bunter's heart almost died within him as he recognised the man.

"You!" he murmured.

Silvio smiled—a terrifying smile.

"You feller know me?" he asked.

"Yes," breathed Bunter.

"Silvio savee you plenty," smiled the half-caste. "Look-see, when um meet white man's yacht, see fat feller looking. You belong Aloha?"

"Yes."

"Where Aloha now?"

"In the lagoon."

"What name you come all alone in little boat?"

Bunter groaned dismally.

"I was going ashore and the tide caught me."

"Fat feller plenty fool."

Bunter made no reply to that. He sat and blinked at the half-caste, his fat face white with apprehension. The black, kinky-haired Solomon Islanders, Silvio's crew in his canoe, stood in a circle round him, eyeing him. They were muttering to one another, and Bunter caught the word "kai-kai." He blinked at the black, harsh, animal-like faces. Only too well he knew what "kai-kai" meant. He did not need telling that these savage brutes were cannibals.

Silvio waved the Solomon Islanders back. He sat down on a lump of coral, rolled a cigarette, and lighted it. As he smoked he watched Bunter's terrified face. It had been a surprise to the half-caste to see one of the Greyfriars party drifting alone in a boat, fairly into his hands. But it was a great satisfaction to him. He was on the treasure island, and he had in his possession the treasure chart, which, by a strange freak of fortune, he had picked up at sea. From a tree-top he had seen the schooner riding at anchor in the lagoon, a mile from the little inlet, when he had beached his canoe. Savagely resolute as he was, the half-caste knew that his position was a desperate one. He was single-handed, for he could not trust his cannibal crew with weapons. Only cunning and treachery could serve him against the numerous crew of the Aloha. Information of their movements and intentions was invaluable to him—and fortune had thrown Bunter into his hands.

The half-caste grinned through the smoke of his cigarette.

"You tell me," he said. "White feller on schooner look-see findee pearls on the island?"

Bunter nodded.

"No find?" asked Silvio.

"No."

"No can, without um chart," said Silvio, with a grin.

Bunter stared at him. How the half-caste knew that the treasure chart was lost was a mystery to Bunter.

Silvio grinned at his expression.

He groped in his pocket and drew out a disc of teak, which Bunter knew well. The fat junior's eyes grew large and round behind his spectacles as he recognised Black Peter's chart.

"Fat feller know 'um?" grinned Silvio.

"It's the chart!" gasped Bunter.

"Belong me now," grinned Silvio. And he slipped the treasure chart back into his pocket. "Pick him up in sea. What name treasure chart he come into sea?"

"Redwing threw it overboard!"

gasped Bunter, utterly amazed to see the chart in the possession of the half-caste. "We—we thought it was lost for good."

"Belong me now. What name Redwing he throw in sea?" asked the half-caste curiously. "You tell am lie. No throw overboard."

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"You tell me what name he throw overboard."

Bunter gasped out an explanation. The half-caste listened with the keenest attention while the fat junior told of Soames having seized the Aloha, and of Redwing dropping the chart into the sea to save it from the sea-lawyer. He understood at last how it was that the treasure chart had been found floating on the Pacific. But he was more interested to hear what had happened on board the Aloha.

"Soames? No savee Soames," he said. "Who Soames?"

"He was Mr. Vernon-Smith's servant," gasped Bunter. "He was sent on the schooner with us to take care of us, and he turned on us."

Silvio grinned.

"Want um pearls?" he asked.

"Yes, he was after the treasure."

"Where Soames now?"

Bunter explained further. The fat junior hardly realised that Silvio was drawing information from him for his own purposes. But in any case he would not have dared to refuse an answer. Only Silvio stood between him and a fate of which he dared not think.

The half-caste grinned with satisfaction.

"Soames, he done, he no good," he said contemptuously. "No flaid of Soames. And captain he gone?"

"Soames pitched him overboard one night."

"And mate?"

"Soames shot the mate and the boatswain."

Silvio chuckled. He had hoped to extract valuable information from his prisoner, and the information was turning out to be more valuable than he had dreamed.

"No captain, no mate, no bo'sun," he said. "Kanakas no good." He snapped his fingers scornfully. "No flaid Kanakas, no flaid Soames. Only boys on schooner. How many?"

"Seven, and Ben Dance."

"Wooden-leg feller he there?" said Silvio. "No flaid Ben Dance; he tremble he look-see Silvio. Ben Dance he no good. Seven boys—pah!" The half-caste snapped his fingers again. "All on schooner now?"

"Ben Dance is on the schooner, the others have gone ashore to look for the cache," answered Bunter.

"How look, without um chart?"

"Redwing remembered it enough to make a copy."

Silvio started a little. His dark face became darker with thought. But he grinned again. What he had learned from Bunter had filled the half-caste with confidence. He had feared an encounter with armed white men; but Soames' treachery on board the Aloha had made the way safe for him—or so he deemed. Ben Dance he disregarded, and the schoolboys were nothing to him. He remembered that Harry Wharton & Co. had handled him in far-off England, and taken from him the chart he had taken from Dance. But that was in a land very different from a lonely South Sea island. On the Island of Caca he was prepared to stalk the Greyfriars fellows and shoot them down like so many rabbits.

He rose from the coral rock and threw away the stump of his cigarette. Bunter

watched him examining his rifle and revolver. The half-caste was preparing for the fight for the treasure. Seven schoolboys were ashore hunting for the treasure with the copied chart. The look on the half-caste's dark face told

grass, in other places dotted with clumps of palms, and in others, again, tangled with high bush and laced lianas. In places, step by step the juniors had to slash their way with their knives. The bush was peopled by insects, buzzing incessantly, many of them stinging and biting. Treasure-seeking was fascinating enough, but it had its hardships. In the open the sun blazed down like a furnace; in the high bush the atmosphere was like an oven. Perspiration streamed down seven crimson faces.

And still the sign was not found, and the juniors stopped at last to rest under a banyan tree and examine the chart once more.

So far as any of them could recall, Tom Redwing's copy was an exact replica of the original chart. Certainly every indication that Black Peter had engraved on the teak with his knife had been reproduced in pen and ink by the sailorman's son.

But the juniors could not help thinking that some trivial error must have crept in—some error in direction, perhaps, of the line of crosses that had been marked over the letters of the

"We've seen nothing of him, at any rate," remarked Johnny Bull.

Redwing looked very thoughtful. "He wouldn't let us see him if he was here," he said. "More likely to keep in cover and watch for a chance of potting us from a distance. We want to keep a sharp look-out—especially when we're in the open."

"Oh, of course," assented Harry. "We have been keeping the sharp look-outfulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Fore-armed is fore-legged, as the English proverb says!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "My esteemed chums, there is much wisdom in proverbs," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh mildly. "A stitch in the side saves ninepence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. It was hot; but not too hot to roar when the Nabob of Bhanipur quoted English proverbs.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

The laughter under the banyan suddenly died away. The many stems of the banyan formed a sort of screen round the juniors as they rested round the parent trunk of the great tree. Outside the shade of the tree the ground was open, baking in the sun-blaze. Across the open space, from the high bush at a little distance, a figure advanced.

"Silvio!" breathed Wharton. "The half-caste!" Wharton's grip fastened on the automatic.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, their old enemy had appeared in sight. They knew him at a glance, with his olive skin, his glinting black eyes, and the gold ear-rings that glistened in the sun.

They sat without motion, in silence, staring from the screen of the many-stemmed banyan at the figure in the open sunlight.

The half-caste had not seen them yet—they could observe that much. But they guessed that the sound of their laughter had reached his ears, and that he knew that they were at hand. As he advanced, from the cover of the high bush his black eyes glinted round him searchingly, and he held his rifle ready for instant use.

So far as they could see, he was alone



Bunter what was in his mind—that not one member of the Greyfriars party would return alive to the Aloha, if Silvio Xero could prevent it. The half-caste, as he examined his firearms, was grinning with ferocious glee.

"I—I say"—Bunter's voice quavered—"you—you'll let me go now?"

Silvio seemed to have forgotten him, but as he glanced at him Bunter spoke. He shrugged his shoulders.

"You fat feller no good now," he said.

"I—I say——"
"You no talk."

The half-caste addressed the Solomon Islanders in their own tongue. Bunter's terrified ears caught the word kai-kai again. Of the rest Bunter understood no word, but he saw the savage grins of satisfaction on the black faces of the Malaita men. He gave a yell of wild terror as two or three of the blacks came towards him.

"You feller no talk," snapped Silvio. "You prisoner now. No time waste on you. You stay here tie to um tree—cooking-pot to-morrow! You make kai-kai along others. Savvee?"

Bunter, half-fainting with terror, was dragged farther up the beach to a palm-tree, where he was bound to the trunk with a grass rope. Then Silvio struck through the palm-trees, with his kinky-haired crew at his heels, and the whole gang vanished from Bunter's sight.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Enemy!

"HOT!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Warm!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Even the Indian junior admitted that it was warm.

To the other fellows it seemed intolerably hot, and exertion, of course, made them hotter.

And the schoolboy treasure-seekers had been exerting themselves. From the discovery of Black Peter's skeleton clue they had lost no time. Hour after hour of blazing sunshine passed, and the chums of the Remove were still seeking for the second sign.

Up-stream they knew the way must lie, but the sandy stream wound irregularly down from the distant hills in great loops and curves. Somewhere in that direction they felt assured that the sign was to be found. But where? The banks were clear in places of all but

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word "cache." If that line of crosses indicated the path to the treasure, as they believed, its exact direction was important. And Redwing could not say whether he had reproduced with exactness the direction of the line.

Long hours of rigorous search had failed to discover anything since the skeleton had been unearthed. And the thought that they were off the track was discouraging to the treasure-hunters.

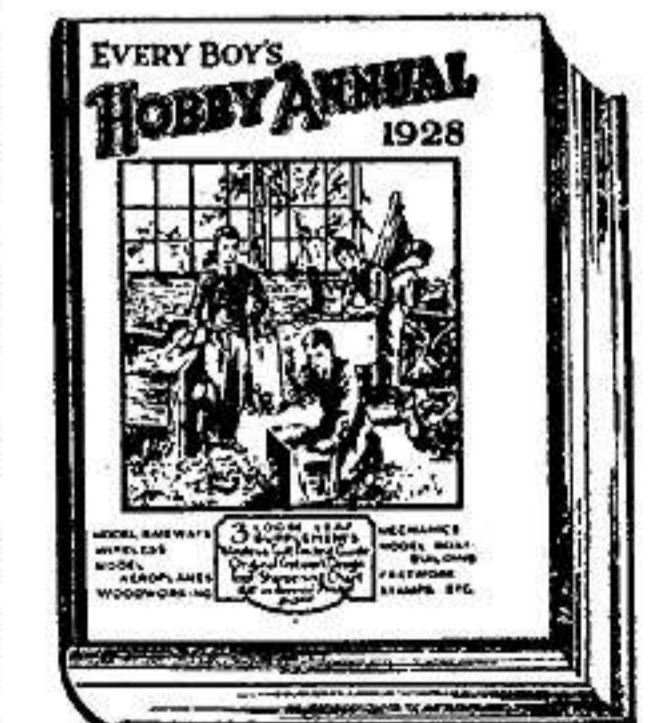
"If we only had the original chart we could jolly soon make sure!" Nugent remarked.

"Too late to think of that, I'm afraid," said Redwing, with a faint smile.

"Oh, we'll find the giddy treasure all right!" said Bob Cherry. "It's only a matter of time. But, my hat, it's hot!"

He fanned himself with his hat as he sat under the spreading banyan.

"Anyhow, we have a clear field to hunt for it," said Harry Wharton. "Soames seems to have cleared right off—not that he could hurt us now. And I hardly think that Dance is right about the half-caste having reached Caca."



but they remembered that the last time they had seen him he had had a crew of half a dozen Solomon Island savages with him; and it was scarcely possible, too, that he could have roached the island alone. The juniors understood at

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once that it was danger, near and threatening.

"The rotter!" whispered Bob Cherry. "He's stalking us—you can see that. Only he doesn't know just where to look."

"He's found a track!" murmured Nugent.

The half-caste stopped.

The juniors saw him bend to the earth, examining the grass with searching eyes. He straightened up again, his black eyes glittering in the direction of the shady banyan. Evidently he had picked up a footprint, which had told him where to look for the Greyfriars party.

He came on swiftly towards the banyan.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had quietly examined the revolver that had once belonged to the mate of the Aloha. Now he levelled it steadily through an opening of the banyan-stems.

"Smithy!" breathed Nugent.

The Bouncer did not heed.

His face was set and hard, his eyes glinting. With a steady eye he glanced along the barrel of the revolver.

Wharton was about to speak, but he closed his lips again. The whole aspect of the half-caste showed what his intention was. His finger was on the trigger of his rifle, his black eyes gleaming murderously. It was life or death now for the treasure-hunters.

Silvio halted suddenly.

Believing that he had to do only with a crowd of schoolboys, whom he regarded with careless contempt, he was confident and reckless; but some glimmering of prudence kept him from stepping from the blazing sunlight into the shadow under the banyan. He stopped a dozen paces distant, but he was evidently unaware that a hidden revolver among the foliage was levelled at him.

"You fellers white marsters!" he called out, with a mocking inflection in his voice.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"You there, you fellers?"

"Here we are!" answered Bob Cherry.

"You comey out!" said the half-caste. "You all prisoner—you savvee? You comey out plenty quick, before shoot!"

He had the rifle to his shoulder now, his eye gleaming along it. It was a magazine rifle, and a touch of his dusky finger only was needed to send a stream of bullets searching under the banyan. The clustering stems and foliage that hid the juniors from his sight would not have protected them from his bullets.

"You hear me, you fellers white marsters?" grinned the half-caste.

"Yes, rather, old yellow bean!" answered Bob.

"I tell you one time you comey out from tree! You savvee? Shoot plenty quick you no come!"

Crack!

It was not the rifle that rang.

It was the Bouncer's revolver; and the half-caste spun over under the eyes of the Greyfriars juniors and pitched to the ground, his rifle exploding as it fell by his side.

The blood was streaming down his olive face, blinding him. But his grasp was still on the rifle, and he strove to raise it and fire. A bullet sang away on the trees as he pulled the trigger blindly. The next moment the rifle was snatched from his hands. The Bouncer's knee was planted on the half-caste, pinning him down, the muzzle of the revolver jammed into his dusky face.

"Stop it, you hound!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "Keep still, or I'll blow your brains out!"

The half-caste's struggles ceased.

With the back of his hand he dashed the blood from his eyes and glared up at the juniors like a trapped wild beast.

There was a deep gash along his forehead where the bullet had struck him and glanced. It was bleeding freely, and his olive face was covered with blood.

Wharton had seized his rifle, and Bob Cherry jerked the revolver from his belt and Johnny Bull the long Malaita knife. Wounded and disarmed, the half-caste lay in the grasp of the Greyfriars fellows—the schoolboys whom he had believed helpless against him—whom he had expected to terrify into submission by merely showing himself. Silvio was discovering his mistake now.

He panted with rage.

After what he had learned from Bunter, Silvio had believed the game to be entirely in his hands. It had been, to his mind, only a question of finding his rivals for the treasure before they could get back on board the schooner and escape him by flight.

Now he had found them!

He writhed with fury under the gripping knee of the Bouncer, with Smithy's knee planted like iron on his chest and the muzzle of the revolver bruising his dusky skin.

"You white fellers, I kill you all—kill ten—twenty—thirty!" panted the half-caste.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"You don't look much like killing anybody at present, old coffee-bean!" he remarked. "Take it calmly."

"The calmfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and execrable friend," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

A long, shrill cry burst from the half-caste. It rang across the island almost like the howl of a wolf.

"Look out!" exclaimed the Bouncer. "That's a signal!"

Wharton gripped the magazine-rifle, glad at that moment of the careful practice on the range at Greyfriars that had made him a good shot.

The half-caste's yell was evidently a signal; and it was answered at once. From the high bush in the distance half a dozen blacks emerged in a howling bunch.

Wharton put the rifle to his shoulder. Crack, crack!

He fired twice, and before the second shot had died into echoes the Solomon Islanders had vanished into the bush again. So sudden was their flight that it broke the tenseness, and the juniors burst into a laugh.

"That's the crew he had with him in the canoc," said Bob Cherry. "They seem in rather a hurry to get home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Silvio ground his teeth. Probably he had hoped little from his black crew, whom he had not dared to arm, lest they should prove dangerous to himself. Perhaps he had hoped that the sight of the mob of cannibals would scare off the juniors. If so, his hope had been very ill-founded.

The Solomon Islanders had vanished;

evidently they had no fancy to face the weapons of "white marsters" at close quarters. The juniors could see the high bush swaying in the hurry of their flight. Then all was still.

"Well, we've got this beauty," said Bob. "He doesn't seem quite so dangerous as Dance fancied."

"Dangerous enough, if Smithy hadn't dropped him so neatly," said Tom Redwing. "The bullet went very close, Smithy."

"Not so close as I intended," said the Bouncer coolly. "It was meant for his rascally skull."

"Then I'm glad you missed."

"Bosh!" said the Bouncer. "What would he have done to us?"

"We're not South Sea half-castes," said Redwing, rather dryly.

"Anyway, we've got the brute," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose if Dance were here he would advise us to knock him on the head. We can't do that."

"We might do worse!" grunted the Bouncer.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"If Smithy stays long in the South Seas he will develop like Reddy's uncle," he remarked. "Black Peter over again! We shall have to get you back to Greyfriars, Smithy!"

The Bouncer laughed.

"Well, I don't suggest knocking the brute on the head," he answered. "But we'd better make him safe now we've got him. He came here, intending to kill us, and he fancied he had a soft job of it, I think. We'll tie the brute up and get him safe on the Aloha."

"That's the best we can do with him," said Harry.

The half-caste's eyes glinted at them. "Kill you all—kill all white feller!" he muttered, showing his white teeth in a savage snarl.

"Shut up!" said Bob. "You talk too much, coffee-face!"

The half-caste attempted to resist as Bob drew a cord round his wrists. A gleam came into Vernon-Smith's eyes and the hammer of the revolver rose a little.

Silvio's resistance ceased instantly. His brown hands were dragged together and bound securely.

Then Redwing bound a handkerchief over the deep gash in his forehead. The half-caste was allowed to rise to his feet.

"He'll be safe on the schooner," said Redwing. "Ben Dance and Bunter can watch over him."

A savage grin came over Silvio's face. "Bunter fat feller, um glass eyes?" he asked.

"Yes. What do you know about him?" asked Bob. "I suppose you saw him on the yacht with us that day we got Dance away from you on the Pacific?"

Silvio grinned.

"You white feller tink Bunter, fat feller boy, on schooner? You nebber see Bunter. Fat feller makee kai-kai along of Malaita boy."

"What on earth is he burbling about?" said Bob Cherry, staring at the half-caste in wonder. "Bunter's on the schooner all right. We left him there safe enough."

Wharton's face was very grave. There was no mistaking the ferocious exultation in the half-caste's look. It was evident that, fallen into the hands of his enemies as he was, he rejoiced in the knowledge that one member of the Greyfriars party was doomed.

"He knows something about Bunter, that's clear enough," said Harry. "Is it possible that that fat fool has run himself into some danger?"

"But he was on the schooner——"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

To the Rescue!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. rushed out from the banyan.

In a moment they had reached the half-caste as he lay sprawling on the ground.



Unaware that a hidden revolver, among the foliage, was levelled at him, Silvio approached the Greyfriars juniors, his rifle to his shoulder, his eye gleaming along it. "I tell you one time," he says, "you comey out from tree, you savvee? Shoot plenty quick you no come!" (See Chapter 7.)

"He's fool enough to go ashore by himself, or to do anything else idiotic!" growled Wharton.

He stepped up to the half-caste and fixed his eyes on him.

"You've seen Bunter?" he said.

Silvio nodded and grinned.

"Where is he?"

"Tie um to tree."

"How did you get hold of him, then?"

"Fat feller he comey ashore in little boat; smash up on rocks."

"Oh, the ass!" said Bob Cherry. "He must have got off from the Aloha in the gig. Dance ought to have stopped him."

"Where did you leave Bunter tied to a tree?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

The half-caste shrugged his shoulders.

"No tell," he answered. "Malaita boy him make kai-kai of fat feller. You no can stop."

"We shall try to stop it, at all events," said Harry. "Those black scoundrels who were with you have gone back to where Bunter was left, I suppose."

"No tell."

"Answer me, you dog!" said Wharton, his eyes gleaming, and he lifted the rifle. "Answer me, before I knock you senseless!"

The half-caste shrank back.

"Black feller he go back camp," he said sullenly. "Make kai-kai of fat white feller. You no can stop."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

It was no time to think of Bunter's fatuous folly in placing himself in the enemy's hands—no time to think of the danger of rescuing him. All the juniors had to think of now was rescuing the Owl of the Remove from the Malaitas.

"We've got to follow those black brutes, you fellows," said Wharton. "We've got to save Bunter if we can.

No time to get this scoundrel to the Aloha now. Tie him up to the banyan."

Silvio was hustled under the banyan, and bound there, with strips torn from his own clothes, to a strong stem. Hand and foot the half-caste was bound to the stem, and as the juniors left him flies and mosquitoes were settling thick on the helpless half-caste.

But there was no time to think of the rascal's discomfort. No thought of Silvio, no thought of the treasure now was in the minds of the Greyfriars juniors. Losing not a moment, forgetful of heat and of fatigue, they started through the high bush on the track of the fleeing Solomon Islanders. The blacks, as they had fled, had left a trampled track that was easy enough to follow, and through the oven-like heat of the high bush Harry Wharton & Co. followed it, only dreading that they might arrive too late.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Soames Again!

"HELP!" howled Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove leaned on the trunk of the palm-tree, wriggling and perspiring. The grass-ropes that bound him to the palm held him securely, and Bunter, who had wrenched at it frantically after Silvio and the blacks left him, gave up hope of getting loose again.

He had to wait there, bound, helpless, aching with heat and thirst, till Silvio returned, and then he knew what was to be his fate.

The half-caste himself certainly was not a cannibal; but it was very probable that he dared not refuse to hand any

prisoner over to his ferocious followers for "kai-kai." At all events, he had made it clear to Bunter that he was to be handed over to the Solomon Islanders, and that the cooking-pot was to be his portion, when the gang returned. And Bunter, fainting with terror, tried not to think of it, and could not help thinking of it every terrible moment that he remained bound to the palm.

And then he heard a soft footstep among the palms behind him.

He was bound to the palm nearest to the beach, simply because that was the shortest distance for the lazy blacks to drag him. Behind him were many palms, round him many on either side. It was through the palms that Silvio and his crew had disappeared into the interior of the island. And when he heard the footstep, Bunter concluded that it meant that the cannibal Malaita boys were returning, and he almost swooned with fear and horror.

But fear sharpened his perceptions.

He realised that it was not the pad of a naked foot he heard; it was a booted foot that trod among the palms behind him. A wild hope sprang up in his heart that the Greyfriars fellows might by some chance have come that way—though he knew that the quest of the cache led them along the sandy stream in the interior of Caca.

But the faint hope was enough, and he shouted for help.

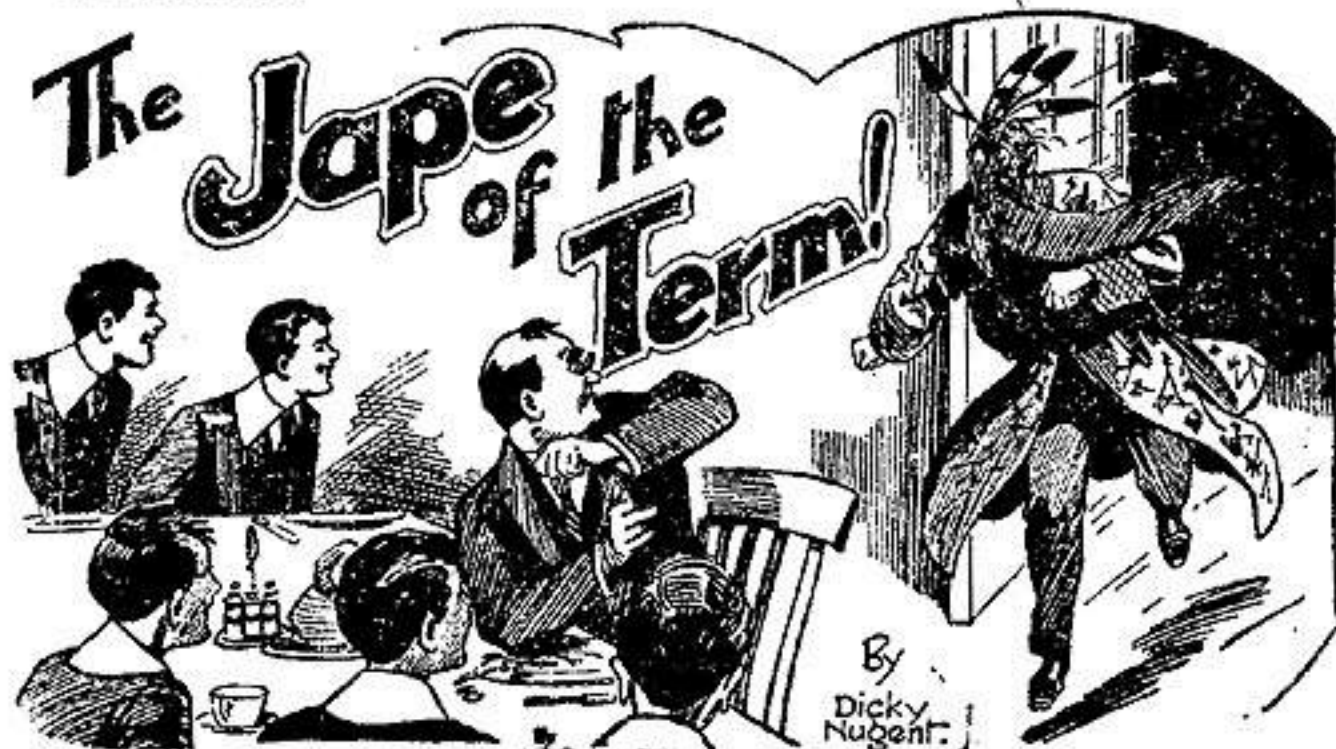
"Help! Help, I say, you fellows! Help!"

The footstep came nearer and nearer. Someone was treading cautiously among the palms, with stealthy footfalls. Something in the soft stealth of that tread was familiar to Bunter; it reminded him of the soft-footed valet on board the yacht.

(Continued on page 16.)

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A LIMIT TO ALL THINGS! Herbert Binns is not a revengeful sort of chap, but as Dr. Birchmall makes a point of victimising him on every possible occasion, the dustman's son feels that it is high time he made some show of retaliation!



A Cheery Yarn of Fun and Frolic at St. Sam's.

I.

"GOAL!"

"Hooray!"

"Bravvo, young Dusty!"

The shouts of applaws ekkoed and re-ekkoed across the St. Sam's playing fields.

Herbert Binns, the dustman's son, whom Jack Jolly & Co. had affectionately crissened "Dusty"—fairly purred with plezzure. He was playing in his first football match, against St. Mike's, and he fairly revelled in the mud. "Dusty" was a perfect peach of a player, and three times in suxxession the ball had wizzed red-hot from his boot into the yorning net.

Wallowing in the mud, "Dusty" played a very clean game. Not once did he stoop to fowl tatticks. Not once did he trip up an opponent, or dig him in the ribs with his elbow; for the referee's eye was on him all the time!

The St. Sam's team was rather a novel one, for it inclooded both a dustman's son and a duke's son.

The Duke's son—the Honnerable Algernon—played a very different kind of game from "Dusty." You would have eggspected a Duke's son to be refined and gentle in his tatticks; but it was not so. The Honnerable Algernon kept fowling his opponents in a shocking manner. He tripped them, and hacked their shins, and grabbed them by the hare, and punched their noses. He went barging and charging all over the field like a young barbarian.

Burleigh of the Sixth, who was the referee, was frankly disgusted.

"Enuff of these fowl tatticks!" he growled. "Play the game, you young rascal, or I'll send you off the field!"

"Bah!" said the Honnerable Algernon, pressing his thumb to his nose and spredding out his fingers like a fan. "You dursent chuck me off the field. Dr. Birchmall gave orders that I was to play, an' the 'Ead's a personal friend of mine; so you can go an' eat coke!"

For a moment Burleigh looked as if he would take the duke's son by the scurf of the neck and shake him. But he remembered in time that it would be sacrilege for the son of a meer Cabinet Minister, like Burleigh was, to lay hands on the son of a duke.

The game went on, and the Honnerable Algernon continued his fowl tatticks. The captain of St. Mike's happened to have the ball, and the duke's son, charging up like a mad bull, butted him in the small of the back and sent him sprawling.

"Fowl!" gasped the captain of St. Mike's, as he rolled in the mud. "Chuck him off, ref!"

Burleigh, his hansom face dark with anger, strode up to the Honnerable Algernon.

"Get off the field!" he said sternly.

"I won't!"

"You will!"

"I tell you, I won't!"

"I tell you, you will!"

Jack Jolly & Co. settled the argument in drastick stile. They were just about fed-up with the Honnerable Algernon. Grimly they closed around him, and whirled him off his feet, and frog's-marched him from the field. Then they rolled him in a muddy puddle and wiped their boots on him, and went back to the game.

St. Sam's had only ten men now, but they were more than a match for St. Mike's. "Dusty" Binns was a team in himself. Time and again he went through the opposing defence like a knife through butter, and crashed the ball into the net. And he had scored seven goals off his own bat—or rather boot—when the final wissle sounded.

"Dusty" was the hero of the match. His schoolfellows swarmed around him, and lifted him sholder-high, and bore him in triumph to the dressing-room, chanting "See the Konkering Hero Comes!"

It was at this eggsiting moment that Dr. Alfred Birchmall, P.I.G., A.S.S., came stalking on the seen, his long beard waving in the breeze, his crool little eyes gleaming like points of fire.

"Stop!" thundered the Head, halting in front of the procession. "What is the meaning of this? Why are you lavvishing all this fuss and serremony on the son of a dustman?"

"He scored seven goals, sir!" said Jack Jolly.

"What! What!"

"He kicked seven beauties, sir!"

Dr. Birchmall fairly danced with rage.

"Jolly!" he cried. "You have flouted my instructions, you young rascal! You have defved my eggspress commands! I distinctly said that Binns was not to play in your eleven!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"For this defyance of orthority, Jolly, you shall be flogged until you squeel for mersy! And Binns shall be flogged, too—though I hate to contaminate my birch-rod by using it on a dustman's son! Follow me to my study at once, the pair of you!"

There was confusion and dismay in the ranks of the Fourth Form footballers. Binns was set down on his feet, and he and Jack Jolly, with rye faces, followed the furious Dr. Birchmall to his study.

It was a flogging for two, laid on with the utmost severrity. The Head busted two birches on Binns' back, and a third on Jack Jolly's.

"Dusty" took his gruel like a man. He riggled a bit, and his legs thrashed the air like flails; but not a mermer escaped his lips.

Jack Jolly was just as heroick, and one of his angwished kicks took the Head full in the chest and bowled him over backwards. Jack reseved an extra duzzen strokes for that!

Dr. Birchmall gathered up the fragments of his birchrods and tossed them into the fireplace.

"Go!" he thundered, jerking his thumb towards the door.

And the two juniors limped out into the passidge, where they were surrounded by their chums.

"Had it hot?" asked Frank Fearless simperthetically.

"Ow!" said Jack Jolly.

"Yow!" said "Dusty."

"How many?" inquired Merry.

"I lost count," said Jack Jolly, "and I beleve the Head did, too. Ow-ow-ow! Old Birchmall's a beast and a broot and a boolly, and I'm going to get even with him for this!"

"Same here!" growled "Dusty." "I'm not a revengeful sort of chap, but old Birchmall needs a lesson—badly! Ever since I set foot in this place the old villain's had his knife into me, just because I happen to be a dustman's son."

"It's a jolly shame!" said Bright. "But I don't see what you can do, Dusty, eggsept grin and bear it."

"I'm going to think out a jape on the Head," said Dusty, "and I shall eggspect you fellows to give me a hand, and make it the biggest jape that ever was!"

"Rely on us!" said Jack Jolly heartily.

Later on, in the Fourth Form dormitry, Dusty confided the details of his jape to the juniors. Evidently it tickled their fancy, for they larfed loud and long as Dusty unfolded his skeem. He had made the most elaborate plans and preparations, and Jack Jolly & Co. were with him to a man.

"To-nite's the nite!" said Dusty. "I'll give you fellows a call at midnite, and then the dasterdy deed shall be done! And to-morrow morning old Birchmall will be the larfing-stock of St. Sam's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors, with the eggseption of Dusty the dustman's son, settled down to slumber, and were soon in the arms of Morphia.

II.

"FOLLOW your leader!" whispered Dusty.

The sollum strokes of mid-nite had stricken from the old clock-tower, and all was in reddiness for the grate jape on Dr. Birchmall.

"Got the paint, Dusty?" mermered Jack Jolly.

"Yes."

"And the die?"

"Yes."

"And the fethers?"

"Everything!"

Like gostly fantoms of the nite the juniors stole out of the dormitry in their rubber-souled shoes. There were five of them in the conspiracy. Dusty led the way, and Jack Jolly and Merry and

Bright and Fearless followed close at his heels.

Their destination was the Head's bedroom. And they were obliged to tread warily, in case some master or prefect should be on the prowl.

After proceeding on tiptoe round several corridors, the little procession halted outside a certain door, and Dusty applied his ear to the keyhole.

A gentle snore announced that the Head, in spite of his guilty conscience, was asleep.

Very softly Dusty pushed open the door and stole into the room. Jack Jolly & Co. followed, scarcely daring to breathe.

The Head's bed-room was flooded with silvery moonlight from the window. Dr. Birchmall lay on his back, with his long beard resting on the counterpane. His eyes were closed and his mouth was open, and his snore caused the bed to vibrate. He stirred once or twice as he slept, and between his snores he kept muttering. The juniors caught the words "young rascals!" and "birchrod," and "black and blue." And they exchanged grins in the moonlight.

Then, at a signal from Dusty, they got busy. And the nature of their business was to transform Dr. Birchmall into a Red Indian. For this purpose they had brought red paint for the Head's face, and a red die to die the Head's beard, and a band, mounted with feathers, to adorn the Head's napper.

It was a slow and perilous task; for if the Head should chance to wake, and find five juniors in his bed-room engaged in making a Red Indian of him, there would certainly be ructions.

But the Head did not wake. Dusty, squeezing red paint from a tube, proceeded to smear it over the sleeper's face; while Jack Jolly busied himself with dying the Head's beard.

Frank Fearless, with the aid of a pot of glue, fixed the chaplet of feathers to the Head's bald pate. And he fixed it so firmly and thoroughly that the Head was not likely to get it off in a hurry.

Merry's job was to adorn the Head with a pair of long, bushy eyebrows; while Bright fastened some cheap trinkets on to his ears.

The juniors were finished at last, and Dr. Birchmall presented an eggstraordinary spectacle. He looked as if he had stepped straight out of the pages of a Wild West story. So commical was his appearance that the juniors, gazing at their handiwork, grew purple in the face in their efforts to keep from bursting out laughing.

The Head's slumbers were very restless now. Suddenly he flung out his arm, and Jack Jolly, who was squatting on the bed, received the Head's fist in his eye. He rolled off the bed with a yelp of anguish.

"Quick!" muttered Dusty in alarm. "Clear out, you chaps!"

The five conspirators were out of the Head's bed-room in a twinkling, and speeding back to their dormitory. Arrived there, they gave their bottled-up laughter full vent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"What a giddy surprize for St. Sam's in the morning when they see a Red Indian chief dancing around!" chuckled Jack Jolly.

And the juniors laughed till they became almost hysterical. It was some time before they settled down to sleep.

Next morning there were signs of the wildest eggstement at St. Sam's.

The Head happened to oversleep. The clock was striking eight when he opened his eyes. Fearful of missing his breakfast

—which he always took in the dining-hall with the rest of the school—Dr. Birchmall bounded out of bed, and scrambled into a dressing-gown and slippers, and went down the stairs three at a time, like Grandpa Krooshen. He had not stopped to look at himself in the mirror, though he was vaguely conscious that there was something wrong with his face. He had not stopped for anything. His sole aim in life at that moment was to reach the dining-hall before some greedy person at the masters' table sneaked his eggs and bacon.

Breakfast was in full swing, when St. Sam's was suddenly startled out of its wits by the appearance of a Red Indian chief in their midst.

The door of the dining-hall was thrown open, and a wild figure dashed in—a hideous and grotesque figure, with a bright red face and a vivid red beard, and a coronet of feathers on its head.

Dr. Birchmall's dressing-gown fitted in well with the rest of his appearance. For it was of an Indian pattern, with a quaint design of wigwags and tommyhawks. It had been sent to the Head by one of his cowboy friends in the Wild West.

Panic and consternation broke out when the Head made his dramatic entry into the dining-hall. Only five



Facing Burleigh, the Honorable Algernon pressed his thumb to his nose and spread out his fingers like a fan. "Bah!" he cried. "You dursent chuck me off the field!"

persons remained calm—the five who were responsible for Dr. Birchmall's present appearance. The remainder jumped to their feet in wild alarm. In the general commotion the masters' table was overturned with a crash, and the floor was bestrewn with eggs and bacon.

"Gug-gug-good heavens!" cried Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth. "What fearsome appyrition is this?"

"It is a savidge—a Red Indian!" cried Mr. Justiss. "Help! He has come to attack us!"

And Mr. Justiss, who was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, promptly darted towards the door, thereby setting an egg-sample of cowardice which the other masters were not slow to follow. Pannick-stricken, they became wedged in the doorway, fighting and struggling to escape.

But the prefects had more pluck than the masters. Burleigh and Tallboy and half a dozen more made a sudden rush towards the Red Indian chief, who was now looking as astonished as anybody.

They grappled with him and bore him to the floor, cheered on eggstedly by the rest of the school.

"Ow-ow-ow! Loggo! Gerroff me chest!" gasped the unhappy victim. And the seniors gasped, too. For they could not fail to recognise the skollery tones of Dr. Birchmall, their headmaster!

"Good gad!" gasped Burleigh, leaping off the Head's chest as if it was a wasp's nest. "It—it's the Head!"

"Dressed up like a Red Indian to scare us!" eggscclaimed Tallboy. "Really, sir, I'm serprized at you! Fancy a headmaster playing a prank of this sort!"

Dr. Birchmall scrambled to his feet. So fearsome and ferocious did he appear that the prefects backed away in alarm.

"How dare you?" he blazed, in a fury. "How dare you commit assault and battery upon the sacred person of your headmaster? And what do you mean, Tallboy, by saying that I am dressed up like a Red Indian? I am certainly wearing an Indian dressing-gown, but that is no reason why you should take me for a savidge!"

"Do you mean to say, sir," gasped Burleigh, "that you don't know what you look like? Your face is painted red, and your beard is red, and you're wearing feathers, and bushy eyebrows, and ornaments in your ears!"

"W-w-what?" stammered the Head incredulously.

And then he passed his hand over his face, and felt the eyebrows, and the trinkets, and the feathers, and nearly fell down in his astonishment.

Meanwhile, one of the juniors had fetched a mirror. Grinning broadly, he held it up before the Head's face; and then, for the first time, Dr. Birchmall saw himself as others saw him. He stared at his reflection as if mesmerised, and it was a long, long time before he found his voice.

"This is a trick!" howled the Head. "I have been the victim of a dastardly and diabolical jape on the part of some person or persons unknown! Somebody must have visited my bed-room whilst I slept and perpetrated this shocking outrage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The pent-up feelings of the St. Sam's skolars found a vent.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ancient rafters of the dining-hall rang to a terrific burst of laughter. Tearing his beard and dancing like a dervish in his rage, Dr. Birchmall looked in danger of having an apoplectic fit.

"Stop!" he bawled.

But nothing could have stopped the assembled skolars just then. They laughed until the tears ran down their faces—and then they laughed again.

"Stop!" bawled Dr. Birchmall. "I will flog—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will expel—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

The St. Sam's fellows were in hysterics. Never had they seen their lerned Head look such a riddickulous site.

They laughed and laughed, the tears of merriment splashing down their cheeks. And Dr. Birchmall, unable to face that storm of riddycule, turned and fled precipitately from the dining-hall.

And as he fled, followed by shrieks of laughter, he vowed dire vengeance upon the "person or persons unknown" who had perpetrated the Jape of the Term!

THE END.

(Another merry "tail" of the St. Sam's heroes next week, boys.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

Golden Arrow—of Soames, Mr. Vernon-Smith's manservant; Soames, the mutineer and sea-lawyer, who had swum ashore from the Aloha the previous night, and was lurking somewhere on the island. Was it Soames? Even so, the sea-lawyer was welcome; villain as he was, he would hardly leave a white man to be devoured by cannibals.

"Help! Help! This way, help!" shrieked Bunter.

There was a soft laugh, almost in his ear.

He was certain now. It was Soames.

A moment later the man came round the palm and stood before him. It was James Soames, his cool, clear-cut, impassive face as cool and calm as ever. His narrow, keen eyes surveyed the fat junior bound to the tree. There was a smile on his face, a smile that was not reassuring.

"Soames!" panted Bunter.

"Master Bunter!" smiled Soames.

"Let me loose!"

Soames did not let him loose, or answer him. He turned his back on Bunter, and scanned, with a keen, searching gaze his surroundings—the thick grove of coconut palms, the shelving sand, the blue inlet and the long canoe beached high up from the lapping sea; the fragments of the Aloha's gig left in the sand by the receding tide. Then he turned to Bunter again.

"You are alone here?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"A prisoner?" smiled Soames.

"Let me loose!"

"Who tied you up?"

"That beast Silvio."

"Then the half- caste is here? I thought as much when I saw the canoe from the distance. Why have they deserted their camp? Do you know?"

"I—I think they've gone after Wharton and the other chaps!" gasped Bunter.

"How came you here?"

Bunter told him. He blinked imploringly at Soames through his big spectacles. At every moment he expected to hear the returning footsteps of Silvio and the Malaita boys.

"I—I say, let me loose!" he pleaded. "That filthy half- caste is going to hand me over to those beastly savages when they come back."

"Kai-kai!" said Soames.

"Yes," shuddered Bunter. "For goodness sake untie me before they come back. Get me loose!"

"You are asking a great deal," said Soames smoothly. "It was through you, Master Bunter, that your friends got the upper hand of me on the schooner. I think I told you the time might come when I should be able to repay what I owed you."

Bunter shivered.

"You can't leave me here!" he gasped. "You're a white man. You can't do it. For mercy's sake—"

He broke off as a sound of firing came across the island, clear and sharp in the clear air. Soames started.

"Silvio has found your friends, I

fancy!" he remarked. "That was a rifle, as well as a revolver, you heard? Your friends have no rifles?"

He listened intently.

"There goes the rifle again—once—twice—and no revolver this time. It would look as if your friends have had the worst of it."

Bunter groaned.

He had no hope that the Greyfriars fellows would get the better of an encounter with Silvio and the Malaitas. And the sound of the firing seemed to tell that they had had the worst of it. Neither Bunter nor Soames could guess that Silvio's rifle was being fired by Wharton at the Solomon Islanders.

"If Silvio has the upper hand, it is good-bye to your friends," said Soames calmly. "They would have done better, after all, to remain under my orders. Silvio will not spare one of them."

Bunter groaned again.

"And they will return here—and I am unarmed," said Soames. "It is time I cleared, I think."

He looked at Bunter, and paused. Soames was a scoundrel, but he was a white man. He began to tear loose the grass rope that bound Bunter to the palm.

The Owl of the Remove gasped with relief when he found his fat limbs at liberty again.

Soames heeded him no further.

He hurried down the beach to the canoe, and began to drag it down the sand towards the lapping waters of the inlet. The tide was out, and there was a long stretch of beach to cross before the water was reached, but Soames worked with a swiftness and strength surprising in a man of so slight a build. Billy Bunter blinked after him.

He was afraid of Soames—but he was terrified by the bare idea of the half- caste and the Malaitas. Better Soames than the cannibals. He knew how unlikely it was that he would find his way along the shore of the island without stumbling into the hands of his enemies. Indeed, to his fat ears, quickened by fear, it seemed that he could already hear the sound of running footsteps in the distance of the palm wood. He scuttled breathlessly down the coral beach after Soames.

"Take me with you!" he panted.

Soames looked at him.

"Help me with the canoe!" he said briefly.

It was not like Bunter to exert himself; but he exerted himself now. He put all his beef into shoving the long canoe down to the water. Well, he knew what would happen if the Malaitas returned before the canoe shoved off. Soames doubtless could save himself by flight—he was light and active and wary. Bunter would have had about as much chance as a tortoise. He streamed with perspiration as he slaved at shoving the canoe down the beach.

The prow glided into the lapping water. Just as the canoe came afloat on the inlet, three or four breathless blacks came tearing through the palms. Soames looked back.

He shoved at a coral rock with a paddle, and the canoe glided off. Billy Bunter had just time to plunge headlong in it as it went. He collapsed in the bottom of the canoe, breathless and exhausted, while Soames, with a paddle in either hand, paddled away swiftly, the canoe shooting like an arrow across the blue waters of the inlet, out into the channel among the reefs—leaving the Solomon Islanders yelling and gesticulating on the beach.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Altoo!"

"H EAR them—"
"Hurry!" muttered Wharton, between his teeth.

From the distance, a sound of furious yelling came to the ears of the Greyfriars juniors as they hurried on through the high bush. It was the yelling of the Solomon Islanders, left on the beach by the capture of their canoe; but to the Greyfriars fellows, thinking of Bunter, it seemed to portend the doom of the fat junior. Breathless, panting, they hurried on through the bush, with set faces almost savage in expression, weapon in hand.

They came out of the thick bush at last, in the open grove of palms that stretched down to the beach of the blue inlet. Far out on the waters they glimpsed, hardly noticing a canoe that shot away seaward. They had no eyes for the sea, only for the bunch of black, kinky-haired Malaitas on the shore.

The half-dozen Solomon Islanders had gathered in a bunch there. They had found their prisoner gone, and their canoe taken away—and they were jabbering wildly and excitedly together when the juniors came on them. At the sight of the seven "white marsters" with their firearms, the blacks set up a howl of alarm and retreated along the beach. They had intended to flee in the canoe, taking their prisoner with them to make "kai-kai" in some spot out of reach of the "white marsters"; but their retreat by water was cut off now.

Wharton raised the rifle, but lowered it again.

"They've not got Bunter," he exclaimed.

"Fire on the brutes, anyhow," muttered the Bounder.

"Stop it, Smithy." Tom Redwing caught the Bounder's arm as he was raising his revolver.

"Chuck it, Smithy," said Harry Wharton sharply. "Let them go—if they've not got Bunter. You can see he's not with them."

"Inside them, perhaps," said the Bounder.

"What?"

"Well, he doesn't seem to be here, and you know they're cannibals."

"Rot! We were close behind them—they've had no time, and they're thinking only of getting away—"

"Where's Bunter, then?"

"That brute Silvio said that he was left tied to a tree. He's not with the blacks, anyhow," said Harry. "Let them go, and let's search for Bunter. He must be here."

The juniors began to search among the palms, leaving the Solomon Islanders to their own devices. The blacks, seeing that they were not pursued, stopped at a little distance, staring back towards the "white marsters," jabbering excitedly together. The juniors did not heed them as they searched anxiously for Bunter.

"He was here, I think," said Redwing, stopping under the palm to which Billy Bunter had been bound.

At the foot of the tree lay the grass- rope, where Soames had dropped it after releasing Bunter. In the earth was the imprint of Bunter's shoes, the heels towards the trunk. Evidently someone had been bound to that palm—not a native, as he wore shoes. Bunter, obviously, had been there—but he was gone. The juniors, in utter perplexity, gathered round the palm. It seemed clear enough that this was the tree to which Silvio had left the fat junior bound: he was gone, and they could see that he was not with the Malaitas.

It was a mystery, and the juniors were trying to puzzle it out, when there was a shout of alarm from the Bounder.

"Look out! They're coming!"
"My hat! Look out, you fellows!" exclaimed Wharton, grasping the magazine file.

Back along the beach came the half a dozen Solomon Islanders at a rush. They had not been fired on or pursued; and that, to their fuzzy native brains, could only mean that the "white marsters" were afraid of them, or had no cartridges. From unreasoning panic to unreasoning ferocity was a change natural to the savage mind, and it came in a twinkling. So swift was the rush of the Malaita "boys," that they were almost upon the juniors when the latter stood on their guard.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!
Harry Wharton & Co. were never likely to learn the savage ways of the South Seas, with the possible exception of the Bounder. But they did not hesitate for a moment to shoot now. The Malaita men had no weapons but their cooking-knives, but they were dangerous enough at close quarters, and in physical strength, of course, the half a dozen brawny savages were a match for thrice their numbers of white school-boys. Life itself depended now on rapid shooting, and Harry Wharton & Co. did not think of hesitating.

There were four firearms in the party now—the rifle, the automatic, and two revolvers, and they blazed out together. The bullets swept through the Malaita men as they came rushing on. It was the surprise of their lives for the Solomon Islanders.

Two of them pitched over headlong, and lay still on the beach. Another dropped with a bullet in his leg.

For an instant they stood halted, and then they fled again, racing away madly along the coral beach. This time they did not stop. They fled on till they vanished in the distance among the rocks.

Harry Wharton lowered the rifle, and ran forward. Two of the islanders did not stir, but the wounded man glared up at him, making a feeble effort to throw his knife. Wharton knocked it out of his hand with the barrel of the rifle.

"Knock the brute on the head," growled the Bounder.

"Oh, cheeze it, Smithy."
"Ask him where Bunter is," said Nugent. "He may be able to speak English—beche-de-mer, at least."

"Good egg," said Harry, and he addressed the wounded man. "You feller boy, you speakee English?"

"No shootee," muttered the Malaita man.

"No shootee if speakee," said Harry. "White marster comee find fat feller um glass eyes, you savvee?"

"No findee," said the Malaita man. "Nother white marster takee in canoe, washy-washy plenty quick."

"Eh, what's that?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I remember there was a canoe out on the water when we came up. It must have been Silvio's canoe. What the dickens does he mean by another white man taking Bunter away?"

"White marster takee canoe and fat feller um glass eyes," said the Solomon Islander.

"It couldn't have been Silvio; we left him fastened up safe enough," said Johnny Bull. "There's no other white man in the island except—"

"Soames!" said the Bounder, with a whistle.

"Who was the white marster who took fat feller 'way in canoe?" asked

Wharton, addressing the black man again.

"Aitoo!" said the Malaita man. "You savvee that white master?"
"Savvee him plenty. Aitoo."
"Great pip! A white man can't be named Aitoo!" said Bob Cherry. "That's a native name, if it's a name at all."

"Debble," said the Solomon Islander. "What?"

"Aitoo samee debble."
"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "Aitoo means devil, does it? And it's the name of the white marster who took fat feller in canoe?"

The black man nodded.
"It must have been Soames," said Wharton, puzzled. "We know there's no other white man on the island. Soames must have been here, and he's got hold of Silvio's canoe and Bunter. Goodness knows what he wants with Bunter—unless he was simply saving him from the blacks."

He looked away across the inlet, but the canoe of which the juniors had had a glimpse, had vanished now far out in the channel among the reefs. Soames—they knew it must be Soames—was gone, and Bunter was gone with him. They had no doubt that the fat junior's life was safe; indeed, what had happened was fortunate for Bunter, for, but for the intervention of Soames, there was little doubt that the Solomon Islanders would have fled in the canoe, taking Bunter with them to make "kai-kai" before Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived at the inlet.

"If it was Soames, it was lucky he turned up here," said Bob Cherry. "It seems clear that Bunter's in the canoe with him. Smithy, old man, I'll bet that when your pater took on Soames as a valet, he never knew that Soames had had such a name as 'Aitoo' when he was in the South Seas."

The Bounder grinned.
"There was a lot about Soames that the pater never knew and we know now," he said. "Let's get back, you fellows. We can't get after Soames—if Aitoo is Soames; and the sun's going down."

The wounded Solomon Islander was crawling away along the beach with uneasy backward glances, as if in fear of a bullet following him. Unheeding him, the Greyfriars fellows hurried back the way they had come. The sun was sinking behind the line of hills that barred Caca from north to south, and it was necessary to get back to the schooner before dark.

But the juniors had counted without the suddenness of the tropical sunset.

In their hurry to the rescue of Bunter, they had forgotten everything else. The afternoon had been waning; the long blazing day drawing to a close. As they tramped now through the high bush back to the valley of the sandy stream, shadows were falling thick.

Wharton gave a rather anxious look about him.

"Better put it on," he said. "The dark comes jolly quick in these regions, and we don't want to be caught in the bush. I'm not at all sure we could find our way out in the dark."

The juniors hurried on at a trot, tired as they were. They came out of the bush at last, and in the last glimmer of the sunset, caught a glimpse of the stream in the distance. It was the last glimpse of light—a few moments later darkness shut down on the treasure island like a curtain that is drawn.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Hidden Cave!

THE canoe bumped, and Billy Bunter sat up with a gasp. He blinked round him. The sky was shot with crimson and gold and purple, in the blaze of the tropical sunset. But where the canoe had stopped there was little of the sky to be seen. Bunter was aware that Soames had paddled into the lagoon; the channel among the reefs, which had had so many terrors for Bunter, had none for the iron-nerved sea-lawyer. Bunter had wondered whether Soames was heading for the Aloha, to make some desperate attempt on the schooner as she rode at anchor in the lagoon. That, however, was not Soames' intention. He had paddled the canoe into a narrow channel between two high rocks of black basalt, which approached each other so closely that only a narrow strip of sky was visible overhead. At the end of the little channel—a "finger" of the lagoon, as a South Sea sailorman would have called it—the water washed on a rocky bank where the basaltic cliffs drew close together and shut in in the arch of a great cave. The canoe bumped on the shelving rock, and Soames sprang ashore.

He glanced back at Bunter. "Get out," he said briefly. Billy Bunter blinked at him and scrambled out of the canoe.

The high, shadowy cave in the basaltic cliff was entirely shut in, save where the water lapped at its opening. So far as Bunter could see, there was no approach to it by land. A goat could scarcely have found foothold on the steep rocks. Soames evidently knew the place well; he came to it as to a familiar spot that he knew. He lashed the canoe to a point of rock to secure it.

"I—I say—" stammered Bunter. Soames looked at him. "What's this place?" demanded Bunter.

"A cave," answered Soames. "I can see that," grunted Bunter. "Then there was no need to ask the question."

Bunter blinked at him. His fear of the sea-lawyer was great, but he could realise that his life was in no danger. That knowledge gave him a little more assurance.

"Look here, you're not keeping me here, you know," said Bunter.

"You are free to go if you choose," said Soames. "Can you swim?"

"Eh? Yes."
"I shall leave you here," said Soames. "There is nothing to prevent your swimming away if you choose; if you care to take the risk."

Bunter blinked out of the cave. The narrow waterway ran between the high cliffs out to the open lagoon, not more than a hundred yards distant. The water was smooth, and even a poor swimmer could have covered the distance and reached the open and swum to the island beach. Not that Bunter thought of making the attempt. Right up to the edge the water was not less than fifty feet deep.

Soames, with an ironical smile, picked up a fragment of rock and tossed it into the water. Something black rose from the water and glided for a moment before it sank again.

"What—what was that?" stammered Bunter.

"A shark's fin."

The fat junior shuddered. If he had thought for a moment of trusting himself to the water, that thought would have been banished now.

"The place is alive with sharks," said Soames. "My advice to you is to remain where you are."

Bunter did not need that advice. His flesh crept at the bare idea of trusting himself within reach of the jaws of the sharks.

"You will be safe here," said Soames contemptuously. "The cave can only be approached from the sea, and no one is likely to penetrate into this rocky channel; no one is likely to know that the cave is here, or to desire to visit it if he knew."

"How did you know of it, then?" asked Bunter curiously.

"I know the island. I was marooned here once, many years ago, and I had to find a hiding-place from the cannibals."

Bunter blinked at him. The man whom he had known as the sleek, smooth, silent-footed manservant, the valet of the millionaire, had had a strange past—a past that was strange and terrible. Bunter wondered to what wild crew Soames had belonged, in those old days, when he had been marooned on the lonely island in the Pacific.

"I needed a craft of some kind to use the cave," went on Soames. "I have one now, thanks to Silvio leaving his canoe unguarded. It is a secure hiding-place; it saved my life in past days. I shall leave you here as soon as the sun is down. I must learn what has happened between your friends and Silvio. One party or the other must have been the victor—but which?"

He bit his lip in deep thought.

Bunter did not answer.

He did not suppose for a moment that Harry Wharton & Co. had been able to hold their own against the half-caste. What had happened to them if Silvio had gained the upper hand he could guess. But Bunter was not thinking so much of the fate of the juniors as of his own fate. What was to happen to him if his friends were gone? If the Greyfriars party had been wiped out, Silvio was certain to make an attempt on the schooner. The Aloha might be already in his hands.

The same thought was evidently working in Soames' mind.

His brow was knitted in deep thought as he waited for the last rays of the sun to die away.

Darkness thickened in the cave.

"Your friends were all ashore?" Soames asked suddenly.

"Yes. Dance was left on the schooner with the Kanakas," answered Bunter. He gave a groan. "I dare say that half-caste beast is there by this time."

"It is possible," said Soames. "But"—he paused—"why did the blacks come back to where they left you, in that case? Silvio did not return with them, and why should he send them back? He would want them with him if he got the better of the schoolboys and intended to attack the Aloha. It is possible that he got the worst of it—that he was killed, and that the Malaitas were fleeing."

Bunter started.

"The blacks would run at once, if their leader fell," went on Soames. "That would account for it. But I must know."

He rose from the rock on which he had been resting and stepped towards the canoe.

The sun was gone now, and in the faint glimmer of light that remained he was only a shadow to Bunter's eyes.

"I—I say, you're not going to leave me here alone?" gasped Bunter.

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"You are safe here," said Soames contemptuously. "Do you think, like the natives, that the sea-caves are haunted by aitoos?"

"I—I'd rather come with you," mumbled Bunter.

"You would be in the way."

"I—I say—"

"That is enough."

Soames stepped into the canoe. Billy Bunter watched him in dismay as he pushed off into the dusky channel. His little round eyes grew wide with terror as he watched Soames glide away in the canoe and disappear in the deep shadows of the basaltic cliffs.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "Beast!"

The darkness thickened in the cave, and every shadow had terrors for the hapless Owl of the Remove. In his fear of the darkness and the loneliness Bunter hardly remembered that he was hungry. From the hollows of the cave in the masses of basalt came strange murmurs. Bunter knew that it was the whine of wind in the hollows, and the faint echoes of the lapping water, but every sound had terrors for him. He could almost have believed, like the natives, that the sea-caves were the dwelling-place of the "aitoos"—the devils of the native superstition.

Bunter had stowed himself away on the millionaire's yacht at Southampton, determined to join the party for the South Seas, anticipating a glorious holiday among the isles of the Pacific. Certainly, he had not foreseen what that holiday would be like. From the bottom of his fat heart, he wished that he was safe home again—quarrelling with Bessie and Sammy. But it was too late to wish that.

Fortunately for Bunter, he was a good sleeper. He curled up in a corner and fell asleep, and his deep, resonant snore was added to the other weird noises in the sea-cave. Had any native passed just then in a canoe, certainly he would have supposed that the shadowy cave was inhabited by an unusually powerful "aitoo," as Bunter's deep snore echoed and re-echoed through the hollows of the basalt.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Asks For It!

"PUZZLE—find Silvio!" grunted Bob Cherry.

Darkness had descended on the Treasure Island, wrapping hill and valley, coral reef and lagoon as in a garment.

One by one the stars came out in the velvety sky, glittering like points of fire in the dark-blue heavens.

Harry Wharton & Co. had reached the bank of the sandy stream; but it was not so easy to find their way back to the banyan-tree where they had left the half-caste a bound prisoner.

There were many banyans in the valley, and innumerable palm-trees waved and nodded in the shadows.

"Let's get back to the Aloha," said the Bounder.

"But Silvio—"

"Hang Silvio!"

"We can't leave the man tied to the tree all night, Smithy," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"What would he have done to us?" growled the Bounder.

"That's not the point. As Reddy told you, we're not South Sea half-castes," answered Wharton.

Grunt from the Bounder.

"That's all very well," he said. "The fellow will be safe till morning, if we leave him. We can't stand on ceremony

with a brute who would butcher us all round if he had half a chance."

"Smithy—" murmured Redwing.

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, we've got to find the man and take him on board the Aloha with us," said Johnny Bull. "If you don't want to help, Smithy, you can go and sit in the boat till we come."

"Oh, rot!" growled the Bounder.

"We'll find him all right," said Frank Nugent cheerfully. "The blessed banyan was along the stream somewhere, only things look so jolly different after dark."

"The differentfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, staring round him in the shadows.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What was that?" exclaimed Bob suddenly.

"What—"

"There was something—behind that palm—I saw it move—"

"Only a shadow."

Bob Cherry rushed towards the palm. But whatever it was he had seen, if he had seen anything, was gone. He stared round him suspiciously.

"You're getting nervy, old man!" said Nugent.

"Rot! I tell you I saw something move!" snapped Bob. "It's gone now. Let's get on, for goodness' sake! The sooner we're on board the schooner the better!"

"Just what I think!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "Let that dashed half-caste roost where he is till morning."

"Oh, come on!" said Wharton impatiently.

"Well, I'm not coming," said the Bounder sulkily. "If you fellows choose to roost about in the dark after a filthy half-caste, go ahead. I'll go and wait at the boat."

"Better keep together, old chap," said Redwing.

"Rubbish! Are you getting frightened of shadows, like Cherry?"

"Look here—" roared Bob Cherry.

"Well, don't let's rag, anyhow," interposed Wharton hastily. "You can wait for us, Smithy. Come on, you fellows."

The Bounder snorted angrily, and stood frowning, as the other fellows moved on up the bank of the stream. He made a movement to follow them; but swung round and tramped away towards the beach where the whaleboat had been left high and dry. It would have been better for Herbert Vernon-Smith had he not yielded to his irritable temper; but it was not the first time that the Bounder's uncertain moods had brought him trouble.

He tramped along towards the beach, glistening in the starlight in the distance. The footsteps of the other fellows died away in the opposite direction.

The whaleboat was in sight, in the glimmer of the stars, when the Bounder was conscious of a shadow that moved among the palms close by the bank of the sandy stream.

He spun round, his hand on the revolver in his belt, his heart beating quickly.

He had jeered at Bob Cherry's alarm; but his own heart beat fast. The palms, nodding in the starlight, were peopled with moving shadows, but it was not the shadow of a waving frond that he had seen; he felt sure of that.

He jerked the revolver from his belt and half raised it. But the shadow was gone.

The Bounder stood with throbbing heart, half-disposed to call out to his comrades. But they had gone up the



So swiftly was the rush of the Malaita "boys," that they were almost upon Harry Wharton & Co. when the latter stood on their guard. Crack, crack, crack, crack! Life depended now on rapid shooting, and the Greyfriars juniors did not think of hesitating. Their bullets swept through the Solomon Islanders and two of them pitched over headlong. (See Chapter 11.)

stream, and were probably out of hearing now—and his pride would not allow him to call. He stared round him in the stillness and silence, his brows knitted, his eyes gleaming under them. He was ready to fire at a sign of danger; but when the danger came it came without a warning sign.

Whiz!

A lump of coral rock whizzed through the air from the gloom of the palms and struck the revolver from the Bounder's hand. The pistol was torn from his grasp before he knew what was happening, and whirled in the air and dropped into the stream. The Bounder gave a sharp cry, his fingers numbed by the shock.

The next minute a figure that seemed a shadow was leaping on him. But it was no shadow that gripped him with a grip of steel.

Vernon-Smith caught a glimpse of a pale, clear-cut face, and two narrow eyes that glinted.

"Soames!" he panted.

The next instant he was down on his back on the edge of the stream, and struggling wildly in the grasp of the sea-lawyer.

He opened his mouth for a shout for help, though he had little hope that his comrades would hear. But that shout was never uttered.

A clenched fist struck him on the temple, and the Bounder's senses swam, and the intended shout died away in a faint moan.

What happened next the Bounder hardly knew.

He was not wholly unconscious, but nearly so, his brain swimming, his sight dim and dazed. He felt himself lifted

as easily as if he had been an infant—he knew that he was carried along, without having the power to move a finger. Then there was a blank, and then he knew that he was in some craft that surged on the water. It was not the whaleboat—the boat could not have been put to sea without the oars, which had been carefully hidden by the juniors when they landed. Vernon-Smith's vision cleared for a moment, and he saw Soames, paddle in hand, in the starlight—it was a canoe in which he was floating.

The Bounder made an effort to move, and Soames' eyes glittered at him, and he saw the paddle lifted threateningly; and he sank back again into almost complete unconsciousness.

Still, he was dimly aware of a rapid passage on calm, shining water, of great cliffs that towered and shut out the stars. He found himself lying on hard rock, with an arch of black basalt far above him. Again he made an effort, but it was too much for him, and he sank down again into blank insensibility.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Smithy?

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's the jolly old banyan!"

The juniors had found the tree where the half-caste had been left. It is said that at night all cats are grey; and certainly, after dark, all the trees along the sandy stream looked the same to Harry Wharton & Co. But they had found at last the great banyan where they had rested in the afternoon—guided, partly, by the

sound of a voice muttering curses in a mixture of Portuguese and beche-de-mer English. Under the foliage, among the many stems that dropped from the branches above and rooted in the soil, growing into new trunks, it was pitchy dark; but they had a glimmer of the furious face of the half-caste.

"Here's the brute!" said Bob.

A volley of curses from the half-caste answered him.

"Chuck that, you rotten brute!" snapped Wharton. "Hold your rascally tongue!"

Silvio's black eyes blazed at him.

For hours the half-caste had been there, bound to the stem of the banyan, struggling with his bonds, and struggling in vain, exhausted by his unavailing struggles, tormented by flies and mosquitoes and ants. He was almost mad with rage now.

"Some time I kill you—kill ten—twenty—thirty—kill all!" he ground out between his teeth.

"Shut up!" said Johnny Bull.

"The jawfulness is not the proper caper, my esteemed scoundrel," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh mildly.

"Untie the brute," said Harry. "Keep his arms tied, though—can't be too careful with the scoundrel."

"Yes, rather!"

The half-caste was released from the tree. But his sinewy arms were kept bound behind his back. He looked as if he was disposed to throw himself at the junior, tearing with his teeth like a wild beast, as indeed he was.

"You feller boy, what you do with me?" he snarled.

"We're taking you on the schooner," said Harry. "You deserve to be

dropped into the lagoon, you rascal. You'd better shut up."

"You no findee fat feller um glass eyes," said the half-caste, with a savage grin.

"No."
"Malaita boy make kai-kai fat feller along cooking-pot."

"Nothing of the kind," said Bob cheerily. "Fat feller he all right, and your giddy Malaita boys have got it in the neck. Soames—if you know who Soames is—got Bunter away from your dirty cannibals."

"No savvee Soames."
"Perhaps you savvee him under his South Sea name," chuckled Bob. "Your niggers seemed to savvee him. One of them called him 'Aitoo.'"

Silvio gave a great start.
"Aitoo! Him feller name Aitoo him here on island?"

"You know him, then?" asked Bob curiously. "Soames seems to be as well known in these parts as your jolly old uncle, Reddy."

"Aitoo!" repeated Silvio. "Him feller here! Fat feller Bunter tell along of Soames; me no savvee Soames Aitoo."

"I knew that Soames knew this scoundrel," said Redwing quietly. "When we met him on the yacht Soames kept out of sight. I guessed then that he did not want to be recognised."

The half-caste's burst of fury had passed. The mere mention of the name of "Aitoo" had quieted him. The juniors noticed that he cast uneasy glances round him as he was led out from the shadow of the banyan. It was plain that he had been deeply alarmed by learning that Aitoo, alias Soames, was one of his rivals in the quest of the treasure, and that he feared Aitoo more than he feared the juniors, though he was now a helpless prisoner in their hands.

"You needn't be afraid of Mr. Aitoo Soames," grinned Bob. "He's far enough away—and keeping away for the benefit of his health."

"Him debble!" said Silvio.
"Soames must have left a juicy reputation behind him in these parts, if a desperate villain like this is afraid of him," said Nugent. "Smithy's pater never knew what a prize-packet his valét was."

"We're not afraid of him, at any rate," said Bob. "We've got this rascal, and Soames knew better than to butt in again. Let's get this brute along."

The juniors marched their prisoner along the stream towards the beach. More and more stars had come out in the dark velvety sky, and the light was clearer now. Silvio tramped sullenly in the midst of the Greyfriars party, in silence, his dark brows knitted.

The party stopped where the oars of the whaleboat had been hidden in the palms, and took them out of their hiding-place. Then they marched on to the whaleboat. In the distance, across the lagoon, a single light showed them where the Aloha lay at anchor.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy!" shouted Bob.

There was no answer save the echoes of Bob's powerful voice reverberating along the lonely beach.

The juniors had reached the whaleboat, high and dry on the sand, but there was no sign of Herbert Vernon-Smith there.

"Smithy!" shouted Redwing.
"Where on earth has Smithy got to?" exclaimed Wharton. "He can't have missed his way; he had only to follow the stream."

"Smithy!" roared Bob Cherry.
The juniors stared round them in the starlight, puzzled and irritated. The Bounder had left them, to wait at the whaleboat, and they had expected to find him there. What had become of him was a mystery. If he did not choose to wait at the appointed spot, at least he should have been within sound of their voices. But there came no answer to their calling.

"Smithy!"
"Vernon-Smith!"
"You silly ass, show up!"
"Dash it all, this is too thick!" frowed Bob Cherry. "We're all as tired as dogs, and Smithy's showing off his dashed temper, I suppose."

"It's not that," said Redwing.
"Well, where is he, then?"
"Smithy!" shouted Redwing.
His voice carried far and wide, echoing along the shore, ringing back from the valley. But no answer came.

"He can't have got on board without the boat," said Harry. "He can't have missed it, either. He can't have been fool enough to wander away when he knew we were coming after him."

"Something's happened," said Redwing.
"Well, what?"
"Goodness knows!"
"Shout all together," said Nugent. "He must hear us if he's anywhere about at all."

"Smithy!"
Six voices joined in the shout. It did not reach the ears of Vernon-Smith, but it reached the schooner, riding at anchor out in the lagoon. The deep voice of Ben Dance came back across the shadowed waters.

"Ahoi, the shore!"
"Ahoi, the Aloha!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Seen anything of Smithy?"
"No, sir."
"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "What the thump has become of him? If this is one of his tempers, I'll jolly well punch his silly head when I see him again!"

"It's not that, I tell you," said Tom Redwing sharply. "Something has happened to Smithy. He was alone. Perhaps some of the Malaitas—"

"Rubbish! He had a revolver, and the Malaitas wouldn't have come near him. They ran fast enough when they tackled us. They're miles away," grunted Bob Cherry.

"Aitoo!" muttered Silvio, with a savage grin.
Bob Cherry swung round on the half-caste angrily.

"What's that? What do you mean?" he snapped.
"Aitoo get feller Smithy," grinned the half-caste. "You no see him any more bimeby. Aitoo him debble."
"Rot!" growled Bob.

But his look was uneasy, and the other fellows were uneasy, too. The mention of Soames seemed to explain the disappearance of Herbert Vernon-Smith. There seemed, at least, to be no other explanation.

"Isn't it just like Smithy to ask for trouble like this?" growled Johnny Bull. "Why couldn't he keep with us?"

The juniors were both angry and alarmed. If Vernon-Smith had fallen into Soames' hands the case was hopeless. They knew that Soames had the half-caste's canoe, and the lapping waters left no trace. The juniors were fatigued with their long day on the island, but fatigue would not have stopped them had there been any chance of finding Vernon-Smith. They stood undecided, perplexed and troubled, till Wharton spoke at last.

"Let's get on board. We can't do anything to-night."

"But Smithy, if that brute's got him!" muttered Redwing, his face pale and tense.

"His life's safe. If Soames had intended anything else we should have found Smithy dead!" answered Wharton curtly. "We can't help him by staying here now. We shall have to search for him and Bunter at dawn. Get the boat into the water."

There was evidently nothing else to be done. The whaleboat was run down into the lagoon, and, with the bound half-caste sitting in the stern, the Greyfriars fellows pulled out to the anchored schooner.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Chart!

BEN DANCE peered down the side of the Aloha, and threw out the Jacob's ladder. Wharton made the whaleboat fast, and clambered up to the deck of the schooner.

"Throw down a line, Dance," he said. "There's a prisoner to come on board, and his hands are tied."

"Soames?" asked Dance.
"No; the half-caste!"
Dance gave a start.

"Not Silvio."
"Yes," said Harry, with a faint smile. He knew the wooden-legged seaman's dread of the half-caste.

"We've got that brute!"
"Shiver me!" exclaimed Dance, in astonishment. "You've got Silvio! You've got that demon?"

"Yes; sling down a rope!"
Ben Dance peered down the side again. The starlight glimmered on the olive face, the bandaged forehead, and gold ear-rings of the half-caste. Dance stared at him as if he could hardly believe his eyes, and Silvio Xero, looking up, met his staring eyes with a bitter scowl.

"You've got him," said Dance, like a man in a dream. "You've got that demon. Master Wharton, don't let him come on board; I tell you, if you let him on the ship, we're done for—and you can lay to that. Drop him into the lagoon, and the sharks will finish him."

"Bosh! Drop a line to him," said Harry impatiently.

"I tell you, sir—" said Dance earnestly.

"Are you afraid of the man with his hands bound?" said Wharton.
"Aye, aye, sir, I'm afraid of him, so long as he's living," answered Dance.
"Rubbish! Throw a line to the boat."

Dance unwillingly obeyed, and Bob Cherry secured the rope to the half-caste. Silvio was pulled up the side, and the juniors followed, and then the Kanakas swung the whaleboat up to the davits.

Bound as he was, a powerless prisoner, Silvio had evidently not lost his terror for the wooden-legged seaman. Dance seemed reluctant to approach the man with the ear-rings, who stood scowling on the deck, eyed curiously by the Kanakas. Silvio's glittering eyes turned on him, and Dance shrank back.

"You 'fraid," muttered Silvio. "You savvee I kill you, kill ten, twenty, thirty—kill all! You savvee!"

"It's madness, sir," said Dance, with a shake in his voice. "You've got the brute, you must make sure of him. I tell you that demon has killed more men than he's got fingers and toes. He

killed Black Peter on the beach—he's wanted in a hundred islands for murder and robbery. Hang him to the boom, sir, while you've got the chance."

"That's what Black Peter would have done, I suppose," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Aye, aye, sir; he was the man for it," said Dance.

"What do you say, Roddy? Shall we follow in your jolly old uncle's footsteps?" asked Bob.

Redwing smiled faintly.

"The man is safe enough, Dance," he said.

"He ain't safe, and never will be, till the sharks get him," answered the wooden-legged seaman, shaking his head.

"There's more dangerous characters than Silvio about," said Bob. "Did you ever hear of a johnny called Aitoo, Dance?"

"Aye, aye, sir! I never seed him, but every man in the South Seas must have heard of him, years ago," said Dance. "The Kanakas gave him that name, which means devil."

"Well, you've seen him, without knowing it," said Bob. "We've found out that Soames was called Aitoo when he was in these seas years ago."

Dance stared at him blankly.

"And Soames has got hold of Bunter and Smithy," added Bob. "We've got to find them to-morrow, before we go treasure-hunting again. Now let's fix up this scoundrel safely somewhere."

"There must be some irons on board," said Nugent. "The brute will be safe enough in irons."

"Have you searched him, sir?" asked Dance.

"We've disarmed him," said Harry. "You can search him if you like, if you think he's got anything hidden on him."

Silvio made a step back. Little as the Greyfriars juniors dreamed it, the Treasure Chart was in the possession of the half-caste. Silvio had lugged that secret to himself. For reasons which the ferocious half-caste did not understand in the least, his captors were sparing his worthless life; and to Silvio's mind, his escape was only a matter of time. He had hoped to escape with Black Peter's chart still hidden about him. Certainly, the juniors and Dance were not likely to suspect that the half-caste had picked up the Treasure Chart floating on the Pacific.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" He doesn't seem to like the idea of being searched," exclaimed Bob, as the half-caste started back, panting.

Wharton knitted his brows. It was very likely that a man of Silvio's kind had some weapon hidden about him, and the captain of the *Remove* realised that he had been careless.

"Search him!" he said. "Search the brute to the skin! We're not taking chance with him."

The half-caste gnashed his teeth with rage, as the juniors promptly seized him. He kicked and struggled and bit like a wild animal.

Crash! The half-caste went down on the deck with a shock that almost stunned him.

"Now be quiet, you wild beast!" growled Johnny Bull. "Knock him on the head if he struggles again!"

The half-caste lay dazed and panting, while the juniors searched through his clothes. A knife, hidden at the back of his waist-band, was taken away. Then every pocket was carefully turned out. A polished disc of teak-wood came to view in Bob Cherry's

THE TREASURE AT LAST!

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hand. He stared at it blankly for a second, and then gave a roar.

"The chart!"

"What?"

"The Treasure Chart!" roared Bob, in amazement and delight.

"Great Scott!"

Redwing stared at the disc of teak.

"The chart!" he stuttered. "But I threw it into the sea—"

"And it's come back like the bad penny!" chuckled Bob. "How the merry thump did this rascal get hold of it?"

"Well, my only hat!" said Wharton, with a deep breath. "This beats it."

"The beatfulness is terrific."

It was an amazing discovery. Since the treasure chart had been thrown into the sea by Tom Redwing, to save it from the clutches of the sea-lawyer, the Greyfriars fellows had never dreamed of seeing it again. And here it was—amazingly recovered from the vast Pacific.

"Well, this is what I call luck," said Bob Cherry. "Who'd have thought it? It's the jolly old chart, Reddy!"

"It's the chart, right enough," said Tom. He had taken the disc of teak, and was staring at it with amazed eyes. "I never dreamed I should ever see it again. And I can see now that my copy was not quite correct—look! That line of crosses, over the word 'cache' runs in a direct line from the peak to the Kanaka's Head—and I had overlooked that. We shall find it plain sailing when we start after the treasure again. Keeping the Kanaka's Head directly behind us, and the peak directly in front, we shall be on the right way."

"Good!"

Bob Cherry turned to the half-caste with a grin. Silvio was gnashing his teeth with impotent rage. A strange freak of chance had placed the Treasure Chart in his hands—only to return it, at last, to the rightful owner.

"Much obliged, old bean!" grinned Bob. "Even an unwashed yellow scoundrel may come in useful sometimes. How did you get hold of the chart?"

"I pick um up along sea," snarled the half-caste. "I take um again, bimeby, kill you all—kill ten—twenty—thirty—"

"That will do," said Bob. "You can shut up! Dance, if you can find any irons on board—"

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Dance. "Captain Lennox must have had irons on the schooner. Here, you feller boy Kalashti."

Five minutes later, the half-caste was unbound, and his arms and legs were secured in a set of iron manacles. Wharton locked them carefully, and put the key in his pocket. The half-caste, muttering and cursing, was placed in the deck-house. As Dance closed the door on him, his eyes gleamed at the wooden-legged seaman with deadly menace.

"You feller Dance, you wait one little—killy you—killy all of you bimeby, killy all belong Aloha—"

Dance, with a deeply-clouded face, closed the door of the deck-house on the savage half-caste. Deep in his heart was a conviction that Silvio spoke the truth—if Silvio lived!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Fate of the Half-caste!

NIGHT darkened on the Pacific. The Aloha rode quietly at her anchor, and on the forward deck the Kanaka seamen slept under the stars.

But Harry Wharton & Co., tired as they were, were not in the mood for sleep.

The strange recovery of the treasure chart had given the juniors keen satisfaction. They felt assured that the difficulties that had beset the search for the cached pearls would fade away, now that Black Peter's chart was in their hands once more. But the treasure was far from being first and foremost in their minds now. Nor were they, like Dance, thinking of the savage prisoner in the deck-house, and fearing him, prisoner as he was. Two members of the Greyfriars party were missing, and that was what filled the thoughts of the juniors and weighed upon their minds.

Bunter owed his misfortune to his own obstinate and fatuous folly; the Bounder to his sulky temper. But the Greyfriars fellows hardly thought of that. The two juniors were prisoners in the hands of an enemy, and they could not be searched for till another day dawned upon Caca. Where they were, the juniors had no idea; but they knew that Soames knew Caca from end to end, and they had no doubt that he had a safe hiding-place.

The sea-lawyer, whom they had defeated, who had fled, unarmed and desperate, was not, as they had believed, harmless now; he was still a dangerous enemy. That fact was borne

in upon their minds very forcibly. Bunter, it was true, he had saved from the Solomon Island cannibals, but he was keeping the fat junior in his hands; and the Bounder he had deliberately attacked and taken prisoner.

It seemed to Wharton, as he thought the matter over with knitted brows, that he could glimpse the game that Soames was intending to play. Openly, he could do nothing against the Greyfriars party, armed and resolute as they were. Was it his game to haunt their footsteps, to watch and wait, watching and waiting with the feline patience they knew so well in Soames, for opportunities to deal with them singly, taking them off their guard at any moment that their vigilance relaxed?

The enemy they had expected on the island—Silvio, the half-caste—was in their hands, ironed and powerless. But a more dangerous enemy was in the island, and the fight for the treasure, so far from being over, had scarcely begun. The secret enemy of the Golden Arrow, the mutineer of the Aloha, was there—stealthy, implacable, watchful as a cat, dangerous as a tiger.

"They're safe," said Bob Cherry, breaking a long silence as the juniors sat in the starlight on the deck. "Soames would not dare to harm them. He knows the chances are against him, cunning as he is, and he knows we'd shoot him like a dog if he harmed a hair of their heads."

"I'm sure that's so," said Harry; "and I hardly think he would want to harm them—unless it was for his safety. But—"

"We'll hunt them out to-morrow," said Bob.

"I don't think it will be easy. And

we've all got to keep together when we go ashore again," said Wharton. "Soames' game must be to catch us singly if he can—and Smithy fairly played into his hands. That must not happen again."

"If you'd done as I advised you, sir," said Ben Dance, "Soames would be at the bottom of the lagoon now."

"Rot!" said Bob cheerily.

"If I'd known that he was the shark I've heard of so much—the man they call Aitoo, he wouldn't have got away from the schooner alive," said Dance. "Fifteen years ago he was known to be the most dangerous man in the islands. That's why he disappeared, I reckon—he'd made all the Pacific too hot for him. Now he's come back, it's all up with you young gentlemen. You can lay to it that you'll never handle the treasure, with Aitoo on the island."

"You told us the same tale about Silvio," said Bob, with a grin. "We've handled Silvio easily enough."

Dance grunted and shook his head. For once the cheery good-humour of the wooden-legged seaman seemed to be gone. He was in a sullen temper, and the juniors knew the cause—their refusal to allow him to throw the half-caste to the sharks. Silvio was a prisoner in irons; but Dance had no belief that he would remain a prisoner, and he believed that his own life and the lives of all the juniors were at stake. Ever since he had sailed with the Greyfriars party, Dance had been cheery and respectful, only too willing to carry out orders. Now he was sullen and resentful, and he sat on the cabin skylight, smoking his pipe, with a black brow.

"Give it a miss, Dance, old bean," said Bob. "Get it into your head that you're not sailing with Black Peter now, and Black Peter's methods won't wash on this schooner. Silvio's safe enough till we sail away from Caca and hand him over to chokey."

"If you sail from Caca with Silvio on board, you'll never see a white man's country again!" said Dance. "He won't be in irons long. He may have friends on this craft, for all we know—among the Kanakas. That Tonga cook was talking to him in his own lingo when he took in his rations."

"He can't talk him out of his irons," said Bob—"and Wharton's got the key safe."

"Them old irons would open to a cold chisel," said Dance. "I tell you the man ain't safe!"

"The safe-fulness is terrific, my esteemed Dance," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh reassuringly.

Dance grunted and was silent.

As the night grew older the juniors stretched themselves on blankets on deck and slept, Harry Wharton taking the first watch, with the rifle under his arm. Dance did not sleep. He sat on the cabin skylight and smoked and watched. It seemed that he could not close his eyes while the half-caste was on the schooner.

"You can turn in, Dance," said Wharton at last.

"I ain't shutting a peeper while that shark is on board!" growled the wooden-legged seaman. "I reckon I'd never open it again!"

"What rot!" said Wharton impatiently.

"You go to sleep, sir," said Dance. "I've rested all day, and I'm fit to keep watch. You need sleep more than I do."

It was true enough; Wharton was wearied out.

"Well, if you're going to keep awake, Dance—" he said.

A REPRODUCTION of the COVER of our WEDNESDAY COMPANION PAPER:



This topping issue contains among other features, an extra-long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, entitled:

"THE CHANGELING OF ST. JIM'S!"

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Twin brothers—a rotter of the worst type, and a really decent fellow who is a sportsman to the core—figure in this amazing tale of school life and adventure. And the trouble at St. Jim's is to know which is the rotter, and which is the decent chap, for outwardly the Castleton twins are alike as two peas!

BAGGY TRIMBLE'S LATEST STUNT FOR RAISING THE WIND.

"I ain't closing an eye to night, sir, and you can lay to that," said the wooden-legged seaman emphatically.

"Very well, then."

Wharton handed the rifle to him, and gladly stretched his own tired limbs on a blanket. In less than a minute he was asleep.

Dance sat with the rifle across his knees, his eyes on the door of the deck-house at a little distance. It seemed as if he more than half-expected to see the half-caste emerge, manacled as he was. Dance knew the South Seas better than the Greyfriars juniors did, and he knew the treachery that often lurked under the smiling submissiveness of the natives. There might be old acquaintances of the half-caste among the Kanaka crew, willing to help him—perhaps afraid not to help him; and he did not trust the Tonga Islander, whom he had interrupted in talking to the prisoner in his dialect. Dance's eyes gleamed for a moment as he saw a black, fuzzy head raised on the shadowy deck forward, where the crew were sleeping, and caught the glitter of black rolling eyes.

Dance did not move; only his head sunk a little on his breast, as if he were sinking into slumber.

But under the brim of his wide grass hat he was watching.

The head was raised again, and then the Tonga Islander was on his feet. Dance did not stir.

Soundless, the Tonga man crept aft. He stood silent beside the deck-house for several long minutes, watching the sunken head of the seaman sitting on the cabin skylight. He was satisfied at last that Dance had dropped into slumber, and he vanished into the deck-house. A faint clink of metal was audible in the silence, and Dance's eyes burned under the shadow of his plaited grass hat.

Still he did not stir.

From the deck-house the Tonga Islander emerged, glanced once more at the wooden-legged seaman, and disappeared silently forward. Dance gave him no heed. His eyes, hidden under the grass hat, were fixed with deadly intentness on the black doorway of the deck-house.

Not a sound, not a whisper of a sound, was heard; but the figure of the half-caste appeared in the doorway, with white, tense face, and black eyes gleaming. Had Harry Wharton & Co. been awake, they would have seen that the half-caste was not ironed now. But the chums of Greyfriars were sleeping the sleep of weariness, and their eyes were fast closed. But the eyes of the wooden-legged seaman were open and watching; and though he did not stir, his grasp had closed almost convulsively on the rifle.

Silvio stood in the narrow doorway of the deck-house, silent, watchful, and the starlight glimmered on his white teeth as his lips were drawn back in a snarl.

He stepped out on the deck silently, and the starlight caught the cold glimmer of steel. The Tonga Islander had freed him of the irons and given him a knife. Silvio Xero was not thinking of a plunge into the sea and escape to the shore. His thoughts were more deadly than that. He was thinking of vengeance—of ruthless vengeance—of merciless death to his enemies, and the treasure chart and the schooner for himself. Still Dance did not move—even when the half-caste, with his stealthy tread of a cat, came slowly across the deck towards the sleeping group. Not till he was within six paces did Dance stir.



Conscious of a shadow that moved among the palms close by, Vernon-Smith spun round, jerked the revolver from his belt, and half raised it. With throbbing heart he stood there, his brows knotted, his eyes gleaming under them, ready to fire at a sign of danger. Suddenly, however, and without warning, a lump of coral rock came whizzing through the air towards him: (See Chapter 12.)

Then he stirred suddenly.

The rifle was thrust forward, and with the muzzle almost touching the half-caste, Ben Dance pulled the trigger. Bang!

The report rang almost thunderously along the deck of the Aloha, instantly waking every soul on board.

There was a terrific yell from the half-caste.

Harry Wharton, as he sprang to his feet, heard the sound of a heavy fall. He stared round at the sprawling, crumpled ruffian, gasping his life out on the deck.

"Good heavens, what—"

Dance leaped up. He sprang forward and placed the muzzle of the rifle to Silvio's breast. Wharton stuck it aside, and the bullet glanced along the deck.

"Stop!" he panted.

"He's loose!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He's out of the irons! What the thump—"

Wharton snatched the rifle from Ben Dance. But the second shot the wooden-legged seaman had intended to deliver was not needed. Silvio Xero gave one groan, and uttered no further sound.

The juniors stared at him in horror. The sight of the bare knife still grasped in the half-caste's hand warned them of the fate they had narrowly escaped.

"I reckon I warned you he wasn't safe, even in irons," said Ben Dance. "I told you you could lay to that."

"But, what—who released him?"

"I reckon I'm going to speak to the lubber who let him loose when I've sunk this carrion!" said Dance grimly.

Splash!

A black fin showed on the starlit water, a hideous snout was thrust up for a moment. Harry Wharton & Co. turned away, sick with horror, as Silvio the half-caste, was dragged into the depths of the sea, the prey of the tiger-sharks. Unmoved, evidently relieved, Ben Dance selected a thick rope's-end and went forward.

"You feller Talupa! What name you let loose prisoner? By golly, I knock seven bells and a dog-watch outer you!"

And the wild yells of the Tonga Islander rang across the lagoon as he squirmed and cowered under a rain of blows. It was not till Dance's sinewy arm was aching that he ceased, and he came back aft breathing hard, leaving the cook groaning on the deck.

There was no more sleep for Harry Wharton & Co. that night. With wakeful eyes they watched the stars pale and fade out, and a new dawn break over the coral reefs and the island of treasure and terror.

THE END.

(What new and perilous adventures are in store for the schoolboy Treasure-seekers? See next week's topping long story of the Greyfriars chums, entitled: "Black Peter's Treasure!")

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THE FROZEN YUKON! The terrors of a Yukon winter are brought home with hammer force to Jack and Terry, as, with their old pard Uncle Clem and husky Skookum, they set out on the ice-bound trail to Dawson. And borne to them on the icy wind come the menacing howls of the wolves dogging their trail!

Gold for the Getting!



By Stanton Hope

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

The Fire in the "High Life"!

"TAKE that for one, ye haythen spalpeen!" yelled Terry, his Irish fighting blood thoroughly roused. "'Tis no invitation ye had to this fight at all, at all!"

"Look out, Bull!"

Lefty's warning shout caused Bull Morgan to release his grip on Jack's throat in time to meet the attack of Terry, who was advancing on him with a chair snatched from the hand of the injured Chinaman. Whirling the chair, Terry rushed at the six-foot-two giant; but Morgan warded the blow on his leg-of-mutton forearm.

"By heck! I'll kill ye for that, y' young skunk!" thundered Bull.

Jack, with a red mist swimming before his eyes, crashed his right fist against the giant's ribs, and was knocked flat on his back the next minute by a back-hander to the mouth.

In the nick of time Terry leaped on to the card-table, his feet sending the nuggets in a golden shower to the boards. From this point of vantage he whirled the chair above his head ready to meet the combined attack of the rogues, for Lefty Simons and Wung had recovered themselves.

An empty bottle flew from the yellow hand of the Chinaman and crashed through the glass of the window high in the partition. Simultaneously, a howl of alarm rose from Simons:

"Mind that chair, you crazy young fool!"

Almost coincident with the cry was the thwack of Terry's upflung chair against the chain which held the oil-lamp suspended from the ceiling. A terrific crash and explosion followed as the chain was jerked from its hook and the lamp fell on the edge of the table.

A stream of blazing coal-oil, or paraffin, shot over the floor, and the odour of it came pungently to the nostrils. In an instant, as it seemed, the place was on fire.

"Faith, that's done it!"

Terry flung the chair from him and took a flying leap over the flames to the side of Jack. Morgan bellowed with rage, and Simons and Wung squealed with fear, and dashed for the door away

from the threatening spears of orange flame which waved madly upward beside the table.

For a moment Morgan himself hesitated; then, as if realising the futility of trying to put out that blazing oil, barged wildly after the other two and crashed the door shut behind him.

Jack and Terry, who had snatched up a pair of moth-eaten wolf-skin rugs with the intention of trying to smother the flames, flung them aside as they heard that ominous bang of the door.

"The skunks!" exclaimed Jack. "They've locked us in!"

Together they beat their fists against the panels and yelled with all the power of their lungs. There was no response from the rogues who had left them to so dreadful a fate, and they looked about for some other means of getting out of the now doomed building.

From the first it was hopeless to try to extinguish the blazing oil which had spread over the wooden floor and a part of the table. The boards of which the apartment was built, and the various fittings, were bone-dry, and made excellent fuel for the devouring flames.

In the orange light of the roaring fire Jack and Terry cast quick, apprehensive glances at one another.

"The window, old man!" cried Jack. "It's the only possible way out!"

Stooping, he picked up one of the wolf-skin rugs again and wrapped it round his right fist, at the same time calling to Terry.

"Give me a bunk up!" he panted.

Terry stooped down and Jack clambered on his back, and with his rug-protected fist vigorously smashed away the jagged glass from the narrow window in the partition.

Now the heat was almost unbearable. Perspiration streamed from the faces of the boys, and their clothes were beginning to smoulder on them.

"Right-ho, Terry!" gasped Jack, leaping down. "I—I'll givo you a hoist up first."

"'Tis crazy ye are!" spluttered Terry. "Up you go, me bhoy!"

"Don't argue, ass!" cried Jack impatiently. "You're only wasting precious time."

To the roaring accompaniment of the

fast-spreading fire, he clutched his chum violently round the legs and hoisted him upwards. Terry got his fingers to the ledge of the window from which the glass had been broken, and by a desperate effort wriggled half-way through the narrow aperture. Then, reaching down, he gripped Jack's wrist, and his chum scrambled up the partition and in turn got his fingers to the ledge.

"Quick! Drop down, Terry, so's I can get through!"

The Irish boy squirmed through as he was bidden, and Jack heard him drop with a thud in the pool saloon on the other side. And Jack's own passage through the high window in the partition was considerably speeded by a painful burning sensation in the region of his coat-tails.

He dropped with a thud on the floor beside Terry and shot forward on his hands and knees.

"Shure, 'tis aight ye are behind, me bhoy!" cried Terry. "For Hiven's sake, keep still a minute!"

Obligingly Jack remained in a kneeling position, while his chum brought a lusty hand down on that part of him which needed attention.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

"Ooch! Crumbs! Steady!"

"There, me bhoy," said Terry. "the foire's extinguished and you'll feel better now."

"Thanks, old man," said Jack, jumping up. "But, by jingo, you never do things by halves, do you? Those rotten crooks haven't got out yet, I sec."

At the far end of the pool saloon, Morgan, Simons, and Wung were trying to unfasten the door. They had withdrawn the bolts, but something had gone wrong with the lock, and they were indulging in a frenzy of abuse as they vainly tried to open it with the key.

Even if they were aware of the boys' escape from the burning card-room, they were now only too anxious to get out and summon the fire brigade.

"We'd better go down that side passage, Terry," suggested Jack. "Surely there's a way out of the back, though why the dickens Morgan and his pals haven't taken it I can't imagine."

They speedily discovered, however, that there was no exit at the back, and that the only window was barred. The place had been built like a great box.

Flames were bursting through cracks in the partition as the boys returned to the pool saloon, and they saw that by this time Bull Morgan and his cronies had unlocked the door.

"Stand by—stand by a minute!" growled Morgan, turning and seeing the lads. "I'll deal with these cubs afore we go."

He snatched up a heavily-butted pool cue, and, with murderous intent in his close-set eyes, came charging between the tables.

A box of coloured pool balls was on the bench near to Jack's hand, and he snatched up one and threw it with deadly aim. It struck the big bully full in the belt, doubling him up like a half-shut jack-knife.

"Jolly good shot, Jack!" cried Terry. "Bedad, let me get at that box!"

Between his gasps of pain the murderous Morgan called upon Lefty Simons to come and help "smash" the boys. He himself, however, quickly turned tail and ducked his head to avoid a couple of hard composition balls flung by the youngsters. The third ball smote him a lusty thwack as he bent, and emitting another yelp of pain, he grasped the injured spot with both hands and dived between two of the tables.

An instant later Simons, who had left Wung to help his big comrade, was discouraged also by a pool ball which struck him full on the chest, and he promptly beat it back to the door.

Jack and Terry, knowing full well they would get no quarter, were prepared to give no quarter themselves. Only the timely retreat of Morgan and Simons saved the rogues from severe injuries.

"Don't follow em to the door, Terry!" panted Jack. "The beasts will probably throw themselves on us as we go out. We'll smash one of these shutters."

The partition of the card-room was aflame and a dense cloud of smoke and sparks was swirling through the doomed pool saloon. There was little enough time to lose, and picking up the heavy cue dropped by Morgan, Jack crashed the butt end against the thin wooden shutters of one of the side windows. In half a minute he had smashed a couple of the boards, so that he and Terry could get their fingers between them and tear them away. Then quickly the boys tore out half a dozen other laths.

"Now hop out, Terry!" ordered Jack. "I'll sling the blankets to you."

He groped his way to the pool table which they had used as a bed, grabbed the blankets and other possessions, and passed them through to Terry, who was standing outside in the teeming rain ready to receive them.

By this time a portion of the roof at the rear part of the great box-like building had fallen in, and a great pillar of smoke and flame made a startling beacon against the black sky of the Yukon night.

Above the roar of the flames and hiss of the rain spattering on the burning building came the shouts of excited men hurrying along Seventh Street. A motor fire-engine of the latest American make swung up, and hoses were soon playing on the furnace. But like hungry serpents the flames swept down the whole length of the building, and within five minutes of the departure of the boys the High Life Pool Saloon was a roaring furnace from end to end.

The chums mingled among the fast collecting throng, and, unseen by Morgan, Simons, and the Chinaman, made their way to the quarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Sensibly they decided to get in their say first, and they were fortunate enough to find their friend Sergeant Curtis, and to him they told the unvarnished story of their visit to the High Life, and how the building had been set on fire.

They also stated that Morgan had the great Bear's Claw nugget, and suggested that he and his pard should be arrested forthwith.

The sergeant, who long before had received from the American police a description of the stolen gold and of Dave Orchard, the suspected thief, was immensely interested by this latter part of the boys' strange story.

One or two members of the R.C.M.P. had already gone to the scene of the conflagration, and now three other Mounties went out and brought in Bull Morgan, Lefty Simons, and Wung, the Chinese servant.

The rage of the scoundrels at finding the boys had got to windward of them knew no bounds, and all three grew violently abusive at once. They were sternly suppressed by Sergeant Curtis, who then listened to the story of each.

Morgan opened the ball by as pretty a pack of lies as ever the chums had listened to. He stated that Jack and Terry had come to the High Life for a night's doss, and had tried to steal some gold nuggets. When they had been caught in the act by himself and Simons, the Irish boy had deliberately smashed the oil-lamp and caused the blaze. In picturesque language he denied that he had ever worn a gold nugget in the shape of a bear's claw, or indeed possessed such a valuable.

Of course, Lefty Simons corroborated everything that Morgan said, except that he added a few more lying details of his own. And finally Wung, speaking

INTRODUCTION.

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

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

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

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

CLEM HARDY, an old prospector, whom they come to call Uncle Clem. At times during their rough journey the three have trouble with a pair of bullies named 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, the two chums visit the town of Dawson for winter supplies. They are staying the night in a "down toon" saloon, the only accommodation available, when they are awakened by angry voices in the next room. Looking through a window, they see their old enemies, Morgan and Simons, apparently owners of the place, fighting. The cause of the dispute is a gold nugget, shaped like a bear's claw, which is hanging round the neck of Morgan.

Jack instantly recognises that nugget as part of the bag of gold his uncle is supposed to have stolen.

Before the fight can come to a conclusion, the presence of the boys is discovered by the bullies, and their Chinese servant. Jack and Terry are pounced upon, and they find themselves fighting for their lives.

(Now read on.)

in pidgin English, corroborated everything that his two precious masters had said, and naively added that he could also corroborate everything else that they were going to say.

In a brusque tone Sergeant Curtis told them that owing to the information given by the boys, it would be necessary for Morgan and his associates to submit to a search. This was carried out by the sergeant himself, and when he returned to the office where Jack and Terry were waiting, he announced that nothing had been found on any of the men.

"Then they must have hidden the big nugget!" cried Jack. "They've had time to do it since they made their getaway from the saloon. I'd take oath in any court of law that the nugget I saw Bull Morgan wearing was the Bear's Claw. There can't be two like it in the world. My uncle, Dave Orchard, was accused of stealing it, and it looks to me as though these beastly crooks—Morgan and Simons—are really the thieves."

"It's mighty strange," muttered the sergeant. "Though even if Morgan had the nugget it wouldn't definitely prove that your uncle wasn't actually the thief and this man merely the receiver."

"I tell you I've never seen the thing!" rumbled Morgan, coming in and adjusting his coat. "Those cubs have been handin' out nothin' but lies. I'll have the law on both of 'em! Our pool saloon wasn't insured, and this is a mighty big loss for me and my pard, 'specially as there was a deal of small nuggets and coarse gold in a smaller room at the back o' the building."

"Well, fire won't destroy gold," retorted Sergeant Curtis, "and I guess if we put a watch on the building to-night, and you go and scrape around in the charred remains to-morrow morning, you'll find your gold all right, welded in as big a nugget as you've ever clapped eyes on."

There was no charge which could be substantiated on either side. The advantage lay strongly with Jack and Terry, however, for now they knew perfectly well that Morgan had got the Bear's Claw nugget, and must have hidden it somewhere in Dawson. The trouble was that the big rogue might not go near the cache for weeks, and there were so many places where such an object could be secreted safely.

The loss to Morgan and Simons on account of the fire was extremely heavy, and neither did they get back all their ill-gotten gold from the burnt-out gaming-room.

Although they saw Jack and Terry several times in Dawson during the next few days, they did not molest them. Their evil looks, though, conveyed only too plainly the intense hatred they felt and their evil intentions for the future. For both Morgan and Simons were determined to wreak a terrible revenge on the boys whose youthful pluck had proved more than a match for their seasoned villainy.

The White Trail!

THE chums did not underestimate the danger from their unscrupulous enemies, but they knew that they were safe in Dawson, where there was strong police protection. They managed to secure shelter through the kind offices of Sergeant Curtis, and spent the next few days attending to various matters of business, including visits to the stores for the making of purchases to take back to the Yellow Horseshoe claim.

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Within a week of their arrival in Dawson they took farewell of their friend the sergeant, and embarked on the steamer for McLennan Crossing, with a deal of luggage in the form of a supply of winter clothing, plenty of strong twine for animal snares, a Primus stove, and some up-to-date miner's implements for working their claim in the cold weather.

At McLennan Crossing they also made some purchases—flour, pork, lard, salt, tea, and sugar. Then, loaded like mules, they set off on the rough trail back to their claim on Starvation Creek and their old partner who was waiting for them.

An icy wind that cut to the bone was keening down from the north when Jack and Terry got back to the claim at Starvation Creek. The warmth of their welcome, though, from Uncle Clem and Skookum was in marked contrast to the uncharitable weather. That, followed by a hot tubbing and a plentiful meal, put fresh life into their trail-weary limbs and a joyful glow into their hearts.

Ensnared in rough home-made chairs they told of their adventures in Dawson.

Gradually, as their tale unfolded itself, and Uncle Clem learned of their peril from the rogues Morgan and Lefty Simons, his manner grew more serious. His surprise at the re-appearance of the Bear's Claw nugget in Morgan's hands was superseded by anger at the scoundrels' treachery and disappointment that the police had been unable to effect their arrest.

For a long time after Jack and Terry had told of their experiences in the High Life Saloon, Uncle Clem remained puffing his pipe in silence. Onco or twice he opened his mouth as though to speak, but each time closed it again as if reconsidering what was in his mind. When at last he did speak it was to voice his anxiety that the boys should have incurred the enmity of so unscrupulous a pair of ruffians.

"Later on it will be necessary to go to Dawson again, boys," he said, "but next time I shan't let you go alone. I'd like to see those two roughnecks put away in gaol for a long stretch. I'll see they get their deserts before I'm through."

During the next few days there was so much to be done that Morgan and Simons faded into the background as a topic for conversation.

That icy wind from the north was but a mild foretaste of the keen-toothed winter which soon would hold the Yukon in its grip. As a measure of protection against the fierce cold which might be expected they nailed large strips of bark on the inside walls of their little cabin to stop up every chink. Afterwards they added an extra inner lining of saplings, which they cut to length and nailed in position. When they had strengthened the roof and added a storm door, even Uncle Clem, who knew something of the terrors of a Yukon winter, agreed that the cabin would make a snug retreat in all but the worst of northern blizzards.

After a few days the wind dropped, and there immediately followed the first fall of snow. Ten inches of it fell during the night, and the gold-getters rose to find their claim and all the rugged country about it covered with a dazzling white mantle. Ice formed on the edges of the creek, and the creek itself cut the whiteness of the landscape like a stream of ink.

When the cabin had been made secure the partners began the getting out of pay-dirt for a great clean-up in the following spring. At first they were able to use pick and shovel, but as the grip of winter tightened in the Northland the ground froze solid.

"'Tis no more picking we'll be able to do," remarked Terry one day, "for 'tis like trying to get the pick through iron. How else to get out the dirt is the burning question."

"You're right, Terry," chuckled

Uncle Clem, "and you might well have said it was a question of burning. For that's how we shall have to work our claim during the freeze-up—by burning wood to thaw out the ground, so that we can get down to bed-rock."

By working hard cutting cordwood they were able to keep two big bonfires going during the day, and by the evening it was possible to pick out soil to the depth of a foot where the ground had been thawed by the fires. This they carried to form a dump conveniently near the sluices ready for the washing-out process when the long Yukon winter was over.

It was about twenty-five feet down to bed-rock, and when the hole became sufficiently deep they had to rig a windlass and a bucket for hoisting out the dirt. At intervals Uncle Clem took a pan of dirt into the cabin, washed it out in warm water, and weighed the gold. The results showed only too clearly that they had not struck it rich, but there was enough of the precious metal to make working the claim just worth the while.

Snow fell at intervals and the temperature varied greatly, sometimes dropping well below zero at night. The days dragged on into weeks, and Uncle Clem grew more and more restless and unsettled. He talked often about Dawson, and he seemed to have lost his former aversion for civilisation, for he mooted a short holiday there.

One day an Indian arrived at the cabin—almost the first human soul they had seen for weeks. The man was on his way to Circle City, and his blankets and one or two pots and pans were stacked on a small sledge which he drew by means of a rope.

The partners received him with the usual hospitality of the North and they exchanged news. The Indian said that miners returning to Three Tree Camp, where he had been working for wages, had reported that "bad men" had burnt down the cabins of two gold miners and torn up the floors for cached gold. This was disquieting news, for the gold mined by the three partners was hidden, as they had thought securely, under the cabin floor.

Before hitting the trail again the Indian said that he could get on better without his sledge, as his load was smaller than when he had set out from the camp. So thinking the sledge might be useful, Uncle Clem weighed him out a couple of ounces of gold for it.

"Seems to me," remarked Jack, after their visitor had left, "that we'd better find a new hiding-place for our gold, in case bandits take it into their heads to visit us."

"The safest place, after all, is a bank," returned Uncle Clem, "and we'll take it with us to Dawson, where it will be secure for you—I mean for all of us."

His manner was so curious that Jack and Terry remarked on it between themselves. After the hard work of the early winter they were quite ready themselves to go to Dawson for their Christmas celebration, but chiefly they thought that the return to civilisation would be good for Uncle Clem.

They set out on the trail early in December, and Uncle Clem said that they would prospect for gold at likely spots on their journey. They stowed a tent, blankets, various utensils, and enough provisions to last for many days, on the little sledge. Skookum, who was a trained sledge dog, came in useful for

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Uncle Clem dropped on one knee in the snow and took swift aim. A shot shattered the silence of the snow-clad Yukon hills, and the leading wolf dropped in his tracks. (See page 28.)

pulling this, and Jack and Terry helped by pushing the load over difficult places and up inclines.

For days they hit the frozen trail, crossing ice-bound creeks and rivers. Sometimes when they camped Uncle Clem would take his pick and smash off pieces of likely-looking rocks in search of those signs which, to his experienced eye, would tell if the area was gold-bearing or not. By this means he found many places rich in copper and other ores, but never a trace of that red metal, for the getting of which so many men have toiled and suffered and left their bones in the keeping of the Yukon for ever.

The swift descent of a spell of twenty-below-zero weather brought home with hammer force to Jack and Terry the rigour of a Yukon winter. It was accompanied by a twenty-mile-an-hour wind which cut through their furs like a knife and got to their very bones. Their progress slowed in the face of this wind and the bitter cold, and even Skookum, whose fur was rimed with frost, seemed to feel the sudden drop in temperature, and a note of severe displeasure crept into his barking.

Uncle Clem went on ahead, beating out a trail with his snow-shoes, and Skookum and the sledge followed, with Jack and Terry pushing behind. Their breath froze in white frost about their parkas and on the chest of their furs.

All at times got touches of frost-bite, but they were on the look-out for this. When any one of them was warned that his nose had become white at the tip, or his cheeks showed signs of the dreaded frost-bite, a halt was made while the afflicted member was rubbed with a handful of snow and the circulation of the blood restored.

Midday and evening camp became a luxury to look forward to and worked for with all their might. And on the first night of this cold spell their hot meal in the comparative warmth of the tent seemed the most wonderful supper of their lives.

They were about to roll in their Hudson Bay blankets for the sleep they

craved when a faint, yapping cry was borne to them on the night wind. It rose in crescendo like an appeal from the wild, yet with a note both fierce and sinister, and then died away into silence.

Jack and Terry looked at one another, their faces pale in the light of the storm lantern placed in the centre of a "floor" cleared of snow.

"Faith!" muttered Terry. "Phwat was that?"

"The howl of a wolf," answered Uncle Clem. "I expect there's been some mighty fierce weather up in the mountains lately, and the cold has brought them down."

On the threshold of the tent Skookum was standing, his fur a-quiver. His mouth was drawn in an angry snarl, baring his formidable fangs, and a rumbling growl quavered in his throat.

Another wolf howl and yet another rose on the night. But although the partners remained awake and alert for some time, the howling grew no nearer, and it was obvious that the hungry animals were keeping their distance.

Secure in the knowledge that Skookum would give ample warning of any real danger, they snuggled in their blankets and slept soundly. Morning revealed that neither the cold nor wind had abated, and although this meant another hard day on the trail, they were relieved to see no sign of wolves.

After a breakfast of hot coffee and fried bacon they once more set out on the white trail that led to Dawson.

For two or three miles they pressed onward in the teeth of the icy wind, Jack going slightly ahead of Skookum for a spell at beating down the trail with his snow-shoes. The rugged, snow-clad country appeared devoid of all life save their own, and because of that they were more startled when a wolf howl rose in faint crescendo and died away.

Uncle Clem glanced back sharply.

"That howl came up against the wind," he muttered. "Those brutes that kept their distance from our camp last night haven't given up their hope of a meal."

"Bedad! Do you mean they're following?" said Terry.

His answer was given by an outburst of angry yapping astern.

"They're following all right," remarked Uncle Clem grimly, "though they're keeping well out of sight among the pines and rocks. From the sound of that yapping I should judge there are several wolves in the pack, and they've just had a brief quarrel among themselves. Jack, push on a trifle faster, if you can; we'll try to make Bear Creek Camp by noon."

There was no doubt that Uncle Clem viewed the presence of the wolves with apprehension, though he proceeded to make light of the matter. The fact that the howls and yapping of the pack grew louder was quite sufficient to indicate that the wolves had drawn nearer.

Jack plodded along faster, and Skookum used every ounce of his great strength in hauling the sledge. Terry pushed up behind, and Uncle Clem, walking alongside the sledge, opened a box of ammunition and slipped a cartridge into the breech of his rifle and several more into the magazine.

During the next half-mile the wolves kept strangely quiet, and the only sounds were the faint crush of the snow-shoes in the snow and the heavy breathing of the three partners and their straining husky.

Suddenly the wintry air was split by another shrill cry, seemingly so near to hand that the party looked back sharply over their shoulders.

Then from out of a copse of spruce about three hundred yards to the rear and right bounded a lean-flanked wolf. Another and another swiftly appeared loping along, black and gaunt against the rough snowy wastes the little party had traversed.

"Well, there are enough of the spalpeens!" ejaculated Terry. "Had we better stop and fight them, do you think, Uncle Clem?"

"Go on—go on, boys!" ordered Uncle Clem. "I'll put a shot or two among them. That may scare 'em away."

He dropped on one knee in the snow, rested his left elbow on the other, and swiftly aligned his foresight in the V of his back-sight. A shot shattered the silence of the snow-clad Yukon hills, and the leading wolf dropped in its tracks.

A babel of howls, yaps, and snarls burst out from the rest of the pack, and they swung from all directions towards their stricken comrade.

To enable Uncle Clem to catch up, Jack and Terry had to slacken their pace.

"That'll delay the pack," panted their old partner, as they got going again.

On they went at a fairly good speed, hugging close the base of a range of hills intersected by gulches or small canyons. Once at the miners' camp at Bear Creek they would be safe; but Uncle Clem estimated that this settlement was still a good nine miles distant. And far behind rose the furious yapping of the starved wolf-pack.

"Bedad, let me take a turn at beating a trail, Jack," piped Terry.

So tiring was the work of making a track through the soft snow for the dog and the sledge that Jack willingly fell back and allowed his chum to take his place.

Terry, well practised on his snow-shoes by this time, set a pace of which an Indian tracker might have been proud. To Skookum, exerting every muscle just behind, the monotonous lift-lift of the Irish boy's feet to which those tennis racket-like snow-shoes of cane and buckskin were attached was a strain on his doggy eyes.

The steady, keen wind blowing from ahead made Terry draw his parka closer about his head, and he bent low and half-closed his eyes as he beat out a track through the white waste of snow. Then suddenly he trod on a small thorny bush barely beneath the snow's surface, and stumbled forward to fall face downwards.

Quickly he scrambled up again.

"All right, Terry?" inquired Jack.

"Shure, mo bhoy," answered Terry.

"By heck, we must stop a minute!"

cried Uncle Clem, plunging forward.

"Your nose is white, Terry, and there

are spots of white on your cheeks. None of us dare run the risk of severe frost-bite any more than falling prey to the wolves."

A halt—a very essential halt—was made while Uncle Clem took a handful of snow and massaged Terry's cheeks and his little snub nose. The frost-bite was only superficial, or near the surface of the skin, and the blood circulation quickly began to restore itself under Uncle Clem's vigorous hands.

Hardly were Terry's cheeks glowing red again when a fresh burst of wolf howls came beating up against the wind. Swinging round the base of a hill came the whole pack, and Skookum, with a savage snarl, swung the sledge completely round, and it was all Uncle Clem could do to head him off again from the oncoming wolf-pack.

(Will the three chums make Dawson before the wolves reach them? Don't miss next week's long instalment of this powerful serial of the Frozen North.)

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(Continued from page 2.)

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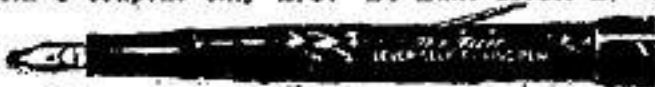
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