

“THE TREASURE ISLAND!”

This week's novel story of Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in Southern Seas.

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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



A ROPE'S-END FOR BUNTER, THE COOK'S BOY!

Billy Bunter's done a good many jobs in his time, but his latest, that of cook's boy to a Tonga Islander, is the most remarkable of the lot. (See this week's grand story of the Chums of Greyfriars.)

The RACE for the SCHNEIDER CUP!

An interesting article dealing with the International Air Race, of 200 miles, that is due to take place at the Lido, Venice, on Sunday, September 25th.



Some of the plucky pilots who have undergone a vigorous course of training for this great event.

THE truly terrific speed of 300 miles an hour—a speed which never yet has been reached by man—is confidently believed to be “bottled up” in at least one of the three secretly constructed machines which pilots of the Royal Air Force are eager to steer to victory in next Sunday’s (September 25th) international seaplane race for the Schneider Cup at the Lido, Venice.

If one of those marvellous little “flying bullets” does succeed in getting back the Cup for Britain in this 200 miles race—we last won in 1922—it will be something more than a notable victory. Our seaplane constructors and gallant R.A.F. pilots will have shown the world that the mastery of the air really is Great Britain’s after all. And it is high time that happened, for just at present there isn’t even one solitary air record which we hold!

Out for Scalps!

Italy at the moment holds the coveted Cup, which represents the blue ribbon of the air. She won it, with the help of the pilot, Major Bernardi, last year from America, at an average speed of a trifle under 247 miles per hour. There was no British plane taking part in the race. Our Air Ministry is out for scalps with all the more determination next Sunday because of last year’s absenteeism.

It will be the first occasion on which R.A.F. officers have represented Britain in this yearly Cup contest. The final selection of three pilots will be made from the British Schneider Cup team, which has been trained most strenuously by Squadron-Leader Slatter specially for this tremendous event. Only one of the finally selected pilots can win, of course, but all the runners-up for the immense honour of taking control of one of the three “hush-hush” seaplanes—the three most promising machines out of the seven that have been built in secret—are undergoing the same gruelling training.

Risk of Being Strangled.

For the Cup will go to the plane that shows supreme all-round proficiency in addition to racing speed. Navigability, taxiing, and mooring tests come first, then the grand climax of the lightning whizz over the 200-mile course. To add to the difficulties, the course is not a straight one, but takes the form of a triangle. The strain that the small British machines will have to bear as they shoot around the corners with scarcely perceptible slackening of speed is nothing compared with the ordeal of the pilot at those turns.

The rush of air striking the pilot from a fresh angle as the corner is taken might easily strangle him. But that possibility, though it will be fresh in the minds of each of the seven R.A.F. officers and twenty-seven mechanics who will help Britain in some way to get back for us (we hope!) the coveted cup on Sunday, causes no anxious frowns on the faces of the competitors, however much it may perturb the onlookers.

The Supermarine-Napier S5 monoplane, one of the entrants, coloured blue and white, is expected to prove itself to be one of the fastest in existence. Its starboard float carries all the fuel, and so narrow is the pilot’s cockpit that when the gentleman has wormed his way aboard it will just about fit his waist! That’s what one might call making a plane to measure! Its racing engine is a twelve-cylinder Napier Lion.

Pilots All A-quiver.

Then there is the Crusader, which also is expected to smash all previous air records. The first thing noticeable about it is its almost absurdly small body. Its metal propeller is made of a secret alloy, and it has the distinction of being the first seaplane with air-cooled engine to be entered for the Schneider Cup race. The engine of its brother competitor, the Supermarine-Napier S5, is cooled by the wing surface radiators.

The Gloster-Napier IV. biplane, a third entrant, is blue and gold, with a twelve-cylinder Napier Lion engine, and its removable petrol tanks are carried in the fuselage.

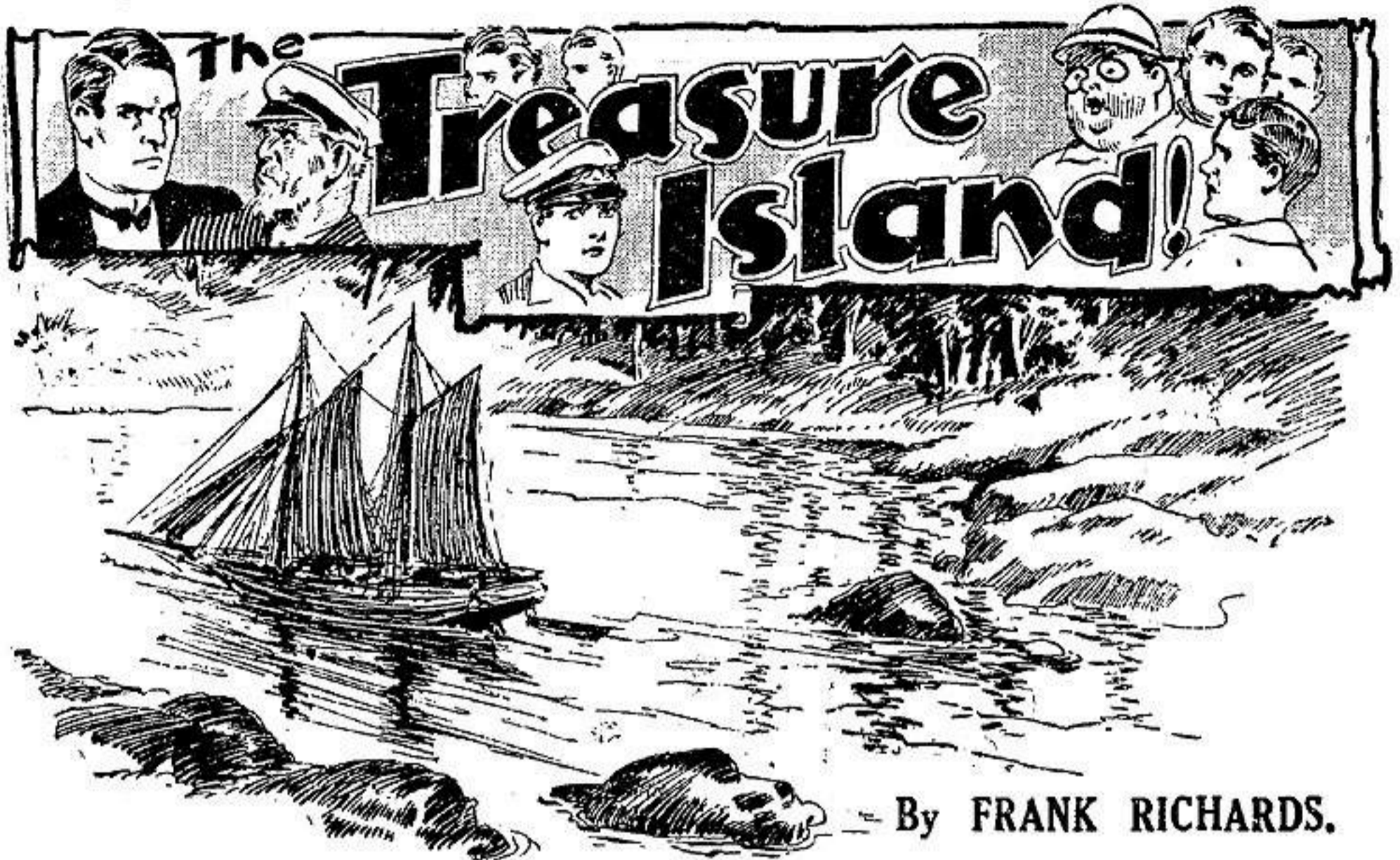
Of the seven machines specially built in this country for Sunday’s thrilling race, of different types, and all of which have undergone severe tests under conditions of the very greatest secrecy—an armed guard has been doing sentry-go around the sheds housing them by day and night—three monoplanes and two biplanes are undergoing the final selective tests in Italy. Two must drop out, for only three of the selected five can start in the race.

The prospective pilots are all a-quiver as to whom the fates will be kind. For the name of one of them may go down in history as the saviour of Britain’s great name in the air and the first man on earth to cleave the skies at the appalling speed of 300 miles per hour!



Will this monster of the air, named the “Crusader,” be the means of bringing back to Britain the coveted trophy known as the Schneider Cup? In the photo above is shown the Bristow-Short-Bristol “Crusader” with engine running. Note how many men are required on the streamlined floats to prevent the plane from turning turtle while the engine is being raced.

THE GOAL IN SIGHT! Out of the sea mist rise the blue mountains and tall, waving palms of Caca Island, upon which is buried the vast treasure of Black Peter, and the sight of it sends a thrill to the hearts of Harry Wharton & Co., although they are now prisoners of the man who was once their servant!



**An Amazing Story of Peril and Adventure in Southern Seas,
featuring Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Master of the Aloha!

"WHARTON!"

Harry Wharton looked round.

He was leaning on the polished teak rail of the Aloha schooner, gliding before the trade-wind over the sunny waters of the Pacific.

The sun was sinking in the west; the long, hot day was drawing to its close. But the heat was still great. Below, the little schooner was stifling, and on deck the breath of the trade-wind was almost like the breath of an oven.

Harry Wharton & Co. were all on deck, as indeed was every soul on board the Aloha, excepting Billy Bunter and the Tonga Island cook.

The juniors, clad in little more than shirt and trousers, sat in canvas chairs or loafed about the deck, getting what shade they could from the big mainsail. Of all the Greyfriars party, only Hurree Janset Ram Singh tolerated the tropical heat with equanimity. And even Hurree Singh looked as if it was quite hot enough for him, if not a little too much so.

Forward, the Kanaka crew loafed and lolled, save when an order was rapped out, when they turned to obey promptly enough.

Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman, was at the wheel, his mahogany face dewed with perspiration.

Only one man on board the schooner looked cool.

That was the man who had just stepped from the deck-house and addressed Harry Wharton.

It was Soames—James Soames—a few days before the sleek, obsequious valet of Mr. Vernon-Smith, the

millionaire; now the iron-handed commander of the schooner he had seized.

The change in Soames was striking.

He had discarded the neat, dark clothes of the valet, and was dressed in white ducks that had belonged to Captain Lennox, of the Aloha. Round his slim waist was a belt supporting a holster, from which peeped the butt of the automatic pistol which had made him master of the schooner. Once the crew of the Aloha had seen that automatic used, when the mate had fallen to the bullet, and the Kanaka crew, at least, were not likely to tempt Soames to use it again.

With the valet's clothes, Soames had discarded also the valet's manner and bearing. The soft, sleek voice the juniors knew so well was gone; his tones rapped out sharply, commandingly. The once sleek and obsequious face looked as hard as iron.

The cloak of hypocrisy had dropped from the man, revealing him now as what he was—a resolute and desperate scoundrel.

Villain as the man was, there was something to be admired in his courage and his iron nerve. In seizing the schooner, Soames had taken his life in his hands. There were seven Greyfriars fellows on board, and Tom Redwing, and Ben Dance, all eager and keen to seize a chance of turning the tables on him. The possession of the only firearm on board, and his skill and ruthlessness in the use of it, made him master of the Aloha. But a moment's carelessness, a few seconds off his guard, would have been his undoing. Once the juniors had seen Jacky, the Kanaka boatswain, grasp a belaying-pin when Soames' back was turned. But Soames had turned instantly, as if he had eyes in the back of his head, and Jacky had sheepishly

slid his weapon into the pin-rail. But the night was coming, and if the sea-lawyer slept in the hours of darkness—

The incessant peril of his position did not seem to affect Soames in the least.

It was scarcely possible to believe that this was the same man who had been the obsequious manservant—the valet who had brushed the clothes of Smithy's father, who had seemed to have no thought in his mind but to make himself humbly useful and obliging—on the yacht which had brought the Greyfriars fellows out to the Pacific. Certainly, Soames had played his game well until the time had come to throw off the mask.

It was thrown off now.

Captain Lennox had gone over the side the previous night, and the juniors knew by whose hand he had gone. Parkins, the mate, had been shot down before their eyes. Since then, Soames' authority on the schooner had been undisputed. The Kanaka seamen obeyed him without question. Jacky, the boatswain, almost fawned upon him, though his submissive, smiling face hid thoughts of which Soames was perhaps not aware; the juniors submitted to the inevitable, because they could not help themselves.

Yet the adventurer's authority hung on a thread, that might break at any moment; only constant vigilance could save him.

"Wharton!" he rapped out.

"Well?" said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, eyeing him.

His life was at the scoundrel's mercy, as Wharton well knew. But he could not stoop his pride to the submissiveness of the Kanakas.

Still harder was it for Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Grey-

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friars, to submit to the man who had been his father's valet, who had been sent with the juniors on the schooner to make himself useful and to watch over the safety of the treasure-seekers. Mr. Vernon-Smith, in his yacht at Nuka-Hiva, little dreamed of what had happened on the schooner.

Mr. Vernon-Smith was not likely to imagine that Soames, who had seemed to live only to be useful to him, who had seemed to delight in deference and subservience, hid a desperate and dangerous character under his sleek obsequiousness. The millionaire prided himself upon being a judge of men, but his valet had taken him in like an infant.

"You will go below!" said Soames, his eyes glinting for a moment at the Greyfriars junior.

"It's hot below," said Harry.

"That is unfortunate," said Soames, with a sneer; "but I think I need not remind you that I am master here."

"No," said Harry, with quiet scorn. "You have made that plain enough, Soames."

"You will go below, and remain below till dawn," said Soames. "I shall give you a hail when you may come on deck again. Sunset is swift in these latitudes, and I cannot trust you on deck after dark."

Wharton compressed his lips.

In the minds of all the Greyfriars party there had lingered a hope of turning the tables on the sea-lawyer under cover of darkness. The deadly automatic would not be so terribly deadly in the dark—there would have been a chance, at least, and the Greyfriars fellows were prepared to take the most desperate chance.

Evidently Soames had foreseen as much.

The involuntary expression on the junior's face brought an ironical smile to his lips.

"I have read your thoughts, my boy," he said. "It was easy enough. Once more, let me warn you not to attempt to play any tricks. I shall be sorry to have to use my weapon, but I shall use it without scruple if I am driven to it. You know what happened to the captain and the mate."

"I know," said Wharton quietly.

"I have no wish to ill-use you, or any of your friends," went on Soames, in a more conciliatory tone. "You treated me decently when I was Mr. Vernon-Smith's valet, and I forget a favour no sooner than an injury. I had nothing but kindness from any one of you, excepting that fat rascal Bunter, whom I have handed over to the cook to make himself useful; but even Bunter shall not suffer more than that. Yet, as you must be aware, it would be safer for me to order the Kanakas to throw you to the sharks. Do you think they would disobey the order?"

Wharton was silent.

"Bear that in mind," said Soames. "After what has happened on this craft, I cannot afford to let any of you return home. You will be marooned on Caca Island when I have found Black Peter's treasure. You will have your lives, at least. If you wish to preserve them, do not drive me to desperate measures. That is all. Go below."

Wharton turned and went down the companion.

Bob Cherry followed him, and Frank Nugent, and Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, and Tom Redwing. Vernon-Smith hesitated a moment, his eyes gleaming at the man who had been, almost as long as he could remember, a

suave and soft-spoken servant to his father. Soames met his glance and tapped the automatic in the holster at his belt. The Bounder gritted his teeth and went below.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Cook's Boy!

"FAT feller belong me where he go?"

The Tonga Islander who was cook on board the schooner Aloha was wrathful.

He was in the cuddy of the Aloha when Harry Wharton & Co. came down from the deck.

His black face gleamed with perspiration and wrath, and his greasy paw grasped a knotted rope's-end.

He was looking for Bunter.

William George Bunter, the fattest and laziest fellow at Greyfriars, had had a high old time that day.

Bunter was the fellow to be impudent and unpleasant when he had the upper hand of anybody. He had snubbed and snapped at the millionaire's valet in a manner which, as he fondly believed, demonstrated that he was accustomed to dealing with a horde of menials at Bunter Court. And he had had his reward.

Soames was top dog now; and he had handed Bunter over to the cook to make himself useful as ship's boy, cook's boy, and general slave and factotum.

It was rough on Bunter; but the juniors did not sympathise with him very much. It was certain that he had asked for it; in fact, as Johnny Bull put it, he had begged and prayed for it. And nobody but Bunter saw any reason why the fat junior should not put in a little work.

To the other fellows, Soames was as civil as the strange circumstances permitted. He had served them as a servant, and they had treated him decently. Desperate and ruthless as he was, in gaining his own ends, it was obvious that he did not desire to hurt the Greyfriars party beyond what his own interests required. But he had not forgotten Bunter's fat insolence, and the Owl of the Remove was going through it now. Soames personally took no notice of him; but the Tonga Islander could be trusted to make Billy Bunter feel that life was not worth living.

It was sheer delight to the black man to have a "white marster" under his orders. To be allowed to kick and cuff a "white marster" was an endless pleasure to him.

In his new role as cook's boy, Bunter bagged more kicks than halfpence. The cook's feet were bare, like most feet on board the Aloha; but Bunter had found them hard and heavy.

Now, apparently, the Owl of Greyfriars was fed-up, and he had deserted the hot, stuffy galley; and the cook was looking for him.

"What name fat feller he no come?" demanded the Tonga Islander, as the juniors came into the cuddy.

The Greyfriars fellows did not answer.

The cook could bully Bunter as much as he liked; but the other fellows had no idea at all of taking check from him.

"You white fellers, what name you no speak?"

"Ob, go and eat coke!" growled Johnny Bull.

The cook glared at him.

He was angry with Bunter for deserting his post, and his obtuse native brain did not grasp the fact that he could not afford to treat the other fellows as he treated Bunter. Captain Lennox was gone, and Soames reigned in his stead

on board the Aloha; and the cook knew, as all the Kanaka crew knew, that Soames was keeping the "white marsters" in subjection by the threat of death. Talupa, the cook, was backing up Soames, as he would have backed up any white man with a weapon in his hand to enforce authority. He took it for granted that he could kick anyone who was down.

He brandished the rope's-end at the juniors.

"My word! Me mad with you fellers any amount," he declared. "You run findee fat feller Bunter plenty quick, or me knock seven bells and a dog-watch outer you!"

Vernon-Smith made a step towards him.

The Bounder's eyes glittered.

To be commanded and ordered about by the man who had been his father's valet was galling enough to the proud spirit of the Bounder of Greyfriars. To be bullied by a black cook was a little too much.

"You black hound! Get out!" snapped Smithy.

"What name you say get out?" roared Talupa. "You talk to me plenty too much, you low white feller!"

"Get out!" snapped the Bounder.

Instead of getting out, the Tonga Islander made a slash at the Bounder with the rope's-end.

Vernon-Smith made a quick spring backwards and avoided the rope. The next instant he was springing forward, and his clenched fist dashed into the angry black face.

Crash!

There was a roar from the black cook as he went heels over head along the planks.

"Well hit!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

The Tonga Islander sat up dizzily.

"Now get out, you greasy hound!" snarled the Bounder.

"By golly!" gasped Talupa, scrambling up, and he fairly hurled himself at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Smithy stood up to him grimly; though the Greyfriars junior was not of much use in a grapple with the powerful black man. But the other fellows rushed in at once.

The Tonga man was grasped on all sides, and, powerful as he was, he came down on the floor of the cuddy with a crash.

He gave a roar as he landed on the planks.

"Bump him!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

It was a new experience to the Tonga Islander and not a pleasant experience, to judge by his wild roars.

"Now roll him out!"

Yelling and gasping, the black cook was rolled along, bumping on the floor, to the doorway on the lower deck where he was rolled out of the cuddy.

He sprawled there, panting.

Soames looked down from the little after-deck, his brows knitting.

"What's that row?" he snapped out.

The Tonga Islander sat up, spluttering, against the mainmast. His eyes rolled wildly. Soames fixed his eyes on him.

"You feller cook, you talk too plenty much along white feller marster!" he snapped. "You mind your eye along white feller marster. Fat feller Bunter him belong you, white marster no belong, savvee?"

That was enough for the Tonga Islander; the distinction was made clear now to his fuzzy mind.

"Savvee plenty much," he gasped.

Harry Wharton & Co. went back into the cuddy. From one of the bunks, a



The Tonga man was grasped on all sides, and powerful as he was, he came down on the floor of the cuddy with a crash. "Bump him!" said Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Greyfriars juniors. Bump! It was a new experience to the Tonga Islander, and not a pleasant experience, to judge by his wild roars! (See Chapter 2.)

fat, perspiring face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered at them.

"I say, you fellows—" "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I say, you keep that black beast away, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

"Get back to your job, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You'd better get back, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "We're all under Soames' orders now, and he has given you to the cook to work for him. You asked for it, and now you've got it!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Get out of it!" growled the Bouncer.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You're asking for more trouble, you fat idiot!" said Frank Nugent. "You got Soames' back up by insulting him when you had the chance, and now you've got to squirm for it, and it serves you right!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"We cannot protect you, Bunter," said Harry Wharton quietly. "There's no reason at all why you shouldn't work."

"Isn't there?" demanded Bunter hotly. "Think I came on this rotten schooner to work? I can see now that I was an ass to accept Smithy's invitation! Nice vacation we're getting, ain't we?"

And Bunter gave a dismal groan. This was not exactly the vacation he had anticipated, when he had stowed himself away on Mr. Vernon-Smith's yacht, and planted himself on the treasure-seekers.

"If Soames comes down for you, you'll have to go," said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, you collar him if he comes down," urged Bunter.

"Never mind his pistol."

"Fathead!"

"Don't be funky, you know. He can't shoot the lot of you."

"Ass!"

"Of all the blessed funks—" sneered Bunter.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Bob Cherry.

"Soames won't come down here," said the Bouncer. "He dare not leave the deck. There's more than one man on deck who would brain him as he came up the ladder again, if he had half a chance. Ben Dance—and I believe that fellow Jack, the bos'un—"

"Please white feller marster!" said a humble voice.

It was the Tonga Islander again.

But he was not bullying now. A word from Soames had been enough for him. He was cringing.

"What do you want?" snapped Wharton.

"Want fat fellow Bunter belong me."

"Keep him off, you fellows!" yelled Bunter.

"White marster Soames he say fat fellow belong me!" said the cook.

From the deck Soames' sharp voice came down the companion into the tiny cuddy of the Aloha.

"Wharton, send Bunter back to his work at once, or I will send in some of the Kanakas to throw him over the side."

There was a yell of terror from the Owl of the Remove. He rolled out of the bunk as if he had been electrified by Soames' voice.

"I'm going!" he yelled. "It's all right! I'm willing! I—I want to work! I'm keen on it! I'm going! Oh dear!"

"You come along me!" grinned Talupa.

And Bunter rolled away after his master.

From the little galley forward the sound of a rope was soon heard, smiting, accompanied by frantic yells from Billy Bunter. The cook was taking it out of his "boy."

"You no wanty work for me!" roared the Tonga Islander, as the rope descended. "You run away along of white marster. By golly! I knock seven bells and a starboard watch outer you plenty soon!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Now you wash um dishes quick, you feller boy!"

"Ow! Wow! Yes! All right! Yaroooh!"

And the hapless Owl of the Remove washed dishes, while the cook slanged him incessantly, and gave point to his remarks with an occasional kick or a lick of the rope. William George Bunter had stowed himself away on the millionaire's yacht in anticipation of a glorious time in the South Seas. And this was the glorious time he was getting—and the fact that he deserved it was no comfort to him whatever.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

NIGHT on the Pacific.

The night was calm, the trade-wind steady. Under mainsail, topsail, and foresail, the schooner glided on through the dark seas, her headlights gleaming out red and green.

Forward, the Kanakas lolled and sprawled, all of them in the open air, the "watch below" sleeping on deck, the stuffy little fore-castle empty. Aft, Jacky the boatswain was at the wheel, and Ben Dance was sleeping under the lee of the cabin skylight. Soames paced the deck. The usurper of authority on board the Aloha had taken possession of the little deckhouse, formerly occupied by the captain and mate; but he was not thinking of turning in. The master of the Aloha dared not close his eyes.

In the cuddy below the Greyfriars juniors had turned into their bunks—but not to sleep. They were still hoping that the darkness of the night might offer them some chance of reversing the position on the schooner. But the attempt to gain the upper hand of the armed and resolute man on deck was certain to be a desperate one, and they did not intend to throw their lives away.

From somewhere in the darkness Billy Bunter's snore could be heard. He was off duty at last, because the cook himself was sleeping. So long as Talupa was awake there was no rest for the cook's "boy."

Soames paced the deck, his face quiet and composed, giving little clue to his thoughts.

Yet his thoughts must have been busy.

His position was a strange and terrible one, calling for incessant watchfulness, resource, and iron nerve.

He could not fail to know that the Greyfriars party would seize the first opportunity of dealing with him. He knew that Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman, would back them up. He doubted Jacky the boatswain, fawning as Jacky was and prompt in obedience. He could not be sure of the Kanaka crew. They had turned over from one master to another without a word; yet if he slept, if he placed himself at their mercy, a change might come. Only the deadly weapon in his belt, and his determination to use it without mercy, saved him. There was no sleep that night for the desperate man who had seized the schooner, single-handed, against a crowd.

And the treasure-chart, for which he had run such desperate risks, was gone. Tom Redwing had dropped it into the sea to save it from the sea-lawyer, and it was gone for ever. Somewhere on the vast Pacific the chart, engraved on the disc of teak by Black Peter, floated, tossed to and fro on the boundless ocean—gone for ever from the adventurer's greedy grasp. He had counted upon it as a certainty when he seized the schooner—and it was gone. But Tom Redwing remained—and Soames knew that the sailorman's son knew the chart by heart.

Black Peter's chart was gone; but Redwing remained to serve as his guide to the buried pearls on Caca Island. James Soames' nature was not harsh or cruel; the sleek softness he had assumed as a manservant was not wholly assumed. But his nature was implacably ruthless and determined. Redwing was to guide him to the treasure,

and if he refused he was to be put to the torture. Already Soames was revolving in his mind the memories of the hideous tortures he had seen in his earlier days among the savages of the Pacific.

His face, calm and composed, gave no clue to the terrible thoughts in his ruthless mind.

He stopped his pacing at last where Ben Dance lay sleeping by the cabin skylight, and shoved the seaman with his boot.

Dance awoke at once.

"Your trick at the wheel," said Soames.

"Ay, ay!"

Ben Dance rose at once and shook himself. For an instant his look lingered on Soames, and then he went quietly to the wheel to relieve the boatswain.

Jacky's black eyes glimmered at him. "White feller marster no sleep?" he murmured.

Dance shook his head.

"Plaps he sleep bimeby."

"Not likely."

"Him must sleep sometime—all feller sleep sometimes," murmured Jacky, and he gave the wheel to Dance.

Soames' voice rang out from the shadows.

"Belay chin-wag there! Get forrard, you feller Jacky!"

"Yes, sar."

The Kanaka boatswain's voice was humble and obedient. He glided away, silent, with his bare feet.

Ben Dance, at the wheel, stared after him curiously. Jacky the boatswain had been devoted to Captain Lennox, the skipper of the Aloha. Yet he had submitted without a murmur to the usurper who had put the skipper over the side and taken his place. But Dance, at least, knew that the Kanaka was only biding his time, and watching for a chance. Whether it was the same with the crew Dance could not guess.

With the unthinking childishness of the South Sea native, they seemed to have forgotten already that there ever had been any other captain but Soames on the Aloha. With Jacky it was different, owing only to his personal attachment to the skipper, who had been a kind master to him. But for that personal feeling Jacky would have accepted the new state of affairs as unthinkingly as the rest.

Soames' glance, too, followed Jacky, with a deadly intentness.

The boatswain curled himself up at the foot of the mainmast, and slept, or seemed to sleep.

"Dance!" rapped out Soames.

"Ay, ay!"

Not for his life would Ben Dance have answered "Ay, ay, sir!" as he had been accustomed to answer his commander. He had to obey orders, or be shot down, and he did not resist the inevitable. But his tongue balked at addressing Soames as he had addressed Captain Lennox.

Soames never appeared to notice the omission. It was a trifle that did not matter in the least to him. So long as his orders were obeyed, he cared nothing for the thoughts of those who obeyed them.

"Keep her before the wind!" said Soames.

"Ay, ay!"

"Call me, if necessary. But it looks like a calm night."

"Ay, ay!"

Soames went into the deckhouse.

Dance's eyes gleamed.

If the man was reckless enough,

fatuous enough, to sleep, with bitter enemies on all sides of him—

But the seaman shook his head at the thought. The sea-lawyer was not the man to give such a chance to his foes.

Ben Dance stood like a statue at the wheel. From the tiny deckhouse came no sound till, in the stillness of the night, it seemed to Dance that he detected the faint, regular sound of the steady breathing of the skipper. But he shook his head again.

A shadow moved on the shadowy deck.

The helmsman gave a slight start.

A dim figure was moving, creeping silently. He discerned it by the corner of the deckhouse, and, though he could not make it out distinctly, he knew that it was the Kanaka boatswain.

Dance felt his heart throb.

The Kanaka was creeping like a serpent, and between his white teeth was a bare knife.

The door of the deckhouse was wide open in the heat of the tropic night. If Soames were sleeping, there was nothing to save him.

Dance felt a sense of repugnance; the stealthy creeping of the Kanaka, with the knife in his teeth and murder in his heart, made him shiver. But he did not think of warning the intended victim. Soames had hurled the skipper into the sea, and had shot down the mate on the deck. His life was forfeit for his crimes, and Dance, repugnant as he felt, wished the black boatswain good fortune in his attempt on the sea-lawyer.

He made no sound, but watched with breathless intentness as he stood grasping the wheel.

Jacky, the boatswain, was moving slowly; he seemed scarcely to move at all. But inch by inch, in deadly silence, the creeping figure approached the open doorway of the deckhouse.

He reached it at last.

There he paused for several long minutes that seemed interminable to the watching helmsman.

From the deckhouse came no sound. The interior was as black as pitch. But the Kanaka was evidently satisfied that Soames was in his bunk there asleep, for he stirred again, creeping into the interior, and the knife was now in his hand. Ben Dance felt his heart beating almost to suffocation. If Soames were sleeping—

Bang!

The sudden report of the pistol came through the silence with the effect of a clap of thunder.

A wild yell rang in the darkness of the deckhouse, and the Kanaka boatswain rolled out, writhing, his knife clattering on the deck. From forward came a startled shouting from the crew. One yell the boatswain gave, followed by a groan, and then he lay still on the deck.

Soames had not been sleeping.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In Sight of the Treasure Island!

SOAMES stepped from the deckhouse, the automatic in his hand, a slightly sneering smile on his cool face.

From the shadows of the deck a dozen startled brown faces stared at him with rolling black eyes. Ben Dance, his grip on the wheel, made no motion and spoke no word. There was a clatter on the companion ladder.

Harry Wharton & Co. had not been sleeping; but had they slept, the shot

and the wild cry of the boatswain would have awakened them. Instinctively they crowded up the cabin stairs. If the crew had turned on the sea-lawyer—if there was a struggle—

But there was no struggle.

The shot, the cry, and the fall were all; nothing followed. But they heard the cool, menacing voice of Soames.

"Below, there! I shall shoot the first who steps on deck!"

And the juniors stopped.

"Not good enough!" muttered the Bounder savagely, between his teeth.

"But what has happened?" breathed Nugent.

Soames glanced carelessly at the form of the black boatswain, stretched on the deck terribly still. But he hardly needed to glance. He knew that he could depend on his aim.

Jacky, the Kanaka bo'sun, did not stir. He was never to stir again of his own volition.

"Keep below, you lads!" went on Soames quietly.

"What has happened?" called out Wharton.

Soames laughed softly.

"Nothing of any consequence. The boatswain thought that I was asleep, and I was awake! A trifle!"

"Oh!" muttered Wharton.

Soames' sharp voice called to the staring seamen.

"You feller Kanaka, you take throw feller Jacky in um water, plenty quick! Make kai-kai along um shark!"

Two or three of the Kanakas picked up the boatswain and dropped the body over the rail.

There was a splash alongside the gliding schooner.

It struck terribly on the ears of the Greyfriars juniors below. In the darkness of the cuddy they stood, with beating hearts and pale faces.

"Good heavens!" breathed Nugent. His teeth were chattering. "That—that was Jacky! The boatswain's—gone!"

"He must have tried—" muttered Bob.

"And failed!" said the Bounder.

"Go back to your bunks!" It was Soames' voice down the companion. "Take care, if you would not follow that fool to the sharks!"

The juniors did not answer.

But they realised that it would be wise to heed the warning. Soames was sleepless that night, and so long as he was sleepless he was invulnerable. There was nothing to be done.

"Better get some sleep, if we can!" muttered Johnny Bull. "We can't touch that villain!"

"At all events, he will not dare to sleep," said Wharton. "And to-morrow—"

"To-morrow we may get a chance," said Redwing. "We're not at Caca Island yet, and even that demon must tire at last! Let's get some sleep; we need it for to-morrow."

The juniors turned into their bunks.

It was not easy to sleep after the terrible happening of the night, and in their strange situation, so full of uncertainty and peril.

But they slept at last.

Soames did not think of sleeping. He paced the deck with his noiseless tread, wary and watchful as a cat or a panther. The rolling black eyes of the Kanakas peered at him sometimes with dread and awe. Had any of the crew thought of turning on the new master of the Aloha, the fate of the boatswain would have been warning enough. After what had happened to Jacky, Soames had nothing to fear from the Kanakas. He stopped to speak to Ben Dance.

"You will keep the wheel till morning, Dance."

"Ay, ay!" muttered the seaman.

"I will pick out a man to relieve you at eight bells. You knew that Jacky was trying to get me?"

Soames' narrow eyes glinted at the wooden-legged seaman.

Dance made no reply.

"Let it be a warning to you!" said Soames. "Sleeping or waking, I am master of this schooner! You are useful to me, my man; but you may count your life by seconds if you dare to raise a finger against me!"

He turned away, leaving the wooden-legged seaman breathing hard. Dance knew that Soames had distrusted the boatswain, and had affected slumber to trick him into showing his hand if he meditated an attack. Jacky had paid for it with his life. And Dance suspected that Soames would have shot him also had he not needed his services. The night was hot, but the sweat

not tell; but he did not look weary. The man seemed made of iron.

His glance turned on the Kanakas.

They met his look with slavish awe and respect. Soames had terrorised the native crew into absolute obedience.

"You feller Kalashti!" he called out to the Kanaka who had been the boatswain's mate.

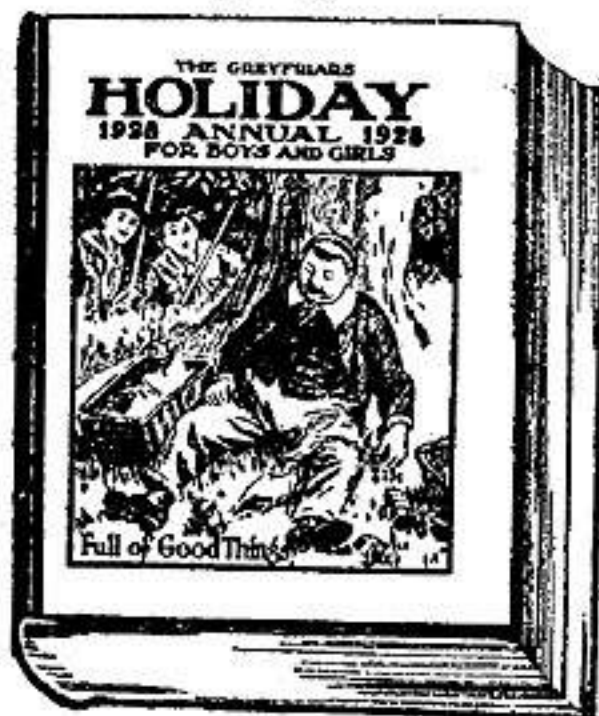
"Yes, sar?" said the trembling Kalashti. "White marster no shoot Kalashti; him good Kanaka boy."

"You feller Kanaka 'bey order plenty quick, no shoot," said Soames. "Give um Kanaka plenty stick tobacco. You feller Kalashti take um wheel."

"Yes, sar!"

Kalashti relieved Ben Dance at the wheel. The wooden-legged seaman stamped away, Soames' eyes following him with a glint in them. Dance was glad enough to get out of sight of the sea-lawyer. His dread of Soames was almost as great as his dread of the half-caste, Silvio Xero. Indeed, of the two,

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ran cold down Dance's face as he realised upon how slender a thread his life had hung. To him, as to the Kanakas, the terrible episode had been a lesson. He was no longer thinking of an attempt to take the sea-lawyer off his guard.

Soames went into the deck-house again, and all was silent. If he ventured to sleep no one knew; the blackness had swallowed him. Sleeping or waking, he was too dangerous to approach.

The tropical night wore away.

The dimming of the stars, the faint flush in the eastern sky, heralded the dawn of another day.

The sun leaped up from the sea.

Soames emerged from the deck-house soon after dawn. Dance, who was fatigued and almost haggard, stared at him in wonder.

His face, always a little pale, was cool, and calm, and clean-shaven, his dress as fastidiously neat as ever. He was as cool and collected as if he had turned out that morning, as of old, to take his master his morning coffee. Whether he had slept or not Dance could

Soames was the more dangerous character. His quiet, cool ruthlessness was more terrible than the savage ferocity of the half-caste.

In the cuddy below Harry Wharton & Co. turned out of their bunks. Their breakfast was brought in by the cook's boy—Billy Bunter.

The wretched Owl of the Remove blinked at them pathetically as he set down the tray on the table.

"I say, you fellows, this is getting awful!" he mumbled. "That black beast routed me out with a rope. I've had hardly any sleep. I'm hungry, too, and he won't let me feed till I've fed everybody else."

"Rather a change for you, Bunter," said Bob, with a faint grin. "You generally come on first in the grub scenes."

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"Take a snack of this," said Bob.

"You fat feller Bunter," came the Tonga Islander's growling voice. "What name you stop talk long of white marster?"

Bunter made one jump out of the cuddy.

He did not even stop for a snack of the juniors' breakfast. The cook's boy had learned his lesson.

A little later Soames hailed the Greyfriars fellows from above and told them they could go on deck. They were glad enough to get out of the closeness of the cuddy.

In the bright sunshine, they looked across the wide, blue waters. That day, they knew, Soames expected to sight Caca Island, the lonely isle in the waste of waters, seldom or never visited by a white man's ship, where Tom Redwing's uncle had buried the pearls. But there was no sign yet of the island. Before the trade-wind the Aloha glided swiftly eating up the miles that lay between the treasure-seekers and the treasure-island.

A Kanaka was aloft on the mainmast, evidently posted there by Soames to watch for land.

It was towards noon that a hail came from the look-out.

"Land!"

The juniors saw Soames start and draw in his breath quickly. He turned the binoculars that had belonged to Captain Lennox in the direction indicated by the look-out.

His eyes were blazing as he lowered the glasses.

"Caca!" the juniors heard him mutter.

They watched anxiously, with beating hearts. Slowly from the sea rose a blue line, which they knew was the line of the hills on Caca Island, marked on the chart which Redwing had dropped into the sea.

It was the treasure island at last!

Often and often had the Greyfriars juniors, in their minds, pictured their arrival at the treasure island, but never had they dreamed of picturing it like this—in the power of a ruthless sea-lawyer who was bent on grasping the treasure from them. They had expected, or half expected, a struggle with Silvio Xero, the half-caste, for the possession of Black Peter's cache of pearls, and they had fallen into the hands of a more dangerous enemy, and it was as prisoners they were approaching, at last, the island of the treasure. Their faces were dark as they stared across the blue waters and watched the graceful, nodding palms arising from the sea.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Silvio's Luck!

SILVIO XERO, the half-caste, raised his head from the mat on which he was resting in the long canoe, stared across the sea, and scowled at the half-dozen black, kinky-haired Solomon Islanders who manned the canoe. In the heat of the tropical day the half-caste had been dozing, though he dozed with one eye open. A revolver and a knife were belted round his waist, and a rifle lay under his arm. His crew were unarmed, but Silvio knew better than to trust them. Every Malaita "boy" in the canoe was a savage, and a cannibal. They took Silvio's pay, in shell money and sticks of tobacco, but they would have made "kai-kai" of the half-caste without hesitation had a chance come their way.

"You feller boy wash-washy plenty quick," snarled Silvio.

And the Solomon Islanders, who had slacked down when the master's eye was not upon them, resumed paddling with vigour.

Many a long mile from land, the canoe glided through the rolling waters of the

Pacific, a cockleshell on the mighty ocean.

Silvio sat up, scowling, and stared over the sea, while he chewed betel-nut.

Fortune had been against the half-caste, but he was still on the quest of Black Peter's pearls.

The long Malaita knife at his belt had dealt out death to Black Peter, but it had brought him no nearer to what he sought.

Ben Dance, the wooden-legged seaman, had taken Black Peter's chart to far-off England, to hand it to Peter Bruce's nephew, Tom Redwing. Half round the world the half-caste had tracked him, only to be defeated at last. He had no hope now of recovering the treasure-chart—the disc of teak that had once been in his hands for a short time, only to be lost again. But he was as resolved as ever to lift the buried pearls of Caca.

Of a white man's faith the half-caste had no idea, and he did not believe that Ben Dance had taken the chart to his old skipper's nephew without reading its secret. With the help of his savage crew he had kidnapped Dance on the beach in the Marquesas, to force him to act as a guide to the treasure island, and then had followed the unexpected meeting with the millionaire's yacht in the Pacific, and the rescue of the wooden-legged seaman by the Greyfriars party.

Since then, Silvio had lurked among the natives of the Nuka-Hiva, and he had spied out the Aloha and learned that the copra schooner was to carry the schoolboy treasure-seekers to Caca. And once more he had put to sea in his canoe, with his Solomon Island crew, to reach the treasure island before the schooner, and to wait there and watch for his chance. Of what had happened on the schooner he had not the faintest knowledge; he fully expected to find an armed and numerous party seeking the cached pearls on Black Peter's island. But at least, he would be there to watch, and to seize his chance, if it came.

But his thoughts were black and bitter as he sat scowling over the sea, chewing betel-nut, while his black crew's paddles flashed in the sun.

His chance might come, but he knew how slight was the chance now. He was ready for any desperate deed, to risk life and to take life, but it was more likely that he would be forced to watch the lifting of the pearls from a safe distance, and to watch helplessly while the treasure was taken away in the schooner.

The black paddlers glanced curiously sometimes at his dark and savage face.

Of Silvio's object in making this voyage they knew nothing—he had been careful to keep it secret that he was seeking pearls. But, with the usual indifference of the native, they thought nothing and cared nothing about what his object might be. So long as he paid them—in the shell money and sticks of tobacco current in their islands—they were satisfied, unless an opportunity came of taking him off his guard, eating him, and seizing all he had without working for it.

They did not respect the yellow man like a "white marster"; but they had a wholesome fear of him and his ferocity, and were not likely to turn on him so long as he was wary.

That their yellow master was savage and angry they knew; his dark face showed as much. Of the cause of his anger they knew nothing and cared as much for it, so long as it was not directed against them.

Silvio was thinking of the treasure and of the slight chance that remained

to him of handling it, and his breast was full of malice and bitterness.

He saw, without heeding, a tiny object that floated on the surface of the sea, bobbing with the motion of the waves, continually submerged, but as continually reappearing.

It caught sometimes the blaze of the sun, and reflected it, thus catching the eye of the half-caste several times.

He did not heed it.

There was much flotsam and jetsam on the wide surface of the Pacific, fragments floating from innumerable wrecks.

But the course of the gliding canoe brought him nearer to the little object that danced on the waves, and his attention became idly fixed upon it.

It was polished, and shone when it caught the sun-rays, but he knew that it could not be metal, as it was floating. It was a fragment of wood, and almost exactly circular in form, and five inches in diameter.

A strange expression came over the half-caste's face.

That little wooden disc, dancing on the boundless Pacific, was the size and shape of the chart, engraved on teak, which was guiding the treasure-seekers to Black Peter's cache of pearls.

It was impossible—impossible! But Silvio Xero felt his heart give a wild bound.

If, by chance, Redwing had dropped the chart—if it had fallen overboard—there were millions of chances to one that no human eye would ever rest upon it again.

And yet—

It was impossible! Fortune could not have played so strange a freak. And yet—

"You feller boy stop washy-washy!"

The half-caste's voice was husky with excitement. It was impossible that the floating disc could be the chart of Black Peter's island; yet the thought was in his mind that it was the impossible that was happening.

Redwing, the nephew and heir of the old South Sea ruffian who had drawn the chart on the disc of teak, could not have been careless enough, mad enough, to drop overboard the clue to the treasure; and had he dropped it, by what strange freak of chance could it have floated in the course of the half-caste's canoe? And yet it was the impossible that was happening.

"Stop washy-washy!" snarled the half-caste, as the Solomon Islanders stared at him in astonishment.

The blacks drew in their paddles obediently.

There was enough way on the canoe to float it on to the bobbing disc, now close at hand.

Silvio watched it with throbbing heart.

He was sure now. Impossible as it seemed, he was sure that that tiny object floating on the boundless surface of the Pacific was Black Peter's chart, which he had last seen in far-off England, when he had stolen it from Ben Dance, only to lose it again to the Greyfriars juniors. It was the chart of Black Peter's treasure.

The Solomon Islanders followed his fixed, almost ravenous stare with wonder, and exchanged significant glances. Their thought was that the half-caste was mad. He must be mad to fix his attention so wolfishly on a floating fragment of wood.

Heedless of them, forgetful of their existence for the moment, Silvio watched the bobbing disc with dilated eyes as the canoe glided closer to it.

He grabbed at it as the canoe glided by, and it was safe in his grasp.

He knew that it was the chart, and even yet he could not believe it. But all doubts vanished as he wiped it with his sleeve and stared at it in the blazing sunlight.

Only a glance had he taken at the chart when he had stolen it at Hawks-cliff, on the coast of Kent; it had been recaptured before he could examine it at leisure. But he knew it—he knew it at once. Now that he saw it again, the lines on the teak wood, engraved there by the knife of the dead-and-gone South Sea desperado, were familiar to his eyes. Silvio gave a shout of joy that rang and echoed across the sea.

It was the chart, and his eyes devoured it. The map of Caca Island, the line of the hills, the volcano, the indication of the "pae-pae-hae," the word "cache" sprawling across the chart, with the dotted crosses above each letter. His dilated eyes devoured it all. The secret was in his hand.

Fortune had been against him ever since the dark night when Black Peter had fallen on the lonely beach under his knife, only to play him this strange trick at last. The chart of the treasure island was in his hand; its secret was his, to be traced out and revealed as soon as his feet trod the shores of the island.

The half-caste's black eyes blazed with joy.

"Mine—feller chart he mine now!" he grinned.

Then he caught the stare of the Solomon Islanders. The chart disappeared into his pocket at once.

"You feller boy, you washy-washy plenty quick!" he rapped out. "You make um island quick time, you savveg, or, my word, you makee kai-kai um shark!"

And the paddles flashed again, and the canoe fled on over the shining waters towards the treasure island, the Solomon Islanders labouring and sweating under the fierce eyes and threats of the half-caste. Blue hills and graceful palms rose out of the distant sea; Caca was in sight. But something else rose out of the sea between the canoe and the island—something that made Silvio Xero catch his breath and click his teeth, with a look on his eyes like a hunted wolf. He snarled an order to the Solomon Islanders, and the canoe's course was changed, to elude the sail that glanced in the sunlight on the Pacific.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Through the Coral Reefs!

SOAMES stood staring towards the treasure island as it rose from the shining blue waters, nearer and clearer. For a moment or two his eyes had blazed and his breath came thick and fast. But he was very soon his cool, impassive self again. He glanced at the Greyfriars juniors, who were watching the island rise into view, and smiled faintly. Then he moved away to the man at the wheel.

Dance had taken the wheel again, and the sea-lawyer eyed him, evidently in doubt.

"You know the island, Dance?" he asked.

"Ay, ay!"

"You've landed there?"

Dance nodded.

"Then you know the channel?"

"I reckon I could take the schooner into the lagoon if the Kanakas are



Tom Redwing looked down steadily at Soames over the rail of the Aloha. "Have you reflected yet?" Soames' voice was ironical. "I regret that I cannot give you longer—once I am out of hail of your voice, it will be too late to save these friends of yours from the cannibals!" (See Chapter 7.)

handy with the sheets. It means plenty quick tacking," said Dance.

"I know."

Soames turned away and stared towards the island. He did not think of scanning the sea in other directions just then, or he might have discerned a large canoe, through his binoculars, that had changed its course and was fleeing. Little did Soames dream that the Treasure Chart had been within a mile of him, in the hands of Silvio Xero. That was a wild chance upon which the most cunning and cautious brain could never have counted.

Caca was still at a distance—only the hills and the nodding tall palms could be seen. But there was a hint of a white line on the sea where the Pacific creamed over the great coral reef. Through the coral reefs, hard as iron, sharp as steel, lay the way of the schooner into the haven of the lagoon, by a narrow and tortuous channel which Soames knew, but which was known to few men in the South Seas, the island itself being almost unknown, not even marked on the charts.

Harry Wharton glanced rather curiously at Soames.

He thought he could understand the perplexity of the desperate adventurer at that moment.

Soames could have taken the wheel, and steered the schooner in the coral channel, at the same time giving the Kanaka seamen the necessary orders for handling the sheets, as the winding of

the dangerous channel made rapid tacking essential. But with his hands on the wheel he could not have handled the automatic—and the instant that he could not handle the automatic he would be seized.

Ben Dance was able to steer the schooner in; but a black suspicion was in Soames' mind that he might run her on the rocks.

That thought, indeed, was in Dance's mind, and had long been in his mind.

It was Soames' intention, after securing the treasure, to sail away in the schooner, leaving the Greyfriars party and Ben Dance marooned on Caca.

The Aloha, therefore, was lost to them in any case; and it was Dance's fixed intention to lose the schooner for Soames also if he could.

The juniors knew nothing of that; but they would have approved heartily had they guessed the wooden-legged seaman's thoughts. Better wreck the schooner, and maroon Soames along with themselves, than leave him the vessel in which to escape with the pearls.

But the sea-lawyer was on his guard. He was loth to trust a native with the helm, in a narrow and dangerous channel; but there was no help for it. He had to keep his own hands free, and he dared not trust Dance with an opportunity of wrecking the Aloha.

He called to Kalashti, and the Kanaka came up. Soames pointed towards the distant island.

"You feller boy, know um island?" he asked.

Kalashiti shook his head. "No Kanaka feller know," he answered. "Nebber see."

Soames dismissed him with an impatient gesture, and stood staring moodily towards the island.

Nearer and nearer, clearer and clearer, rose the isle of the Pacific, and the juniors could see now the long lines of the coral reefs where the rollers broke and creamed. And they knew, too, that under the surface were the sharp teeth of reefs that did not show, and that were not marked by breaking foam—teeth that would have torn through the hull of the Aloha like a shark's teeth through the limbs of a swimmer. Round that lonely isle the coral insect had been busy for centuries, piling up mighty barriers. The juniors remembered the line of reefs marked in the Treasure Chart, barring the way from the open sea to the sheltered lagoon.

Captain Lennox had known the passage, and could have taken the schooner in safety. But Soames was navigating the Aloha under greater difficulties—surrounded by foes and with his life in his hand. One moment's carelessness, or distraction of attention, would mean the grinding of the hull on razor-edges of coral, and destruction for the schooner. And the passengers of the schooner would have welcomed a wreck, or anything else that would have deprived the sea-lawyer of the whip-hand.

The creaming reefs were closer now, the white lines of breaking foam glistening in the sun. More and more the island opened up to the eager eyes of the juniors. Beyond the barrier of the reefs they discerned the shining lagoon, and beyond that the stream that rippled down from the hills and emptied into the lagoon.

On the bank they could pick out a shape, which they fancied was the "pae-pae-hao" that had been marked in Black Peter's chart. South of the stream was a tall, rocky knoll, oddly shaped like a head and shoulders, and that, they could guess, was the "Kanaka's Head" on the chart. Beyond all rose the line of the hills that barred off the western side of the island, beyond which, according to Black Peter's chart, were the cannibals that dwelt on Caca. At the southern end of the line of hills a blur of smoke rose against the brilliant blue of the sky.

Bob Cherry pointed it out. "The volcano!" he said in a low voice. The volcano on Caca Island was smoking, but there was no sound from it, no gleam of flame. It was not active, perhaps had not been active for centuries. But it was not extinct; and the thought came into the juniors' minds that at any time it might wake to life again, and flood the coconut woods and the shining coral beach with burning lava. Closer and closer the Aloha glided, till they could pick out each individual palm tree, and the scarlet blossoms of the hibiscus. Soames called to Kalashiti again.

"You feller Kalashiti take um wheel." His lip curled in a sneer, as he noted the look with which Ben Dance relinquished the wheel to the Kanaka.

"Fool!" he said, contemptuously. "Do you think I do not read you like an open book? Doubly fool—if the schooner is wrecked here, not a living thing will swim ashore. The sea is alive with sharks."

Dance did not answer. "Keep clear of the boom, you lads," added Soames, quietly and coolly. "If any fellow should be swept overboard, he goes for good."

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He stood beside Kalashiti at the wheel, muttering instructions to the Kanaka. The crew stood ready to obey the slightest order, almost to anticipate it. One glance at the sea was enough to reveal black fins gliding. If the schooner went on the reefs it was very doubtful whether there would be time to crowd into the whaleboat before she went down. And even the Kanakas, who swam like fishes, were anxious not to take their chance among the "tiger" sharks waiting for their prey.

"That sea-lawyer's too sharp for me," Ben Dance muttered to the juniors. "I'd have run her on the reefs and chanced it. I reckon I could have piled her up just outside the lagoon, with a chance for everybody to get to the beach. But he ain't taking chances like that, durn him."

Soames rapped out a word to the crew. The men stood ready at halyards and sheets.

The schooner was close on the creaming reefs now, and the juniors, watching intently, could see no opening for the passage; it seemed to them that the Aloha was gliding on destruction. And when they looked down, and saw shapes in the clear water below, they could not help hoping that Soames would take the schooner safely in. A wreck outside the reef meant destruction, with little hope for anyone on board. Soames was watching intently, with fixed gaze and set face. The helmsman mechanically obeyed each muttered word as it dropped from his lips. And now the juniors could detect a space—a terribly narrow space it seemed to their eyes—where the foam did not break, and where evidently there was an opening in the coral reef.

Under mainsail and jib, the schooner glided into the passage of the reefs. The juniors felt their hearts leap into their mouths as there appeared, directly ahead of the Aloha, a line of churning foam, with the teeth of cruel rocks gleaming through. But Soames' voice rang out in command, and the rattle of the blocks instantly followed as the Kanakas dragged on halyard and sheet, and the boom swung and the great stretch of canvas overhead rolled and banged. The Aloha swept round with her starboard bow looming over the rocks, and the foam broke under her quarter as she glided on in safety.

Bob Cherry caught his breath. "My hat! I—I thought——" "Look!" muttered Wharton tensely. Again the reefs gleamed and foamed fairly under the bowsprit, and again the Aloha swung to safety, Soames' voice rapping out staccato orders to the watchful Kanakas. Then the schooner glided on, with the reefs on her port side, the island on the starboard, gliding down to the lagoon. Once the juniors felt a shock and a thrill in the whole fabric of the vessel as she scraped against a hidden rock—but it was only a scrape, and the Aloha was clear again instantly.

As the schooner glided into the safe haven of the lagoon the Greyfriars fellows looked at Soames. They could not help admiring the man in that moment. It was long years since he had sailed the south seas, long years since he had seen that lonely isle; yet he had taken the schooner in safely through a dangerous passage, at which many an experienced South Sea skipper would have baulked. His face was still cool and calm; but there were beads of perspiration on his brow; the strain had told even on the sea-lawyer, who seemed to be made of ice and steel.

In the lagoon, fifty yards from the

shelving beach of dazzling sand and coral, the anchor was dropped, and the Aloha rode in safety in water as smooth as a pond.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Redwing's Answer!

"AND now——" murmured Bob Cherry.

The juniors watched Soames. The Aloha was at anchor now in the island lagoon, and the juniors were intensely interested in the next proceedings of the man who had seized the schooner and planned to seize the treasure of Redwing's seafaring uncle. The time had come now for Redwing to tell what he knew of the lost chart.

That Tom Redwing could have drawn a copy of the chart from memory, with little likelihood of a mistake, the juniors knew; and they suspected that Soames knew it, too. It was clear that he was depending absolutely on Redwing's knowledge to lift Black Peter's pearls. Redwing, at the scoundrel's mercy, could scarcely refuse to obey his command. All the fellows knew what would happen if he refused. But there was a grim, dogged expression on Tom Redwing's face that boded no good for Soames' plans.

Soames had ordered the whaleboat to be lowered, and it was floating beside the schooner, at the end of the painter, scarcely moving on the placid water. Soames evidently intended to go ashore; and once he was off the schooner, the juniors felt that there was a chance, at least, of keeping him off. The Kanakas, terrorised by the desperate man, were slavishly at his orders. There was nothing to be expected from them.

But if the sea-lawyer left the Aloha, Ben Dance was capable of getting the vessel away from its anchorage, and the risk of wreck was one that all the party were prepared to take. Yet they knew it was little likely that Soames would give them such a chance. Difficult and perilous as his position was, single-handed among so many enemies, he seemed to be able to guard himself at all points. They watched him almost breathlessly as he stood staring towards the island beach, where there was no sign that a human foot had ever trod.

He turned at last. "Dance!" "Ay, ay!" grunted the seaman. "You were here with Black Peter?" "Ay, ay!" "Did you go ashore with him?" Dance shook his head. "Ho trusted you, I think," said Soames, his glittering eyes on the wooden-legged seaman. "It was to you he gave the chart when he lay dying on the beach; he trusted you with the chart. Tell me the truth, if you value your life. You were here with Peter Bruce when he buried the pearls on the island."

"Ay, ay!" "He did not go ashore alone?" "He took five black boys with him, in a canoe," answered Dance; "the rest of us stayed on the ketch." He gave Soames a bitter look. "You heard me tell these young gentlemen so on board the yacht when I was picked up, afore we knowed you was a sea-lawyer."

Soames smiled faintly. "I heard you," he assented. "I do not believe all I hear, however. Have you ever set foot on Caca?"

"Never!" "And the black boys who went ashore with Peter Bruce?"

"They never came back."
 "You mean that Black Peter killed them on the island, to keep the secret of the cache?"

"We reckoned so, on board the ketch. Leastways, they was never seen again," answered Dance. "He was the man for it, Black Peter was. But he saved my life once from Malaita cannibals, and I always served him faithful. He never reckoned much of a black boy's life. I wanted to go ashore with Peter, but he wouldn't have it, and I knew arterwards why. You can lay to it that I shouldn't have come back to the ketch alive, and he didn't want to leave me as he left the black boys."

"That was Black Peter," assented Soames—"Black Peter as I remember him. I think you are telling me the truth, which is just as well for you. You are an honest man, though you have served the blackest scoundrel that ever sailed the Pacific."

"He was my skipper, and he saved my life," answered Dance. "A black boy more or less wouldn't make a lot of difference."

"And Silvio got him at last," muttered Soames, "that dog of a half-caste! But he did not get the pearls, which is all that matters. You know nothing of the cache?"

Dance made a gesture towards the island.

"It's there," he said. "That's all I ever knowed."

"You had the chart in your hands for weeks—months. It was Silvio's belief, I think, that you had conned it and knew what it told. That was why he seized you."

"I never looked at it," said Dance. "Black Peter made me swear on the Good Book to carry it safe to his sister's son, not that I'd have broke my word to my old skipper, and him dying under Silvio's knife. I never looked at the chart."

Soames nodded.
 "You are useless to me, then. Redwing!"

Tom Redwing drew a deep breath. There was a movement among the Greyfriars juniors. Their hearts were beating fast. It was "sink or swim" together for Harry Wharton & Co. The fate of one was the fate of all. Soames' hand rested on the automatic at his belt, and the lives of all were his for the taking, and they knew it. But every fellow there was determined to stand by Redwing to the last.

"Redwing, I am going ashore now, and taking your friends with me," said Soames quietly. "While I am gone you will draw up a copy of the chart."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said Redwing.

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"With your life at stake?"

"Yes," said Redwing steadily.

Soames smiled.

"You are a plucky lad," he said.

"Believe me, I admire pluck, and shall be sorry to harm you. But the treasure is to be mine. I have set my life on a cast, and you should know by this time that I shall stop at nothing."

"I know," said Redwing quietly.

"Look overside," said Soames.

"Look! In this clear water you can see sixty feet to the coral at the bottom. Look, and see the crabs crawling over the coral, waiting for their meal!"

Redwing did not stir.

"Look," said Soames, "and see the tiger sharks—four—five—six of them—ready to rend you limb from limb!"

"You villain!" said Redwing. "Do as you will, I will not tell you one word to help you to rob me."

"I have sailed in the South Seas,"

said Soames in the same quiet, smooth voice. "Do you know what I have seen in Malaita? I have seen the Malaita boys handle a prisoner. I have seen them break him joint by joint till he was a mass of bleeding flesh without power or motion. I have seen them sink him, thus broken, into water up to the neck, in a blazing sun. This was done, not simply to torture the prisoner, but to make the meat tender for a cannibal feast. Dance, have you not seen the same?"

"It was that that Black Peter saved me from," muttered Dance, the perspiration thick on his mahogany face. "I lost a leg there."

"You hear me, Redwing?"

"I hear you," answered Tom.

"Will you draw up the chart?"

"No."

"There are cannibals on the island yonder," said Soames, with a wave of his hand towards Caca. "Beyond the hills—which they cross sometimes—which they would cross immediately to take a prisoner handed to them for a cannibal feast. A smoke signal would call them. Do you desire me to make that signal?"

"I have answered you," said Redwing.

"And you still refuse?"

"I still refuse."

Soames gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"Very well," he said lightly. "Remain on board and reflect. You others, get into the boat." His hand touched the automatic. "You first, Dance, then you lads. Sharp's the word!"

Ben Dance stumped to the side and swung into the boat. Harry Wharton & Co., in silence, followed.

Their brief hope was gone, if it had been a hope, for they could not have expected that Soames would leave them on the schooner, free to act against him when he was gone.

Redwing stood alone.

Soames had told him to reflect; but he did not need to reflect. His mind was long made up. But he had not yet heard all. Four Kanaka seamen manned the whaleboat, and

Soames stepped in after them. He sat down and took the lines with one hand, and his automatic was in the other. The oars dashed into the water. But Soames made a sign to the Kanakas to stop, and the seamen rested on their oars.

"Redwing!" he called up.

Tom looked down steadily at him over the rail of the Aloha.

"Have you reflected yet?" Soames' voice was ironical. "I regret that I cannot give you longer! Once I am out of hail of your voice, it will be too late!"

"I have made up my mind!" answered Redwing.

"Watch the shore!" said Soames.

"In a few minutes you will see the smoke signal rise! Say farewell to Herbert Vernon-Smith!"

Redwing started.

"What—what do you mean?" he panted.

"I mean that I shall leave Herbert Vernon-Smith on the beach, unarmed and helpless, for the Caca cannibals!" answered Soames, with deadly quietness of tone. "If you choose to ransom his life before it is too late, there is yet time! But the seconds are passing!"

"You scoundrel!" roared the Bounder, his face red with rage.

"Silence!"

"Reddy, stick it out!" shouted the Bounder. "Never mind me! Stick to it, and beat the scoundrel!"

Redwing's face was haggard as he looked down.

He had no doubt of Soames' intentions; the man was merciless. If Redwing defied him to the end, it was not his own life, but his friend's life, that was to pay for the defiance.

Soames gave him a look.

"Give way, men!" he snapped.

"Washy washy for beach plenty quick!" The oars dipped.

"Stop!" panted Redwing huskily.

His face was white as chalk. To save his friend's life he would have given not only the treasures of Caca, but all

(Continued on next page.)

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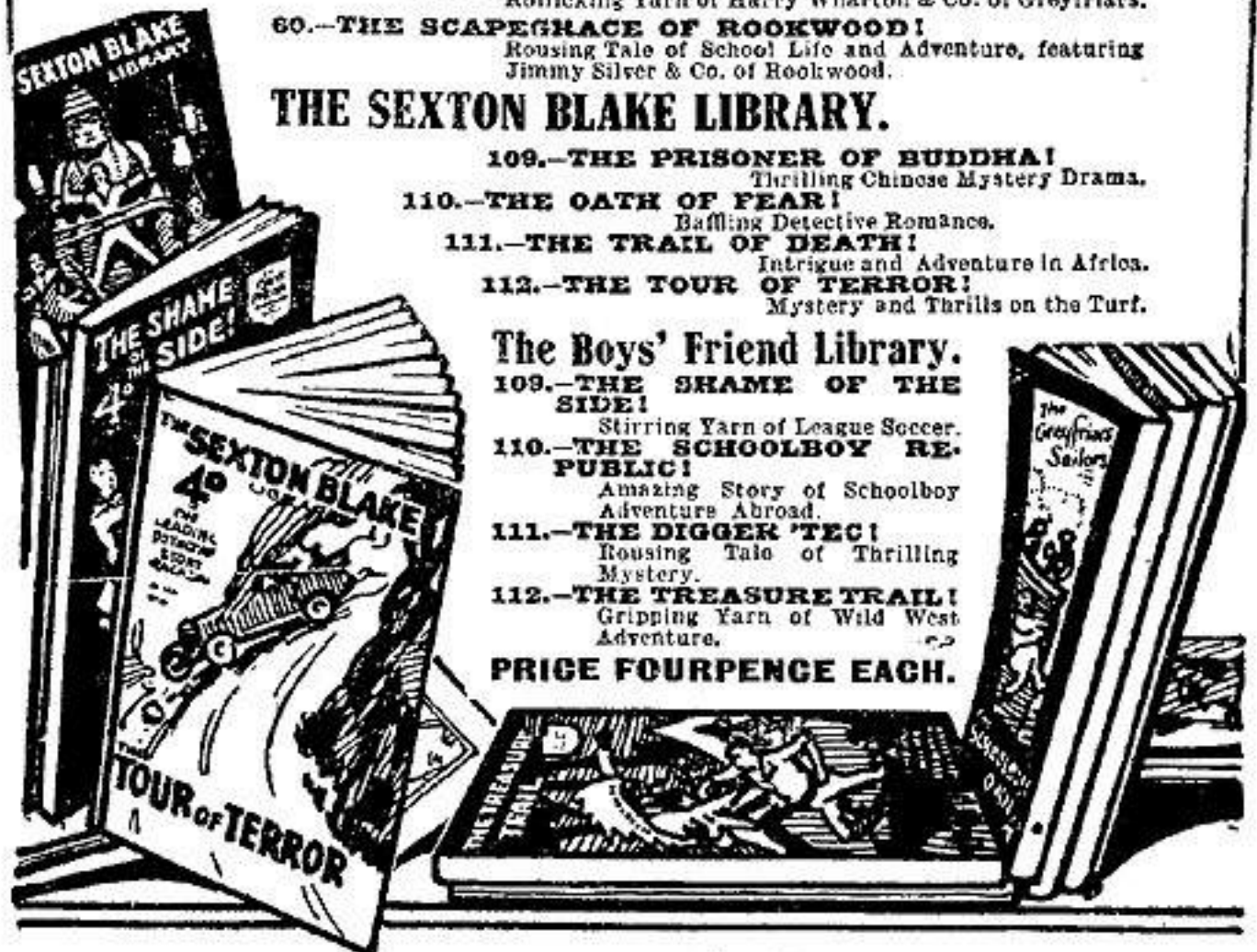
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the treasures of the world. Soames had calculated well. He did not need the torture to force the sailorman's son to speak.

He looked up, with a sneer.

"I will do as you ask!" panted Tom. "I will make a copy of the chart, you villain! You shall have your way!"

"I thought so!"

"Reddy!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Silence, you!" snapped Soames. "You Kanaka boy, you knock um down with oar if um talk plenty much!"

"You hound——" hissed the Bounder.

He broke off with a cry as a Kanaka oar struck him, obedient to Soames' order, and he fell into the bottom of the whaleboat. He scrambled up again, crimson with fury; but Harry Wharton caught his arm and dragged him into a seat. The automatic was ready, with Soames' cold, clear eye gleaming over it.

"Chuck it, Smithy! Don't be a fool!" muttered Wharton.

"Good advice, Master Herbert! Act on it!" sneered Soames.

The Bounder, choking with rage, sat panting. The oars dipped again, and the whaleboat glided away from the schooner. Soames glanced up at Redwing's white, tense face looking down and smiled.

"I shall expect to see the chart when I return in an hour!" he said.

And then the way on the boat carried him out of reach of Redwing's voice.

But he did not need an answer. He knew that the chart would be ready. Once more the sea-lawyer had scored, and in the breasts of his prisoners was a feeling something like despair—a feeling that this icy, iron-nerved, desperate man was destined to score, and that they were as helpless in his ruthless grip as flies in the web of a spider.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Respite for Bunter!

"YAROOH!"

It was a dismal roar from Billy Bunter as the boat glided away from the schooner—Bunter, whose existence was forgotten by all.

Bunter was in trouble again.

The Tonga Island cook had given his rope's-end plenty of exercise. Now he was giving it some more. Talupa delighted to see a "white marster" hop and yell under the rope. Talupa had had plenty of the rope in his time, and he gloated over the chance of handing back some of what he had received to a white man—any white man.

William George Bunter was the only white man Talupa had at his mercy, or was ever likely to have. So Bunter was paying for all.

With an excuse, or without an excuse, Talupa roped and clouted and kicked the fat junior. Bunter, the laziest fellow at Greyfriars, or in the wide world, had developed into the most industrious worker on board the Aloha. He worked like a slave; he anticipated his master's wishes so far as his fat intellect allowed; he fawned on the black cook; he trembled at the frown of the Tonga Islander. And even so he could not escape punishment, for in the

punishment of a "white marster" the soul of the black man delighted.

Redwing heard the yell as he went below, but he did not heed it. He had his task to think of.

Bitter as it was, he had to obey the sea-lawyer. To save his own life he would not have obeyed; his resolution had been fixed. But to save his chum from the hungry clutches of the cannibals—that was a different matter. He had to save the Bounder, and he could save him only by obeying Soames. And, with a bitter, black brow, the sailorman's son went below, to take pen and ink and paper and carry out Soames' order. He was not likely to heed the woes of Billy Bunter in that hour of bitterness.

Soames had won at the finish, in spite of the throwing overboard of Black Peter's chart. The man who had been the secret enemy on board the Golden Arrow, the man who had drugged the millionaire, the man whose treachery and hypocrisy had been abysmal—he was the man who was to lift the pearls and to sail away successful, leaving the Greyfriars juniors marooned on the solitary island. It was bitter enough, but it was better than leaving him to carry out his threat. Black Peter's pearls were a light price to pay for Smithy's life.

Redwing sat at his task, with a moody brow.

It was not difficult for him; so many times had he coned over the chart that every word of it, almost every line graven by Black Peter's knife, was familiar in his memory. Here and there might be some slight error, but the chart he drew would guide the sea-lawyer to the cache as surely as the disc of teak itself.

A stealthy footstep made him look up.

"Hush!" breathed Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove had stolen in.

He was crimson with heat, perspiring at every pore, and in many places he bore the marks of the Tonga Islander's rope.

Evidently Talupa's slave had stolen away from the galley and was seeking a hiding-place again.

Redwing frowned.

"Get back, you fat duffer!" he muttered. "The man will be after you!"

"The black beast has gone to sleep!" muttered Bunter. "I'm going to hide somewhere! I say, Redwing, I'm worn out—I am, really! I've been working like a nigger slave for that black brute!"

"You asked for it!" grunted Redwing. "Soames would have let you alone if you'd treated him decently when he was Mr. Vernon-Smith's servant!"

"Oh, really, Redwing——"

"Don't bother!"

"Beast! Is that what you call sympathy?"

Redwing turned to his task again. His own heart was too heavy for Bunter's tribulations to affect him much. Indeed, he was rather of opinion that the fat slacker was getting a lesson he needed.

"Fat feller Bunter!" It was the voice of the Tonga Islander. "You show a leg, plenty quick, or me knock seven bells outer you!"

Bunter shuddered.

"That black beast has woke up!" he groaned.

Bunter blinked round wildly through his big spectacles for a hiding-place. He scuttled into the companion-way and crept up as far as the deck, and stopped there, listening. He heard the

voice of Talupa below in the cuddy addressing Redwing.

"Fat feller, where he go?"

"Find out!" snapped Redwing.

"What name you no tell me where fat feller he go, sar?"

"Leave me alone, I tell you!"

The Tonga Islander had already had a lesson on the subject of cheeking "white marsters," and he let Redwing alone, and proceeded to root through the cuddy in search of Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove stepped out on deck, shuddering. As soon as he was found the roping would begin; he knew that. He was bent on postponing the evil hour as long as possible.

Some of the Kanaka crew saw him and grinned. The adventures of Billy Bunter in the cook's galley furnished considerable entertainment to the crew of the Aloha.

"You feller Talupa!" shouted Kalashti. "Fat feller boy he come up."

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

The Tonga Islander's footsteps sounded on the companion-ladder. Bunter dived into the little deck-house, of which the door stood wide open. Had Soames been still on board Bunter would have faced the cook's rope rather than have ventured into the sea-lawyer's quarters. But he had seen Soames go ashore in the whaleboat and knew that the deck-house was untenanted. He dived in and shut the door behind him, and groped over it for a fastening. There was a bolt, and Bunter slipped it into place just as the Tonga Islander reached the door.

Crash!

The cook's massive fist struck the door with a concussion that made the whole light structure shake.

"You feller Bunter, you come out plenty quick!" roared Talupa.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter.

He stood trembling with apprehension.

The little deck-house was of light construction, and the Tonga Islander could have beaten in door or wall with one of his saucepans. But Bunter felt fairly sure that he would not venture to treat in such a disrespectful way the quarters of the lord of life and death on board the Aloha.

He was right. The Tonga Islander rapped savagely on the door and shouted blood-curdling threats, but he did not venture to attempt to break a way in.

Over each bunk in the little house was a port-hole, wide open, and at each port in turn Talupa glared in at the shivering Owl of the Remove with rolling eyes and flashing teeth. But there was not space for the cook to squeeze in.

"You feller Bunter, you come out, or me make kai-kai of you long of shark!" yelled Talupa.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"You feller comey out plenty quick!"

"Oh, dear!"

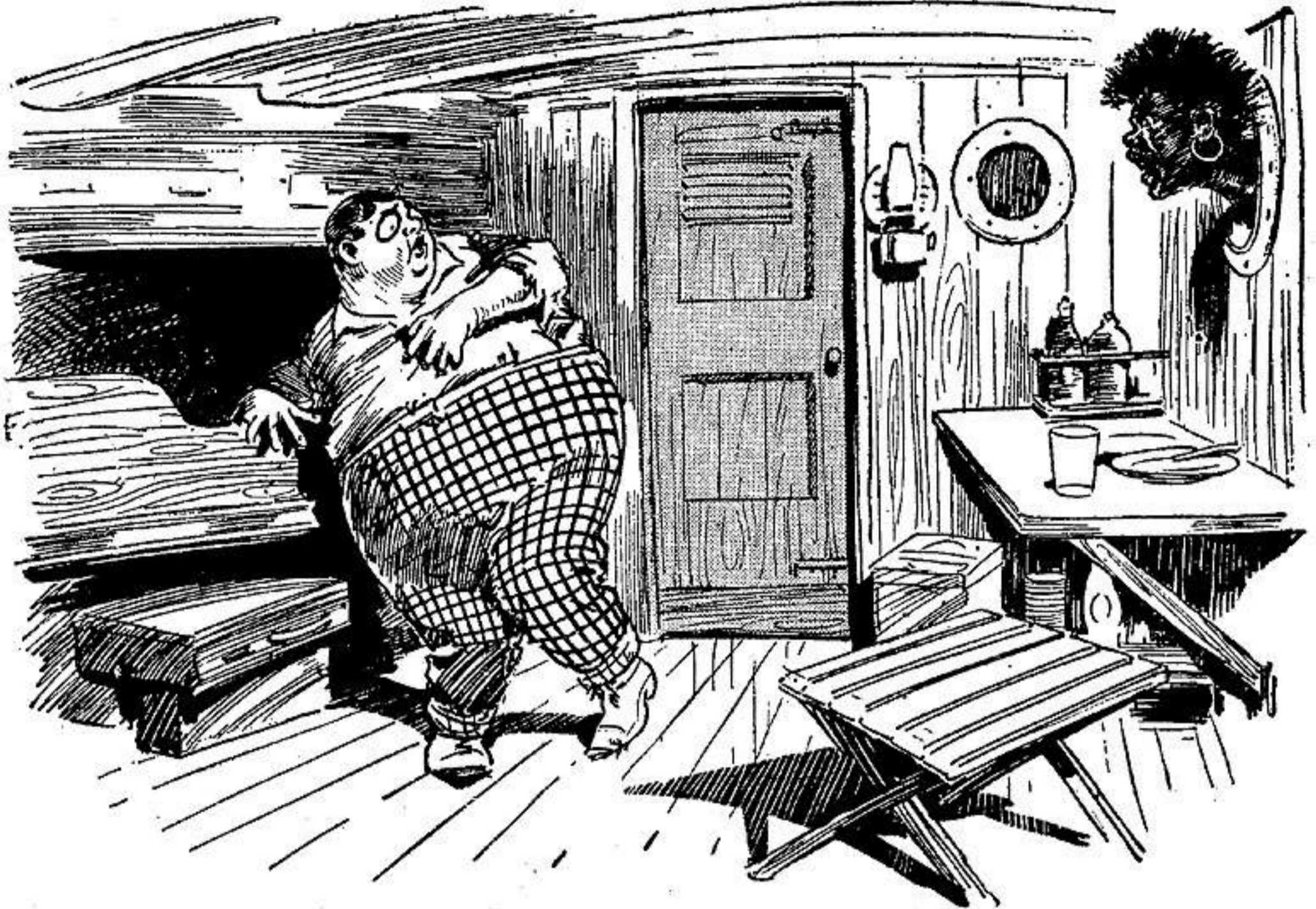
Bunter had not the slightest intention of coming out—at least, until Soames came back to the schooner and turned him out. It was a respite, at least, for the cook's boy.

For a long time the black cook prowled round the deck-house, breathing threats; but he could not enter, and he did not dare to break a way in. He gave it up at last, and squattered away with his bare feet, to curl up and sleep in the shade of the mainmast, but with one eye open for Bunter to emerge.

The Owl of the Remove did not emerge. He was getting a much-needed rest from his task-master.

When the cook was gone Bunter sat down on a bunk, breathing in great

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"You feller Bunter!" yelled Talupa, poking his head through the porthole. "You comee out, or me make kai-kai of you long of shark!" "Beast!" groaned Billy Bunter. "You feller comee out plenty quick!" roared Talupa. "Oh dear!"
(See Chapter 8.)

gasps, streaming with perspiration all over his fat limbs. The mere cessation of labour, and of blows, and kicks, and abuse, was a glorious change after what he had been through. He was quite resolved to stay where he was till Soames came on board. If he had to face his master again, the later he faced him the better.

He was hungry.

Bunter had fed on scraps and fragments ever since he had been cook's boy to the Tonga Islander, without a single square meal at all. Many a meal had he helped to prepare for others, never one for himself. Now that he had a rest he realised that he was ravenously hungry, and he blinked round the deck-house in search of provender. His blink landed on a box of biscuits, and in a moment more his jaws were busy. He found a bottle of lime-juice and a syphon of soda-water, and quenched his thirst, and then he re-started on the biscuits and finished them. Then, like Alexander of old, he looked round for fresh worlds to conquer.

There was a leather suitcase belonging to Soames in the deck-house, but it was locked. Bunter knew that case; he had seen it in the valet's room on the Golden Arrow on the voyage out from England.

Well the fat junior recalled having seen James Soames packing the automatic in that suitcase, one day on the yacht.

He tried the lock, but it was fast; Soames evidently had the key with him. But Bunter continued to blink at the suitcase. It was quite probable that there was something to eat in it, if only chocolates or meat cubes.

The thought of Soames' anger, if he

found his baggage rifled when he returned, made Bunter turn quite cold.

But his fat wits were hard at work now. He was hungry—famished, in fact. There might be food in the suitcase; and, after all, Soames might not know that he had done it. The suitcase had been shoved under a bunk out of the way, to save what little space there was; Soames might not have any reason for going to it that day, and in that event the discovery would be postponed. Even while he was debating the matter in his mind Bunter had sorted out his pocket-knife and opened the largest blade. When Soames found that the suitcase had been burgled he would not know that Bunter had done it. He might think that one of the crew had rifled it, or one of the Greyfriars fellows. It did not really matter what he thought so long as he did not think of Bunter! Spurred on by hunger and the hope of discovering eatables in the case, Bunter made up his fat mind at last.

He hacked at the leather round the lock.

It was not real leather, but an imitation material, that was strong enough in its way, but offered only slight resistance to a knife. Bunter hacked through in a few minutes and gashed round the lock till it came loose.

Then he eagerly opened the lid of the suitcase.

It was neatly packed. Everything about Soames was neat and orderly.

Bunter turned over its contents with eager, greasy fingers leaving finger-marks on everything he touched, without heeding them.

There were folded clothes, and a number of papers, and two or three

books, all of which Bunter passed unheeded. There was an empty box, where the automatic had been kept, and there was a case of cartridges, of no use to Bunter—he could not eat cartridges. There were brushes and combs, and other things—all useless to Bunter for his present purpose. There was a little bottle, without a label, half full of a colourless liquid, which Bunter blinked at. He removed the stopper and sniffed at it, and detected a faint, not unpleasant smell. For the moment he forgot his quest of food as he blinked at that little bottle.

He could guess what was in it.

He remembered how Mr. Vernon-Smith had been drugged on board the Golden Arrow by the thief who had attempted to obtain the chart locked up in the yacht's safe.

The secret enemy's identity was known now. It was Soames who had drugged the millionaire; Bunter knew that.

And he had little doubt—or, rather, none—that the phial in his hand contained the opiate of which a part had been administered to Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith.

It was of no use to Bunter, and he was about to put it back when a sudden idea dawned in his fat mind, and he grinned.

Mr. Vernon-Smith had been put into a deep sleep, lasting ten or twelve hours, by a dose of Soames' drug. If the rest of it, dropped into the Tonga Islander's food, had the same effect on Talupa, it would give Bunter a long rest—a rest of which he felt the need sorely.

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(Continued from page 13.)

Bunter slipped the phial into his pocket.

If it really was the secret drug, as he believed, the Tonga Islander was booked for a long spell of slumber, and Bunter for a long spell of rest.

Then the fat junior resumed his search through the suitcase for food. He found, at last, a little case of compressed meat tablets and a box of milk chocolate. It did not take Bunter long to dispose of them. He felt better when they were disposed of.

There was nothing more of an eatable nature in the case, and Bunter shut down the lid at last, and pushed it under the bunk. Only the back of the suitcase showed to the eye now, and there was nothing about that to reveal the fact that it had been tampered with. If Soames pulled it out from under the bunk to open it, certainly, he would see at once that it had been cut open. Bunter hoped that he wouldn't.

But he realised that it would be wise to be off the scene when Soames returned, if Soames was not to guess that he had been there.

He blinked from one of the portholes.

At a little distance he could make out the Tonga Islander, sprawled against the mainmast, asleep.

Now was his chance.

Softly he opened the door of the deck-house and stole out, leaving it wide open as he had found it.

On tiptoe he stole across to the companion.

From somewhere forward came a cackle of laughter and a calling voice.

"You feller Talupa, him boy come."

The cook was on his feet in a second, his black paw closing on the rope's end. Bunter bounded into the companion; Talupa bounded after him.

Whack!

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter fled for his life, and the Tonga Islander pursued hotly. The fat junior was rounded up in the galley, yelling and roaring. The rope's-end fairly rained on him.

"You fat feller white marster, I knock seven bells outer you!" roared the Tonga Islander. "I knock seven bells and um starboard watch outer you, golly!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-woop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Now you washum plenty quick; and you bleak nodder dish, I knock stuffing outer you, my word!" said Talupa.

And Billy Bunter groaned and washed dishes.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Exploring the Island!

THE whaleboat bumped on the beach of dazzling white sand and ground coral, of a dazzling whiteness that made the eye ache. Soames stepped ashore, his quick

glance travelling up and down the beach. There was no sign of human life—no footprint on the wide stretches of sand—no moving figure in the shadows of the tall, nodding palms. The island seemed utterly uninhabited; yet it was always possible that appearances might be deceptive, and that ferocious head-hunters might be lurking and watching. Soames was not off his guard for a second.

"Get out of the boat," he said.

The Greyfriars fellows and Ben Dance followed him ashore, then the Kanaka oarsmen. The whaleboat was pulled up high and dry on the beach by Soames' order; and the juniors exchanged glances. Apparently the sea-lawyer knew that the thought had flashed through their minds of seizing the boat and leaving him marooned.

Soames ordered the Kanakas to cross the beach to the palms, at some distance from the sea, and wait there. Even the Kanakas he did not trust with a chance of leaving him stranded on the island. The natives obeyed him willingly enough, and stretched themselves under the palms idly, only too willing to laze.

"You others follow me," said Soames.

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Bob Cherry.

Soames glanced at him and smiled. Even the cold, hard-hearted sea-lawyer seemed to have some liking for the cheery Bob.

"Probably you will be pleased to explore the place a little," he said. "I must warn you that if you attempt to run I shall shoot on the instant. Do not force me to do so. I may also warn you that this island may not be so peaceful as it looks, and if there are enemies at hand, only my pistol can save you from the cooking-pot. It will be for your benefit to keep close."

He walked away from the sea, heading for the object the juniors had noticed, when the schooner was approaching the island, on the bank of the stream that flowed into the lagoon.

They knew what it was; it was marked "pae-pae-hae" on Black Peter's chart, and they had seen such buildings at Nuka-Hiva.

Although they were in the power of Soames, and no longer their own masters, the juniors were keen enough to tread the treasure island, and to explore what they could of it. Soames evidently was making a reconnaissance now, to ascertain whether the coast was clear for the search to begin for the cache. Only the western side of the isle, beyond the hills, was inhabited by natives—cannibals, who seldom crossed the island—why, the juniors did not know. It seemed to them that the fertile stretch spread before their eyes invited inhabitants. Sometimes, however, the savages must have come round the island in their canoes; and it was certain that if news of the arrival of a white man's ship reached them, it would cause immense excitement among the natives. The prospect of so much plunder could not fail to stir them. Soames, as the juniors could see, was anxious to ascertain whether there were signs of the natives on the eastern side of the island, which would make a great difference to his plans. The search for the treasure would have been difficult and dangerous, had cannibals been watching and lurking in the woods.

All was silent, save for the calling of the gulls, the cries of many-coloured parrots, and the soft lap of the sea on the sand. Land crabs crawled among the stones, taking no heed of passing feet, which seemed to the juniors to indicate that no feet had trodden there

of late. Soames stopped as they reached the pae-pae-hae.

A long platform of volcanic stone formed a kind of high foundation, twenty feet or so in length, five or six feet in height. Roughly-made steps of the same material led up to it.

This was the pae-pae, in the language of the Marquesas.

Soames strode up the lava steps, and the juniors followed him up, and stood on the rocky platform.

On the pae-pae had stood the hae, or house, built of plaited grass and palm-leaves, but little of the hae remained.

The juniors could trace where the long, flimsy building had been, but it had long fallen to utter ruin, and the remnants of it were thickly inhabited by ants, spiders, caterpillars, and all kinds of insects. Little crabs crawled among the shapeless remains of the hae.

"So this was the pae-pae-hae," said Nugent.

"This was marked on the chart, I think?" said Soames.

"Yes," said Harry.

"In connection with the clue to the cache?"

"I don't know that. I know that it was marked, that is all."

Soames nodded.

"Was this the only house here, Soames?" asked Bob Cherry.

"By no means. It was probably the only pae-pae-hae, and must have been built by Marquesans," said Soames. "Probably servants of the trader who lived here once."

"A trader lived here?" exclaimed Bob.

"Not a copra trader. This island would furnish little copra if once the coconuts were gathered in. Long ago there was a trader here, however, who built a stockade further to the north."

"That's on the chart," said Bob.

"No doubt Black Peter put down every detail," said Soames. "He must have had some idea that perhaps an enemy would get him. He had plenty of enemies—more than any other man in the Pacific, I fancy. He had a hard and heavy hand with natives, had Black Peter, and not only with natives. He made the chart ready, lest an enemy should get him at last—as came to happen; and no doubt the chart was intended for his kin at home. Who would have dreamed that that ruffian remembered his kith and kin?"

Soames seemed to be speaking rather to himself than to the juniors.

"You knew him?" said Bob.

"I knew him well—once," said Soames briefly.

He was standing on the highest point of the pae-pae, gazing about him intently. No sign of life, save for the land-crabs, stirred on the island.

"There seem to be no natives here," said Bob.

"Fortunately," said Soames.

"But why is not this side of the island inhabited?" asked Bob curiously. "Do you know that?"

"Black Peter could have told you," said Soames. "It would be inhabited now, as it was once, but for Black Peter. I told you that a trader lived in a stockade here for some years. He was one of Peter's men. That was before the pearls were buried here, of course. He traded in flesh and blood. Black Peter's ketch came here to kidnap natives for the plantations—Dance knows."

"Oh!" muttered Bob.

Ben Dance did not speak.

"I do not know how many natives lived here—certainly some hundreds,"

said Soames. "Black Peter and his men cleared them off in a few trips. Those who escaped into the hills had a worse fate than the plantations, for they were at war with the tribe on the other side of the island, and they must have gone to the cooking-pots. Since that time the eastern side of the island had been uninhabited. On the other side is no anchorage. A black-birder cannot anchor there on a kidnapping expedition. The tribe on that side is safe—or, rather, the tribes. There are two or three tribes, generally at war with one another."

"What do they go to war about?" asked Bob.

"To capture prisoners for the cooking-pots."

"My hat! A pleasant lot!" said Bob. "But when they have no prisoners, I suppose they are not cannibals?"

"You do not know the South Seas yet," said Soames. "When a feast comes round they obtain long-pig, as they call it. If there are no prisoners from their raiding, they find the long-pig in their own tribe. The day of a feast is a dangerous time for any friendless man in the tribe."

"What awful beasts!" said Bob, with a shudder.

Soames smiled faintly.

"If you feel tempted to run, remember what I have told you," he said. "You are safe with me."

The juniors did not answer that. They intended to submit to Soames' dictation just so long as they had no choice in the matter, and not a second more.

Soames descended the lava steps of the pae-pae, and moved along the bank of the stream, his eyes watchfully about him, the juniors and Ben Dance following. Across the stream, strange and grisly to the view, rose the large rock, strangely shaped like head and shoulders. Soames fixed his eyes on it.

"That was called Kanaka's Head," he said. "No doubt it was marked on the chart."

"It was marked," said Harry.

"From the top there is a view of all this side of the island, as far as the hills," said Soames. "I remember that. Follow me."

"But the river—"

"There is a ford."

Soames moved along the bank, his keen eyes taking in details stored years since in a retentive memory. At the ford of the shallow, sandy stream the juniors were able to cross with ease, stepping from one stone to another and hardly wetting their feet. A patch of low bush lay between them and the head-shaped rock. They tramped through the bush, startling myriads of insects, and reached the rock.

It was steep, and looked almost inaccessible. But Soames swung himself to the top in a few minutes.

On the summit, clear against the sky, motionless as a statue, the juniors watched him as he swept the island with his gaze. He seemed satisfied at last, and came down from the Kanaka's Head.

"The coast is clear," he said. "All is clear for the search for the pearls to-morrow. We return now."

Soames was evidently in a satisfied mood; his reconnaissance of the island had turned out as he had hoped. He strode back to the whaleboat, the Greyfriars fellows following.

"What price making a run for it?" Bob Cherry whispered to his comrades. "Plenty of cover among the bush."

Wharton shook his head.

"Without food—or weapons?" he said. "And Redwing's still on board the schooner—and Bunter, too, if Bunter matters. We must wait for a better chance than this."

Soames looked round.

He could not have overheard the whispered words, but he seemed to be gifted with a strange intuition.

"Walk ahead of me!" he rapped out, his hand on the automatic.

Bob grinned faintly, and the juniors went on. At a call from Soames, the sprawling Kanakas came loafing down from the palms, and the whaleboat was manned again and pulled back to the schooner.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Within His Grasp!

BILLY BUNTER blinked dismally at the Greyfriars fellows as they came on board the Aloha. The chums of the Remove were, in Bunter's opinion, having a much better

"Beast! I say, you fellows, it's up to you!" mumbled Bunter. "You brought me here, you know, and you can't let this go on. Why didn't you tackle that villain Soames on the island?"

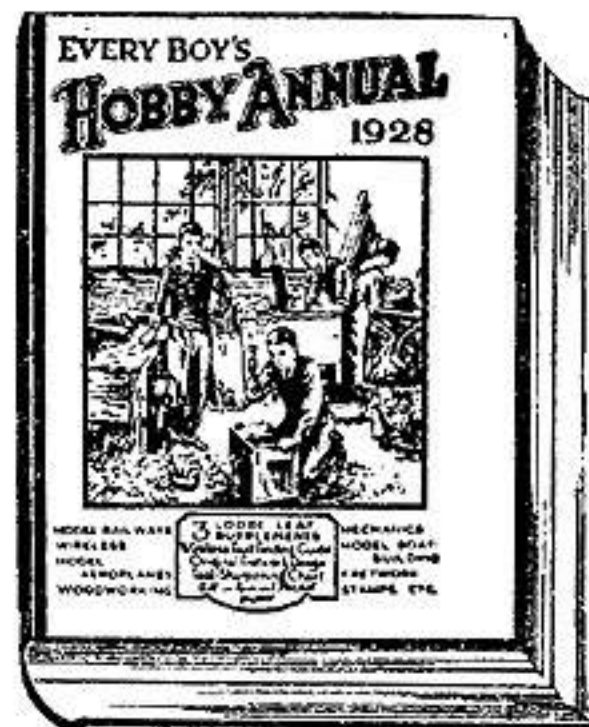
"Why don't you tackle him on the schooner?" asked Frank Nugent.

"You silly ass! I say, that beast Talupa has gone to sleep now, but when he wakes up he will pitch into me again. He's always pitching into me for nothing!" said Bunter pathetically. "Fancy a fellow being knocked about by a nigger! Look here, that beast Soames seems to be treating you decently. Can't you put in a word for me?"

"Put in a word for yourself!" said Wharton. "You checked Soames, and he's taking it out of you. Serve you right! He may let you off if you ask him. Still, you rubbed it in pretty hard when you had a chance, so you can't expect much."

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time than the fat Owl. Bunter was not worrying about the chart or the treasure. They were not his, so why should he worry? He was worrying about his own troubles, which seemed to him intolerable. In point of fact, the life of a cook's boy, under a Tonga Island cook, was not a happy one.

Soames went into the deckhouse, and Bunter felt a shiver run through his fat limbs.

If the sea-lawyer discovered that his suit-case had been broken into—

At that moment Bunter repented him of his temerity. It was Bunter's way to rush into trouble, and repent when it was too late.

"I say, you fellows," mumbled Bunter—"I say, this is too thick, you know! How long is this going on?"

"Where's Redwing?" asked Harry.

"Blow Redwing!" said Bunter peevishly. "What does Redwing matter? I was speaking about myself!"

"You generally are!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Has the cook been making you work?" asked Johnny sarcastically. "Must be awful to get through a little work! Still, fellows who can't be ornamental should try to be useful."

Smithy? You brought me here as a guest—pretty sort of a holiday this is!" groaned Bunter.

"Sorry you stowed yourself away on the yacht?" grinned the Bounder. "Well, nobody asked you to do it."

"Beast!"

"It's no good grouching, Bunter," said Harry. "We're all under Soames' thumb at present. So long as Soames is top-dog we've got to stand it."

Soames came out of the deckhouse.

"Bunter!" he rapped out.

The fat junior's knees knocked together.

"It wasn't me!" he gasped.

"What?" Soames stared at him.

"What do you mean, you fat fool?"

Bunter gasped.

He had jumped to the conclusion at once that Soames had discovered the state of his suit-case. Evidently that was not so, however. Bunter had very nearly given himself away in his terror.

"I—I—I mean—"

"What are you doing here?" snapped Soames. "A cook's boy has no business here. Get back to the caboose!"

"I—I say—"

"That's enough! Clear!"

Soames' voice was quiet, but there was

menace in it. Billy Bunter did not wait for more. He scuttled away like a scared rat.

"Don't you think Bunter has had enough, Soames?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I think not," answered Soames. "So long as he remains on board the Aloha he will be cook's boy." He dismissed Bunter's existence with a gesture. "Tell Redwing to bring me the map."

Redwing was below in the little cuddy. Had Soames gone down the companion, he would have risked an attack from behind—and the sea-lawyer was taking no risks. He had not been below since he had seized command of the schooner.

The juniors went down, and found Tom Redwing at the table, with the finished copy of the chart before him.

"You've done it?" asked the Bounder.

"Yes."

"And that villain is to bag the treasure to-morrow, and we're helpless to stop him!" said the Bounder gritting his teeth.

"Perhaps," said Redwing. "We are not sure yet that the chart will lead to the treasure. There are many points about it that we do not yet understand. So far as I can make out, the chart gives no exact clue to the cache."

"Depend upon it, that cunning hound will work it out easily enough, once he has the chart," said Vernon-Smith bitterly. "I'd rather have taken my chance, Reddy, than given in to him like this."

Redwing smiled faintly. "Never mind that now, Smithy! After all, Soames has not got away with it yet, and our chance may come."

Redwing went on deck with the map in his hand. Soames was waiting for him there.

A gleam came into his eyes as he took the paper from the sailorman's son.

He scanned it eagerly. "This is a faithful copy, so far as you remember it?" he asked.

Redwing's lips curled. "I told you I would make a copy of it," he said. "If you do not believe me, you can please yourself!"

"I beg your pardon!" said Soames, civilly enough. "I know you are a lad of your word! Anyhow, your fate depends on the finding of the pearls, and the fate of your friends!"

Redwing did not answer that. He returned below, with a heavy heart. It went bitterly against the grain to yield to the unscrupulous sea-lawyer, but he had had no choice. He was longing passionately for a chance of turning the tables on the master of the Aloha; but he realised, with something like despair, that that chance, if it existed at all, was very slight—infinitesimal. Everything was in Soames' hands; he was the lord of life and death on the schooner. To attack him was to throw life away, and leave matters where they stood.

The clue to the treasure was his now. What was still perplexing in Black Peter's chart would soon be elucidated by the sea-lawyer when he searched the island with the aid of the map. Redwing felt that that was certain.

And the lifting of the pearls would be followed by the sailing of the Aloha, leaving the Greyfriars juniors marooned on the lonely island. To that solitary speck in the Pacific ships seldom or never came. What hope would there be of rescue?

None; for it was clear that if any hope of rescue existed, Soames would not have planned to maroon his

prisoners there. Their silence was necessary to his safety.

Since Black Peter's kidnapping vessel had been there, probably no craft had touched at Caca till the Aloha came. That lonely isle, barred by dangerous reefs, far out of the track of trade, not even marked on the Admiralty charts, was as secure a hiding-place as could have been found for them. Indeed, from one point of view, it was better for the juniors that it was so; for had it not been possible to maroon them beyond hope of escape, what would Soames have planned for them? He did not desire their death, but he would never have allowed them to return to civilisation to denounce him. For the Greyfriars party, it was marooning on the solitary isle or—the sea and the sharks!

Heedless of the sailorman's son, Soames went into the deckhouse to examine the map with gloating eyes. His voice was heard calling a few minutes later:

"You feller Talupa!"

The Tonga Island cook hurried up. "Coffee!" snapped Soames.

"Yes, sar!"

And Soames, with glittering eyes scanning the map, forgot everything but the treasure that now seemed within his grasp.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Worm that Turned!

"YOU feller Bunter!"

"Oh dear!"

"You take um coffee to white marster!"

"Ow! Yes!"

"You spill um, and me knock eight bells outer you!" said Talupa.

Bunter groaned.

Talupa had been knocking seven bells and eight bells out of Bunter all through the hot day. Bunter had had more lickings as cook's boy on the Aloha in that one day than had ever fallen to his lot in a whole term at Greyfriars. The Tonga Islander ruled in the galley with a heavy hand. To Soames, Talupa was fawningly submissive, and he took it out of Bunter.

Never had the Owl of the Remove been sunk to such depths of woe. Whichever way he looked, the prospect was dark and dismal.

So long as the Aloha remained at Caca Island Bunter was cook's boy, and when the treasure was lifted and the Aloha sailed he was to be marooned with the rest on the island.

The prospect really was appalling. Bunter felt bitterly that the Greyfriars fellows ought to have handled Soames somehow. Certainly, he had not the slightest idea of handling him himself. Not for whole worlds would he have thought of facing the deadly automatic. If he had thought of it, the fate of Jacky, the boatswain, would have been warning enough for him.

When he waited on Soames, carrying his meal to the deckhouse, Bunter was as submissive as Talupa or any of the Kanakas. He trembled in the presence of the desperate adventurer who, he knew, would have shot him down without compunction had occasion arisen. Life as the Tonga cook's "boy" was hard enough, but Bunter never dreamed of resistance.

But as Talupa handed him the tray with the coffee, a thought was working in Bunter's fat mind.

It was a thought that made him tremble, and yet it remained and grew into a resolution.

In his pocket was the phial he had taken from Soames' suitcase—the phial containing the drug which had doped the millionaire long ago on board the Golden Arrow.

Bunter had taken it with the idea of administering it to the Tonga Islander, and getting a much-needed respite while Talupa was sleeping off the effects of it.

But another idea was in his brain now.

Doping Talupa meant a respite, but only a respite. But if he dropped that colourless liquid into Soames' coffee—

His fat knees knocked together at the thought.

Discovery meant that Soames would have thrown him into the sea. He knew that. He was spared because he was contemptuously regarded as of no account. Soames had not even taken the trouble to take him ashore when he landed on the island, as he had taken the others. He had kept Harry Wharton & Co. under his eye, knowing that they were capable of desperate measures if the slightest chance offered. He knew that Bunter was capable of nothing of the sort, and contemptuously forgot him. But if he learned that the fat junior could be dangerous, Bunter knew what to expect.

If he tasted the stuff in the coffee—Bunter's heart failed him at the thought.

But he remembered at once that Mr. Vernon-Smith, on that occasion on the yacht, had not tasted it—had, indeed, refused to believe that he had been drugged at all. The dope was tasteless.

Discovery was impossible unless he was seen to dope the coffee, and it was easy enough to avoid that. And if Soames slept under the influence of the drug, as Mr. Vernon-Smith had slept, and—

Bunter's eyes glittered behind his spectacles at the thought. Once the deadly automatic was out of the way, Soames' power on the Aloha was broken for ever. There were plenty of hands to handle him when it no longer meant instant death.

"You feller boy spill um, and me knock a starboard watch outer you!" threatened the Tonga Islander.

Bunter's hands were shaking as he received the tray.

Billy Bunter made an effort to pull himself together. Terrified as he was, he knew that there was no risk unless he betrayed himself. If the dope worked he was saved—saved from the Tonga Islander, saved from the horrors of the galley, saved from marooning on a cannibal island. A rat in a corner is a dangerous creature, and Bunter was now very like a cornered rat.

His fat mind was made up. Added to his other urgings was the fear of what might happen if Soames discovered the damage to his suitcase—or, rather, when he discovered it. Everything urged Bunter to make the attempt, but the greatest urge of all was the knowledge that it could be done without risk.

He carried away the tray, and the Tonga Islander turned back to his cooking. Out of sight of the cook, Bunter set down the tray for a moment while he groped in his pocket. Inside the pocket he removed the stopper from the phial, keeping his thumb over the little bottle as he drew it out. His fat hand hovered over the coffee-cup for a moment. In that moment the contents of the phial were emptied into the coffee.

Bunter dropped the empty phial back into his pocket, and picked up the tray. If any of the Kanakas had



Crash! The hatchet struck the flimsy door of the deckhouse with a concussion that rang fore and aft of the Aloha. The die was cast now. With hearts that beat almost to suffocation, the juniors waited and watched, every hand grasping a weapon of some sort, but there was no sound from within the deckhouse—a raging hurricane would not have awakened Soames just then. (See Chapter 13.)

observed him, they could only have supposed that he had set down the tray, to rest for a moment, if they thought about him at all, which was unlikely.

He moved on, trembling.

Soames looked up as he entered the deck-house. Bunter's knees knocked together. The knowledge of what was in the coffee gripped his heart with terror; at that moment, he would have undone what he had done, had it been possible.

But there was no possibility of suspicion in Soames' mind. Bunter's obvious terror told him nothing, for he was accustomed to seeing the fat junior shiver and tremble under his eye.

He gave the Owl of the Remove only a glance of contemptuous indifference. "Put the tray down, and go."

Bunter sat the tray down on the little bamboo table in the deck-house, and backed away.

Outside, the sun was blazing down with the heat almost of a furnace, but Bunter felt cold all over.

He stood glued to the deck, blinking into the little house as Soames stirred the coffee.

Some irresistible power seemed to root him there.

He saw the sea-lawyer raise the cup to his lips, and drink off the contents. The sight fascinated him.

Soames put down the cup, and took a biscuit from the tray. Then his glance fell on Bunter outside the deck-house.

One look was enough; he did not

need to speak. The fat junior scuttled away.

Soames munched the biscuit, as he sat conning over the copy of the treasure chart. Billy Bunter rolled into the companion, with the sweat pouring down his fat face. Aching with fear, he groped his way down into the cuddy.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

The Greyfriars fellows gathered round Bunter. The look on his fat face alarmed them. He was grey with fear.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Bob Cherry.

Bunter did not answer.

He could not speak.

He sank down on a locker, breathing stertorously, his eyes glazed behind his spectacles. His hands were shaking as if with the ague. There was no vestige of colour in his fat and flabby face.

"Bunter!" Wharton dropped his hand on the fat junior's shoulder. "What's the matter?"

"The matterfulness seems to be terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

But Bunter did not, and could not, speak. Bob Cherry brought him a glass of water, but he shook his head. He leaned back on the locker, his scared eyes glimmering through his spectacles, almost fainting with fear at what he had done. And James Soames, in the deck-house above, was nodding over the copied chart, drowsy, and growing more drowsy every moment, in the grip of his own drug.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Doped!

JAMES SOAMES started, and rubbed his eyes.

Sleep was creeping on him; the lines of the copied chart danced before his gaze. His head was heavy and sinking. He rubbed his eyes, striving to pull himself together.

What was the matter with him?

Sleep—he needed sleep! If his eyes had closed the night before, it had only been in cat-naps of a few minutes. He needed sleep—but it was not fatigue, it was not the normal desire for slumber, that was overcoming him now. Many a time had the cool, iron-nerved man, strong and supple as steel, passed forty-eight hours without slumber, and retained all his coolness and clearness of mind and vision. Yet now he was sinking heavily, his head dropping as if weighted with lead, and with all his efforts he could barely keep his eyes open.

He rose from his canvas chair, setting his teeth.

He must not sleep.

He knew that he must not sleep—even with his senses growing dreamy and drowsy, he knew that clearly enough. He must not sleep—he dared not sleep, until infinite precautions were taken. The juniors locked in the cuddy—Ben Danco bound hand and foot—the deck-house closed and bolted, with bells to jangle if a hand stirred at door or port-hole—in such circumstances, in the midst of such precautions, he could venture to take

repose when he absolutely required it. But he had not thought of requiring it yet—he had not been tired or sleepy when he returned on board after reconnoitring the island—and he had taken coffee to clear his mind, and the natural effect of coffee was to make one wakeful, sleepless. Yet following the drinking of the coffee, this strange dreaminess had come upon him.

He must not sleep.

He gritted his teeth, as he rose. The deck-house, the bunks, the sunlit portholes, seemed to be moving about him. Outside, the deck, cracking in the glare of the sun, seemed to shift and float. He stood unsteadily, holding to the wall with one hand, the other grasping the copy of the chart.

What was the matter with him? What was this drowsiness that had come upon him so suddenly, so strangely? Had he defied fatigue too long, and had it suddenly gripped him thus?

For the first time, something like fear penetrated the hard heart of the man who had known no fear, any more than he had known mercy or scruple.

If they knew—if they saw him in this state—if they realised, they his enemies—what then? His hand sought the automatic, but his grasp on it was nerveless. He knew that now he could not shoot straight, with all things swimming before his eyes—even if he got no worse. And the numbness of irresistible slumber was creeping on him more and more.

What had happened?

His brain was growing confused, but he knew that this was not natural. Had he been poisoned—had one of the natives in the crew some deadly potion of the South-Sea devil-doctors in his possession—had it been given him in his food? The coffee—he remembered the coffee. Then he knew. He was drugged!

Who—the Tonga Island cook, of course. Only Talupa could have drugged his drink, with some fiendish potion known to the natives. The man who foresaw everything had not foreseen that.

The thought stirred him to action, in spite of the numb grip on him. He drew the pistol from its holster. To seek Talupa, and shoot him dead—the work of a minute. It would be an example to the others, too—

But he did not leave the deck-house. He knew that he was losing consciousness, and he must not lose consciousness in the open, where his enemies could see him, and handle him.

With a last effort, the last struggle of a desperate determination, he forced himself to close the door of the deck-house, his hands like lead, fumbling clumsily, his head swimming, his eyelids weighed down with heaviness. He closed the door, he shot the bolt. He closed the two ports, heedless of the stuffy heat without a breath of air from outside. He was reeling now, overcome by sleep; but he did not reel to a bunk. He dropped in a sitting posture inside the door, his back to the door—if he could wake, he would should an attempt be made to force the door.

It was all he could do. The copied chart had fallen on the deck planks, unheeded and forgotten. But the automatic was in his right hand, as he sat with his head sagging on his breast. It was in his hand—but his grasp on it was nerveless. Still he struggled against sleep—knowing all the time that the struggle was futile. If they

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knew that he slept—if they discovered that he was unconscious—

The unfinished thought died in his numbed brain. His chin on his breast, the pistol loose in his relaxed fingers, he slept.

He slept in the heat and silence, lost now to all consciousness of his surroundings, a sleep from which nothing was likely to wake him till the dope had run its course.

Outside, many eyes turned on the deck-house.

Not a Kanaka was likely to approach—the fate of Jacky, the boatswain, was too fresh in their minds. Soames had tricked the boatswain into betraying himself, by affecting slumber. If he was sleeping now, or if he was affecting slumber, he was too dangerous to approach. Ben Dance, watching from where he leaned against the taffrail, thought of it, and shook his head.

Gladly enough he would have taken a chance, but there was no chance. Forcing a way into the deck-house would awaken a sleeper, and the deadly automatic would do its work. Now that the schooner was safe in her anchorage Soames could afford to leave the deck unguarded. He was doubtless taking, at last, the sleep he needed, but the risk of waking him was too great. He would wake—

Dance shook his head gloomily. Almost every hope had left him now of ever getting the upper hand of the sea-lawyer. Sleeping or waking, the man was as dangerous to approach as a tiger or shark. It was death to waken him. And the seaman did not know—did not dream—that Soames was in a sleep from which, for many hours, there could be no waking.

Below in the cuddy, Bunter was still sprawling on the locker, faint with fear of what he had done. But as the long minutes passed the Owl of the Remove recovered himself a little. There had been no alarm, no call from Soames. Whether the dope had worked or not Bunter was in no danger. Long minutes had passed; it came suddenly into Bunter's frightened mind that he had been there half an hour. It was the voice of the Tonga Islander that startled him into activity at last.

"You feller Bunter, you here?"

Bunter sat up on the locker.

"Keep him off, you fellows!"

The cook came along, rope in hand. Harry Wharton & Co. interposed.

"Bunter's ill," said Bob. "Let him alone."

"Fat feller he belong me."

"Let him alone, I tell you!"

"And get out!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Fat feller comey galley, me knockey seven bells outer him," said the Tonga Islander. "White marster he give fat feller long of me."

"Get out!"

The cook hesitated. In Bunter's present peculiar state, though they did not guess its cause, the juniors felt bound to stand by him. And they stood round the fat junior and barred off his task-master.

"Me speak white marster!" threatened the cook.

"Get out!"

With a scowling face the black cook pattered up the companion and went to the deck-house.

"White marster Soames!" he called.

There was no reply.

The Tonga Islander tried the door. It was fast. He tapped on it and received no reply. Then he looked round at Ben Dance.

"White feller marster, he here?" he asked.

"Ay, ay!"

"Him sleep mebbe," said Talupa, and he hesitated to awaken his terrible master. But he called again.

"White marster Soames, fat feller he no come to galley!"

But still there was no answer, and the Tonga Islander pattered away to his caboose, leaving the matter over till his white "marster" should awaken. In the cuddy below, Bunter had been stretching his fat ears to listen. Bunter, at least, knew why there had been no answer from Soames' quarters.

He rolled off the locker, his little round eyes gleaming behind his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Feeling better, old fatty?"

"I say, now's your chance, you chaps!" gasped Bunter. "Now's your chance to collar that scoundrel!"

"Give us a rest!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"He's fast asleep—"

"You can wake him if you want to," said Nugent. "Jacky thought he was asleep when he tackled him last night. Don't be an ass, Bunter!"

Bunter snorted impatiently.

"You silly ass! I tell you he's asleep, and he won't wake up for hours. He's doped!"

"What?"

"Doped!" hooted Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"I tell you—" yelled Bunter.

"How do you know, ass?"

"Because," Bunter grinned triumphantly, "because I doped him!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared blankly at the Owl of the Remove.

For the moment they supposed that the fat junior was wandering in his mind.

Bunter trembled with impatience.

"You silly chumps!" he gasped. "I tell you that this is your chance. He won't wake up. He can't, any more than Smithy's pater could that time when Soames doped him on the yacht."

"But what—" exclaimed Wharton.

"I found the stuff and gave it him in his coffee," breathed Bunter. "I knew it would fix him, same as it fixed Smithy's pater that time, only—only I—I wasn't sure. But you heard that black beast call him, and he didn't answer. He's fixed."

"You found the stuff he used that time he drugged my father on the Golden Arrow?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, staring in amazement at Bunter.

"Yes—yes."

"And gave it him in his coffee?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes."

"Great pip!"

The juniors looked at one another. Hope was dawning in their hearts and determination in their faces. If it was their chance, at last, at the usurper, the pirate, the sea-lawyer who ruled on the Aloha—

"By gad!" muttered the Bounder.

"If that's right—"

"Don't I keep on telling you?" hissed Bunter. "Go and collar him while you've got the chance."

"Tell us exactly what you've done," said Harry Wharton quietly. "This is rather too serious a matter for haste."

"You're wasting time!"

"We don't want to be shot down like a parcel of rabbits," said the captain of the Remove. "Don't be a fool, Bunter. If he's doped the dope won't

wear off in a hurry. Mr. Vernon-Smith was unconscious for a long time when he had it. Tell us exactly what you've done."

Bunter gasped out his story. The juniors listened with breathless attention. They listened, too, with wonder. It seemed rather miraculous that it should turn out to be Bunter who saved them from the power of the sea-lawyer—the only member of the party whom the scoundrel had regarded with contemptuous indifference, whom he would never have dreamed of fearing in any circumstances whatever. Bunter, evidently, had been thinking only of himself in what he had done; he had not been thinking of saving the chart, of saving the treasure, of saving his companions, only of saving his fat and fatuous self from discomfort and danger. But if he had done it that mattered little. In saving himself he had saved the whole Greyfriars party.

"It looks like a chance," said Tom Redwing quietly. "I think we ought to risk it."

"There's no risk," grunted Bunter. "Don't be funky; just go up and collar the brute!"

"Will you go up and collar him?" asked the Bounder.

"I—I—"

"If there's no risk, why not?" Bunter faltered.

"There isn't any risk. But—but—" "Well, shut up, then!" said the Bounder. "Hold your cheeky tongue and leave it to us."

"Oh, really, Smithy, after what I've done—"

"Hold your tongue I tell you!"

And Bunter sulkily held his tongue, while the juniors consulted together. Bunter was certain of what he had told them, but even if Soames was doped senseless the fat junior dared not approach him. Fortunately, the other fellows were made of sterner stuff.

"There's a risk—a big risk," said Tom Redwing, unheeding Bunter. "We know how the scoundrel tricked Jacky and shot him like a dog. If we fail, if he's on his guard, the game's up for us. We've got to risk our lives. But it looks like a good chance, and I'm for taking it."

"Same here!" "The samefulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton looked round at his comrades.

"We're all game," he said. Every face was set and tense. "It's a chance for us, at least, and it will never happen again. Come on!"

Leaving Billy Bunter in the cuddy the seven juniors ascended to the deck. Their eyes fixed on the deck-house at once. It was closed, and no sound came from within.

Ben Dance looked at them, puzzled by the suppressed excitement in their faces.

With a few whispered words Wharton told him how the matter stood, watching the deck-house all the time.

Dance's eyes gleamed.

"Shiver me! We're trying it on!" he muttered. "Wait till I get hold of a belaying-pin!"

"No violence, if we can secure him," said Harry.

Dance nodded.

Harry Wharton, with a deep breath, stepped to the door of the deck-house.

He rapped on it with a firm hand. "Soames!"

There was no answer. Knock, knock!

"Soames!" called Harry again.

Silence as of death. Wharton's face was pale. Either the man was doped, as Bunter believed, or he was playing a deadly trick, as he had played a trick

on the boatswain. An attack on the deck-house meant that Soames would shoot, if he was capable of shooting. And as yet the chums of Greyfriars could not know whether an easy victory was within their grasp or whether they were facing sudden and ruthless destruction.

The chance had to be taken. The risk was terrible, but they had not expected to escape the terrible fate Soames designed for them without risk.

Bob Cherry went below and returned



STRETCHED out quite flat, upon the mat, Lay Bunter's ample figure; And those around, upon the ground,

Surveyed him, with a snigger. "Pile in!" cried Cherry. "Blaze away! You're going to score a 'bull' to-day!"

Bursting with pride, the Owl replied, "I feel in form for shooting.

I'll load my gun—no need to run! Why, half the chaps are scooting!"

They knew that Bunter's aim, no doubt, Was just as wild as that of Prout!

The shot was in, and, with a grin, The marksman cocked his rifle;

And Toddy laughed, and Cherry chaffed, Their mirth they could not stifle.

The trigger then was pressed with force, The bullet sped upon its course.

"A wide! A wide!" Frank Nugent cried.

"The target's missed completely!" The portly Owl then gave a scowl—

"I shot both well and neatly. I'm the best marksman in the school, I've been and bagged a blessed 'bull'!"

We laughed with glee, then went to see The bullet's destination;

The target white was untouched quite, And free from perforation.

"A miss!" was Wharton's grim admission.

"A wicked waste of ammunition!"

Then came a shout from Mr. Prout, A dozen yards away:

"Why, goodness me! Boys, come and see!

A shot has gone astray!" Bunter had scored, beyond all doubt,

A splendid "bull"—for Mr. Prout!

with a hatchet in his hand. He looked at Wharton, who nodded assent.

Crash!

The hatchet struck the flimsy door of the deck-house with a concussion that rang fore and aft of the Aloha.

The die was cast now.

With hearts that beat almost to suffocation, the juniors waited and watched, every hand grasping a weapon of some sort—not that their weapons were likely to avail them much if Soames began to fire from the deck-house.

But the crash on the door was answered by no sound from within. If that demon in human form was tricking them, as he had tricked the boatswain

to his death, he was keeping up the trick.

But the juniors had gone too far now for receding, if they had thought of receding. The hatchet crashed again on the door, and again and again, and the splinters flew fast.

The Kanaka seamen, lolling and loafing forward, gathered amidships to stare in wonder at the scene. But they did not dream of interfering.

Strife among the "white marsters" was no business of theirs. Their business was to obey whichever "white marster" gained the upper hand in the strife.

A fat face and a pair of spectacles glimmered out of the companion. Bunter watched breathlessly. But he dared not venture on deck. He was prepared to scuttle below like a rabbit if Soames waked.

But Soames did not wake.

A raging hurricane could not have awakened him then. Had the Aloha gone down Soames would have gone down in her like a stone. The crashing of the hatchet, the splintering of the wood were soundless to his ears.

The blows of the hatchet rained on the door. The splintering wood left the door free, and the juniors, desperate now, grasped it and tore it open. Even then they half-expected to be met by whizzing, death-dealing bullets raining on them from the automatic. But there was no sound—only a senseless body rolled heavily in the doorway of the deck-house.

Soames, the sea-lawyer, lay senseless at their feet.

For a moment they stared at him, scarcely believing their eyes, scarcely believing in their good fortune. Then Harry Wharton stooped swiftly and grasped the automatic from the relaxed hand.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter rolled out of the companion. "I say, what did I tell you?"

Even the Owl of the Remove could see that all was safe now.

"We've got him!" Ben Dance gripped the belaying-pin.

Wharton pushed him back.

"Stop that!"

"Take the chance while you've got it, sir," said Dance. "You know what he's done—you know what he'll do if he gets another chance—"

"Stop it, I tell you!"

"Drop him over the side, sir; it's the only safe way with such a sea-lawyer!"

"Cheese it, old bean!" said Bob Cherry. "You're not sailing with Black Peter now!"

Soames lay motionless, unconscious. It was strange enough to the juniors to see the man who had been so dangerous, the man who had dealt out death ruthlessly, lying helpless at their feet. The tables had been turned with a vengeance. Soames had played out his desperate game, and he had lost. By a chance that he could not have foreseen—that the most cunning brain could not have foreseen—he had lost, struck down by the hand which, of all on board the Aloha, he had most despised.

He lay senseless, knowing nothing of what passed, and Wharton, kneeling by his side, searched him for weapons.

In an inside-pocket he found the mate's revolver, fully loaded. Soames had kept that weapon in reserve. He handed it to the Bounder.

He fastened Soames' holster to his own belt, and placed the automatic in it. The sea-lawyer's teeth were drawn now.

Plainly, Soames was to lie unconscious

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for hours. The juniors lifted him into a bunk in the deck-house, and left him there. He was to find a startling change on board the Aloha when he came to his senses.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vae Victis!

"YOU fat feller Bunter!"

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

It was the voice of the Tonga Island cook.

Either the cook had taken no heed of what had happened on deck, or his obtuse brain did not grasp the significance of it. There was a new regime on board the Aloha now, but the Tonga Islander evidently did not understand. He was calling Bunter in his old bullying tone, and he came aft looking for him with a rope in his hand.

Bunter was a funk of the first water; but he was not afraid of the black man when the latter was unsupported by the terrible Soames. Moreover, he had the support of the Famous Five now, and the Famous Five were the masters of the schooner. They would not have left him at the black cook's mercy once power was in their hands; and after the service he had just performed still less would they have done so.

Bunter's little round eyes gleamed. Circumstances had changed once more; and Talupa was not yet aware of it, and was to be made most emphatically aware of it.

"You lazy fat feller boy, you no wantee work!" growled Talupa, as he came up to Bunter.

"You black pig!" snapped Bunter.

Talupa stared at him.

This was rather new language from his "boy."

"What name you call me pig?" he roared. "Golly! Me knock seven bells outer you plenty quick!"

"Stop that, Talupa!" said Bob Cherry sharply. "Bunter doesn't belong to you now!"

"White marster he give fat feller belong me."

"Soames isn't master of the schooner now," grinned Bob. "Soames is nobody. He's a prisoner. You take orders from us, old black bean."

"Talupa no savvee."

"White marster he no good any more," explained Ben Dance. "Young white marsters boss Aloha, savvee?"

"Fat feller boy belong me allee samee!"

"You black pig!" said Bunter. "You cheeky nigger! You drop that rope, or see what you'll get, you filthy cannibal!"

"What name you call?" hissed Talupa.

"Dirty cannibal!" hooted Bunter.

In all probability the Tonga Islander, in his time, had joined in a feast where "long pig" figured in the menu. But the South Sea Islander is sensitive on such points, and does not like being called a cannibal.

His black face blacker with rage he made a jump at Bunter.

"Keep him off!" yelled the Owl of the Remove.

He dodged behind the stalwart figure of Ben Dance.

Crash!

Dance drove his huge, knotted fist into the face of the Tonga Islander without ceremony.

Talupa went over like a felled ox and crashed on the deck.

There was a cackling laugh from the

Kanakas forward as Talupa sprawled. They found his sudden fall entertaining.

Talupa sat up, dazed.

"Golly! What name you hit Talupa?" he gasped.

"Keep your place, you dog!" answered the wooden-legged seaman. "You'd better kick him, young Bunter! He will savvy that!"

Bunter was only too willing to impress by that means upon Talupa's obtuse mind the fact that circumstances had altered.

He fairly jumped to the task.

Talupa yelled and squirmed and roared as the Owl of the Remove kicked him right and left.

Then Bunter caught up the rope's-end he had dropped.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

The hapless Tonga Islander squirmed under the lashes of his own instrument of punishment. Bunter put all his beef into it.

Talupa squirmed away, roaring. It was borne in upon his thick skull now that the reign of Soames was over, and that he was back in his old place, and that it behoved him to treat all white marsters, including Bunter, with respect.

He dodged back to his galley, and Bunter pursued him till he was out of breath, still lashing with the rope.

The fat junior returned aft, gasping for breath, but grinning with satisfaction.

"I say, you fellows, that's the way to handle niggers!" he said. "You leave it to me to keep niggers in order! I'll give that villain Soames a taste of it, too, when he wakes up!"

"You won't!" said Harry Wharton curtly.

"Oh, really, Wharton—" Bunter glared indignantly at the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. "I've had enough cheek from Soames—a cheeky manservant—and I can tell you I'm going to thrash him! Why, you cheeky ass, but for me you'd still be cringing to him!"

"Nobody cringed to him but you, Bunter," said Harry, "and now he's down and out you'll let him alone! You deserved all you got, and if you don't behave yourself, we'll give you to Talupa again!"

"What!" gasped Bunter.

"After all, Bunter made a pretty good cook's boy!" remarked Bob Cherry. "It's the first time in his life he's ever done any work, but he picked it up quite quickly! Better keep him at it!"

"The betterfulness would be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Why, you—you cheeky beasts!" gasped Bunter. "After I've saved you all! After what I've done for you! I did it all—"

"Shut up, old fat man!" said Johnny Bull. "Soames would still be master of the schooner, even after you doped him, if you'd been left to deal with him! You've been useful, but shut up!"

"Why, you—you—you—" spluttered Bunter.

"Dry up, Bunter!" urged Wharton. "Now, you fellows, we've got to decide what we're going to do. The schooner is in our hands now, and, with Dance's help, we can sail her. The Aloha belongs to Smithy's father, and so we'd better appoint Smithy captain."

"Well, I like that!" hooted Bunter. "After what I've done, I can tell you I expect to take command!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Where would you be now but for me?" demanded Bunter.

"Where will you be if we tell Talupa that you belong to him again?" chuckled Nugent.

"Beast!"

"Shut up, Bunter, for goodness' sake!" said Wharton. "It's agreed, you follows—Smithy's captain?"

The Bounder shook his head.

"I vote for Redwing!" he said. "Reddy can sail the schooner! He's a sailorman!"

Redwing shook his head in his turn.

"Wharton's our leader," he said quietly. "Keep to that. When it comes to sailing the schooner I'll do my best. But we're not sailing yet."

"The treasure first!" said Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

"That's settled, then. Wharton's skipper," assented the Bounder. "Reddy will have to take command when we get to sea, but we're not going to sea till we've lifted the pearls. It's plain-sailing now. We begin searching for the treasure to-morrow."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That's settled, then. This side of the island is clear of natives; we found that out to-day when we went ashore with Soames. We begin hunting for the treasure early in the morning. But we shall have to take jolly good care that Soames doesn't do any more mischief. His teeth are drawn now, but he will want watching!"

"We shan't stand on ceremony with the villain!" said the Bounder. "We've got to keep him a prisoner, and hand him over to the law when we get away from here. We'll take him ashore with us, and leave him bound to a tree when he's out of our sight, with a fellow to watch him."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I can hear that 'beast' Soames moving!"

"Oh!"

There was a sound from the deck-house of the sleeper stirring at last. The sun was sinking behind the hills of Caca now, and shadows were stealing over the lagoon.

The juniors waited for Soames to emerge.

They heard him drag himself from the bunk and mutter. A few minutes later he was looking from the doorway of the deckhouse. His face was pale and his eyes were burning. The effects of the dope had not wholly worn off yet, and there was a dazed expression on his face. But it was clear that he realised something of what had happened. He had found his weapons gone, and knew that the power had passed from his hands.

The Greyfriars fellows eyed him grimly.

Soames blinked at them in the red glare of the tropical sunset. His glance took in the automatic slung in the holster to Wharton's belt and the Bounder's pocket sagging under the weight of the mate's revolver. He knew at once how matters stood.

"So you've come to?" said Wharton quietly.

Soames nodded.

What his feelings were the juniors could guess, but his composure was unbroken. Indeed, there came back into his manner something of the old smooth obsequiousness of the manservant.

"I suppose you know that you are in our hands now?" said Harry.

"It would appear so, sir," said Soames.

Wharton tapped the automatic.

"You are a prisoner!" he said. "I suppose you know that we shall not



Bunter caught up the rope's end the Tonga Islander had dropped. Whack! Whack! Whack! The hapless Talupa squirmed under the lashes of his own instrument of punishment, and Bunter put his beef into it. "Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Harry Wharton & Co., vastly amused. (See Chapter 14.)

harm you if we can help it? But if you raise a finger to give us trouble, you will be shot down like a mad dog! I warn you that we shall run no risks of letting you get the whip-hand again!"

"I should not expect you to do so, sir," said Soames smoothly. "I have played for a high stake and lost! I have nothing to regret except that I have failed! It is a case of *vae victis*."

"Woe to the vanquished!" said Bob, looking very curiously at Soames.

It was odd enough to hear a manservant, turned sea-lawyer, quote a Latin tag.

Soames smiled faintly.

"I was not always a manservant, sir, and my name was not always Soames," he said smoothly. "Had I come into possession of a fortune, as I hoped, I should not have pushed my way into a class to which I do not belong; I should have resumed a position I lost long ago. But that is a matter of no interest to you. I quite realise that the power is now in your hands, and that I am your prisoner. May I ask what you intend to do with me?"

The man's smoothness did not deceive the juniors. They knew that he was still dangerous, and never more dangerous than when he seemed to be submissive and obsequious. He was not likely to deceive them again.

"What can we do with you?" said Harry. "You are a murderer, and we must keep you a prisoner till you can be handed over to the law!"

"I do not agree! If I have taken life, it was in self-defence, and my conscience is clear!" said Soames calmly.

"In Rome one must do as Rome does, and in the South Seas the ways are different from the ways at home. But I know better than to argue with one who has the upper hand. I am your servant, gentlemen!"

He paused a moment.

"I have been doped?" he said.

"Yes," said Harry.

"I did not look for that," said Soames. "We all make mistakes. May I ask, if it is not taking too great a liberty, how you contrived it?"

Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle.

"You can put it down to me, you rotter!" he said, grinning.

Soames looked at him.

"It was your own dope," said Wharton contemptuously. "We were not likely to have such stuff in our possession. Bunter found it, rummaging in your suit-case, while we were ashore to-day."

"And I jolly well gave it to you in your coffee!" chuckled Bunter.

For an instant there came a terrible flash into Soames' eyes. The grin died off Bunter's fat face as he saw it, and he backed instinctively behind the other fellows. Wharton's grasp closed on the automatic and Ben Dance gripped his belaying pin. But it was only for an instant that Soames allowed his consuming fury to be seen. The next he was calm and suave again.

"I understand," he said. "I made a mistake. I should have remembered that a brave man is not so dangerous as a coward driven desperate."

"Why, you cheeky cad!" hooted Bunter.

"I shall remember this, Master

Bunter," said Soames. "Possibly a change of circumstances may enable me, some day, to pay you what I owe you."

"Oh, shut up!" said Bunter derisively. "You just remember that you're a manservant, and be respectful to your betters. See? You'll be jolly well kicked if you don't behave yourself. Got that?"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I stand corrected," said Soames, unmoved. "May I ask, gentlemen, what are your orders to me now?"

"None," said Harry. "We go ashore to-morrow, and you will be taken with us and carefully guarded. Till then you can keep to your old quarters and do as you like. Only I warn you, once more, that if you attempt any mischief it will be for the last time. We shall not allow you to endanger our lives again."

"I quite understand, sir."

And Soames was left to himself. He took his suit-case and his other belongings from the deck-house back to his old quarters amidships with submissive obedience. His belongings had already been searched for concealed weapons. Unheeding the mocking stares of the Kanaka seamen, Soames dropped back, in a moment as it were, into his old position of a deferential manservant. Ben Dance stared after him and shook his head. The wooden-legged seaman was plainly of the opinion that the sea-lawyer would be safer over the side; but the Greyfriars fellows were not likely to act on the advice of the man who had sailed with Black Peter.

When the night came the Greyfriars fellows were divided into two watches, to sleep and watch alternately. Not for a moment did they intend to be off their guard. Soames, unarmed, single-handed, was powerless now, and the Kanaka seamen had accepted the new change in the mastery of the schooner without question. But the Greyfriars juniors knew how much might depend on their vigilance. At midnight the Bounder looked in on Soames; the man was in his bunk, apparently peacefully asleep.

Splash!

It was an hour after midnight when Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry, who were the watch on deck, heard a faint splash by the side of the anchored schooner.

Wharton started and stared round.

"What was that?"

"A shark, perhaps."

Wharton ran to the side. In the gleam of the stars on the lagoon he caught for an instant a glimpse of a swimmer's head on the water. It vanished the next moment in the direction of the beach. A black fin showed in the starlight, a hideous snout was seen for a second. Wharton, with a shudder, ran to Soames' quarters. As he already suspected, the bunk was empty. The sea-lawyer was gone!

"Soames?" exclaimed Bob, as Wharton hurried back.

"Yes."

"He's gone?" asked Nugent.

"Yes."

"But the sharks—"

"He has taken his chance," said Harry. "If he chooses to be marooned on the island, instead of being taken back a prisoner, let him. But the lagoon is alive with sharks!"

The juniors stared across the rail, across the shadowy lagoon, with tense faces. No cry came to their ears. Either the desperate swimmer had escaped the sharks, or he had been dragged under the water without a cry. They could not tell. The sea-lawyer was gone, and the shadows of the tropic night hid his fate.

THE END.

(The treasure island lies before the Greyfriars Chums, and Black Peter's cache of pearls is almost theirs for the taking. But there are still perils to be overcome before the schoolboys touch the treasure they have braved so much for. Next week's long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled "THE RIVAL TREASURE-SEEKERS!" and is full of thrills.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

"LET IT RAIN, LET IT BLOW!"

WHAT a time it's been for ducks! This summer has out-rained itself, so to speak, but it hasn't damped the cheeriness of one of my readers, who has been on a long tramping holiday through Devon and Cornwall. T. M., of Guildford, tells me he has walked through miles of cloud-bursts, and has been up to his eyes in mud—the good old red mud of the Devon lanes. Every evening he has had to dry his clothes before the roaring kitchen fire of a wayside cottage, and scrape the mud from his "eyebrows." That is enough, I should think, to make the merriest optimist feel down in the dumps. I shouldn't blame him feeling so, either. But not so with my cheery correspondent. No; he's been through it every day, or nearly every day, with a smile on his wet face and a whistle on his lips, and consequently he has returned to school as fit as a fiddle. "What's the good of grouching if it rains cats and dogs?" asks my correspondent. "That won't make it brighter, will it?" Quite so. No good looking for trouble with a gloomy countenance. A bright one will carry you through the stormiest storm.

"Let it rain and pour, but it won't damp my spirits," seems to have been the subject of T. M.'s songs as he yelled them over the moors to the accompaniment of the rain and wind. I like that character in a chap. He's the kind who'll get on in this world.

KEEPING THE POT BOILING!

This hasn't anything to do with cooking. It's to do with Magnetites who are always pushing their favourite companion papers to the fore on every possible occasion. "Bill," of Norwich, says he is doing his bit for the old MAGNET in this way. There's a lot a reader can do for his paper by mentioning to pals what's going on in it. Little references that will incite curiosity in the non-reader, and make him want to know more. He'll buy the MAGNET and the deed is done. Once a reader, always a reader. So keep the pot a-boiling, chaps, and don't let your pal alone until he has seen a copy of your paper. You'll be doing me a good turn, and I'm not one to forget a service.

LETTERS RECEIVED!

Best thanks for interesting letters from C. Rundle, Strete, near Dartmouth; Leslie H. A. Ricksan, New Kent Road; Sidney Taubin, Stoke Newington; R. W. Froome, Margate; J. Shroll, Highgate; Barry, Portsmouth; M. Cowan, Hilton Road, New South Wales; M. Conant, Sydney; Lawrence M. Miller, Vancouver; Jean Todhunter, Ongaruo, New Zealand; R. T. G. Wratnall, Derby; James Taylor, Audenshaw; John Wright, South Shields; R. D. G. Bellwood, Sevenoaks; Gertrude Kappesser, Brooklyn; Alexander Dillon, Greenock; Harry Lambert, Barry; A. H. Allen, Attercliffe; Charles Curtis, Lurgan; W. Glyn Protheroe, Swansea; D. P. Henderson, Wandsworth; F. W. Fletcher, Lowestoft.

YOUR EDITOR.

FOR NEXT SATURDAY!

A MEAL FOR THE CANNIBALS?



THE THRILL OF THE WEEK!

What Bunter has dreaded most since he started on this treasure quest to the Southern Seas has happened; he's fallen into the hands of cannibals, who regard the fat Greyfriars Removite as the finest specimen of "long pig" they have ever had the luck to meet!

Will he make a meal for these hungry cannibals or will he, with "Bunterish" luck, escape the stewing pot?

See next week's grand long story of the Greyfriars Chums, entitled:

"THE RIVAL TREASURE-SEEKERS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

It's the story of the week!

THE BEAR'S CLAW! Although the rest of the world condemns Dave Orchard as a thief, his nephew has always believed in his innocence. And at last Jack's belief is vindicated, for round the neck of his old enemy, Bull Morgan, he sees part of the stolen gold—the great Bear's Claw nugget!

Gold for the Getting!



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

The Stolen Nugget!

FLINGING himself aside, Simons darted round the table, nursing the forearm badly bruised by the toe of Morgan's great boot. A few inches lower and the savage kick would have broken his wrist.

"Aw, cut it out!" he yelped, terror in his starting eyes.

Morgan hurled himself across the table and grabbed his pard by the hair, dragging him over the gold heap towards him. The hands of Lefty clawed feverishly like the talons of a bear, and, encountering Morgan's shirt, ripped it from his throat and chest.

On the swaying step-ladder, Jack and Terry peered in at this scene of violence, their every vein tingling. Then both gave a gasp of surprise as the lantern shone full on Morgan as he wrenched himself back. There, nesting on his bare, massive chest, was a great gold nugget in the shape of a claw!

"Great snakes!" gasped Jack hoarsely. "D'you see it, Terry? The nugget my uncle was supposed to have stolen—the Bear's Claw!"

Jack and Terry, his Irish chum, stared at the great golden nugget resting on Bull Morgan's bare chest, their eyes round as saucers.

The youngsters had come to Dawson to make some purchases and were soon to return to their old pard whom they called Uncle Clem, at Starvation Creek. For long they had hoped to get on the track of the great Bear's Claw nugget which Jack's uncle, Dave Orchard, was supposed to have stolen in San Francisco. Dave Orchard had disappeared, and neither Jack nor Terry had been able to get any information about him or the stolen gold. Now suddenly and unexpectedly, they found themselves in the way of solving the whole mystery.

Standing there on the swaying step-ladder, the boys peered through the small high window into the smoke-laden card-room where Bull Morgan and the card-sharper, Lefty Simons, were savagely facing one another.

The scoundrels had opened up the High Life Pool Saloon to fleece the

hard-working Yukon miners of their gold. They had been succeeding mighty well, too, but it was clear from the conversation of the rogues that this big nugget had not been acquired recently. There was no doubt that for some considerable time it had been in Bull Morgan's possession, and that it was a bone of contention between the unscrupulous partners.

Both the rogues were panting heavily after their fight, and were too engrossed to notice the eager faces of the boys at that small window in the partition high above them. They were not even aware that it was Jack and Terry, the youngsters they hated, who were taking a night's shelter in the pool saloon out of the rain. Their

Chinese servant had reported that two boys had wanted a doss there, and the partners had agreed, providing the lads paid heavily for the privilege.

Now because Simons had ripped Bull Morgan's shirt open, the youngsters had seen the great nugget tied round the saloon-keeper's neck with a rough piece of string. If indeed this was the Bear's Claw—the nugget belonging to Simpson, the prospector—the rogues should be made to explain to the police how they came by it.

"Me bhoy!" whispered Terry to Jack beside him on the step-ladder, "d'you think that is indade the Bear's Claw nugget which your uncle Dave was accused of lifting?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it, Terry?" whispered Jack, in reply. "Of course I've never seen it before, but I'll wager my share in the Yellow Horseshoe mine against a skinned jack-rabbit, that there ain't two nuggets in the world of that size and shape!"

"That sounds reasonable enough," muttered Terry. "But how comes it that that spalpeen Morgan has got it?"

Jack gave a shrug. "Ask me another!" he said.

Down in the card-room, Bull Morgan had clenched his great fists again as though seriously thinking of smashing his crony, who much dishevelled, was scrambling off the green baize table. Evidently, however, his cunning mind reflected that Lefty Simons was too useful a man to quarrel with, and he forced a gruff, unmusical laugh.

"Haw, we ain't going to fall out for the sake o' a few mouldy nuggets, Lefty!" he cried. "Help y'self to the first half-dozen afore we divide the rest o' the pile we won to-night from those bone-headed miners."

A gloating look spread over Lefty's avaricious face, and the share-out was made between the two scoundrels. The cunning sharper knew his value in the partnership, and as Morgan had given way on one point, he was now minded to test him on another.

"I guess that's satisfactory so far," he said; "and now what about the other matter?"

"What other matter?" grunted Morgan.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,023.

By Stanton Hope

INTRODUCTION.

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

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

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

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

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

Luck comes to the three "partners" 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.

As the winter draws near the chums decide to visit the town of Dawson for necessary supplies to carry them through the long months of snow and ice. Uncle Clem remains at the cabin, and the two boys set out.

On their first day in Dawson they are obliged to put up for the night in the lower part of the town. During the night they are awakened by angry voices coming from an adjoining room. Looking through a small window they are astounded witnesses of a quarrel between their old enemies, Bull Morgan and Simons. Apparently these two are owners of the saloon, and are fighting over the spoils of the evening.

(Now read on.)



Lefty Simons clawed feverishly at Bull Morgan's shirt, ripping it from his throat and chest. There, on his bare, massive chest was a great gold nugget in the shape of a claw. "Great snakes!" gasped Jack hoarsely. "D'you see it, Terry? The nugget my uncle was supposed to have stolen—the Bear's Claw!" (See page 25.)

"The Bear's Claw!"

The watching boys gave a start. So the great nugget was actually the one that Jack's uncle was supposed to have decamped with!

The mention of the name by Lefty, made his burly pard truculent again. "Ain't I minding it?" demanded Morgan.

"See here, Bull," murmured Lefty persuasively, "we had a share-out o' that other gold we got offen Dave Orchard, the uncle o' that young skunk Jack Orchard who gave you a thundering good licking—"

"Gr-r-rrh, never mind all that!" interposed Morgan savagely. "I'll smash the cub for that one o' these days. And I don't want to hear nothin' about that other gold neither; we went fifty-fifty on that and the matter's done with."

A sardonic grin curled Lefty Simons' cruel lips.

"Not altogether done with, Bull," he said; "there's that Bear's Claw you're wearin' I guess I'll go and get a hammer right now and we'll smash it up and split that between us."

Morgan stiffened.

"You're crazy!" he grunted. "The nugget will lose a full third o' its value if it's smashed up. And besides, ain't it a luck-bringer? Ain't it brought me

—us—a powerful heap o' good luck to-night?"

Lefty Simons flickered his lean, sensitive fingers in the air.

"Aw, it was my skill that provided to-night's good fortune, Bull," he remarked, "and I guess there's plenty more good luck coming by the same means. We were going fifty-fifty on all that gold we got in 'Frisco, mark you, and yet you've kept the best part of it—the Bear's Claw—entirely to yourself. Apart from it's not being the square thing to do with an honest pard, it's durn dangerous. If one o' the Redcoats was to spot that on you, they'd have all the evidence that 'ud send you—and me, too—away to the pen for years."

"Is that so?" rumbled Bull Morgan. "Well, I ain't in no ways parting from my li'l mascot, Lefty, and that's straight. The Bear's Claw has brought us luck to my way o' thinkin' and I ain't a-goin' to fly in the face o' Fate by breaking it up wi' no hammer. Now quit talkin' about it, for whatever y' may say won't cut no ice at all."

The pair of rogues stood facing one another beneath the yellow rays of the lantern. Jack and Terry, gazing intently between the blinds of that small window, could see Lefty's fingers twitching as though the mere sight of

that great claw of gold gave him a irresistible impulse to acquire it.

"Begorra, 'tis a real scrap they're going to have yet, me bhoys!" whispered Terry hopefully.

With heads together they watched in silence, so intent on the interior of that gaming den and the affairs of their old enemies that they scarce noticed the cramp which was beginning to assail their legs due to their uncomfortable stance on the top of the ladder. Neither did they see a leering, yellow face peer round the partition from the narrow passageway, nor hear the cautious-footed tread of the Chinese attendant as he moved toward the ladder.

They had completely forgotten the Asiatic, and their first startling reminder of him occurred when, with a vicious tug, he dragged the step-ladder from under them.

"Jehosophat!"

"Hivins!"

The crash of the ladder and the yelps of the two chums as they descended to the hardwood floor, came like a burst of thunder on the stillness of the pool saloon. A stream of yellow light shone forth as the door of the gaming den was slung open, and Bull Morgan, followed by Lefty Simons, charged out.

"Jumpin' mackinaw! What's wrong?" bellowed Morgan.

"Me catchee boy take look-see through window!" piped the Chinaman. "Allee same, me t'inkee too much dirty spy!"

"To the door, Terry!" cried Jack, bounding to his feet. "Never mind your blankets!"

Badly bruised by their fall, the youngsters eluded the two rogues, and, dodging swift-footed between the pool tables, attempted to drag open the wooden outer doors of the saloon.

"Locked!" panted Jack.

He fumbled for the key, but it had been taken away, and then both he and Terry flung themselves aside as a knife struck quivering into the woodwork between them.

The disappointed grunt of the murderous Chinaman who had slung the weapon was swiftly followed by a bellow from Bull Morgan, who thrust the Asiatic violently aside.

"What the blazes are y' doing, Wung, y' fool!" he thundered. "We don't want no killin' on respectable premises like these—leastways, not right by the front door!"

As there was no way out from the front, Jack and Terry doubled back

through the saloon towards the rear, for the side windows of the building were shuttered. Unluckily, in dodging Simons, Terry tripped over the butt of a pool cue protruding from a rack, and went bowling to the sawdust like a shot rabbit.

Jack stopped and turned back to help his chum, and that was the undoing of both the boys; for Morgan, Simons, and the Chinaman piled upon them, and in spite of their violent struggles, dragged them under the oil-lantern of the gaming-den.

Immediately a triumphant howl rose from the giant pool-saloon keeper.

"Heck! We've got 'em, Lefty—got 'em at last—those two young skunks!"

The iron fingers of Bull Morgan tightened like a vice on Jack's throat till red spots danced in bewildering array before the boy's dimmed eyes. As though from afar off, he heard Terry shouting wild Irish throats, and knew his chum had his hands full with Simons and the Chinese. He felt, too, Morgan's great right paw tearing at his coat, and pressed against the moose-skin pouch of gold hitched under his shirt.

"Say, Lefty, this boy's got a poke on him!" exclaimed the big villain gleefully. "Get that sandbag o' yours, and

afterwards we'll relieve 'em of their stake!"

Jack's gurgling cry as Morgan increased the pressure on his throat roused Terry to a frenzy. He had managed to secure a grip on Simons' wrist, and this prevented Morgan's crony from snatching up the six-shooter which still lay on the floor.

Then, as the sinister Wung flung his sinewy arms about him, the agile Irish lad suddenly released Simons and dropped through the Chink's grip to the floor. With lightning dexterity, his right foot hooked behind Simons' left ankle, and his left foot struck Morgan's crony a smart blow just below the knee.

It was a ju-jitsu trick he had once been taught. Simons gave a howl of pain and crashed full length on to his back.

Squirming over like an eel, Terry bounced to his feet as Wung made a rush at him with an uplifted chair. His left shot out like a piston-rod full to the Asiatic's leering mouth—and Wung went reeling back and fell headlong over the prostrate Simons.

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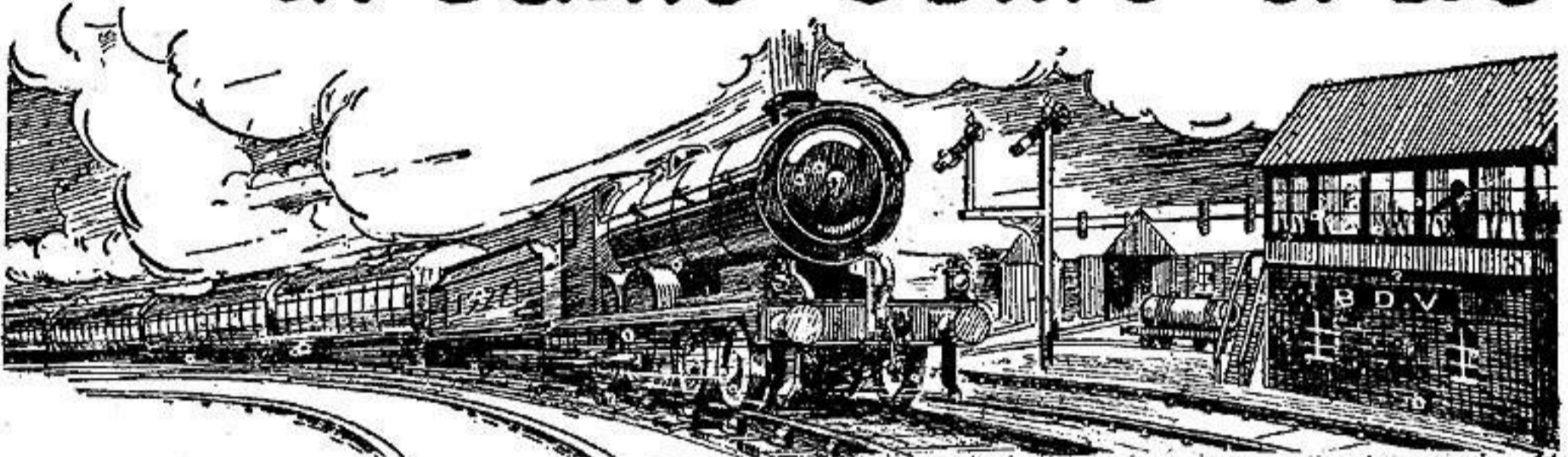
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DUCK'S SON AND DUCKMAN'S SON! Two new boys make their appearance at St. Sam's together—the "Honorable" Algernon and Herbert Binns. To one the Head gives a prize feed, to the other a prize flogging!



The Head's Persecution!

Dicky Nugent
the talented "orther" of the Second Form at Greyfriars.

COME in, fathead!" said Doctor Birchmell cheerily, as a hefty boot clumped on the door of his study.

It was Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, who opened the door of the sacred department. He stopped short on the threshold, and stared. He had expected the Head to be alone, but there were two new boys with him in the study. One was a tall, elegant-looking youth, with well-blended features, including a well-hammered nose, for it was rather red and swollen. It seemed that the elegant-looking youth was no stranger to the noble art of self-offense.

The other new boy was dressed very shabbily. His features were really moth-eaten. He wore no collar or tie, but a highly-colored "chocker" adorned his neck. He was freckle-faced, and snub-nosed, with a pair of twinkling, roguish eyes. There was nothing haughty about him—a fact which Mr. Lickham noted with approval. If there was one thing Mr. Lickham could not stand, it was haughtiness.

The shabby boy made a courtly bow to the Form master.

"I wish you a good-afternoon, sir!" he said, in a cultured, refined voice.

The elegant-looking youth also greeted Mr. Lickham, but in a very different way.

"Afternoon, old covey!" he said. And you could have cut his accent with a knife.

Mr. Lickham gasped. He knew that the two new boys must be the duke's son and the duckman's son; and his first impression was that the elegant youth was the duke's son, and the shabby youth the duckman's son. But the way in which they addressed him caused Mr. Lickham to change his mind. It was hardly likely that a duke's son would drop his "aitches," and call a Form master an "old covey." It was still less likely that a duckman's son would make a courtly bow, and speak in the refined, cultured tones of the Upper Ten.

So Mr. Lickham, having quite decided that the shabbily-dressed fellow was the duke's son, and having been commanded by the Head to treat the latter with courtesy and respect, promptly dropped on one knee before him.

"Your Honor," he murmured, in a pleading tone, "I kiss your hand!"

"Stop!" cried the Head, rushing forward in alarm. "What on earth are you doing, Lickham? What do you mean by groveling at the feet of a duckman's son?"

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man's son? How dare you kiss his grimy paw?"

Mr. Lickham let go of the shabby boy's hand as if it had suddenly become red-hot. Then he rose to his feet, a crimson flush coloring his cheeks.

"I'm sorry, sir!" he stammered. "I had no idea I was making obeisance to a duckman's son. I wasn't quite sure which was which—"

"Well, you know now!" snapped Doctor Birchmell. "This tall, refined-looking boy is the duke's son—the Honorable Algernon. It is to him you should pay your respects."

"Not at all!" grinned the duke's son. "Eager to atone for his blunder, Mr. Lickham again dropped on to one knee—this time at the feet of the Honorable Algernon."

"Welcome to St. Sam's, Your Honor!" he said, like a fawning sycophant. "I kiss your hand! That is to say, I should like to kiss it, but it's so—er—grimy!"

"Kiss it at once, Lickham!" commanded the Head tartly.

Very gingerly Mr. Lickham applied his lips to the Honorable Algernon's grimy paw. Then, rising to his feet, he hastily wiped his mouth with a handkerchief.

"I trust Your Honor will be very happy at St. Sam's," said Mr. Lickham. "Would Your Honor do me the privilege of taking tea with me in my study?"

"His Honor has just had tea with me!" interrupted the Head.

"Yes, but I could go another!" said the Honorable Algernon, smacking his lips. "The tea I had with you was a wash-out! A plate of stale buns, and a cup of wishy-washy tea. That ain't the way to entertain a duke's son. I think I'll go, and have tea with this old covey"—indicating Mr. Lickham.

"P'raps 'ell be a bit more jenners than you were!"

The Head gritted his false teeth with rage, and for a moment it looked as if he would commit assault and battery on the Honorable Algernon. But with a grudge effort he conquered his anger, and mustered a sickly smile.

"I am sorry Your Honor did not enjoy the magnificent spread I prepared in your honor's honor," said Doctor Birchmell. "Doubtless Mr. Lickham's tea will atone for the shortcomings of mine."

He waved his hand to the door, which Mr. Lickham opened like a fawning sycophant to usher out the Honorable Algernon.

"If you please, sir," said the duckman's son, who had been a silent spectator of the proceedings. "May I have tea with Mr. Lickham, too?"

"No, you may not!" thundered Doctor Birchmell. "You will remain here and take your gruel!"

"My—my gruel, sir?"

"Yes—a liberal application of my birch-rod!" said the Head savagely. "You common, low-bred pauper! You shall pay dearly for your audacity in coming here to mix with the sons of gentlemen!"

Herbert Binns—for that was the new boy's name—looked dismayed.

"But I didn't come here from choice, sir," he protested. "I was sent here by the local Council, to receive my education. I had no say in the matter."

Doctor Birchmell frowned.

"The local Council compelled me to receive you into this school as a pupil," he said. "I was unable to pay my rates, and they threatened me with chocky—I mean, quod. So I offered to give a free education to the son of one of their employees, by way of squaring the matter. They nominated you—the son of Binns, the duckman! I regard it as an insult! To think that a duckman's son should come here and rub shoulders with a duke's son! I am not a snob; I do not make fish of one and foul of another; but I hardly despise a brat who has no breeding and no pedigree. Your education, Binns, shall commence forthwith!"

So saying, the Head selected his most formidable cane.

"Touch your toes!" he commanded.

"But—but why should I be birched, sir?" demanded young Binns. "I've done nothing wrong; I've got into no mischief."

"But you'll be getting into mischief before long," said the Head, "so I'll give you your punishment in advance. Touch your toes, you welp!"

The duckman's son gazed defiantly at Doctor Birchmell.

"I am smarting under a sense of injustice—," he began.

And you will soon be smarting under my birch-rod!" the Head mocked him.

"For the last time, I command you to stop down and touch your peddle eggstremities!"

Young Binns obeyed. And the Head, drawing aside his gown, swung the birch-rod over his shoulder with a loud, hissing noise, and prepared to administer the first crool stroke.

But, even as the instrument of torcher was in the act of descending, young Binns suddenly turned a complete summersault, which landed him safely out of reach.

The birch swept the empty air, and the Head, thrown off his balance—for he had put all his beef into that stroke—pitched headlong, and landed in a sprawling heap on the carpet.

"Yarooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Binns. Doctor Birchmell picked himself up, his face was working convulsively, and a mocking smile was playing on his lips.

"You young villain!" he hissed. "You shall receive an extra dozen strokes for this outrage! Come here, and touch your toes!"

Binns declined the invitation. He started to dodge round the table, and the Head, snorting like an angry bull, went charging in pursuit.

It was an exciting round, until the Head grew quite dizzy. His head was swimming, and he was striking out—

Crash! Bang! Wallop! Chairs were overturned, and the table rocked and swayed, and the Head's papers and inkpots went flying.

Young Binns was thoroughly enjoying the chase. But the Head wasn't! His tung was jolting from his mouth, and his breath came and went in grate gasps. Fast as he flew, the elusive Binns flew faster.

And then, before the Head could tumble to his intentions, the duckman's son darted towards the open window, and with the agility of a monkey, he leapt clean through into the quadrangle.

The Head, with the agility of a hippopotamus, followed. But he was not so lucky as Binns. That bright youth landed on his feet, and scuttled away to safety. But the Head, jumping awkwardly, fell flat, measuring his length on the hard, unempathetic flagstones.

"Ow, ow, Groo! Yarooooo! Binns, you young villain, I'll birch you to the bone for this!"

The only response was a loud peal of laughter from the distance. For young Binns had joined Jack Jolly & Co., of the Fourth, and was sending them into hysterics by his account of the birching that never came off!



BUT the birching came off next morning. The Head nursed his vengeance all night, and in the middle of morning lessons he stalked into the Fourth Form-room, like a lion seeking what he might devour.

The Head was surprised to observe that Binns, the duckman's son, was seated at the top of the class; while the Honorable Algernon, the duke's son, was standing in the corner, with a dunce's cap on his noble head.

"What is the meaning of this, Lickham?" he demanded. "Why have you put that wretched pawner at the top of the class, and made his honor stand in the corner?"

Mr. Lickham culled a little.

"I am sorry to tell you, sir," he said, "that Binns, in spite of his humble parentage, is a very brainy lad. He possesses a fundamental fund of ability. His nollidge of all subjects is profound. His honor, on the other hand, is a brainless body—an empty-headed numskull!"

"Lickham," cried the Head, against a background of a duke's son! You are fowly slandering the son of my dearest friend, the Duke of Stony Struttford!"

"I can't help it, sir," said Lickham. "Much as I do adore dukes and despise duckmen, I must be fair and just. After testing the nollidge of the two boys, I had no alternative but to place Binns at the top of the class, and to make his honor stand in the corner with a dunce's cap on his head to testify to his ignorance."

The Head gave a snort.

"You are all wrong, Lickham—all wrong!" he exclaimed. "You have made a grievous mistake. I will test the nollidge of those two boys myself, in a few moments. Meanwhile, I have a severe flogging to administer. Binns! Stand forth!"

The duckman's son came out before the class. There was no chance of escape now, from the vicls of the Head's

wrath, and he prepared to face the music.

"Get over that desk!" commanded the Head. "Kindly hold him down."

Lickham. He is as slippery as an eel!"

Then, taking the birchrod from under his arm, the Head got busy.

It was a terrific flogging. The Head had been doing dumb-bell exercises that morning to get his muscles in trim, and he laid on the birch with grate vim and vigor.

Jack Jolly & Co. looked on, lost in admiration for the new boy's pluck. As a rule, the victim of a birching, however brave he might be, gave a gasp at the tenth stroke, a yelp at the twentieth, a yell at the thirtieth, a roar at the fortieth, and a wild beller of anguish at the fiftieth.

But no sound escaped the lips of Herbert Binns. He seemed, in fact, to be enjoying the flogging, for as he lay over the desk he kept winking at the class. And he thanked his lucky stars that he had taken the precaution of slipping a cushion into his bags before morning lessons.

The Head grew more and more eggspattered as each stroke fell, and he was unable to ring a moan of pain from his victim. Soon he felt utterly whacked, but Binns didn't feel whacked at all!

"That'll learn you, you young welp!" Release him, Lickham, and I will put a few pertinent questions to him, in order to test his nollidge. We will commence with English history. Tell me, Binns—who was the monarch who burnt the cakes?"

"King Alfred, sir!" was the prompt reply.

"Indeed!" sneered the Head. "And who was the monarch who ordered the waves to retreat?"

"King Canute, sir!"

The Head turned scornfully to Mr. Lickham.

"You hear him, Lickham? You hear what this ignomineous young puppy has just told us! He says it was Alfred who burnt the cakes, when all the time it was Canute; and he says it was Canute who tried to keep the waves back, when any fool knows it was King Alfred. I knew it myself!"

"I didn't, sir!" confessed Mr. Lickham.

"No? Well, I'm not surprised. Lickham. For a schoolmaster, your lack of nollidge is appalling!"

Doctor Birchmell then turned again to Binns, and put him through a long cross-examination. The duckman's son answered readily and rightly, and was not to be caught napping. But the Head contended that all his answers

were wrong, and finally ordered him to change places with the Honorable Algernon, and to don the dunce's cap. It was now the turn of the duke's son to be put through his paces. And the Honorable Algernon proved himself to be the biggest duffer that ever duffed. He told the Head that Shakespeare was a famous sea-captain in the rain of Queen Elizabeth; that Keats was a famous killer of microbes; and that Milton was a disinfectant. He made the class rock with laughter, and even Mr. Lickham was dubbed up with merriment. But the Head kept a perfectly solum face, and congratulated the duke's son on his wonderful nollidge.

"Your honor is indeed a brilliant scholar!" he said, patting the Honorable Algernon on the back.

"You will go to the top of the class!" There was a gasp from the Fourth—a gasp of utter astonishment. And the Honorable Algernon, grinning broadly, took his place at the top.

Then, leaving Mr. Lickham quite speechless, the Head gathered up his birch-rod and swept out of the Fourth-room.

After lessons, Jack Jolly & Co. punted a football about. They were curious to see how the two new boys would shape. Young Binns proved himself quite a genius at the game. His clever foot-fellows, and closed the eyes of Doctor Birchmell, who happened on the scene at an unlucky moment, and stopped a powerful drive with his face.

While the Head was recovering, Jack Jolly & Co. gave the duke's son a trial, and they found him to be an absolute duffer.

"The Honorable Algy's a wash-out!" said Jack Jolly. "But young Binns is a peach of a player. We'll give him a place in the eleven."

"Yes, rather!"

The Head, however, thought different. "Binns is no good!" he cried.

"Jolly! You must give the Honorable Algernon a place in your eleven."

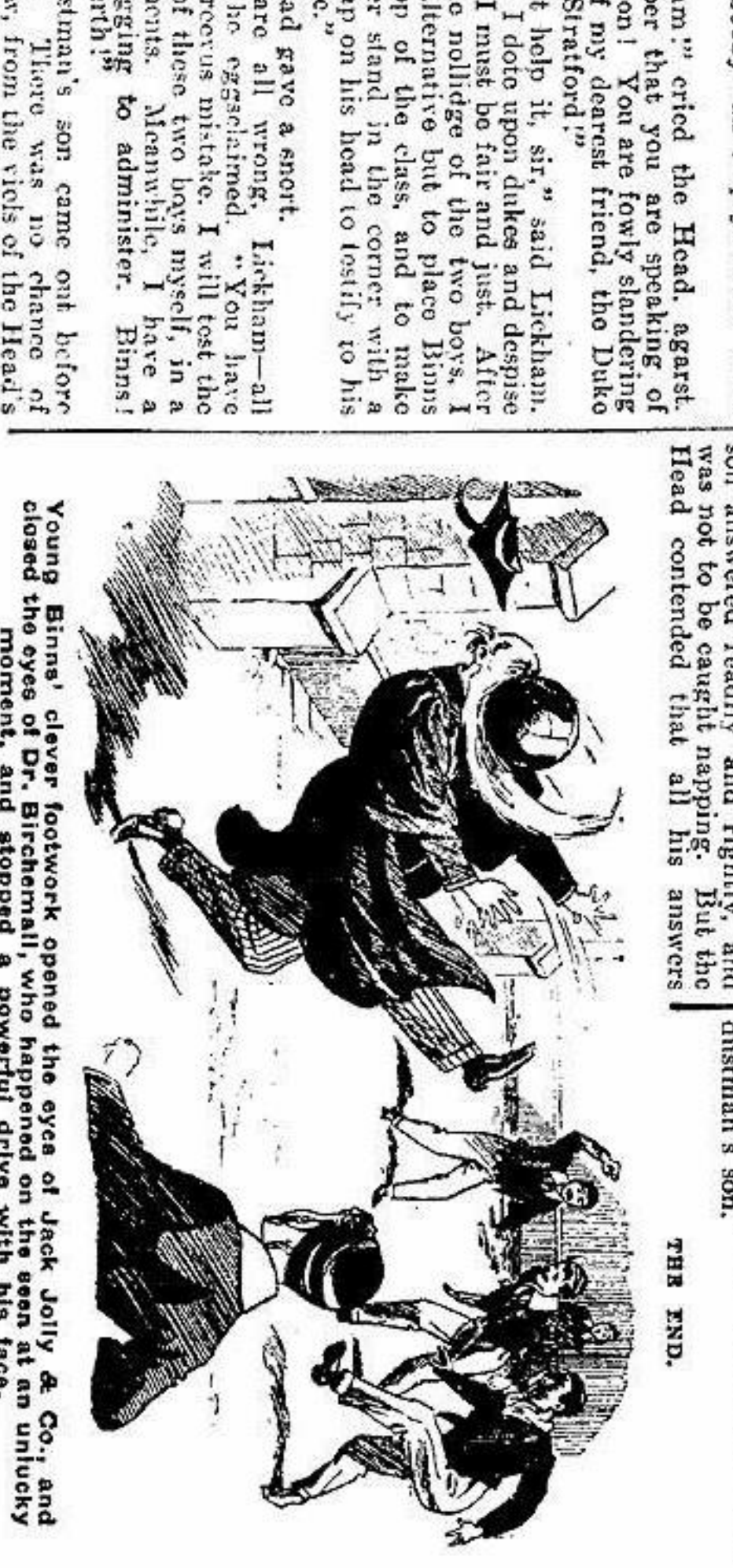
"But—but he's no footballer, sir!" protested Jack Jolly.

The Head turned to Jack Jolly and frowned.

"Take five hundred lines, Jolly, for dispersement!" he cried. "I command you to give his honor a place in the Fourth Form team. As for that wretched fellow Binns, he is not to be allowed to play. Do you understand?"

And the Head stalked away, leaving Jack Jolly & Co. furious and indignant at the Head's unfair persecution of the duckman's son.

THE END.



Young Binns' clever footwork opened the eyes of Jack Jolly & Co., and closed the eyes of Dr. Birchmell, who happened on the scene at an unlucky moment, and stopped a powerful drive with his face.