

THE CLUE OF THE CORAL KNIFE!

This week's gripping school and adventure story of the Chums of Greyfriars.

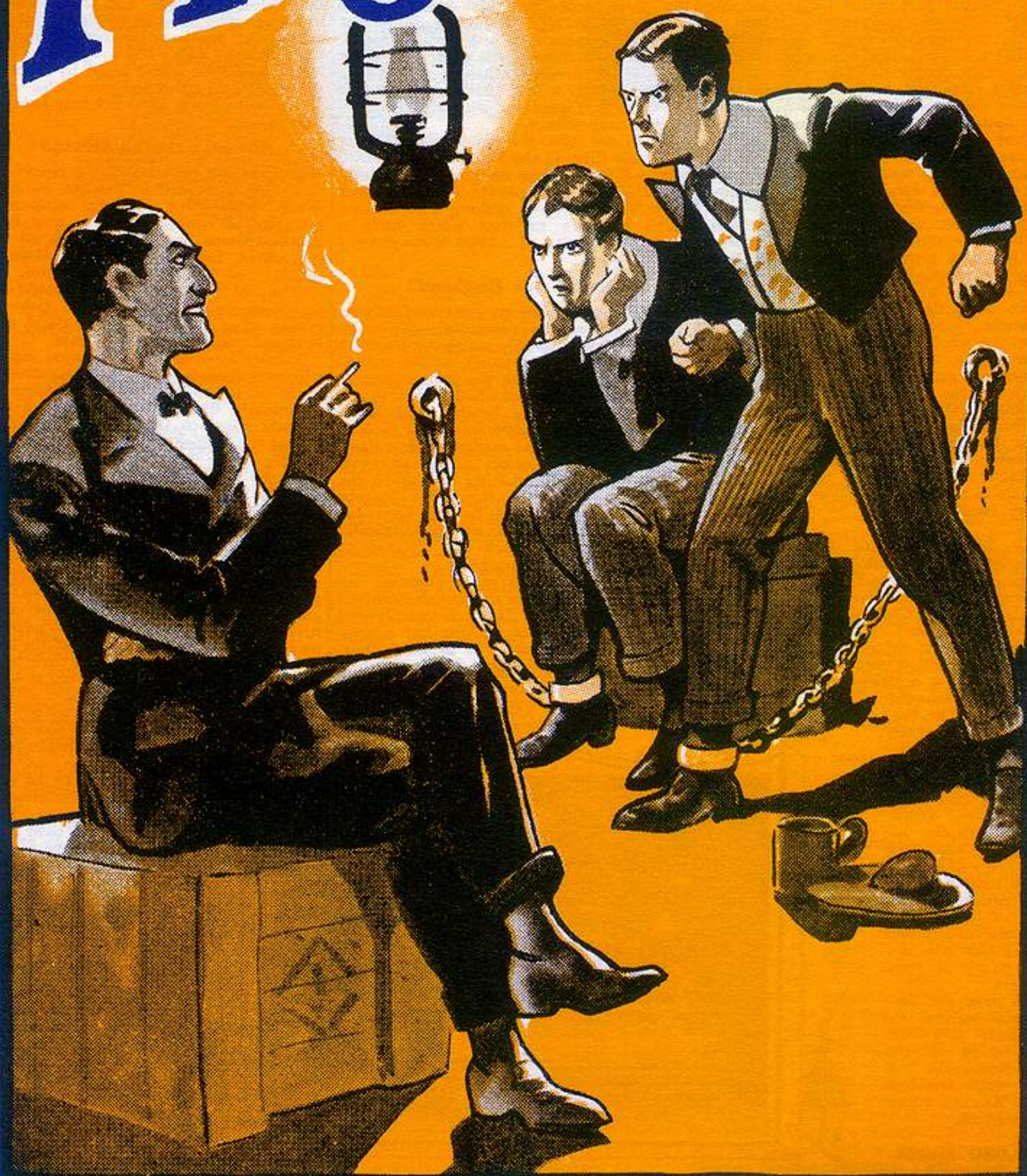
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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



IN MERCILESS HANDS!

(A tense moment in this week's dramatic story of Harry Wharton & Co.)



THE SECOND ARTICLE IN THIS NOVEL SERIES WHICH TELLS YOU HOW THE FINISHED COPY OF THE "MAGNET" COMES INTO EXISTENCE!

LAST week we were spectators of a grand jam in the timber-carrying river—a tremendous hold-up of heaving logs which found their further passage barred by a mighty trunk which had broken free from one of the colossal rafts and, becoming wedged in a turn of the river, had thrown everything into apparently hopeless confusion.

That jammed timber—eventually to be made into paper on which a future number of THE MAGNET will be printed, and now on its stormy way to the pulping mills down on the Canadian coast—must be poled free.

The crew aboard the big raft nearest the blockage must risk life and limb to clear the passage. Jumping from tossing log to log, with iron-shod poles they shove and thrust, until suddenly the crosswise trunks, grinding and leaping over one another, are headed down the river again, and on the never-ending procession goes.

Always the paper-timber must be kept flowing, as though part of the river itself, for fresh logs are continually being tipped in at the forest end—and continually THE MAGNET is eating up paper at a tremendous rate! To a ton-foot the jumble in the river is a nightmare, threatening tangle.

Identification Marks!

Several timber-cutting companies sometimes cut from a forest at the same time, all using the same river as a beast of burden. How, then, are the logs ever sorted out again? For, of course, they become wildly mixed whilst yet the sorting-out station near the river's mouth is many days' journey distant.

It is managed thuswise. The loggers stationed at the points where the trunks are tipped in, deftly and without fuss nick with their axes distinguishing marks belonging to their own employers. By these marks are the logs identified at the end of their boisterous river-trip and fished out into the keeping of their owners.

At last the destination-station is reached, and the first stage in the transformation of the rough tree-logs into MAGNET paper commences.

12,000 Horse Power!

The rough life of the loggers' camps

has been left behind, and the town where the river-borne logs are sawn up for pulping—a picture of savage desolation only a few years ago, just virgin forest—now boasts a railway and all the comforts of civilisation, even though things are frozen stiff for a few weeks on end when the severe Canadian winter grips the land in iron fists.

Such are the present-day conditions at Clarke City, in the Province of Quebec, where a tremendous dam has been flung across the St. Marguerite River, to hold captive the mighty rushing torrent and make it drive turbines which have a working capacity of 12,000 horse-power!

Bound for England!

Here, by machinery run by the harnessed water, the paper-pulp is made, and from here it is shipped to the Imperial Paper Mills, at Gravesend, at the mouth of the Thames, where the pulp is turned into finished paper—of which THE MAGNET and its very many brother and sister publications use 35,000 tons in a year.

Loading from that enormous river-dam, built of solid concrete, are giant pipes which convey the rushing torrent to the power-house, where the short lengths of timber—the trunks having been cut into thirty-inch lengths and mechanically stripped of their bark—are ground to pulp by enormous machines.

The pulp has then to be cleaned; all resin, gum, and other unwanted materials being taken out of it by a complicated process which leaves nothing but a mass of fibres in the pulp. It is these short fibres which are later "felted" into printing-paper.

The prepared pulp, which is to be sent to Gravesend for the last transformation to be wrought upon it, is first dried, then rolled out by massive machinery into thick sheets looking like very coarse cardboard, and then seized again by machines and finally bundled up into bales which each tip the beam at about four hundred-weight.

Misadventures Missed!

Thus is the produce of the great Canadian forests turned to yet one more use. When you think of the stupendous quantity of timber which is now being chopped down in all the forests all over the world, for other purposes than the making of paper—for furniture, the building of houses, and the thousand-and-one uses to which timber is put—you realise what a race there is these days, between man and those forests.

Timber trees are being planted rapidly, wherever there is room, and in the denuded parts of the forests young saplings are continually springing up to replace their parents fallen to the axes of the fellers. But at the moment felling is going on more rapidly than reforestation. But you need not worry—there is plenty of paper-material left for THE MAGNET for some considerable time yet!

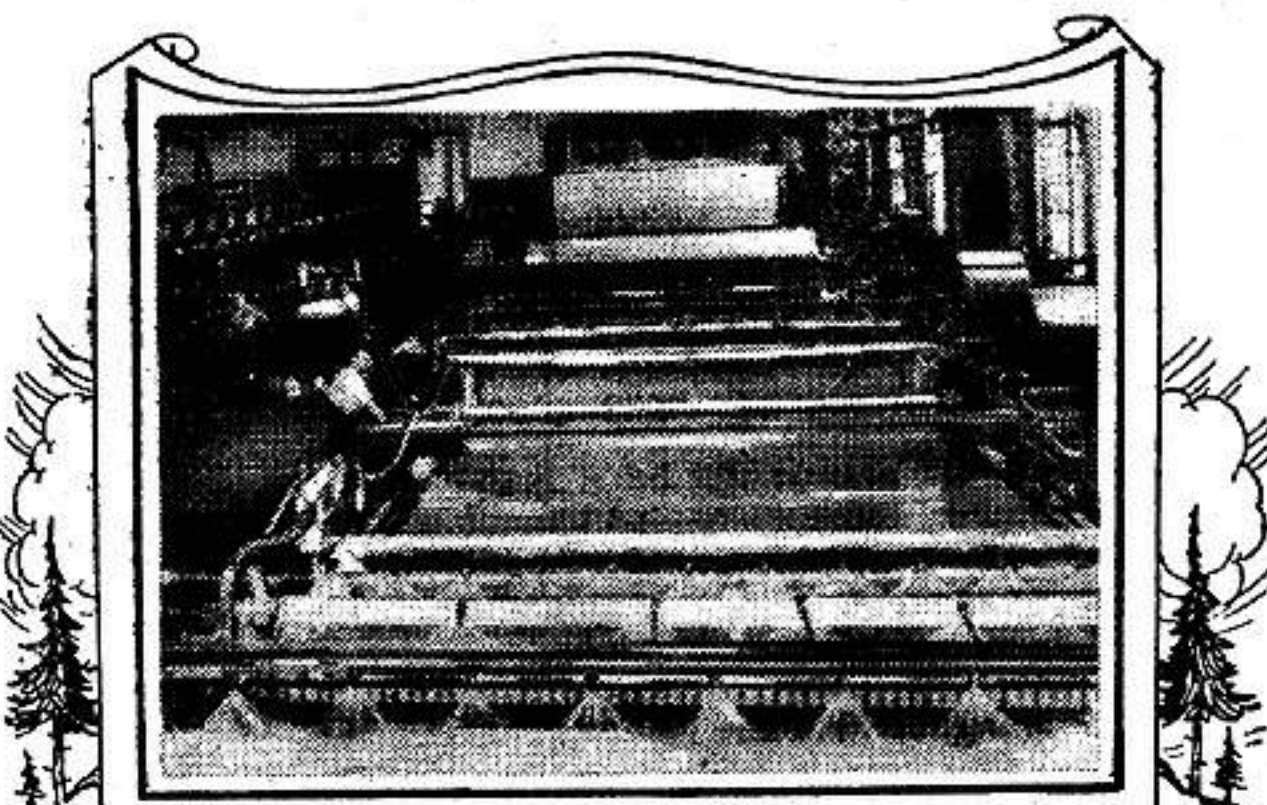
Fire-fighters have done, and are daily doing, their bit on your behalf. A carelessly dropped lighted match or unextinguished cigarette and may start the great forest conflagration, and to safeguard the many square miles of paper-timber these forests are constantly patrolled by fire-fighters, equipped with all the latest devices for putting out small fires before they reach the proportions of a raging inferno.

But to get back to our bales of prepared paper-pulp.

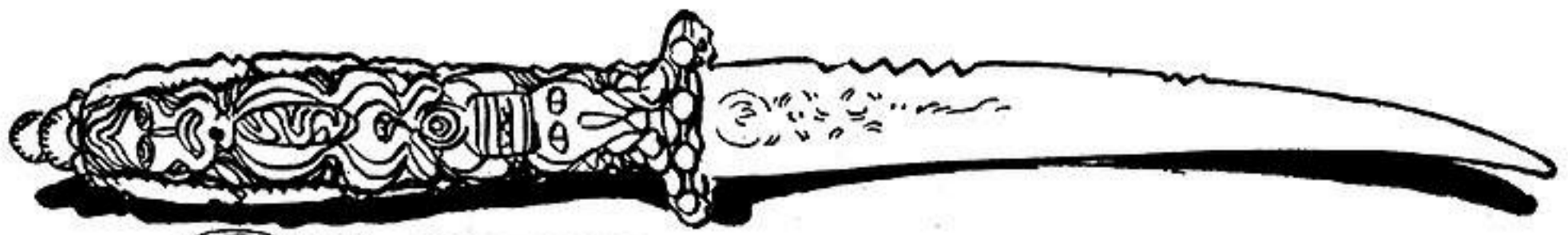
These are now ready to be taken from the store and placed on board ship for their trip to the paper mills in Kent. Out of one ton of this pulp—which a short while before had been towering trees in vast and lonely Canadian forests—the mills here at home make enough of the finished material to paper a three-acre field.

But THE MAGNET makes very short work of a mere three acres of paper!

(Next week's interesting article-tells how the actual paper ready to be printed on, is made.)



This photograph shows water being sprayed on the pulp to keep it properly moist whilst on its journey through the enormous paper-making machine. At the far end can be seen the actual paper being reeled off.



THE CLUE OF THE CORAL KNIFE!



A Dramatic Long Complete School and Adventure Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

The earth might have opened and swallowed him up for all trace there is to be seen of Tom Redwing. But that does not dismay his chum. Some clue there must be that will throw light upon Redwing's disappearance. And that clue Vernon-Smith seeks out with heroic determination!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Where is Redwing?

"**S**NOW!" said Bob Cherry. It was the last day of the term at Greyfriars School, and the night had set in wild and windy. The wind from the sea wailed round the old chimney-pots, and shook the leafless branches of the elms in the quad. There was a roaring fire in the Rag, and most of the faces there were merry and bright. The prospect of breaking up on the morrow for the Christmas holidays had an exhilarating effect on most of the Remove.

Bob Cherry was standing at one of the high windows of the Rag, looking out into the quad. Tiny snowflakes, glimmering in the stars, floated on the wind and rustled on the panes. It was the first snowfall, and Bob was pleased to see it.

"Snow, you men!" he shouted, and half a dozen fellows joined him at the window.

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shivered. "The goodness is not terrific!" he murmured.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter joined the group at the window. "Redwing hasn't come in yet. Nice walk for him in this weather, what? He, he, he!"

"Hasn't Reddy got back from Hawkscliff?" asked Nugent.

"No. Shouldn't wonder if he's fallen over the cliffs," said Bunter cheerfully. "Jolly dangerous in the dark, you know, especially now the snow's come on. There was a man fell over the cliffs one night last winter—"

"Dry up, you fat ass!" "Well, there was, you know," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, if Redwing's fallen over the cliffs—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob. "There's Smithy," said Wharton, with a nod towards a coated and muffled

figure in the quad coming towards the House.

"Smithy's been down to the gates to see if he's coming," said Bunter. "He seems jolly anxious about Redwing. They had a row this afternoon, you know. He, he, he!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, came into the Rag a few minutes later. There was a dark cloud on his brow.

"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, did you see anybody coming?" called out Skinner. Some of the fellows laughed. Most of the Remove knew that the Bounder had been quarrelling with his chum that day.

Smithy did not seem to hear. He crossed over to the group at the window.

"Redwing's not back," he said. "He was to be back at lock-up. It's close on bed-time now."

"Oh, Reddy's all right!" said Bob. "He knows every inch of the path by the cliffs, and he's not likely to take a tumble."

"I believe something's happened."

"I don't see why," said Harry Wharton. "His father's home from sea to-day, you know, and most likely Redwing's staying up at Hawkscliff for the night as the weather's turned rough."

"He wouldn't, without leave."

"I say, you fellows, there was a man pitched over the cliffs on that path last winter—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I'm going to see Quelch," said the Bounder. "Redwing ought to have been back hours ago, and he ought to be searched for. I'm going to ask Quelch to let me go up to Hawkscliff and see if—"

"Better give that a miss," said Bob. "You're not in Quelch's good books now, Smithy! You got into a row for cutting class this afternoon—"

"And got six!" said Billy Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

The Bounder scowled. "I'm going to speak to Quelch, anyhow. I believe something's happened to Redwing—"

The door of the Rag opened again, and Wingate of the Sixth looked in with a cheery, good-humoured face.

"Dorm, you kids," he said.

There was a general movement of the Removites. Vernon-Smith drove his hands deep into his pockets and scowled as he walked out of the Rag. He was worried about his chum—partly, perhaps, because he had parted with him on ill-terms that afternoon, on the way up to Hawkscliff.

Instead of proceeding to the stairs with the rest of the Remove the Bounder left them, and headed for Masters passage.

Wingate looked round.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"I've got to speak to Quelch," said the Bounder, over his shoulder.

"You've got to go to your dormitory," answered the prefect curtly. "Go up at once."

"Redwing's not come in—"

"I know that. Possibly Mr. Quelch knows what to do about it, without your advice," said Wingate sarcastically. "Go up to the dorm!"

The Bounder gave him a sullen look, quickened his pace, and disappeared into Masters passage.

Wingate stared after him.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated.

Some of the juniors grinned. When the Bounder had his back up he was reckless of authority; but that cool defiance of the head prefect of Greyfriars was rather unusual, even in Smithy.

Leaving the Removites collected on the stairs, Wingate strode after the rebellious junior with a grim brow. He entered Masters passage, just in time to see Vernon-Smith stop at Mr. Quelch's door, tap thereon, and enter the study.

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Then Smithy disappeared from Wingate's sight, and the captain of Greyfriars paused, breathing hard and deep.

He returned to the waiting Remove. "Bunter, go to my study and fetch the cane you will see on the table!" he rapped out.

Bunter grinned. "Yes, Wingate." The fat junior rolled away, apparently entertained by the prospect of what was to happen to Smithy in the dormitory.

"Go to your dormitory," said Wingate gruffly, and the Lower Fourth marched on their way.

Billy Bunter arrived a few minutes later with the cane. He handed it to Wingate, who tucked it under his arm in readiness for the Bounder's arrival.

The Remove turned in; but Wingate did not put out the light, as usual, and bid them a cheery good-night, and leave. He was waiting for the Bounder. And as minute followed minute and Vernon-Smith did not come, the expression on Wingate's rugged face grew grimmer and grimmer.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

MR. QUELCH frowned. There were two other masters in the study with him, when the door opened suddenly and Herbert Vernon-Smith almost bolted in.

Mr. Quelch, Mr. Hacker, and Mr. Wiggins, having happily finished with their Forms for the day, were enjoying a little chat, discussing the coming Christmas vacation, and the interruption was unwelcome.

Mr. Hacker and Mr. Wiggins both raised their eyebrows expressively as Smithy came in. Whereupon Henry Samuel Quelch turned a frowning brow upon the intruder.

"Vernon-Smith! What does this mean? What do you want?" he snapped.

"Excuse me, sir—" said the Bounder, a little breathlessly. He had made good speed to his Form master's study.

Mr. Quelch glanced at the clock. "It is past your bed-time, Vernon-Smith. You should be in your dormitory. Go there at once!"

"Redwing hasn't come in, sir."

"I am aware of that."

"I believe something's happened to him, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a freezing look.

"I see no reason to suppose anything of the kind, Vernon-Smith."

"But he was to be back at lock-up, sir."

"Quite so. But, as the weather has turned stormy, I have no doubt that he is staying with his father for the night. You may go."

Vernon-Smith did not go.

"He would have telephoned in that case, sir," he persisted.

Mr. Quelch almost glared.

"You may not be aware, Vernon-Smith, that there is no telephone at the village of Hawkscliff," he said.

"I know, sir; but he would have walked to Clyffe to phone. There's a telephone at the station there."

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

Mr. Hacker and Mr. Wiggins were still exercising their eyebrows in shocked astonishment at this junior who persisted in arguing with his Form master. Mr. Quelch was not the man to have his authority belittled in the presence of other members of the staff.

"Vernon-Smith," he said in his most rasping tones, "go to your dormitory

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this instant! I shall cane you if you utter another word!"

The Bounder gave him a dogged look, but he left the study without another word. Mr. Quelch had taken a common-sense view of the matter, and it was evidently useless to attempt to make him share the Bounder's vague anxiety.

Smithy closed the door and tramped back along the passage, with a moody brow.

He stopped at the foot of the staircase.

His Form master had ordered him to his dormitory, and he knew that Wingate must be waiting for him there. But the Bounder was thinking of other things. He had not had an opportunity of asking leave to go up to Hawkscliff—not that it would have been of any use to ask, for leave certainly would have been refused. Mr. Quelch was not likely to allow a junior to start on a ten-mile walk in the falling snow at half-past nine at night. But, as leave was impossible to obtain, or even to ask, the Bounder was thinking of going without leave.

For the moment it was possible to slip out of the House, and, once outside, he would be his own master; recapture would be impossible. He would have to face the music when he came in, but the reckless Bounder cared little for that.

He set his lips in a tight line.

Smithy's mind was made up. He was moving away from the stairs, having settled the matter in his own mind, when Gwynne and Walker of the Sixth came along. Gwynne called to him at once.

"What are you doing out of your dormitory, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder gave the prefect a savage look and backed away. Gwynne, with a stare of surprise, came over to him and grasped him by the shoulder.

"What are you up to?" he demanded.

"Find out!" snapped Smithy

Gwynne tightened his grip on the Bounder's shoulder and led him to the stairs.

"This way!" he said laconically.

Vernon-Smith set his teeth. For a moment he was thinking of resistance. But he realised the futility of that at once, and, with Gwynne's hand still on his shoulder, he tramped up the stairs and along the corridor to the doorway of the Remove dormitory.

Wingate was waiting there, and his eyes glinted at the sullen Bounder.

"One of your lambs I found wandering, Wingate!" Gwynne said, with a laugh.

And he pushed the junior into the dormitory and turned away.

Wingate slid the cane down into his hand from under his arm. He pointed to a bed with it.

"Bend over that bed, Vernon-Smith!" he said.

"He, he, he?" came from Billy Bunter.

Most of the Removites were sitting up in bed, with their eyes on the scene. Harry Wharton ventured to put in a word.

"Smithy's worried about Redwing, Wingate," he said. "He thinks that something's happened to him."

"What rot!" said Wingate. "What could have happened to the kid?"

"Nothing that I know of; but he's Smithy's chum, and Smithy thinks—"

Wingate looked more closely at the Bounder's sullen face. It was sullen and sulky enough, but the prefect was able to read there also distress and anxiety. He unknit his brows, and slipped the cane under his arm again.

"Never mind about bending over,

Vernon-Smith," he said. "You're a cheeky young rascal, but I don't want to lick a kid on the last night of term. Get to bed!"

The Bounder turned in silence to his bed.

"You needn't worry about Redwing," added Wingate. "I've spoken to Quelch about him, and it's certain that he's staying the night with his father at Hawkscliff. No reason at all to suppose anything else. Don't be a nervy young ass!"

Vernon-Smith made no reply. He turned in, in sulky silence. Wingate put out the lights at last.

"Good-night, kids!"

"Good-night, Wingate!"

The door closed, and the Remove were left to darkness and slumber. But there was one at least in the Lower Fourth dormitory who was thinking of anything but slumber.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business!

FROM one bed to another in the Remove dormitory ran a cheery buzz of talk. Nobody was in a hurry to go to sleep on the last night of term. Fellows were thinking of the morrow—of break-up, and the journey home, and the festive season that lay before them.

Even Billy Bunter's snore was not heard so immediately as usual. Bunter's plans for the Christmas holidays were still unsettled. Only one thing was settled in Bunter's fat mind, and that was that he was not going home for the holidays if he could help it. This was rather inexplicable after Bunter's descriptions of the good time that was coming at Bunter Court. But, as the poet has told us, "Tis distance lends enchantment to the view."

Seen from the distance of Greyfriars, Bunter's residence in Surrey was a magnificent abode. Approached more closely, it dwindled to a detached villa. The vast grounds contracted to a suburban garden; the gorgeous Rolls-Royce became a mere Ford. Bunter Court was, so to speak, a splendid place for a fellow who wasn't there. When a fellow was there, it hadn't much to offer. So Bunter, if he could help it, was not going to disport himself on his native heath that Christmas. What worried him was that it looked as if he wouldn't be able to help it. Blind to the many fascinations of William George Bunter, nobody in the Remove wanted to take him home. On the last night of term Bunter's plans were still in the air. A victim had to be found, as the song says, and Bunter had not yet found a victim. So that night his snore was silent, while Bunter pondered the problem instead of going to sleep as usual.

Harry Wharton & Co had matters settled to their satisfaction. The Famous Five were all going off together on the morrow to put in the first days of the vacation at Wharton's home. Afterwards they would scatter, but they had arranged to spend most of the holiday more or less together.

The Bounder had wanted to take his chum, Tom Redwing, home with him. That would have been easy enough but for the news that Redwing's father had come home from sea. Hence the dispute that had arisen that afternoon, Redwing naturally wanting to spend his holiday with his sailor father at the cottage at Hawkscliff, and the Bounder being disappointed and irritated in consequence. That dispute worried the



The door was suddenly flung open and Harry Wharton & Co. spun round towards it, in sudden relief, expecting to see Redwing or his father. They dropped back in amazement at the sight of an ancient seaman, in jersey and sea-boots, with a boat-hook in his hand, who stood in the doorway, glaring at them. "You young swabs," said the mariner, lifting the boat-hook threateningly, "I've got you now!" (See Chapter 4.)

Bounder now. He had been exacting and unreasonable, and he had parted with Redwing on the cliff path with angry words. He had meant to make it up when Redwing came back, and Tom had not come back. The thought that some disaster had happened to his chum after that angry parting was bitter to Smithy.

Smithy's voice did not join in the buzz of talk that went on in the dormitory. He lay silent, but his eyes were not closed, and he was not thinking of sleep. When the quarter chimed out from the clock tower and the voices in the dormitory were dying away and fellows falling asleep, the Bounder, very wide awake, stepped out of bed and began to dress himself in the dark.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's voice in rather drowsy tones. "Is that somebody turning out?"

"Don't tell all the House!" snapped the Bounder.

Bob sat up in bed.

"You, Smithy?"

"Yes."

"What's the game?"

"I'm going up to Hawkscliff."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob.

He peered at the dim form of the Bounder in the gloom. Half a dozen voices chimed in.

"Don't be an ass, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "You jolly well know you can't go up to Hawkscliff to-night!"

"It's nearly ten miles," said Johnny Bull.

"I don't care if it's a hundred!" answered Smithy.

"My esteemed Smithy," murmured Hurree Jamsset Singh, "you will

be spitefully caught, and the ludicrous Quelch will be infuriated."

"Hang Quelch!"

"You want to bag a flogging before break-up to-morrow?" asked Skinner.

"I don't care."

"Rather you than I!" grinned Skinner.

"You must be an ass, Smithy!" said Frank Nugent. "How the thump are you thinking of getting to Hawkscliff to-night? You can't walk it and back, and you can't get a bike out."

"Snowing, too!" said Bob.

"A little snow won't hurt me," said the Bounder. "I'm going! You fellows like to come?"

"Leave me out!" chuckled Skinner.

"I wasn't asking you!" snapped the Bounder.

Harry Wharton sat up in bed.

"Smithy old man, don't play the goat!" he said. "What's the good of winding up the term with a fearful row?"

"I don't think there'll be a row. I'm not likely to be spotted. But I don't care if there's a row. I believe something's happened to Redwing, and I'm going to find out."

"But you've no reason to think—"

"I have," answered the Bounder quietly.

"Well, what's the reason?"

"Oh, lots! No time to jaw now; I'm going! If you fellows like to come I'll be glad. Anyhow, I'm going. I don't mean to walk it. I can get a car from Courtfield garage."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"And how are you going to get a car this time of night, Smithy?"

"Telephone for it."

"You're going to ask Quelch to let you use his phone?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's more than one phone in the House, and I shall get at one all right," said the Bounder coolly. "Hacker's got a phone in his study; and he was with Quelch, jawing, when we came up. I dare say he's there still, cackling. Anyhow, I shall find a phone all right."

"Well, you've got a nerve, anyhow!" remarked Squiff.

"A neck, I should say!" chuckled Skinner.

"The neckfulness is terrific."

"Look here, Smithy," said Harry Wharton, "we're all friends of Redwing's, and if anything's happened to him, we're as concerned as you are. But Quelch thinks he's all right."

"Quelch doesn't know!" grunted the Bounder. "Anyhow, I'm going. I don't believe Redwing stayed the night at Hawkscliff. I've got to find out. I don't care if there's a row. If you fellows are afraid of a row, stay where you are; I don't funk going alone."

"If you'd got any real reason to believe that something was wrong—"

"I've told you I have."

"Then I'll come!" said Harry Wharton, slipping out of bed. "I think you're an ass, Smithy; but—"

"Same here!" said Bob Cherry. "I know you're an ass, Smithy; but I'll come."

"Two fellows will be enough," said Vernon-Smith. "Get into your things if you're coming. No time to lose."

Wharton and Bob Cherry dressed

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quickly in the dark. Wharton was not feeling very happy about it, but the Bounder's positiveness had made him feel uneasy about Redwing. Bob Cherry was looking on the adventure as rather a lark.

"Floggings for three in the morning," remarked Skinner, as the trio went to the door. "If you have tears, prepare to shed them, then, my beloved carers."

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, "if you like to leave it till the morning, I'll come."

"Fathead!"

"They won't get very far!" sniggered Snoop. "They'll be back in a few minutes, with Quelch walking behind with a cane."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you chaps!" said Wharton. "Keep quiet here. There'll be a fearful row if this is found out."

"No doubt about that!" said Squiff. "You're duffers to go!"

"Right on the wicket!" agreed Bob. "We are! But it will be a lark."

"Quiet!" growled the Bounder.

He opened the dormitory door softly. The three juniors stepped out into the passage, and the door was closed behind them.

"Get into the box-room," whispered the Bounder. "Wait there for me. I've got to get to a phone. We can't walk it."

"You'll never bring it off," muttered Bob. "Better chance walking it if we're going to play the goat at all."

"Rot!"

The Bounder glided away silently in the darkness.

"Well, we're for it now!" said Bob. "Come on, old chap!"

Wharton and Bob made their way silently to the box-room. In that apartment they waited for the Bounder.

They waited very uneasily.

Fellows had broken bounds after lights-out many a time; but telephoning for a car on such an occasion was rather an extraordinary proceeding. What Mr. Quelch would think—and do—if he discovered what was going on did not bear thinking about. Certainly there would be a flogging all round for the breakers of bounds, if it were not worse than that.

"We're frightful asses, old chap!" Bob murmured, as they waited in the cold, dark box-room.

"We are!" agreed Wharton. "About the limit, I think! But we can't go back now."

"Oh, no fear!"

Minute followed minute. The two juniors waited in a state of great discomfort and uneasiness. It seemed unlikely to them that the Bounder would succeed in carrying out his plan without discovery. And if he was discovered and marched back to his dormitory the other fellows would be missed from their beds at once. There would be no expedition to Hawkscliff, in that case, but certainly a fearful row. Every minute that passed added to the uneasiness of the two juniors waiting in the box-room.

There was a stealthy footstep at last. A shadowy figure came softly into the room, and the door was closed.

"Smithy!" breathed Wharton.

"Yes."

"You've done it?"

"Yes."

"Phew!" murmured Bob.

"I got the Head's phone," said the Bounder coolly. "He's in his own House, and his study was empty. I sneaked in and phoned in the dark."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Easy as falling off a form!"

"And the car's coming?" asked Bob.

"Of course. My pater runs an account for me at Courtfield garage; I suppose you know they send me a car whenever I want one," answered the Bounder, with a touch of arrogance.

"Not at this time of night, I should think."

"I mentioned that I'm going to fetch a fellow back to the school," said the Bounder coolly. "They take it for granted that I've got leave."

"Oh!"

"I told them that I'd walk along and meet the car on the road to save time," said Vernon-Smith. "It will save time, of course; and it would hardly do to have the car come up to the gates for us, what?"

Bob Cherry chuckled softly.

"Hardly!"

NOTE! The next issue of the **MAGNET** will be on sale at all newsagents Friday, December 21st.

"Get a move on!" said Vernon-Smith. "If we don't meet the car in time it will come up to the gates all right, and all the fat will be in the fire!"

"Buck up, then, for goodness' sake!" said Harry.

No time was lost. The three juniors slipped from the box-room window, one after another, to the leads outside. Vernon-Smith closed the window, and followed his companions to the ground. There, they lost no time in getting away from the House.

Through the keen wind and the drifting snowflakes the three juniors cut across to the old Cloisters.

A few minutes more, and they were dropping from the wall, and running for the Courtfield road.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nobody at Home!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's the car!"

The lights gleamed through the darkness and the feathery flakes. The three juniors were waiting in the road, already at a good distance from the school gates. In the starlight they recognised the car and the chauffeur from Courtfield garage; both were quite well known at Greyfriars. Vernon-Smith stepped into the road and held up his hand, and the car halted. The chauffeur peered rather curiously at them.

"Get in," said Vernon-Smith.

Wharton and Bob entered the car.

"Where to, sir?" asked the chauffeur.

"Hawkscliff," said the Bounder.

"Make her buzz, too—we've got to get back as fast as we can. You'll have to take the road by Clyffe and Woodford—it's about fifteen miles that way, but it's a good road—until you get close to Hawkscliff."

"Right, sir."

Vernon-Smith followed the chums of the Remove into the car, and the chauffeur started.

Leaving Greyfriars behind, the car ran swiftly along the road, turned into the road over Redclyffe Hill, and buzzed on rapidly through the night.

"Well, we're for it now," said Bob, settling back comfortably on the cushions. "It's no end of a lark—if we don't get nailed and flogged."

"I don't think I'd break bounds at this time of night for a lark," said Harry Wharton. "Look here, Smithy, you've told us you've got a reason to

believe that something's happened to Reddy. What's the reason?"

"It's clear enough to me," answered the Bounder. "Redwing was told to get back for lock-up. The snow never stopped him, because it didn't begin till after lock-up. He meant to come back."

"He's not the fellow to fall over the cliffs—"

"I know that. I don't think anything of that kind."

"What the thump do you mean, then?" demanded Wharton. "Nothing else can have happened."

"Have you forgotten what happened at the cottage up at Hawkscliff last week?" grunted the Bounder. "We went up there with Redwing, and there was somebody in the house—rooting about—and he knocked Redwing senseless and got away. I never believed at the time that it was a thieving tramp, and I don't believe so now. The man was after something I've wondered a lot about it since, and I admit I can't make it out; but it was some enemy of Redwing's, that's clear to my mind. And if he has got at him on that lonely path—"

The Bounder paused.

"I had a row with Reddy this afternoon," he muttered. "It was my fault; but we parted on ill terms. And if something's happened to him since—" He broke off again.

Wharton made no answer. He remembered the mysterious episode at the Hawkscliff cottage quite well, but that it had any connection with Tom's absence now did not appear to him probable in the least. The Bounder's conscience was troubling him for that row with his chum, and it made him unduly anxious, and apt to see trouble where none existed. That was how it looked to the captain of the Remove.

"You don't think there's anything in it?" snapped the Bounder. He understood Wharton's silence quite well.

"No," answered Harry frankly. "I think you're making a mountain out of a molehill, Smithy. The most likely thing is that Reddy's stopped the night with his father at Hawkscliff, as Quelch thinks."

"He wouldn't without letting Quelch know."

"Quelch thinks so."

"Quelch is an ass."

There was really no answer to be made to that. The Bounder gave a grunt, and relapsed into silence.

Through the darkness and the snow the swift car was eating up the miles. On the high slopes of Redclyffe Hill it met the full force of the wind from the sea, which roared and wailed round it as it rushed on. From the hill the car glided rapidly down the lane that led to Woodford. The lanes were lonely, the hedges gleaming white with snowflakes in the glare of the lamps. No other car was passed, and not a single pedestrian loomed up in the snow and the gloom.

When the car ran through the sleeping village of Clyffe, the boom of the sea came clearly from the distance. The wild winter's wind was tossing the North Sea to foam, and the breakers roared and boomed along the chalk cliffs.

"Now we shan't be long," remarked Bob Cherry, glancing from the window as the car ran swiftly out of Clyffe.

"I suppose a car goes up to Hawkscliff about once in a blue moon," said Harry. "We shall wake up the whole place."

"Redwing, too," chuckled Bob. "They go to bed early at Hawkscliff. Reddy's fast asleep long ago."

The Bounder growled.
"You think we shall find him safe at the cottage?"

"Sure of it!" answered Bob. "He will be tickled to death at us for this stunt."

The Bounder reddened angrily; Smithy prided himself on being a hard case—hard as nails, and the very reverse of a sentimental, nervous sort of fellow. If Redwing was found safe at the cottage, and astonished to see his friends in the middle of the night, he would be too kind and good-natured to laugh at the Bounder's uneasy fears; but no doubt he would think him a fool. Certainly, Wharton and Bob Cherry would; and the Bounder had to admit that he would look a fool. It was a galling reflection to him; and for the first time Smithy began to repent a little of that wild rush through the night. But it was too late now to think of turning back—if the expedition was an absurd one, it would be still more absurd to turn back.

The car was grinding over rough roads, and rugged slopes now at a lower speed. The roads in the vicinity of Hawkscliff left much to be desired. Vernon-Smith tapped on the glass at last, and the chauffeur halted.

"We can get out here!" growled the Bounder. "No good taking the car into the street—it would have to go all out to get up there. We can walk it."

"Much better," agreed Bob Cherry. "No good waking up the whole place to stare at us."

The Bounder muttered a word to the chauffeur, turned away, and tramped up the rugged slope into the irregular street of the little village that sprawled along the cliff. Wharton and Bob Cherry followed him.

They reached the Redwing cottage in a few minutes.

It was a small building, built against a cliff, and at a little distance from the other cabins and cottages scattered along the rugged street. The windows were dark, like all other windows at Hawkscliff at that hour of the night.

"They're asleep," said Bob.

The Bounder knocked at the door. The loud knock echoed through the cottage. It brought no reply from within.

"Fast asleep!" said Bob.
Knock, knock, knock!

Vernon-Smith had picked up a stone, and he was hammering with it at the door. The din rang along the street, and could not have failed to awaken other sleepers in other cottages; but it brought no sound or movement from the Redwing cottage.

"It's jolly odd," said Wharton, perplexed. "If Redwing isn't here, his father must be. Why the dickens doesn't he answer?"

Bang, bang, bang!
Only the echoes of the loud knocking answered from the interior of the cottage. There was not much doubt that the place was untenanted.

The Bounder threw down the stone at last savagely.

"Do you still think Redwing's there?" he snarled.

"He can't be," said Wharton, quite puzzled. "He couldn't sleep through that row, or his father either. Nobody's there."

"Then do you still think that Quelch was right in supposing that Redwing had stayed here for the night?" sneered Smithy.

"Well, no," admitted Wharton. "I can't make it out."

"I'm going in," said the Bounder. "Reddy used to leave the door on the latch, but since that fellow was rooting

about here last week he locked the door and left the key with a neighbour. But I'm going in. Reddy won't mind a little damage in the circumstances."

Without waiting for a reply, Smithy picked up the stone again, and dashed it through a pane in the window beside the door. There was a clatter and tinkle of falling glass.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Bob.

Vernon-Smith thrust his arm through the broken pane, unfastened the window-catch, and opened the window. He clambered through and dropped inside.

"You fellows coming in?" he snapped.

"May as well," said Bob. "I hope Reddy won't charge us with burglary."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

The Bounder had lighted a candle by the time the two juniors were inside. They looked round the little sitting-room. There was no sign of recent occupation. The grate was swept and clean, as Redwing had left it a week before; no fire had been lighted since. The juniors stared round them, perplexed. If John Redwing was home from sea, if Redwing had joined his father at the cottage that afternoon, as they had supposed, there would have been some sign of occupation.

"Redwing never got here!" muttered the Bounder. "He never got here at all to-day, you fellows."

"But what—"

"Goodness knows! Let's look upstairs."

The juniors went up the little staircase, the Bounder in advance, holding up the candle. There were two rooms above, neither tenanted. The beds, obviously, had not been slept in; they were not even made up for use, the bedclothes being neatly folded away. The odour of moth-balls and the heavy atmosphere showed that the windows had not been recently opened.

The juniors went down again, lost in wonder. Vernon-Smith placed the candlestick on the little mantelpiece. In silence, the Removites looked at one another. The Bounder's face was pale with anxiety, and his companions shared his anxiety now to the full. As they stood in troubled silence there was a grating of a key in the lock of the door, it turned, and the door was flung open.

They spun round towards it in sudden relief, expecting to see Redwing or his father. But it was an ancient sailor-man, in jersey and sea-boots, with a boathook in his hand, who stood in the doorway glaring at them.

"Shiver my timbers!" said that ancient mariner, lifting the boathook with a threatening gesture. "You thieving swabs, I've got you!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Mystery of Tom Redwing!

"O H, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

The Bounder scowled at the newcomer.

"Who are you?" he snapped.

"Name of Bowline," answered the old sailor-man. "The key of this here caboose was left with me. Don't you try to get away! Breaking into a man's house while he's away at sea!" Mr. Bowline snorted. "I'll l'arn yer! You try to get away, and I'll put you on your beam-ends with this here boathook, and you can lay to that!"

Bob Cherry burst into an involuntary chuckle. Evidently Mr. Bowline had been awakened by the hammering at

the cottage door and had turned out, and picked up the boathook to deal with a supposed gang of tramps or burglars. His supposition was not an unnatural one in the circumstances.

But as he blinked at the Greyfriars fellows in the candlelight Mr. Bowline's frown relaxed, and he lowered his weapon. He had not expected to see schoolboys, and it dawned upon him that it was not a gang of housebreakers he had to deal with.

"Shiver my timbers!" he said, in astonishment. "Ain't you the young gents that come up 'ere sometimes with young Tom?"

"We're Redwing's friends," said Harry, with a smile. "We've come up after him, and as we couldn't get in we—"

"Well, you ain't stood on ceremony, you ain't!" grunted Mr. Bowline. "Look at that winder! A man will 'ave to come two miles from Woodford to mend that winder!"

"Where's Redwing?" shot out the Bounder.

"Eh?" Bowline stared. "Ain't he up at the school?"

"No; he came here—"

"He ain't come here," said Bowline, shaking his head. "'Cause why, if he had, he'd have come and asked me for the key."

"But his father—"

"His dad's at sea."

"But he came back from sea!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, bewildered. "Mean to say you haven't seen him and he hasn't asked you for the key of his cottage?"

"If John Redwing had got back to port, sir, I'd have seed him," said Mr. Bowline. "Ain't I always 'ere, seeing as I'm too old these days to go to sea? Any day you can see me leaning on that there post yonder. You can lay to it that if John came back from sea, I'd be the first of his mates to see him. He ain't back. 'Cause why? His ship's on the high seas. He's on the Samarcond."

"The Samarcond?" repeated Wharton.

"Ay, ay; that's his ship," said Bowline. "And the Samarcond ain't this side of the Red Sea yet, as you can see in the papers if you foller the shipping noos."

"Well, we don't follow the shipping news, as a rule," said Bob, with a grin. "Redwing expected his father home, and—"

"What's the good of expecting a man any given date when he's on one of them steamers?" demanded Mr. Bowline. "On a windjammer, now, you can put a date. You know what your masts will stand. You know what wind you've got. There ain't nothing to break down and leave you adrift in the Indian Ocean. With them steamers it's different."

Evidently that ancient mariner had sailed the seas in the days of sailing-ships, and did not trust such new-fangled inventions as steamships.

"That there Samarcond," said Mr. Bowline, "was 'ung up with her engines in the Indian Ocean. She had to put in at Aden for repairs. On a windjammer John would have been 'ome for Christmas. He'll have a 'ot Christmas in the Red Sea on that steamer. You can lay to that."

The juniors looked at Mr. Bowline and looked at one another in utter amazement. They had been astonished to find the Redwing cottage untenanted, but this news was more astonishing still.

"But Mr. Redwing telephoned to
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Greyfriars this afternoon!" almost shouted Bob Cherry.

"You mean wireless?" asked Mr. Bowline, with a stare. "I know they got wireless—though I don't hold with it—on them steamers. Sailormen took a chance in my time. Now they want to go to sea as safe as the King in his palls. But you tell me that they let a foremast hand wireless 'ome? Shiver my timbers!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Wharton. "Telephoned! He rang up Greyfriars, and told Mr. Quelch, our Form master, that he was home from sea, and asked for leave for Redwing to come up here for the afternoon."

Mr. Bowline looked puzzled.

"You kiddin'?" he asked.

"No, no, no! I tell you—"

"It ain't any good telling me that John is 'ome from sea when the shipping noos says that the Samarcand is 'eld up at Aden with her blooming engines broke down," said Mr. Bowline positively, "and you can lay to that!"

"You're sure Mr. Redwing isn't home?" gasped Bob.

"Not unless he flew!" said Mr. Bowline, with sarcasm. "They do a lot of flying these days with them air-planes. I don't 'old with it! Frightful row they make, buzzin' over a man's roof! A ship and a good spread of canvas was good enough for a man in my time. But I reckon John ain't flew 'ome on a air-planes."

"It was a trick!" said the Bounder hoarsely. "Reddy's father is not home from sea; it couldn't have been him that telephoned. It was a trick to get Reddy away from the school!"

"But what—why—" stuttered Bob.

"You're sure Tom Redwing never came up to Hawkscliff this afternoon, Mr. Bowline?" asked Wharton.

"You can lay to that," answered the old seaman. "Wouldn't he 'ave asked me for the key? Shouldn't I 'ave seed him?"

That was unanswerable. It was clear that Tom Redwing, who had left Greyfriars to walk to Hawkscliff, never had arrived there. What had happened to him on the way?

The Bounder groaned aloud.

"And I came half-way with him—if we hadn't rowed, I should have come all the way. And after I left him—" Smithy's voice broke.

"What can have happened?" said Wharton. His face was pale now. "That was before the weather changed; there was no snow and hardly any wind. The path was safe enough—"

"Can't you see?" hissed the Bounder. "The man who telephoned—he was waiting for him—waylaying him—"

"But who—why—"

"How can I tell? But it's clear, isn't it?" Vernon-Smith almost snarled. "Why should anyone play that trick on the telephone, except to get him on that lonely path, away from the school? He started—and disappeared on his way. Isn't it as plain as the nose on your face that the man, whoever he was, waylaid him?"

"I—I suppose so. But I can't understand—"

"We've got to get back to Greyfriars," said Bob. "Something's happened to Redwing, that's certain, now that we know he never reached Hawkscliff. We've got to tell Quelch at once." The Bounder nodded.

"Come on!"

"Shiver my timbers!" said Mr. Bowline. "What—"

But there was no time for talk. The juniors ran out of the cabin, leaving the

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ancient mariner staring. They raced back to the waiting car.

"Greyfriars—as fast as you can go!" snapped Vernon-Smith to the chauffeur. "Stop at the school gates! Make her buzz! I don't care if you smash the dashed car to splinters, if you make good time. Hurry!"

"Yes, sir," said the chauffeur stolidly. The juniors bundled into the car, and it roared away through the night. They sat in silence, with anxious, troubled faces as the car rushed on.

Tom Redwing had disappeared! Amazing as it was, it was certain that he had been tricked away from the school by a false message on the telephone, and that some unknown enemy had waylaid him on the lonely path over the cliffs. The school authorities had to be informed at once—and the police. It was impossible to make a secret of that forbidden expedition out of bounds now, but the juniors were not thinking of that, or of the possible consequences to themselves. All their thoughts were for Tom Redwing, the cheery, sturdy, good-natured son of a sailorman, liked by all who knew him, who had left Greyfriars in a happy mood, and had vanished, as it seemed, into thin air.

The Bounder sat, white and frowning, biting his lips. His misgivings had proved well-founded, after all; some disaster had befallen his chum. He had parted from him in anger—had he not left him he might have been able to help him, to save him. The thought was torture to the Bounder. The car raced and rocked through the darkness and the whirling snowflakes, but fast as it was, it was slow to the Bounder's impatience.

But it roared, at last, up to the school gates, and halted, throbbing. The Bounder sprang out almost before it stopped, and rang loud peal after peal at the bell.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Quelch is Not Pleased!

GOSLING, the porter, stared through the metal bars of the gate, which he seemed in no hurry to open. He blinked in astonishment at the sight of three Remove juniors and a throbbing car outside the gates close on the hour of midnight.

"My eye!" said Gosling.

"Let us in, you old ass!" shouted the Bounder angrily.

"Wot I says," answered Gosling, "is this 'ere—"

"You old dummy! Open the gate!"

"Nice goings hon!" pursued Gosling stolidly. "The 'Ead will 'ave something to say about this! Young rips!"

"For goodness' sake let us in, Gosling," said Harry Wharton impatiently.

"'Ooking a man out of his bed!" said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Open the gate, you chump!" howled the Bounder.

Gosling at last unlocked the gate. The Bounder thrust it violently open, almost knocking over the old porter. He ran in, and raced towards the House. Gosling staggered, slipped in the snow, and sat down with a bump and a gasp.

"Ow!" he ejaculated.

Wharton and Bob Cherry passed him at a run, and followed the Bounder to the House. Smithy was hammering at the big door savagely.

Midnight was at hand, and there were few lights burning in the windows. But one of the lighted windows was that of Mr. Quelch's study. The Remove master had not yet gone to bed.

Bang, bang, bang! rang the blows on the door.

Mr. Quelch's window shot up.

The Remove master's head was put out into the wind and the snowflakes.

"What—" he began.

Wharton ran across to the window.

"It's us, sir—"

"Upon my word! Wharton! You are out of doors at this hour of the night!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! We—"

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

"Cease that noise immediately!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "How dare you make that disturbance at this hour!"

"Shut up, Smithy!" murmured Bob.

There was a sound of rattling chains and a turning key at the big door. The House was locked up for the night, and Mr. Quelch was quite pale with wrath at finding three Remove juniors out of doors at such an hour. The door swung open at last, and the Remove master's wrathful face looked out.

"Come in at once!" he said harshly.

The Remove master had turned on the electric light. The three breathless juniors stepped into the glare of illumination, blinking.

"Now, what does this mean?" demanded the Form master sternly. "How dare you be out of your dormitory and out of the House—"

"We've been up to Hawkscliff, sir—"

gasped Wharton.

"You have dared—"

"Redwing's missing, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"It's true, sir; he never got to Hawkscliff this afternoon, and his father is not home from sea."

"That is absurd, Wharton! Redwing's father telephoned to me this afternoon."

"It was somebody else, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"It was a trick!" panted the Bounder.

"Rubbish!"

"I tell you, sir—"

"Silence, Vernon-Smith! Go to your dormitory at once!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You will be taken before your headmaster in the morning for inquiry into this unprecedented escapade. Go!"

The Bounder gritted his teeth. No doubt a reception like this was exactly what the truants might have expected from an incensed Form master. But minutes were being lost.

"Will you listen to me, sir?" shouted the Bounder. "If not, I shall go to the police station in Courtfield!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Wharton, if you have any explanation to give, I will listen to you."

Harry Wharton explained as succinctly as he could. Mr. Quelch listened at first with an angry and impatient frown. But he was impressed by the time the captain of the Remove had finished.

"If it is absolutely certain that Redwing did not reach Hawkscliff, something certainly must have happened to the boy," he said, pursing his lips.

"It's quite certain, sir."

"That does not excuse this escapade," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "You are perfectly well aware that you should not have left your dormitory and the House without leave. I shall, however, communicate with the police at once, in view of what you have told me. You will leave the matter in my hands and go to bed immediately."

"I've got a car at the gates, sir—"

began the Bounder.

"It is like your impudence to have a car at the gates, Vernon-Smith. I will dismiss the car. Go to bed."

"I mean, sir, we can use it to begin searching for Redwing!"

"You will do nothing of the kind."



Vernon-Smith thrust the gate wide open, ran in, and raced towards the House. Gosling staggered, slipped in the snow, and sat down, with a bump and a gasp. "Ow!" he ejaculated. Wharton and Bob Cherry passed the school porter at a run, and followed the Bounder into the House. (See Chapter 6.)

You cannot imagine that I shall allow you to leave the House again to-night. Go to your dormitory immediately!"

Mr. Quelch, though clearly alarmed for Redwing and concerned about him, was still more clearly angry with the three juniors who had taken matters into their own hand.

The Bounder paused. His look showed that he was thinking of resistance to his Form master's orders. Wharton caught his arm.

"Come on, Smithy!"

"And leave Redwing to it!" muttered the Bounder savagely.

"Nothing can be done till daylight."

"Go to bed at once!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "In the circumstances, I do not desire to cane you Vernon-Smith; but if you do not go to your dormitory instantly——"

With a grunt, the Bounder swung towards the stairs. He realised that what Wharton said was well founded, and that nothing could be done till daylight, beyond notifying the police. And that was a matter left to a person in authority.

Mr. Quelch, frowning and troubled, saw the juniors to their dormitory, and then went down to his telephone, to ring up Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield. All the Remove were fast asleep, and they did not awaken when the three juniors turned in.

"It's all rot!" growled the Bounder savagely. "How's a fellow to sleep? We ought to be searching for Redwing!"

"Useless in the dark," said Harry quietly. "Now that Quelch is putting the police on to it, that's all that can be done for the present. We can turn out at dawn, without waiting for rising-bell then——"

"And the more sleep we get before then, the better," said Bob Cherry.

"Sleep!" snarled the Bounder. "Do you think I'm going to close my eyes? Redwing may have been murdered——"

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton uneasily.

"Why should anybody want to hurt him?"

"Why should anybody want to kidnap him?" snarled Smithy. "If he's still alive, he's been kidnapped!"

"I suppose so. But——"

"I can't make it out," said Bob. "But it's rot to look on the worst side of anything. Get some sleep and turn out at daylight."

The Bounder snarled, but he said no more. Wharton and Bob, anxious as they were, were almost dropping asleep, and their eyes very soon closed.

They did not awaken till the rising-bell was clanging out over Greyfriars. The December dawn was creeping over the school. Fellows sat up in bed and yawned.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Smithy?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, staring at the Bounder's bed.

The bed was empty. Evidently the Bounder had not remained indoors for the night.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Clue!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH stood on the cliffs, staring with a moody brow over the tumbling sea, grey in the breaking dawn.

The Bounder had not closed his eyes that night, but he was not feeling the need of sleep. A fierce excitement possessed him, and his nerves were in a quiver. He had remained in bed in the Remove dormitory scarce ten minutes after Mr. Quelch had left him there. It was only to avoid a futile dispute that he had gone to bed at all. Undoubtedly Mr. Quelch would have locked him in a room had he refused.

Wharton and Bob Cherry had fallen asleep almost immediately, and they did not hear the Bounder creep out of bed, dress himself, and steal on tiptoe from the dormitory. In the blackness of

the winter night Smithy crept out of the school and tramped to the cliffs.

He knew the exact spot where he had parted from Redwing, and it was for that spot that he headed, tramping savagely along the rugged, lonely path in the darkness and falling snow. It was five miles to the place, half-way between Pegg and Hawkscliff, on a lonely coast, and the path was dangerous enough in the night; but the Bounder gave that no thought.

He hoped that he might find some clue to what had happened to his chum, and if the hope was faint, it was all he had. He had brought with him an electric torch. But in the darkness, and with snow on the ground, he could not find the exact spot where he had left Redwing; and, with savage impatience, he realised that he had to wait for dawn.

He moved restlessly about the cliff path, flashing on the light of the torch, seeking some sign. But the light gleamed on chalk rocks and grass powdered with snow, that told him nothing.

He could not rest, and it was too bitterly cold in the sea wind to keep still. He moved about restlessly, seeking in vain, till the grey December dawn crept over the shore and the sea. While the rising-bell was ringing at Greyfriars, Vernon-Smith was five miles from the school, restless, tireless, a prey to bitter anxiety and dread.

The dawning light enabled him to find the place at last where he had left Redwing the previous day. He recognised the path now, and the shapes of the great rocks and boulders, and a gully that ran down through the chalk cliffs to the beach below. As the light strengthened, he found the exact place, and knew that he stood upon the very spot where he had parted from his chum in anger.

From that spot Tom Redwing had gone on towards Hawkscliff—which he

had never reached. Somewhere between that spot and the fishing village the sailorman's son had disappeared. Vernon-Smith followed the path closely, scapping the ground. It was thinly powdered with snow, and a few light flakes were still falling.

Somewhere along that path his enemy had been waiting and watching for Tom Redwing. Smithy knew that. An accidental fall on the cliff was not the solution. The false telephone message proved that Tom had been deliberately lured out to that solitary place. It was the work of an enemy. But what enemy? The answer to that question was a baffling mystery.

What enemy could Tom Redwing have—a good-natured, kind-hearted fellow, who made no enemies? Ill-natured fellows like Skinner of the Remove might be on ill terms with him—a fellow like Ponsonby, at Highcliffe, might hate him, with the natural dislike of a mean nature for a noble one. But this, obviously, was no matter in which a schoolboy feud was involved. It was a matter in which some desperate man had carried out a desperate scheme—for what?

For what?

Smithy could find no answer to that question.

He sought along the cliffs till he had covered a mile from the spot where he had left Redwing the day before. The chalk rocks gave him no sign—he hardly knew what sign he had hoped to find.

He stood and stared out over the sea, his face pale, his brows knitted, his heart heavy with trouble.

He tried to think out the problem. If he could but have imagined the motive for this outrage it would have helped him. But what motive? Who could have desired to harm a fellow who had never harmed anyone? For what imaginable reason could anyone have desired to make him a prisoner?

Out on the sea there was a mist. A ship's foghorn sounded dully, eerily through it, the ship unseen. Closer at hand there was a wintry sunlight on the waters that broke along the shore, dashing up the sand.

The Bounder turned at last and retraced his steps. He recalled the gully that led down to the beach, not far from the spot where he had left Redwing. It was the only secure path down to the beach for a long distance on either hand. With a prisoner, the unknown enemy could not have clambered down the rough face of the cliff like a cragsman. Had he gone down by the gully?

The kidnapping, if kidnapping it was, had taken place in broad daylight. Unseen, no doubt, in that solitary place. But getting the prisoner away unseen was a very different matter. No vehicle could have approached within half a mile of the path, until it reached the very outskirts of Hawkscliff. Lonely as the path was, it was not wholly unfrequented, even in the winter, and a man carrying a schoolboy, or forcing him to walk, a prisoner, could not have counted on escaping observation.

It seemed to Vernon-Smith most probable that a boat had been used to get Redwing away, and if a boat had been used, that gully was the only practicable way down to the beach. If that was the way the kidnapper had gone, there was yet hope of finding trace of him.

The Bounder tramped back to the spot where the gully opened in the chalk rock.

It was a difficult path down, rugged and steep, and the chalk was smooth

with powdered snow. Loose stones rolled under the Bounder's feet, and clattered down to the beach.

Once or twice he stumbled and slipped. Once he had to catch on to a jutting rock to save himself from a heavy fall. But he clambered down with no thought for the danger.

He came out on the beach at last—irregular masses of sand heaped high by the tides. At high water the sea washed the cliffs in this spot. At low water there was a short distance of tumbled sand between cliffs and sea. Any hope of footprints in the sand was delusive. The tide had been in since Redwing's disappearance, heaping the sand into new, strange shapes.

The Bounder stood, ankle-deep in loose sand, searching the shore and the sea with his almost haggard eyes.

What did he hope to find? He hardly knew. He only knew that there would be no rest for him, no sleep, till he had found his chum. He had almost forgotten Greyfriars—forgotten that that day the school was breaking up for the Christmas holidays. He had forgotten Christmas—forgotten everything but that his chum was in danger, and that he must save him, caring nothing what he risked.

Sea and sand and heaped sea-weed met his eyes, backed by the silent cliffs. No sign of life was stirring in the winter dawn, no sound of life save that doleful, boding moan of the foghorn from the ship out in the sea mist.

The false message on the telephone, in the name of Redwing's father, proved that the kidnapper's plans had been carefully laid. If he had taken Redwing away by boat, the boat must have been waiting here when he waylaid the junior on the cliff path. It must have been tied up; and a trace might be found.

He found no trace where the boat had been tied. Above the high-water mark he found patches of sand that had been blown into the gully by high winds. But he failed to find any foot-prints there—only a few confused marks that told him nothing. But, suddenly, as he sought and scanned and searched, a cry broke from his lips, and he sprang, with gleaming eyes, at a small object that lay among the rocks.

He clutched it, lifted it, stared at it with blank, almost unbelieving eyes. It was a knife—but it was such a knife as had never been seen on that coast. The short blade was made of a shark's tooth. The handle was of carved coral. Sailormen in Hawkscliff who had sailed the South Seas would have known that knife as a native knife of the islands. And Vernon-Smith, in that summer vacation which had been spent in his father's yacht in the Pacific, had seen many such a knife. A South Sea native's knife here on the coast of Kent! A cry broke from the Bounder.

"Soames!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face!

"SOAMES!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith repeated the name in conviction. He held the clue now to Redwing's disappearance.

Back into his mind came the memory of that wild cruise in the South Seas, when Redwing had sought the fortune of his uncle, Black Peter, when Soames had been his enemy, and had almost succeeded in robbing him of the treasure. Soames, once the valet of Mr. Vernon-Smith, who had sailed in the millionaire's yacht as a manservant,

and who had shown himself in his true colours when the time came, whose desperate fight for the fortune had brought perils innumerable on Redwing and his friends. Soames, who had escaped in an open boat at the last, and was believed to have perished in the sea. The Bounder had often thought of him, and he had not believed that the man was dead. The cool, ruthless, iron-nerved sea-lawyer was not the man for it. He had escaped in a well-found, well-provisioned boat, and he had escaped to safety—perhaps to some island, perhaps to be picked up at sea by some trader or steamer. As certainly as if he had seen the cool, clear-cut, impassive face before his eyes, Vernon-Smith knew that it was Soames who had done this deed.

The South Sea knife was a proof. Who but a man fresh from the Pacific would be carrying a shark's-tooth knife?

It was Soames, beaten in the fight for Black Peter's fortune. And he had come back for another throw of the dice. That fortune now was Tom Redwing's. And it was the fortune Soames was after. And that was why Tom Redwing had been kidnapped. In the Bounder's mind there was not the shadow of a doubt.

He had tried to think what enemy Redwing could have. He had forgotten Soames. He knew now.

"Soames!" repeated the Bounder, staring at the knife.

It had been dropped at this spot—doubtless the spot where the waiting boat had been tied. Encumbered with his prisoner Soames had not noticed the fall of the knife from his pocket. Or he might have taken it out to cut a rope. Yes, that was it. Vernon-Smith, pursuing the thought, pictured Soames binding his prisoner with ropes, cutting lengths from a rope for the purpose.

Anyhow, the knife was there, and it told that a man from the South Seas had been lately on that spot. And that man the Bounder was convinced was Soames!

His eyes blazed.

He had his finger on the mystery now. All that had been dark, perplexing, had suddenly cleared. It was like a beam of light after black darkness.

Redwing was a prisoner. There was a thought that brought relief, for all the time a darker thought had been at the back of the Bounder's mind. He was a prisoner, because alive he might serve Soames' purpose, dead, he would be useless. Dead, his fortune would go to his father, the sailor man now on the steamer, Samarcand, at Aden. Alive, a prisoner in the sea-lawyer's hands, Soames had some desperate scheme for forcing the South Sea fortune from him. He was living, and the Bounder's heart was lighter with that certain knowledge.

Standing in the gully the Bounder was hidden from the sea by bulging rocks of chalk. The sea was hidden from him, and he did not see a boat that was pulling steadily and swiftly to the shore that had appeared suddenly out of the sea mist. The man who was pulling the oars did not see the Bounder, hidden by the rocks. To his eyes the shore was deserted and absolutely lifeless in the rising sun.

The boat thudded on the sand, and the rower laid in his oars and jumped ashore, and pulled the boat up from the water.

Then after a swift glance to and fro—a glance that showed only a lifeless

beach and frowning, solitary cliffs—the man strode quickly across the sand towards the gully.

He came round a great mass of chalk into the gully, so suddenly that he was almost upon the Bounder before either knew of the other's presence.

Vernon-Smith swung round at the footstep.

He saw a man in a grey coat and sea-boots, with a thick beard on his face and large, horn-rimmed spectacles.

So deep was the disguise that even with the thought of Soames in his mind the Bounder would not have recognised him, but for the involuntary exclamation that broke from him.

"Herbert Vernon-Smith! You!"

And the Bounder knew that voice instantly.

"Soames!"

He stared at the dignified sea-lawyer.

For a moment the man in the grey coat stared at him, evidently taken utterly aback by the unexpected meeting.

But he recovered himself swiftly, and his lips curved under the thick beard in a derisive smile.

"You have found it!" he said.

"What?"

Soames made a gesture towards the shark's-tooth knife in the schoolboy's hand.

"That!" he said. "I found that I had lost it. I came back for it at the first peep of dawn. I know I must have left it here. I used it to cut the rope."

"The rope you used on Redwing, you scoundrel!" exclaimed the Bounder, his eyes burning at Soames.

"The rope I used on Redwing," assented Soames. "I suppose you guessed when you found the knife."

He made a movement, and the Bounder leaped back. The shark's-tooth knife was gripped in his hand. It was a deadly weapon, as keen as a razor. The Bounder knew that he was in danger, and he knew the full extent of the danger. But he was not afraid.

"Keep your distance, Soames," he said, between his teeth. "Keep your distance, you kidnapping scoundrel, while you're safe!"

Soames laughed lightly.

"You would not dare to use that weapon!" he said.

"Try me!" said the Bounder, his eyes glinting. "Lay a hand on me, and see whether I will dare to use it, you villain!"

"No doubt," Soames nodded. "I remember you well, Master Herbert. You have in your character the makings of a man very like myself. I assure you that I shall keep out of reach of that knife which has shed blood many times, my young friend, but will never shed mine."

The Bounder watched him like a cat. He knew only too well that the sea-lawyer had no intention of allowing him to escape with what he had discovered—not if he could prevent it. There was no help to be looked for in that solitary spot, at that early hour. The Bounder had only himself to depend upon. But he had a weapon in his hand, and the courage and determination to use it in self-defence.

Soames stood quietly, his eyes on the Bounder. His head was bent a little, as if to listen.

The Bounder guessed for what he was listening. But no sound of a footstep or a voice came from the cliffs; the place was utterly desolate and deserted at that early hour. The Bounder longed to hear a footstep; but he had no hope that Harry Wharton & Co. were yet near at hand. Even if they had left the school at dawn to begin the search for Redwing, they did not know where Smithy was—and were not likely to be near this spot. There was no help for him. But the Bounder was not afraid. His grasp was firm on the coral handle of the knife.

Soames smiled through the thick beard, as if satisfied. His hand shot under his coat, and reappeared with an automatic pistol in it.

Vernon-Smith started. But still he did not flinch.

Soames raised the automatic.

"Drop that knife!" he said tersely.

"Rats!" retorted the Bounder coolly. "You dare not use that pistol! If you dare, get on with it—you won't get anything out of me with threats!"

"You are in error, Master Herbert," said Soames, in his smooth, silky tones. "Did it serve my purpose, I should shoot you dead where you stand. But it does not serve my purpose, and your life is safe. But I bid you drop that knife!"

"Oh, cut it out!" snapped the Bounder.

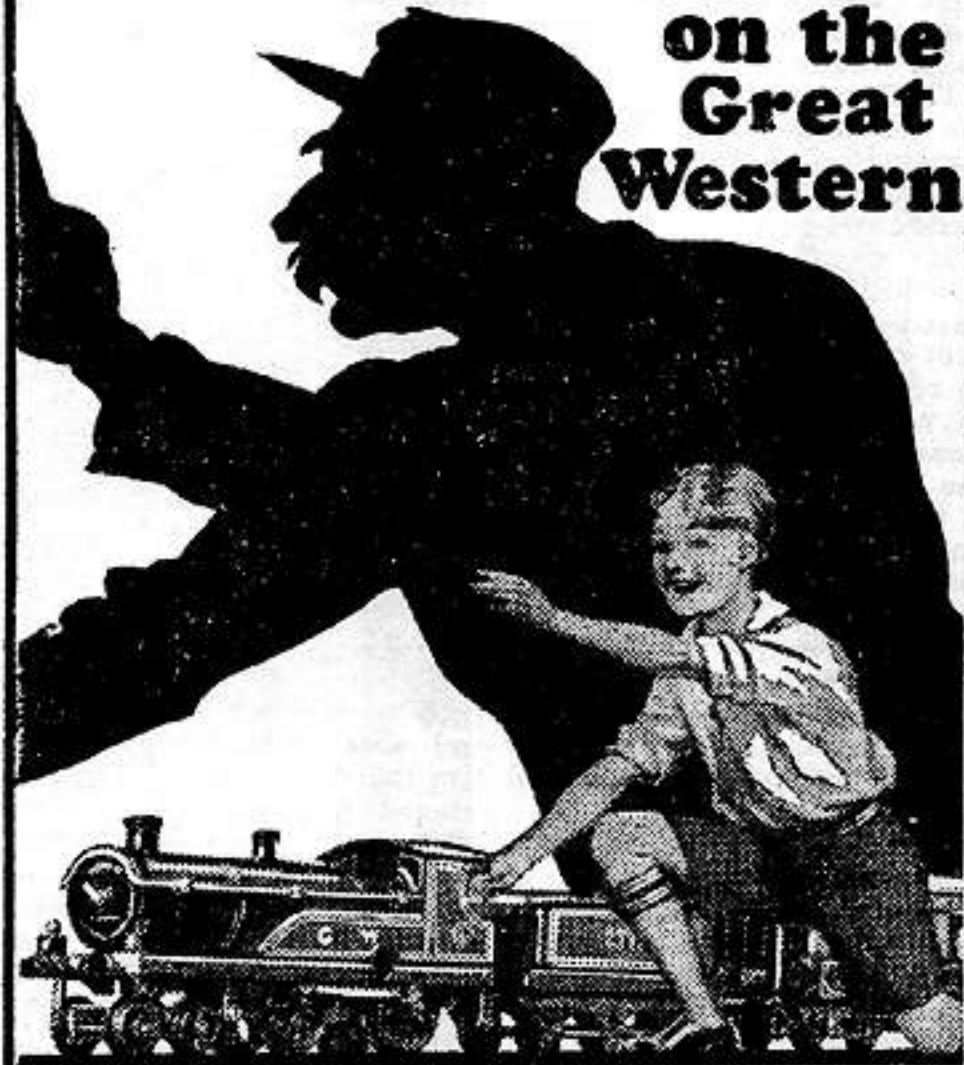
Soames made a step towards him. The Bounder threw up his right hand, grasping the shark's-tooth knife, his eyes gleaming with deadly determination.

Crack!

Vernon-Smith felt a numbing shock in his right arm. He staggered, with a startled cry. He was dimly conscious that he held in his hand only the coral handle of the knife.

(Continued on next page.)

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He hardly realised that, however, as Soames sprang on him, and he struck fiercely at the sea-lawyer. Soames, with a deadly accuracy of aim, had shot the knife from his hand—the shark's tooth was shattered into a thousand fragments.

The Bounder's blow was harmless; and the next moment the barrel of the pistol struck him on the head.

Vernon-Smith fell heavily on the chalk rocks.

He was not stunned; Soames had not struck hard enough for that. He lay dazed and helpless, as the sea-lawyer bent over him. He made a feeble effort at resistance—an effort that was wholly in vain as the strong grasp of Soames closed on him. His hand still clutched the coral knife-handle. Soames forced it from his grasp, and slipped it into a pocket of the grey coat. The next moment the Bounder, still struggling feebly, was flung like a sack over Soames' shoulder, and carried swiftly across the beach, down to the boat.

Soames flung him heavily into the boat, and followed him in, and with cool, quick movements, bound him hand and foot with a rope, and fastened a handkerchief tightly over his mouth. The Bounder was helpless, but his eyes glared defiance at the sea-lawyer. He was rolled into the bottom of the boat, and a sheet of canvas tossed over him. Under the canvas Herbert Vernon-Smith was completely hidden from sight.

Quietly and coolly, Soames pushed the boat into the water and sat down to the oars. With swift strokes he rowed out into the misty sea.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Shot on Shore!

"**H**OOK it!" said Bob Cherry.

"The hookfulness is the proper caper," remarked Hurree Jaimset Ram Singh.

"The esteemed Bounder has already hooked it; and if we also hook it without waiting for our ridiculous breakfast, it will be supposed that Smithy hooked it along with us, and he will not get into a preposterous row for breaking bounds a second time."

"That's so," agreed Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That's the programme," he agreed.

"I don't know what Quelch is going to do about our breaking bounds last night; but if he finds out that Smithy hooked it from the dormitory a second time he's sure to be wild."

"The wildfulness will be terrific."

"If we ask Quelch he may refuse," said Bob. "We can't disobey a direct order. Least said soonest mended."

"Come on!" said Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five made up their minds. They were the first down from the Remove dormitory. It was, after all, the last day of term; and there was only one class that morning, which was more or less a matter of form on breaking-up day.

It was very probable that Mr. Quelch, having placed the matter of Tom Redwing in the hands of the police, would consider that it was well placed, and that the assistance of Lower Fourth juniors was not needed. It was a case, as Bob said, of least said, soonest mended.

The Famous Five certainly did not like the idea of departing for the Christmas holidays with the mystery of Redwing's disappearance still unsolved; and their view was that there was no time to lose. Moreover, the Bounder's

absence from the dormitory had not yet been discovered, and if Mr. Quelch supposed that he had gone with the Famous Five when they started, it would be all the better for the Bounder. So they scudded away to the Cloisters, dropped over the wall, and started for the cliffs.

When the Remove gathered to breakfast there were six places empty at their table, as well as Redwing's.

Harry Wharton & Co. went at a rapid trot as far as Friardale, where they stopped at Uncle Clegg's tuckshop. Uncle Clegg was not yet out of bed; but a loud hammering on the door brought him down to serve his very early customers. With a handful of sandwiches each, the Famous Five went on their way, eating that rough-and-ready breakfast as they hurried on towards Pegg.

They followed the cliff path past the village, leaving Pegg and Cliff House School behind, and heading up the coast to Hawkscliff.

From what Smithy had told them, they knew that he had walked half way home with Redwing the previous day; and it was after that that Redwing had disappeared. So it was half way on the route to Hawkscliff that the search had to begin and they had little doubt of finding the Bounder somewhere along the cliffs, already engaged on the search.

The snow had ceased to fall by this time, the cliffs powdered with the white flakes that had fallen overnight. That someone had already passed that way, early that morning, was clear, for the snow showed tracks that were not a man's track; and the juniors had no doubt that they were on the track of Vernon-Smith.

The traces led them mile after mile along the rugged path.

They tramped on steadily, following the tracks.

Faintly from the misty sea came the hooting of a foghorn from some hidden ship.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

The five juniors came to an abrupt halt.

Breaking suddenly on the wash of the waves, and the moaning of the foghorn, came a sharper report—a report that echoed along the cliffs, with a thousand echoes.

It was the report of a firearm.

"That was a gun!" said Nugent, breathing quickly.

"A pistol!" said Bob.

They looked at one another, startled. The report of a gun was not an uncommon sound on the countryside; but in the present circumstances it was startling.

"Some ass potting at the gulls," said Johnny Bull.

"So early as this?" said Bob.

"Come on," said Harry Wharton; and the juniors broke into a rapid run. A few minutes later they passed the head of the gully that led down to the beach.

They passed it at a run; but Harry Wharton stopped suddenly and called to his comrades.

"Hold on! Smithy turned back—"

"What—"

"Look at the tracks."

The footprints, plain in the powdering of snow on the path, told a plain tale. One set of tracks led on towards Hawkscliff; but another set came leading back to the opening of the gully. The second set, in places, partly covered the first—a proof, if it was needed, that they had been made later.

"Smithy went on towards Hawkscliff, turned back, and came back as far as that gully," said Wharton quickly. "He went down to the beach."

"That's so!" Bob caught his breath. "That shot was fired down below; it came from below the cliffs—"

"Come on!"

The juniors turned into the gully, and plunged and clambered down the steep slope amid the rugged boulders. They were in hot haste now. That Herbert Vernon-Smith had gone that way they were certain; and the shot from below the cliffs, evidently fired at a spot near where the Bounder must be, was alarming.

They came down the gully at a reckless speed and burst out on the piled sand at the bottom.

Nobody was in sight on the beach.

Out at sea, dim in the mist, was a boat, pulling steadily away from the shore.

Wharton's eyes fixed upon it.

He could make out a man in a grey coat, with a thick beard, pulling at the oars, and no one else was to be seen in the boat—only what looked like a heap of canvas. The rising sun glinted on a pair of large horn-rimmed spectacles on the face of the oarsman.

"Smithy's not there," said Johnny Bull, following Wharton's gaze. "That may be the man who was potting at the gulls."

"But where's Smithy?"

"We shall find him here. This soft sand would keep the track of a sparrow and it would last till the next tide."

"He never went up the gully again," said Bob; "we should have found tracks in the snow there if he had."

"He's on the beach. But where?"

"Smithy!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Smithy!"

Only the echo of his voice booming back from the chalk cliffs answered.

"He's not in hearing," said Nugent.

"He's gone along the beach. We'd better pick up his track and follow. Easy enough!"

It sounded easy, but it did not prove easy. The juniors spread out to search for a track leading away in either direction along the beach. But no such track was to be found.

It was obvious that the soft sand would have retained the traces of the lightest walker. The conclusion was clear—Vernon-Smith had not gone along the beach in either direction.

Wharton's face was grave.

"According to the sand, he's still here," he said. "And he's not here! Something's happened to Smithy. He left here, and he must have gone in a boat; and we saw the boat—"

He stared towards the sea again. The boat, with the bearded man rowing it, had vanished into the mist on the sea and was no longer to be seen.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Seeking Sign I

HARRY WHARTON drew a deep breath.

"This is getting rather thick!" he said. "Smithy came along here to hunt for Redwing, and he must have run into the kidnapper; it's plain that he's been taken away in that boat—"

"And that shot we heard—" muttered Nugent.

Wharton shivered.

A terrible thought was in the minds of the juniors—that the shot had been fired by a murderous hand, and that it was not a prisoner, but a body, that had been taken in the boat.

"Don't think of that until we know, anyhow," said Bob in a low voice. "We may find out something from the tracks; there's plenty here, though they don't lead away along the beach."



"Drop that knife!" ordered Soames, making a step towards Vernon-Smith. Instead of obeying the Bounder threw up his right hand, grasping the shark's-tooth knife, his eyes gleaming with deadly determination. Crack! Vernon-Smith felt a numbing shock in his right arm, and staggered back, with a startled cry, dimly conscious that he held in his hand only the coral handle of the knife. (See Chapter 8.)

"If—if blood was shed, it must have happened close here, and we shall find traces," said Harry, his voice faltering a little. "It's lucky we've had some training as Scouts. But there's no time to lose; the tide's coming in now—in an hour it will all be washed away. Get going."

The juniors lost no time. The soft sand, lightly powdered with snow that was already melting in the sunshine, told its own tale, and they were able to read it; every member of the Co. had had plenty of experience as a Boy Scout.

They found the track of heavy sea-boots leading up from the sea to the gully. The spot where the boat had rested was already under the incoming water; but it was clear that the track that emerged from the lapping waves marked where a boat had been.

Close by that track, overlapping it in places, was the track of the same sea-boots returning to the sea.

Obviously the man in the sea-boots had landed from a boat, walked up to the gully across the sand, and returned later to the boat. And the freshness of the tracks showed how recently they had been made.

The trail of the sea-boots ended on the rocky ground in the gully that split the cliffs. But among the loose sand and the particles of snow it was easy to follow the way the man in the sea-boots had gone. The juniors came round a bulging rock in the gully and stopped at the spot where the struggle had taken place.

Feeble as had been Vernon-Smith's resistance after he had been struck down, it had left traces. A mass of

seaweed was trampled and torn, a patch of sand was deeply marked. The Bounder, as his school-fellows knew well, was the fellow to put up a fight, even against an armed man; and they wondered, with sinking hearts, whether the shot had been fired to end a desperate resistance.

But on the spot where it was clear that Vernon-Smith had struggled with his assailant there was no sign of blood. It was scarcely possible that had he been wounded no such trace would have remained.

"The man may have fired only to frighten him!" muttered Bob. "Anyhow, it looks as if he wasn't hit."

Wharton scanned the ground with intent eyes.

"There's no sign of—of what I was afraid we might find," he said. "But keep it up; we may find something."

That first terrible dread faded away as the juniors searched the place with careful thoroughness. There was no sign whatever of anyone having been wounded.

No blood had been shed—that was practically certain now. The Bounder was living.

Wharton moved out of the gully again and scanned the track that led down to the sea.

"No sign that Smithy went down to the water," said Nugent. "Only the sea-boots go that way, Harry."

"Look at the trail," said Wharton. "The track going down to the water is rather different from the one coming up."

"It's the same track," said Frank, scanning it—"the same man."

"That's so. But the track going to

the sea is different; the toes have been driven deeper into the sand."

"Exactly!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "And that proves that the esteemed man in the sea-boots was bending forward and carrying something heavy on his back."

"That's it!" said Harry.

"He was carrying Smithy!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes. Smithy certainly wouldn't have walked at his order; he had to be got under and forced to go. The man slung him on his back."

"Clear enough!" assented Bob.

"That looks as if—as if Smithy—" faltered Nugent. He stared towards the dim sea, shuddering at the thought that a body might have been taken away in the boat, to be sunk out in the deep waters.

Wharton shook his head.

"Smithy was never wounded by the shot we heard," he said. "It's absolutely certain we should have picked up some sign of it. But we know the man had a pistol; he may have knocked Smithy on the head with it and stunned him. Anyhow, Smithy couldn't have kept his end up against a grown man. He was got under; and the man carried him down to the boat. And that was the boat we saw pulling away to sea."

"But Smithy wasn't in it, so far as we saw."

"There was a heap of canvas in it—and Smithy was under that," said Wharton, with conviction. "Naturally, the brute would keep him out of sight. That was the boat; the man in it must

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(Continued from page 13.)

have seen what was going on here, if he was not the man who did it. He couldn't have left the shore more than a few minutes before we got here. If we'd been earlier—"

"Not much good thinking of that," said Bob. "Smithy was a reckless ass to start out by himself; he oughtn't to have done it. We'd better get back into the gully; the sea's coming in jolly fast."

The oncoming waters drove the juniors across the narrow strip of beach, into the rocky gully. Great waves washed over the sand, and as far as they reached, the sign that had told the juniors of the kidnapping was obliterated.

In a very short time, all sign would be washed out and not a trace would remain to tell of what had happened to Herbert Vernon-Smith, or to reveal that he had ever been on the spot at all.

With troubled faces, the juniors stood in a group in the gully, watching the sea as it thundered in to the foot of the cliffs.

As the sun rose higher, the mists on the sea cleared away, slowly dissolving. The hooting of the distant foghorn had ceased now. The juniors scanned the clearing sea, in the hope of seeing the boat again. But the oarsman had made good time; there was not a speck to be seen of the boat.

"We've got the man's description, anyhow," said Bob Cherry at last. "We can be jolly glad we came—we've found out what happened to Smithy, and we've got a description of the man who did it."

"That's something," said Johnny Bull.

"And that man ought to be easy to identify," said Nugent. "There are plenty of men along the coast in sea-boots and grey coats and beards, but horn-rimmed specs are jolly rare among the fishermen and the longshoremen. I saw them quite plainly."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That's something to tell the police," he said. "We've found out a lot—we know now that a boat was used, and it's pretty certain that it was used to get Redwing away, too. Clear enough it was the same man. The boat may be traced, and the man may be traced—others must have seen him at some time or other—and if he hired or bought that boat locally, that will help the police to get after him."

"But what on earth's his game?" asked Bob, utterly puzzled. "Is he some giddy lunatic, or what? It's plain why he's bagged Smithy—Smithy was hunting Redwing, and must have run into the man—but why on earth did he bag Redwing?"

"That beats me! I can't make that out at all."

There was a rush of eddying water, as a wave came splashing into the gully. The beach was wholly under water now. The juniors retreated farther up the gully.

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"Better get back to Greyfriars," said Wharton at last. "We've got news for Quelch—and for Inspector Grimes!"

And the Famous Five tramped back the long miles to the school.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Breaking Up!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter met the Famous Five as they came away from Mr. Quelch's study. The juniors had gone at once to their Form master to report, and they had found Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, with the Remove master. Mr. Quelch, it was obvious, was not in a good temper. The mysterious disappearance of Tom Redwing worried and puzzled him—the necessity of calling in the police irritated him—and the fact that the Head had kindly left the matter in his hands to be dealt with, was, perhaps, not wholly gratifying, on the last day of the term. True, the headmaster was busy, but so was Mr. Quelch.

The matter was bad enough, and troublesome enough already, and the news that Vernon-Smith had disappeared also, was intensely exasperating.

Redwing was not to blame, but Smithy had left the school without leave, indeed, in defiance of orders, and so he certainly was to blame for what had happened to him.

Irritated as Mr. Quelch was, however, the seriousness of the matter set bounds to his wrath. Inspector Grimes had listened with keen attention to what the Famous Five had to say. Mr. Grimes was, naturally, not so annoyed as Mr. Quelch by the whole occurrence. There was a keen professional interest to him in the matter—indeed, Mr. Grimes had something of the look of a war-horse sniffing the battle from afar. Two mysterious disappearances from the school, on the eve of the Christmas holidays, looked like furnishing Mr. Grimes with a case of unusual interest.

He questioned the juniors closely, drawing all details from them, and making a good many notes. As the tide had now washed over the spot where Vernon-Smith had been seized, he had only the testimony of the juniors for guidance as to what had happened there.

"It was very fortunate that these boys went to the place so early, Mr. Quelch," said the inspector. "Very fortunate indeed, sir."

After which, Mr. Quelch could scarcely reprimand the Famous Five for having gone out early without leave.

But he gave them a very distinct order not to leave the school again until the hour came to start for home and the holidays.

If Vernon-Smith had fallen into danger, the same danger might await other searchers for Redwing, and such a task, therefore, was best left in official hands.

In this, Mr. Grimes heartily concurred.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not concur. But they could not, of course, argue the matter, and they left Mr. Quelch, still in worried discussion with the inspector from Courtfield.

Billy Bunter awaited them at the corner of Masters' passage.

Bunter blinked at them genially through his big spectacles.

Break-up being now almost upon Greyfriars, Bunter had far more important matters to think of than the disappearance of Tom Redwing, and the mysterious fate of the Bounder.

To William George Bunter, at such a time, these happenings were trifles light as air. They passed him by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

Where Bunter was going to spend his Christmas was the one important matter that had to be settled. In comparison, all other matters were negligible.

This matter, though of the greatest import, had not been settled yet. And it had to be settled.

"I say, you fellows, Mauly's gone," said Bunter. "Went off in a car. I believe the beast was dodging me."

The Famous Five grinned.

"Not that I would have gone home with him," explained Bunter. "Old Mauleverer ain't a bad chap—but he's rather too much of a bore. Besides, I've promised you, Wharton."

"Have you?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes, old chap. I—"

"I'll let you off, then."

"That's all right—I don't want to be let off."

"I do!" answered Harry.

And the Famous Five walked away, leaving William George Bunter blinking after them.

"I say, you fellows—" howled Bunter.

The chums of the Remove disappeared.

Having dodged Bunter—quite a number of fellows were dodging Bunter that day—the Co. gathered by the fire in the Rag to discuss the situation. Their own idea was, that they ought to be utilising every minute in the search for Redwing and Smithy, but Mr. Quelch's definite command kept them within gates.

Greyfriars was in a buzz of excitement now, and all fellows were thinking of home, and the journey there. Fellows in the Remove were sympathetic enough about Redwing, but they had their own affairs to think of. As for the Bounder, it was not yet believed that he really had disappeared. The Famous Five were certain they had made no mistake in the sign they had read, but other fellows were not so sure of it, and Skinner, in fact, was waiting for the Bounder to come in, in the hope of going home with him, his own chum, Redwing, not being available.

"Well, we've got to decide what we're going to do, you men," said Harry Wharton. "This place will be closed up in a few hours—some of the fellows are gone already. I don't know what you chaps think—but I don't feel inclined to clear off to Wharton Lodge, leaving matters as they are here."

"Just what I was thinking," said Bob.

"Same here," agreed Nugent.

"The samofulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

And Johnny Bull nodded assent.

"You fellows were coming with me," went on Wharton. "It was already arranged for us to be together. Well, we've got to get out of Greyfriars, of course—but we're not bound to head for home unless we like. If you men agree, I'm for sticking around here somewhere, for a few days at least, and seeing whether we can do anything for Redwing and Smithy."

"I'm with you," said Bob Cherry. "I should hate to clear off as matters stand. In fact, we can't do it!"

"Quelch won't let us chip in so long as we're here," said Frank. "But once we're gone that's done with. We're off his hands as soon as we've left Greyfriars for the hols. But what about your uncle, Harry? He will be expecting you home to-day."

"I shall telephone him and explain. I'm absolutely certain that he will give me permission to stay on when he knows that something has happened to a pal of ours, and the chap can't be found."

"Where are we going to stay, though?" asked Johnny Bull. "Are you thinking of putting up at an inn?"

"We could do that; but I've thought of Redwing's cottage at Hawkscliff. Reddy would be glad for us to stay there, I know, and we should get into touch at once with his father if he comes home from sea. We can put our things on a taxi, and instead of going to the station we can drive up to Hawkscliff."

"Good egg!"

And after a little discussion of details that plan was settled on, and the Famous Five felt a good deal easier in their minds. It seemed impossible to them to go home for the holidays and leave Redwing's fate unknown, and Tom a prisoner in the hands of some unknown enemy. Certainly, the police had the matter in hand, but Redwing's friends very naturally wanted to take it in hand themselves also.

The matter being decided, Harry Wharton proceeded to borrow a telephone to communicate with his uncle at home. He came back in ten minutes and rejoined his chums.

"It's all right," he announced. "We shan't be expected at Wharton Lodge till I phone again."

"I say, you fellows—" Billy Bunter followed the captain of the Remove into the Rag.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Not gone yet, Bunter?"

"Waiting for my old pals," said the fat junior.

"Well, better go and look for them! Good-bye!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Better see about a taxi now," said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bunter, old bean, you're superfluous," said Bob. "We're not going to Wharton's place, after all. We're going to camp up at Redwing's cottage at Hawkscliff. You don't want to come there and rough it. Buzz off!"

Bunter winked—a fat wink.

"Oh, I'll come!" he said.

"It's not going to be a holiday, fathead. We're going to rough it, and put in every day hunting for Redwing."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat bounder?"

"He, he, he!"

The cause of Bunter's cackle was obvious. He did not believe the statement, but regarded it as a dodge for getting rid of him. Bunter was not to be taken in so easily as all that.

He grinned cheerily.

"All serene! I'll come," he said. "I'll look for Redwing as much as you will! He, he, he!"

"You fat duffer—"

"He, he, he!"

"Buzz off, you fat bluebottle!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Let him come up to Hawkscliff if he likes. He can come back in the taxi, and catch a later train. You'll only be wasting your time, Bunter."

"He, he, he!"

The Owl of the Remove was not to be convinced. He was absolutely determined not to let the Co. get out of his sight. Bunter had tackled almost every other fellow in the Remove, and some in the Fourth and the Shell, and with a wonderful unanimity they had all made it plain, with more or less politeness—generally less—that they did not want William George Bunter for Christmas. Harry Wharton & Co. were his last resource, and Bunter was not the fellow to take no for an answer in such a crisis. It was a case of any port in a storm—and the Co. were the only available port.

And so it came to pass that when the Famous Five with their goods and chattels crammed into a Courtfield taxi and rolled away from the school gates, William George Bunter was packed in the taxi also—in the happy belief that they were heading for the railway station and Wharton Lodge.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"Hi!" Bunter shouted to the chauffeur.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"That silly ass is taking the wrong road!"

said Bunter excitedly.

"Fathead!"

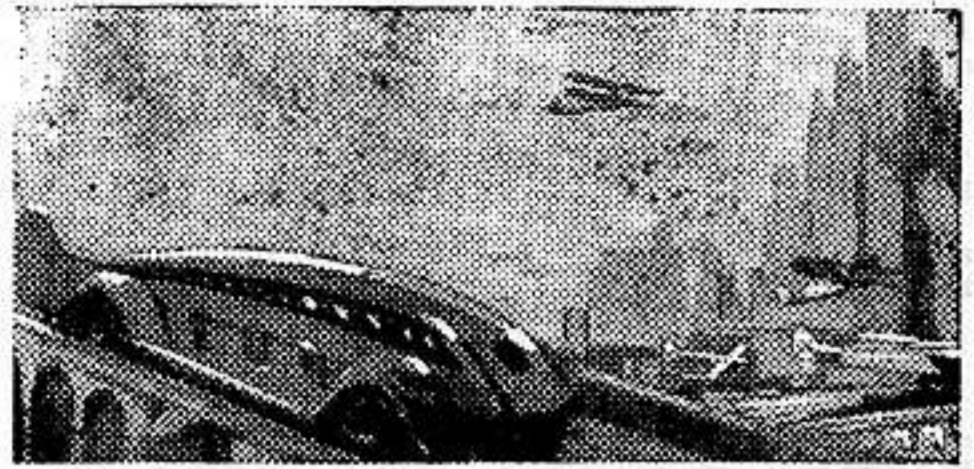
"Hi!" yelled Bunter.

The driver looked round.

"It's all right!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Keep on!"

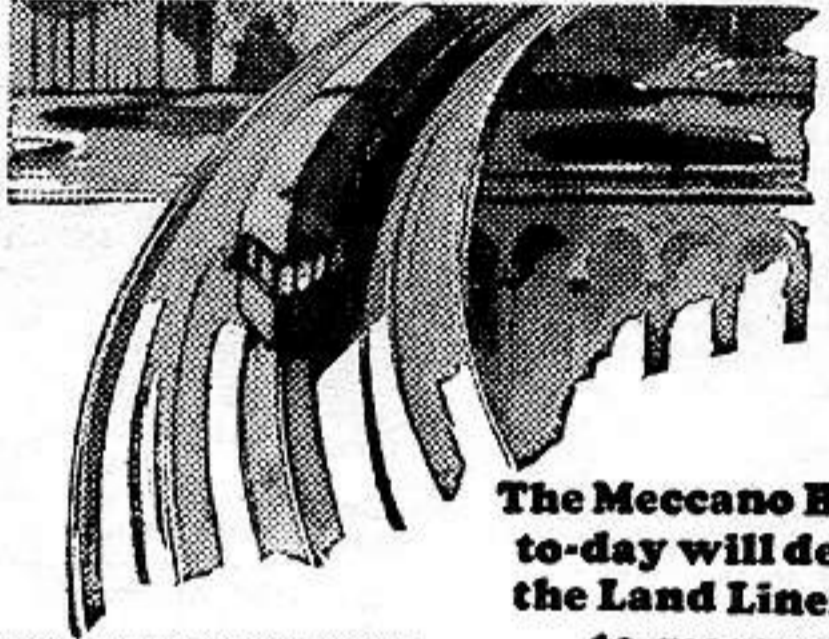
The taxi buzzed on by the road over Redclyffe Hill. Billy

(Continued on next page.)



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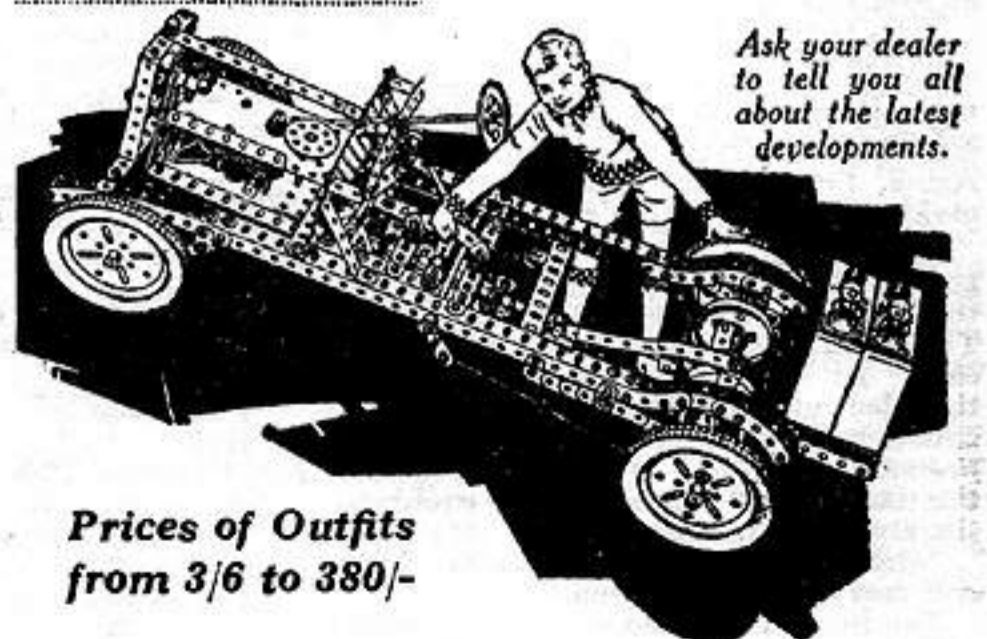
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Bunter blinked at his companions in the car through his big spectacles with an angry blink.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Dry up, old bean," said Bob Cherry, "and for goodness' sake give a chap a little room."

"Where are we heading for?" demanded Bunter peevishly. "If we're taking the train at Redclyffe—"

"We're not taking any train at all." "Yah!"

Bunter was not convinced.

That any fellow who was expected at a comfortable home for the Christmas holidays could be ass enough to give it a miss and camp in a cottage in a wind-swept fishing village on the cliffs Bunter declined to believe. That five fellows would do it on account of a fellow who had disappeared, was much too improbable for Bunter to credit.

In the present proceedings of the Famous Five Bunter could only see a dodge to get rid of his attractive self.

Short of kicking him Bunter was not to be got rid of. Under the genial influence of Christmas they did not want to kick him. So they were taking this method of dropping him out. That was how it seemed to the sagacious mind of William George Bunter.

He had no doubt that after circling round the country roads for a time the taxi would head for Courtfield Station, where the express was to be taken.

Comforted by that absolute certainty, the Owl of the Remove settled down cheerfully to the drive.

As the car ran through the little town of Redclyffe Bob Cherry tapped the fat junior on the shoulder.

"If you're going home, Bunter, you can get a train at Redclyffe Station. Like us to drop you there?"

Billy Bunter winked.

"You fellows going from Redclyffe?" he asked.

"No, ass."

"Then I'll keep on with you to Courtfield."

"You fat duffer, we're not going to Courtfield. We're going directly away from Courtfield! Can't you see?"

"He, he, he!"

The taxi buzzed on. Woodford and Clyffe were left behind, and Bunter blinked out of the window at the sea that lay glistening in the wintry sun at a distance.

"I say, you fellows, you're going an awfully long way round," he remarked.

"Fathead! We're heading straight for Hawkscliff."

"Oh, don't keep that up!" said Bunter. "That's getting stale. I say, you fellows, you'll have a lot to pay on this drive. All the way up here, and all the way back again—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, it's your money," he grunted. "If you think you're going to stick me for the taxi fare after fooling miles round the country like this, you're making a mistake, that's all."

He blinked at the grassy cliffs, powdered here and there with snow, that lay before the taxi as it buzzed on. The wind from the sea was sharp and cold. At the foot of the rugged slope that led up into Hawkscliff Wharton called to the driver to halt. With its present heavy load it was unlikely that the taxi would have proved equal to the strain of the ascent.

"Get down here," said Harry. "We can carry the baggage on."

The juniors alighted.

Bunter still sat in the cab, grinning. All this, to Bunter's mind, was only a continuation of the trickery which, with

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his wonderful sagacity, he had seen completely through. The juniors and the driver walked on with the baggage, leaving Bunter sitting alone in the cab.

"Good-bye, Bunter!" called out Bob Cherry. "Merry Christmas, old fat bean!"

"He, he, he!"

Bunter watched the party out of sight. He had not the slightest belief that they intended to stay at Hawkscliff.

But presently the chauffeur came back by himself. He glanced into the cab at Bunter.

"Going back, sir?" he said.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Wait here for the fellows," he said.

"Eh? They ain't going back," answered the driver. "They're in a cottage up yonder with their things."

"It's only gammon," said Bunter. "They're coming back all right. You wait here."

"I've been paid," said the puzzled taxi-man. "I've got to get back to Courtfield, sir. You staying in or getting out? No extra charge for taking you back, if it comes to that."

He stepped to the driving-seat.

Bunter jumped.

"I—I say, hold on!" he gasped.

He bundled out of the cab and clutched his bag. Fortunately, it was not a heavy bag. When Bunter travelled, he travelled light. He could always depend on borrowing anything he wanted by the simple means of not asking permission before he borrowed.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter. "So they're keeping it up! Well, I'll jolly well keep it up as long as they do!"

And he tramped up the ascent into the rugged street of Hawkscliff, the taxi buzzing away as he started.

Billy Bunter was puzzled and annoyed, but he was not yet doubtful. Evidently—to Bunter—the beasts were keeping up the pretence that they were going to camp in the Redwing cottage, expecting him to go back in the taxi and vanish into space. No doubt they had arranged for the man to fetch them later. Bunter was too old a bird to be caught with such chaff as that. He puffed and grunted up the steep street to the Redwing cottage.

Doors and windows of that cottage were open letting in the stiff breeze from the sea. All the Famous Five were busy—airing the bed-rooms, sorting out blankets, building a fire in the old chimney unpacking bags, unpacking a hamper that had been brought from the school shop stacked with provisions for their stay—and Bob Cherry was stuffing a broken window-pane with a newspaper. Thick smoke rose from the chimney and sailed away over the cliffs on the wind. Outside the doorway stood Mr. Bowline regarding the proceedings thoughtfully. As he knew these fellows to be friends of "young Tom," he raised no objection to their taking possession of the cottage, but he seemed to be in a state of considerable surprise.

Bunter dropped his bag, pushed past the ancient mariner, and blinked into the cottage.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You still here?" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You'll lose your train, ass, if the taxi's gone!" said Johnny Bull.

"I'm catching the same train as you fellows! You know that!" grunted Bunter. "How long are you staying here?"

"Until Redwing's found."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" said

Bunter peevishly. "As I see you've brought some grub, it's not a bad idea to have a feed here. When is the taxi coming back for you?"

"It's not coming back, ass!"

Billy Bunter blinked from face to face. For the first time a dreadful doubt smote him.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, you're not really staying up here in this blinking cottage?" he gasped.

"Haven't we told you so a dozen times?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"But that was gammon!"

"Fathead!"

"What are you staying here for, then?" hooted Bunter.

"To hunt for Redwing."

"You—you silly ass! What does Redwing matter?" roared Bunter indignantly.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Lots to us," he answered. "Nothing to you, I suppose. If you've let the taxi go, Bunter, you've got a long walk, and you'd better start!"

"Do you think I can walk ten miles?" shrieked Bunter.

"Well, you can't fly, old fat bean! And you can't get another taxi; there's no telephone under two miles."

"Beast!"

Bunter sank down into a chair, almost overcome. He was tired already, having walked from the taxi to the cottage. Walking ten miles to Courtfield certainly did not appeal to him.

"I—I—I suppose you're going home to-morrow, Wharton?" he stammered, with a last gleam of hope.

"Not unless we've found Redwing."

"Blow Redwing!" roared Bunter.

"Dry up, ass!"

"Mean to say I've got to camp in this place—this hole—for the night?" howled Bunter.

"No fear! You've got to clear off! There's no room for you here!"

"Beast!"

"You bothering ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If you've let the taxi go, I suppose you must stay the night and we must manage somehow! There's not enough bedclothes to go round for six."

"If there's enough for me, that will be all right. I don't mind putting in one night here if I'm made reasonably comfortable. I shall expect to have plenty of blankets."

"You'll have your whack, you fat boulder!" grunted the captain of the Remove. "If you're staying, anyhow, you can lend a hand; there's lots to do. The firewood's in the shed."

"It can stay there!" growled Bunter. "If you think I've come here to do a skivvy's work you're mistaken! The sooner you understand that, Harry Wharton, the better!"

"Fetch in the firewood!"

"Rats!"

"Kick him, Bob!"

"What-ho!"

"Yarooogh!" roared Bunter. "Yow-ow-ow! Beast! Keep off! I—I'm going for the firewood, you beast! Ow! I—I want to fetch it in— I—I really want to— Yarooogh!"

And William George Bunter, no doubt for the first time in his fat career, made himself useful.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoners of the Sea-Cave!

"REDWING!"

"Smithy!"

Tom Redwing's sunburnt face brightened for a moment, and then it grew dark. It was the sight of his chum that



"Come on, you fellows," said Harry Wharton, "we'll get out here, and carry the baggage up the hill. Jump to it, Bunter!" The Owl of the Remove, thinking it was only a ruse to get rid of him, sat tight, grinning. "Good-bye, then, Bunter!" called out Bob Cherry, as the juniors and the driver walked on with the baggage. "Merry Christmas, old fat bean!"

(See Chapter 12.)

brightened it, but the reflection immediately followed that Herbert Vernon-Smith was a prisoner also.

Redwing had been seated on a bench in a rocky gallery that opened off the sea-cave under the rocks of the mighty Shoulder. The roof of the gallery was so high that it was lost in gloom. From a jagged point of rock in the wall a hurricane-lamp hung, shedding a dim light. Not the remotest gleam of daylight penetrated to the rocky prison.

About the gallery were several rugs and boxes, a drum of paraffin, and other articles, showing that it had been stocked for camping. A paraffin-stove burned and cast a welcome warmth.

The gallery, where it broke off from the vast sea-cave, was narrow, and the opening was out of Redwing's reach. The sailorman's son was no longer bound. Round his right ankle was locked a steel cuff, from which a thin steel chain ran, locked at the other end upon an iron staple driven deep into the rock wall. Redwing had the freedom of his hands, and he could move the length of his chain, which was four or five yards long. But he was more completely a prisoner than if he had been bound hand and foot with ropes, for the steel chain, light and slim as it was, was quite unbreakable. So far as its length allowed Redwing could move, but not an inch farther.

The Bounder's hands were tied behind him as he entered the gallery, Soames pushing him in from behind. He, like Redwing, had been relieved of his overcoat by the rascally Soames.

"Smithy!" repeated Redwing. "You—here!"

"I've found you!" said the Bounder grimly.

Redwing's eyes glinted past Smithy at the man in the thick beard and sea-boots.

"You know who it is, Smithy?" he asked.

The Bounder nodded.

"Soames," he answered.

"I shall leave you together," said Soames' smooth, silky voice, sounding

strange enough from the thick beard. "No doubt you have much to talk of. But first, Master Herbert, if you will excuse me, I will make you secure, and then you may have your hands free."

Soames' tone and manner were as quietly deferential as in the old days when he had been Mr. Vernon-Smith's valet, and had treated "Master Herbert" with smooth respect. The Bounder gave him a savage look.

"You're master here!" he snarled.

"Quite so, Master Herbert," said Soames smoothly. "Quite so. But I desire to do everything possible for your comfort while you are my guest here. You will see that I have prepared this place for a visitor—though it is true that I expected only one visitor. I am glad to welcome two instead of one—very glad. It is a pleasure to see my old master's son under this poor roof."

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

There was something almost terrifying in the sardonic smoothness and deference of the man who held his life in the hollow of his hand, and who, he knew, would take that life as calmly as a mosquito's, if that would serve his purpose. Even in those wild days in the South Seas, when Soames had seized on the ship, and ruled it revolver in hand, he had never lost that cloak of smooth politeness.

Soames unlocked one of the chests that stood within the gallery, and drew from it a steel chain. He proceeded to lock one end on the Bounder's ankle, the other end on the staple in the wall.

Then, with nimble fingers, he unbound the new prisoner, and Vernon-Smith was at liberty.

The Bounder clenched his hands hard. His first impulse was to make use of his liberty by springing like a tiger on the kidnapper.

Soames smiled.

"Think again, Master Herbert," he said softly. "I fear that you regard me as an enemy—but think again! Suppose anything should happen to me, what would become of you and your

friend? You could never escape from this cave—you would perish here of hunger if I did not bring you food. If you angered me, I might be tempted to go my way and leave you to your fate. Think of that, Master Herbert, if you are tempted to act recklessly."

"You hound!" muttered the Bounder.

"What is the use of hard words?" smiled Soames. "Does not the proverb say that they break no bones?"

Smithy turned savagely away from him.

Soames proceeded to remove the thick beard from his face, and the horn-rimmed glasses. The smooth, clean-shaven face that the juniors knew so well was revealed. Soames tossed the disguise into a chest.

He smiled as he saw the two juniors staring at him, wondering why he was removing the disguise that had served him well. If he should be seen and recognised, it would be guessed at once by whose hand Tom Redwing had been kidnapped.

"That has served its turn," he said. "It may interest you to know, Master Herbert, that some of your friends were not far away when I brought you off in the boat. A few minutes earlier, and they would have interrupted me. Certainly, they saw me pulling away in the boat, and I have no doubt that by this time they have described to the police a rough-looking man in beard and horn-rimmed glasses. That man will never be seen on this coast again." He laughed. "I am provided with other disguises, fortunately. You may guess that I have laid my plans carefully."

"I've no doubt of that!" said the Bounder bitterly. "I remember you in the Pacific. You laid your plans carefully then; but you may as well remember that you were beaten at the finish."

"And will be beaten again," said Tom Redwing quietly.

Soames shook his head.

"I think not," he said softly—"I think not. I have little doubt that I could

have persuaded you, Redwing, to accede to my demands. In the South Seas I have learned methods of persuasion which I should be exceedingly sorry to apply to you, but which I should not hesitate to apply if needed. But your friend, so opportunely searching for you, has placed a stronger weapon in my hand."

Redwing looked at him, puzzled.

"I think," said Soames smoothly, "that you will yield, my young friend, to save the life of Master Herbert, if not to save your own."

"You villain!" muttered Tom.

"You will do nothing on my account, Reddy," said the Bounder, setting his lips.

Tom did not answer.

"We shall see," said Soames, smiling. "We shall see." And he went back into the other cave, leaving the chums alone.

Vernon-Smith sat down on the bench.

"This is a go!" he grunted.

"You were looking for me, I suppose, when he got you?" asked Tom, with a sigh.

"That's it." The Bounder looked at him. "We had a row when we parted on the cliffs yesterday, Redwing—"

"Never mind that now, old chap."

"You never were a fellow to bear a grudge," said the Bounder. "It's been worrying me—when you didn't come back—"

"I can guess," said Tom softly. "It's all right, old fellow. I—I wish you could have kept clear of that villain, Smithy."

"I don't," said the Bounder coolly. "I'd have liked to get you out of his hands; but if I couldn't, I'd rather take my luck with you here. We're together, anyhow."

He paused.

"What does he want, Reddy? What has he done this for?"

"The South Sea treasure—my uncle's fortune—that is what he is after," said Tom. "I've told him it's out of his reach now—turned into money and banked. But—that is his game; I don't know what his plans are, but I suppose he has some plan."

"He could work it—if you consented."

"I've refused."

"And you're sticking to that?"

Tom's face was troubled.

"You're not going to play the goat," said the Bounder harshly. "You're not going to let him influence you by threatening me. Don't be an ass! Besides, we're not in the South Seas now—he will be jolly careful how he puts his neck into a rope. We've got to keep a stiff upper lip. And—we've got to get out of this."

Tom glanced at the trailing chains.

"I'm afraid he's got us safe, Smithy. Unless we're found—"

"Who's likely to come anywhere near the sea-cave, in the winter?" growled the Bounder. "We shan't be found."

Tom nodded in silence.

"We've got to help ourselves," said Smithy. "We're together, anyhow—and two heads are better than one. Do you know whether that scoundrel is alone in this, or whether he has any confederates?"

"I've seen only Soames; but there is somebody else," said Tom. "I've heard him speaking to someone in the outer cave, but haven't seen who it is. I suppose he leaves the other on guard while he's absent."

The Bounder grunted.

"That makes it harder. But we'll beat the rotter somehow. We've got to beat him."

"We'll try," said Tom.

But there was little hope in his tones. Long, long hours had passed since he had been brought a prisoner to the sea-cave; and he was a helpless prisoner still. And as the hours of that long, long day wore by, the Bounder realised how desperate the situation was.

He tramped to and fro in the rocky gallery, the steel chain clinking as he tramped, his face dark and furious. With all his determination and force of character, the Bounder of Greyfriars had to realise that he was at the mercy of the man from the South Seas—and it was borne in upon his mind that there was no hope.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Kybosh!

"SHUT up!"
"Eh?"
"For goodness' sake, shut up!" mumbled Bunter. "Can't you let a fellow sleep?"

The grey light of dawn was creeping over Hawkscliff, over the chalk cliffs and the sea. That day was to be a busy one for Harry Wharton & Co., and they were turning out at the first glimmer. William George Bunter, however, had no intention of turning out. And he had rather an objection to his repose being disturbed by the other fellows turning out. There was nothing, so far as Bunter could see, to turn out early for. He intended to make no move till much later in the day. And the movements of anyone else, of course, were of no importance.

Bunter had taken possession of one of the beds. The other was large enough for two. And three had been made up on boxes and a settee and other things. The little cottage had not been planned for the accommodation of six fellows; but the Famous Five made themselves fairly comfortable. And Bunter, needless to say, made himself quite comfortable.

Bob Cherry was down first, lighting the fire. The Famous Five had camped out often enough, and they were quite able to look after themselves. Bob soon had a good fire going, and the kettle singing. A buzz of voices and a trampling of boots filled the little cottage with unaccustomed sound.

"You staying in bed, Fatty?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Yes, you ass! What is there to get up for?"

"We're going on a search."

Snort from Bunter.

"You're welcome to it. Silly asses, if you ask me."

"Well, we don't ask you," grunted Johnny.

"Are you going to get your own brekker?" asked Bunter sarcastically. "Nice way of spending a holiday, I don't think. Sweeping and dusting and all that—what? Look here, you could hire somebody in the village to come in and do the work. That would be sense."

"Not worth the trouble, fathead."

"Well, leave my breakfast in the fender to keep warm," said Bunter. "Leave plenty of coffee in the pot. I'm not going to cook meals, and all that, I can tell you. If you fellows like it, you're welcome."

"If you want any brekker, old fat bean, you'll find the stuff in the larder, and you can cook it yourself."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"And you'd better get off early for your train, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, looking in from the landing. "You've got a long walk."

"Of course, you'll send for a taxi," said Bunter. "You can get one of the villagers to go, if you tip him five bob."

"We'll leave that to you," said Harry, laughing.

"Beast!"

Bunter settled down in bed again. "Don't kick up a row," he said. "For goodness' sake be as quiet as you can, and let a fellow sleep! If you want my company to-day you can call me about half-past ten, not before."

"You won't be called, old fat man! Nobody wants your company."

"Yah!"

Bunter settled down and snored again.

In the room below the Famous Five ate their breakfast, and packed up a

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lunch to carry in their pockets. They did not intend to return to the cottage before dark. Every hour of daylight was to be spent in searching the coast for Redwing and Smithy.

Mr. Bowline looked in at the open door, in the rising sunlight, as they finished breakfast.

"Mornin'!" said the ancient mariner. "Good-morning!"

Mr. Bowline turned a quid of tobacco in his cheek, and regarded the chums of Greyfriars meditatively.

"I've been thinking about this 'ere," he told them. "'Cordin' to what you says, young Tom has been shanghaied by some land shark. I don't seem to get the rights of it. But if some land shark has got hold of young Tom, and you young gents are setting a course to run him down, why, I'm ready to help, and you can lay to that!"

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "I suppose you know the coast along here pretty thoroughly?"

"Like a book," answered Mr. Bowline. "There ain't a fathom's length of this here coast I don't know, from Dover to the Thames."

"Then you can help," said Harry. "Tom Redwing is being kept a prisoner somewhere, and it's practically certain that Vernon-Smith is along with him now. They can't be very far away."

Mr. Bowline blinked at him.

"Ow do you know that land shark ain't steered a course for furrin' parts?" he asked.

"If it was the same man who collared Vernon-Smith—and it must have been—he was still hanging about here a day after Redwing disappeared. That looks as if his hiding-place isn't far away."

"That's so," agreed Mr. Bowline. "Them chalk cliffs along by Hawkscliff is honeycombed with caves, and he may have come to anchor in one of them."

"Or some cottage or cabin along the coast," said Bob Cherry. "Of course, he may have landed somewhere and struck inland. I suppose that's likely enough. We've got plenty of ground to cover."

"Lots," said Wharton, rather ruefully.

Now that the chums of the Remove were face to face with the task they had set themselves, they realized more clearly what an extensive task it was.

But that did not deter them. They were determined to stick to it, even if it filled up the whole of the Christmas vacation.

"And you ain't any notion who this here land shark may be?" asked Mr. Bowline thoughtfully.

"Not the slightest."

"There's been a policeman 'ere yesterday asking a lot of questions of the folks," said Mr. Bowline. "Asking about a man in 'orn-rimmed specs. I ain't never seed such a swab in this here place, and nobody else has, I reckon. He don't belong to these parts. If you young gents want to use a boat I've got a clipper, and I'll sail you anywhere you like, and 'appy."

"Good egg! We're going to start at the gully where Smithy was collared, and we'll run down there in your boat, if it's ready."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Ten minutes later the Famous Five were in the boat, and Mr. Bowline hoisted the brown-patched sail, and ran out to sea.

Mr. Bowline's boat was not exactly a "clipper," but ancient as the mariner was, he handled it very well. And the juniors were not long in reaching the

beach opposite the gully in the cliffs where the search was to begin.

The boat was run into the sand, and the juniors scrambled ashore. Since their last visit the tide had, of course, washed out all traces of Vernon-Smith and the mysterious kidnapper. But they had a faint hope of discovering some sign in the gully above high-water mark. The hope was faint enough; but it was not a matter of choice with them. In any other direction there was no clue of any kind.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, as they tramped across the sand, leaving Mr. Bowline sitting in the boat smoking his pipe. "There's somebody ahead of us."

A hat could be seen over the rocks in the steep gully.

"Not the kidnapper?" said Nugent.

"Not likely."

The juniors hurried on. Some man was in the gully, and they concluded that it was some curious sight-seer who had heard of the mysterious disappearances. But as they came tramping into the gully and caught sight of him they had a surprise. It was Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

He stared at them in equal surprise.

"You here!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," answered Harry.

"What are you doing here, Wharton?" exclaimed the Remove master sternly. "I was under the impression that you had gone home."

"We're staying at Hawkscliff for the present, sir, to look for Redwing," answered Harry.

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Wharton made no reply to that. No doubt it seemed nonsense to the Form master; but these members of his Form took the liberty of disagreeing.

"You should have gone to your homes," said Mr. Quelch, frowning.

"We have leave to stay at Hawkscliff, sir," said Harry. "My uncle knows all about it."

"In that case, as you are no longer under my charge, I cannot, of course, intervene," said Mr. Quelch. "But I cannot understand in the least what you hope to effect by staying here."

"The hopefulness is to find the esteemed and ludicrous Redwing, sir," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Absurd!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Hem!"

"I am remaining at the school until this matter is cleared up," said the Remove master. "But there is no object whatever in you boys remaining here."

The juniors were respectfully silent. They had no intention of altering their plans, even if their respected Form master regarded them as absurd.

"Inspector Grimes will probably be displeased by this intervention on your part," added Mr. Quelch, frowning.

"Is Mr. Grimes here, sir?" asked Harry. He could hear the sound of footsteps farther up the gully.

"He is here."

The portly inspector from Courtfield came in sight among the boulders. There was a smile on his face, and the juniors guessed that he had heard what had been said.

Even at the risk of displeasing Mr. Grimes, they had no idea of changing their plans. But, as a matter of fact, Mr. Grimes did not seem displeased. He seemed amused.

"So we are going to have your assistance, young gentlemen!" said Mr. Grimes cheerily. "The police force will be very much obliged—very!"

His tone was pleasantly sarcastic.

"I am afraid there is nothing to be found here, Mr. Quelch," the inspector

went on. "It is most probable that Master Vernon-Smith was taken away in a boat, as these lads supposed. The kidnapper undoubtedly landed a little farther along the shore and struck inland."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

That statement surprised them considerably. It looked as if Mr. Grimes had been making discoveries.

"There is no secret about it, young gentlemen," said the inspector, with an amused glance at the juniors. "A man answering to the description you gave of the man in the boat has been seen at Lantham."

"At Lantham!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes—five miles inland. There is no doubt about it; the man was seen last night in Lantham by several persons, who gave information at the police station when the description was circulated. A seafaring man wearing horn-rimmed spectacles is rather uncommon, you know. He appears to have made purchases at several shops, and to have made an attempt to hire a car at the garage at Lantham."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"He offered to leave a substantial deposit on the car; but his manner seemed suspicious to the garage proprietor, who refused to let him have a car," added the inspector. "I can guess why he wanted the car. Ha, ha! It was a large closed car he desired to hire—it had to be a closed car."

"But he did not get it, sir?"

"Fortunately, no! He may have obtained a car elsewhere; investigation is now going on. We shall see."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "Then he may be a hundred miles away with Redwing and Smithy, while we're rooting about here for him."

The inspector gave a fat little chuckle. "Probably," he assented. "Very probably!"

"But it's certain that it is the same man!" said Harry.

"Quite!"

Inspector Grimes pointed to a heavy bootmark in the sand above high-water mark. Here and there in the gully remained tracks of the unknown's heavy sea-boots beyond the reach of the water.

"That is the track of the man you saw, my boys?"

"That's it."

"I have measured it," said the inspector. "There are—hem—certain characteristics in a footprint which would not be observed by an unprofessional eye. Now, it happens, my boys, that the man who tried to hire a car at the garage in Lantham very obligingly left his footprints there. He had to cross a muddy yard, and he left a track of heavy sea-boots, which were examined immediately on information being given. They tally exactly." Mr. Grimes smiled broadly. "I do not think you young gentlemen will be of much use in pursuing the investigations at Lantham. I recommend you to go home for your Christmas holidays. We may as well return, Mr. Quelch."

The inspector and the Remove master went up the gully together and disappeared.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another rather blankly.

"Well, here's a go!" said Johnny Bull.

"The go-fulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dismally.

Bob Cherry laughed rather ruefully. "If he got a car he may be in the next county by now. If he didn't, he's

hiding somewhere round about Lantham. Oh, my hat! Grimey seemed rather amused; I suppose it rather tickled him to find us rooting about here when he knows that man isn't within five miles."

"Oh, blow!" said Nugent crossly.

Harry Wharton was silent. It seemed to him at that moment that the Famous Five might as well take the inspector's advice and go home for the Christmas holidays. If the kidnapper was hiding at Lantham, five miles inland, it was futile enough for the juniors to think of seeking him there; and much more so if he had obtained a car and left a hundred miles or more between him and the scene of the kidnapping.

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Johnny Bull, after a rather long silence. "No good rooting about here that I can see."

"Of course, what Grimes says alters the case," said Wharton slowly. "It seems certain that the Lantham man was the man we saw in the boat. It's certain that that man was the kidnapper. But—"

"We're done," said Bob.

"I suppose so. We couldn't do any good at Lantham, or at trying to track a car across country, that's certain. But—"

"But what, old chap?"

"I don't see the use of clearing off till there's more definite news, at any rate," said Harry. "They'll be combing Lantham for the man now, and if a car's missing they'll get on its track fast enough. There may be news soon; and I don't feel like going before we know what's become of Redwing and Smithy. And we know that the man was here the day after Redwing was taken. He must have hidden Reddy somewhere all that time. We may find the place, and pick up some clue there to where he's gone. Let's stick to it."

"May as well," said Bob. "It won't do any harm, anyhow."

But the hopes of the search-party were at zero now. The news they had received from Inspector Grimes had, as Bob expressed it, put the kybosh on the plans they had formed.

They spent the remainder of the day searching the cliffs and the shore for sign, sometimes afoot, sometimes in Mr. Bowline's boat. But the search was half-hearted now; they could not help feeling that it was all in vain, and that there was little or nothing to be discovered.

As a matter of fact, they discovered nothing; and at sunset they ran back to Hawkscliff in the boat.

As they walked up to the Redwing cottage, tired and no longer hopeful, they could not help feeling that it was useless to remain longer, and that they might as well pack their bags in the morning and start for home.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Furnishes a Clue!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"I say—"

"You still here?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Don't jaw, anyhow!"

"The jawfulness of your esteemed self is much too terrific, my worthy and idiotic Bunter."

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five as they came in. Even without the aid of his big spectacles the Owl of the Remove could have seen that they were not in their usual good humour.

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"If that's what you call being civil to a guest—"

"Shut up!"

"You've come back in a jolly nice temper," grinned Bunter. "I suppose you've discovered by this time that you're only playing the goat, and might as well clear off, what?"

As a matter of fact, Bunter was right on that point. His words rather expressed the feelings of the Famous Five.

The diminished state of the larder seemed to indicate that Bunter had had his fill. However, there was plenty left, as the juniors had laid in a week's supplies, which even William George Bunter could not dispose of in a day. They cooked their supper and sat round the fire to eat it, in very subdued spirits.

After supper the juniors discussed the state of affairs, not very hopefully. Billy Bunter listened with a fat grin on his face. His opinion all along had been that the chums of the Remove were playing the goat, as he expressed it, and he did not conceal that opinion. Certainly he was not disappointed to learn that they now regarded their task as hopeless. Bunter was in a hurry to get to Wharton Lodge. There he would be more comfortable, which, from Bunter's point of view, was all that mattered.

Outside, the wind was rising, wailing round the Hawkscliff cottages, and howling past the door. The heavy wash of the breakers could be heard from the beach. The weather had been fairly fine all day; but a storm was setting in with the night. Bob Cherry looked out of the door. Snow was falling again, drifting in feathery flakes along the irregular street. A gust of wind rushed in at the open door, and the lamp clouded, and smoke eddied out of the chimney.

"Shut that door, you ass!" squeaked Bunter.

Bob closed the door, and returned to his chair.

"It's going to be a wild night," he said.

"Cosy enough here," said Nugent.

"I—I wonder where old Redwing is?" muttered Bob. "If the old chap were only squatting here along with us it would be all right. And Smithy, too, of course!" he added.

"I don't see it," said Bunter. "Precious little room for us, without any more, if you ask me."

"Oh, dry up!"

Sniff! from Bunter.

"I dare say Redwing's all right," he said. "It's all his own fault, anyhow."

"How do you make that out, you fat idiot?" growled Bob Cherry.

"I offered to take him up for Christmas," said Bunter. "He never even thanked me for my kindness. Of course, I'm used to ingratitude. Look how you fellows treat me, for instance, after all I've done for you. But Redwing really is the limit. Look at the way I was treated over that South Sea treasure in the summer vac. I did practically everything; but I was never even offered half the stuff we found on the island. You fellows made out that it belonged to Redwing, just because his uncle had put it there—"

"Are you wound up?" asked Bob.

"Beast! But for me, that man Soames would have dished the lot of you, and you'd never have got away with it," said Bunter. "As for Smithy, he's as bad as Redwing. Look at the way he walloped me with a fives bat, for bagging his hamper the other day and—"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"After all I'd been through, too!" said Bunter, his fat voice thrilling with

indignation. "Wrecked in the sea-cave, and jolly nearly drowned—"

"You fat ass, you were never in the sea-cave! They found you sprawling on the beach near Pegg."

"Do you think I dreamed it?" hooted Bunter.

"Of course you did, you ass!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter relapsed into sulky silence. Nobody at Greyfriars believed a word of the fat junior's thrilling adventure in the sea-cave at Pegg Bay.

Nobody, in fact, was likely to believe that Bunter had seen a ghost in the haunted cave. Even Bunter did not believe that it really was a ghost—once he was safe away from the spot.

But he still remembered the ghostly face he had seen in the darkness of the cave, and shuddered at the recollection. And the general disbelief in his story exasperated the fat Owl. It really was hard lines not to be believed, when for once he was telling the truth. Such occasions were very rare.

"I say, you fellows." Bunter never could keep silent for long. "Of course, I don't believe in ghosts. It couldn't really have been a spook I saw in the sea-cave. But I saw a face—"

"Bosh!"

"An awful face!" said Bunter impressively. "White as chalk, and with awful gleaming eyes. And there was something about it I knew. I'd seen it before somewhere—"

"You never were in the sea-cave," grunted Bob Cherry. "How the dickens could you have been, when you were found in a faint on the beach a mile away from it?"

"I don't know how I got ashore in the boat," said Bunter; "but I jolly well know that I was in the sea-cave before I fainted, and that I saw an awful face in the dark—"

"Bow-wow!"

"It was somebody playing ghost, of course!" said Bunter. "I dare say he had rubbed chalk on his face, and phosphorus paint, or something. I didn't think of that at the time. Of course, I wasn't frightened—you fellows would have been, but you know my pluck!—I wasn't scared—"

"You fainted because you weren't scared?" asked Nugent.

"Beast!"

"What's the good of sticking to that idiotic yarn?" growled Johnny Bull. "You jolly well know that you dreamed it all!"

"I didn't!" roared Bunter. "I was in the sea-cave that day—"

"Gammon!"

"And some beast was there, and he played the ghost to frighten me—not that I was frightened—"

"Nice place for a chap to choose for larking," said Bob Cherry, "and if you did get there at all it was by accident, and nobody could have known you were coming. Was he there with his chivvy made up all ready waiting for that accident to happen?"

The juniors chuckled.

"Well, I can't make out why he was there, or what he was up to," said Bunter. "But he was there! There used to be smugglers in that cave. Might have been a smuggler or something—scaring people away by playing ghost—not that I was scared, you know—"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

He jumped to his feet.

His face was in a blaze with sudden excitement.

"You fellows, there may be something in that yarn, after all!" he exclaimed. "We thought that that fat



"I say, you fellows, it was rather lucky I came along with you, what?" said Billy Bunter. "The best thing you can do now is to place yourselves entirely under my lead——" Harry Wharton opened the door at that moment and a fierce gust of wind blew in. The Owl of the Remove was interrupted, as an eddy of smoke from the fire encircled him. "Grooogh!" he spluttered. "Shut that door, you silly ass! Ooooch! Atchoo-atchoo!" (See Chapter 15.)

fool had got frightened in the dark, and fancied he saw a ghost——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"But it seemed idiotic, at the time, to suppose there was anybody in the cave, playing ghost. But——"

"But what?" asked Bob.

"The sea-cave's five miles down the coast from the place where Redwing was taken," said Harry. "Nobody ever goes near it in the winter. But if somebody was there that day when Bunter butted in—somebody who wanted to keep people away——"

"The jolly old kidnapper!" exclaimed Bob.

"It's possible, at least."

"That was a week before Redwing was kidnapped," said Johnny Bull.

"He might have been on the spot waiting for a chance to get at Redwing. If he had the cave fixed up to hide him in, he would naturally be startled when that fat ass butted in; and as the place is supposed to be haunted, it would serve his turn to play ghost and frighten the duffer away!"

"But Bunter never was really there!"

"I was!" howled Bunter.

"That's explained easily enough," said Harry. "The man frightened him into a faint, and, of course, he wanted to get shut of him. In that case, he rowed him to the beach and left him there."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter! It looks as if there might be something in it," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "We never thought of the sea-cave—it's miles away and a jolly dangerous place in the winter. But——"

"But the man was seen at Lantham last night," said Johnny Bull. "We know that now. If he hid Reddy in the sea-cave the first day, he's gone now."

"I'm not sure of that." Wharton's eyes were gleaming with excitement now. "That old cave is about the safest hiding-place a man could find at this

time of the year especially with its reputation of being haunted. He could have got to it in the boat from the place where he collared Redwing and Smithy. We've been hunting round Hawksoliff—we never thought of going so far afield. If he's there, he would want the police to be looking in another direction. He may have shown up at Lantham on purpose."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob.

"He seems to have got a lot of notice at Lantham," said Harry. "Half a dozen people saw him there and knew him by the description—and he even left the track of sea-boots in a muddy yard, and made himself conspicuous trying to hire a car. If it was a trick, it was a clever one—the police are hunting for him inland, and we were thinking of throwing up the whole thing. But——"

Bob drew a deep breath.

"And he may be hiding in the sea-cave all the time, and we'd never have thought of it but for——"

"Me!" said Bunter.

The Famous Five looked at him. It was true enough. There had been no clue, and little hope. It was Bunter's story of the haunted cave that furnished a clue—if clue indeed it was.

"Me!" repeated Bunter. "I say, you fellows, it was rather lucky I came along with you, what? Where do you think you would be without me?"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think you might thank a fellow, at least!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "Here you've been rooting about a whole day and doing nothing, and thinking of chucking up the whole thing. As soon as you consult me I put you on the right track. The best thing you can do now is to place yourselves entirely under my lead and——"

Harry Wharton went to the door and opened it. A fierce gust of wind blew in, and the lamp suddenly went out.

Billy Bunter was interrupted as an eddy of smoke from the fire encircled him.

"Grooogh! Ooooch! You silly ass!" spluttered Bunter. "Shut that door! Ooooch! Grooogh! Atchoo-atchoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Grooogh! Ooooch!"

Wharton stared into the black night. Booming through the blackness came the roar of breakers at the foot of the high chalk cliffs. A wild wind was stirring the North Sea to fury.

Wharton set his lips.

"We can't get out in this—to-night," he said. "But to-morrow morning, rough or fine, we're going down to the haunted cave!"

"Shut that door!" shrieked Bunter.

Bob Cherry had to lend Wharton his assistance, to get the door shut against the fierce wind. It was jammed shut at last, and bolted.

"Bed now," said Harry. "We've got to turn out at dawn—and we're going to find Redwing and Smithy! That ass Bunter has come in useful, after all."

"Wonders will never cease!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows——"

"And it's going to be a merry Christmas, after all!" said Bob.

To the prisoners in the haunted cave hope of rescue seemed to be dead as they lay in the darkness and listened to the roar of the stormy sea. But there was hope had they known it—and they were soon to know!

THE END.

(Don't miss the next story in this splendid series, chums, entitled: "HUNTED DOWN!" It's full of thrills and exciting situations. The wise Magnetite will make sure of his copy by ordering NOW!)

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In the "Good Old Days" many and various were the means employed to make an obstinate prisoner speak. And on the High Seas, those who sailed beneath the dreaded Skull and Crossbones found keelhauling wonderfully persuasive!

WOLVES OF THE SPANISH MAIN!

By ERNEST McKEAG.



A stirring story of adventure in the "Good Old Days."

Roger Meets Enemies, and a Friend.

ROGER raised his voice and gave a mighty shout; but he knew full well as he did so that it was useless. The surge of the breakers beating against the barrier reef was enough to drown all other sounds, and as he trod water and watched the shadow of the *Celestine* being swallowed up by the darkness he knew that help from that quarter was all in vain.

Suddenly, above the thunder of the breaking waves, came the sound of another mighty splash, and Roger's blood seemed to freeze in his veins.

"Sharks!" he gasped.

Realising his only chance of escape was to strike out for the island and take to the forest, Roger swerved around in the water and began to strike out, keeping the barrier reef well on his left. He knew full well that should he be picked up by a wave and sent crashing on to the reef his body would be battered till it was unrecognisable.

Roger's deadly peril spurred him to greater effort, and never in his life had he swum as he did now.

Again and again to his ears came more splashing sounds—the noise of sharks disporting themselves in the water he surmised. At all costs he realised he must gain the beach of the island, for he was in imminent danger every minute he remained in the water.

Yet though Roger struck out mightily it seemed to him that the splashing came ever nearer and nearer to him.

A cold chill struck at his heart. He was being pursued through the water, and that could only mean that a shark was hard after him.

The surge of the breakers dinned continuously in his ears, and he felt the pull of the waters as though they would pile him upon the jagged reef. Danger lurked on every hand—danger from the

reef, danger from the sea and the sharks, and even if he succeeded in reaching the shore danger from the pirates who were marooned there.

Dogged pluck, however, told in the long run, and Roger began to see himself drawing away from the dreaded reef. His task much easier now, he struck out for where he could see the shore of the island, pale and ghostly in the shimmering lights of the stars. Yet it seemed that the splashes which he had previously heard abated not, and he redoubled his efforts to reach the shore lest he should fall a prey to the shark which dogged him.

It struck Roger as curious that the shark had not already attacked him, for the monster must surely have been the faster swimmer of the two. Every moment he expected to feel its vicious teeth bite into his flesh and tear him limb from limb. But naught happened, though the splashing continued.

At last he felt his feet strike the sand, and hardly able to walk from the exhaustion which his swim had occasioned, he managed to stagger from the grip of the waves which, however, gave him a tremendous buffeting as he dragged himself from their clutches.

But the sand was beneath his feet now, and he could see the tall fronds of the palms which fringed the beach swaying dizzily in the breeze.

Roger staggered like a drunken man across the beach. A great weariness had descended upon him, and he gave a sigh of relief as he saw that he had come to a point above high-water mark. He was safe, and with that in his mind Roger threw himself down upon the beach. The pirates were far from him, for he had landed on the beach which skirted the island, and they were in the lagoon. It was unlikely that his whereabouts would be discovered, and that meant that he could sleep until the morning sun aroused him to the necessity of finding some hiding-place upon the island where the pirates could not find him.

swum dizzily. He endeavoured weakly to stagger to his feet, only to fall face downward upon the soft sand.

Using every ounce of strength within him he rolled over and endeavoured once again to rise. As he did so he beheld the reason of his helplessness, for he was trussed as securely as any fowl; his hands tied tightly behind his back, and his feet lashed together at the ankles.

How had this happened? Who had done this? Recollection of his terrible swim in the darkness came back to Roger, and he remembered staggering up the beach and falling where he now was. But how he had come to be trussed up in this manner Roger could not make out. He twisted himself into a sitting position, and then, as though in answer to his thoughts, there came the faint sound of a croaking voice—a voice that he knew too well.

"Where the dead man lies, his staring eyes,

Look out to the Westward-ho—"

"One-Eye!" he gasped. "But—but how comes he here? Am I dreaming?"

"So-ho, my little whelp—so-ho! What cheer, mate?"

Roger's eyes went to the fringe of the forest. One-Eye, chuckling viciously, had thrust his way through the undergrowth, and stood there regarding him, a light of triumph in his single eye.

"So ye thought ye had outwitted Abednigo. One-Eye," chuckled the scoundrel. "Rat me, though, an' ye be not a plucked 'un, boy! 'Tis a fine member o' the brotherhood ye'd make, lad, an' ye'd take service wi' me."

"Rather would I cut out my heart than that should happen, rogue!" answered Roger.

"Perhaps I shall save ye that trouble, lad," croaked One-Eye. "For, list ye, an' ye tell me not what I want to know I'll ha' ye flogged, ay, an' keelhauled, too! Come now, boy, tell me where the chart was hidden aboard the *Celestine*,

and tell me too, what ye know o' the treasure."

"What can it avail ye to know where the chart is?" asked Roger. "The Celestine has gone, and the chart has gone wi' it."

"Ay, lad, the Celestine has gone. But think ye the Chevalier will not return?" One-Eye rubbed his hands together as he spoke. "I know him better nor ye, lad, an' I know full well that the Chevalier will not leave ye here wi'out making some attempt to get ye back. He soon will know what happened to ye when he learns that neither ye or I are aboard the schooner."

"How came you here?" questioned Roger.

"Did ye not hear me plunge into th' sea after ye?" asked One-Eye. "Sink me, but I made sure that ye must ha' heard me swimming along i' your wake."

Roger was silent. He knew now the reason for the splashes he had heard behind him as he swam. It had been no sea-monster which had dogged him but a human monster, even more cruel than a sharp-toothed shark.

"So 'twas ye who fell upon me when I was helpless, and trussed me up like this?" he said, after a pause.

"Ay, lad!" chuckled One-Eye. "I could not let ye rot here. Nay, lad, ye shall be my guest on the island. I ha' this morning been to the lagoon, and soon will come some o' my men to take ye back to the camp. Make yourself easy; no harm shall befall ye till the Celestine returns, and then—"

He finished his sentence with a croaking laugh that sent a chill through Roger's veins. Only too well did the lad see One-Eye's plan. The Chevalier would not desert his young comrade, and One-Eye still cherished the hope that he could seize the schooner once more.

True, the schooner was in the hands of the Chevalier; but his crew would mutiny if they had the slightest chance.

This, then, was what One-Eye was counting upon, and if he did prove successful Roger knew that neither he nor the Chevalier could hope for the slightest mercy at the ruffian's hands.

"But here come my bully boys to take ye to the camp!" chuckled One-Eye, as the undergrowth parted and a small party of the pirates, led by Slim, appeared. "Here, Slim, gaze ye onco more upon our little turkey cock that would seek to pit his brains against us!"

Slim came forward, his beady eyes glittering as he turned them upon Roger.

"Ay, Abednigo, an' we'll make him dance, rot him!" he growled. "Already has he thwarted us too often! Why will ye not let me cut his heart out?"

Slim fingered the haft of his dagger as he spoke, and took a step nearer to the helpless Roger.

"Avast, ye madman!" yelled One-Eye, stretching forth a hand and catching Slim by the arm even as it seemed that the rat-like pirate would carry his words into action. "Can ye not see that while we hold him the Chevalier will seek to aid him, and is like to give us another chance of seizing the Celestine? An' we make shark's meat of this whelp there is no more reason for the Chevalier to return—until he has the treasure. Then will it go hard wi' us, Slim!"

Slim thrust his dagger back into his belt and turned to the men.

"Bring the whelp along!" he commanded, and then turned.

Accompanied by One-Eye, Slim began his march back through the forest.

Roger was hauled roughly to his feet, and the ropes which bound his legs were slashed so as to allow him to walk. But his arms were still bound fast behind his back, and he had no option but to obey the pirates and walk between two of them through the dense undergrowth.

It was hard going, and the sun had risen high in the heavens before the camp by the shores of the lagoon was reached.

Roger was taken to the hut and thrown roughly inside. There were two rooms in the hut—one the living-room that was evidently shared by One-Eye and Slim; the other a dark, dismal hole, devoid of all furnishings and half-filled with stores. It was in this latter room that Roger was thrust. The door was closed and barred, and he was left to his own ruminations.

The young adventurer surveyed the place in which he now found himself. The only light there was came from an opening high up in the wall, and Roger realised, with a sinking heart, that even if he could gain the opening he could not wedge his body through it.

Now that there was no chance of escape Roger's bonds had been loosened, and he sat down upon a case to ponder over his predicament.

He knew that there was truth in what One-Eye had said—that when the Chevalier found out that he had vanished from the schooner he would make some endeavours to find him.

But how long would it be before he did so? The Chevalier was but one man against the crew of the Celestine. He dared not trust them to bring the schooner back to the lagoon. He would have to cruise around until he came across help and picked up a crew of men whom he could trust.

And in the meanwhile Roger was a prisoner amongst the pirates, who were themselves prisoners, inasmuch as they were marooned, and could not leave the island until such time as a passing vessel called at the island for water—or the Chevalier returned!

How long he had been in his prison Roger knew not, but the door was opened suddenly, and he heard the voice of One-Eye growling a command to someone.

"Gi' that food to the whelp that is in there!" he grunted. "Sink me, but we cannot let him starve to death; he'd be useless to us then! And hurry, scum, or your skin shall pay for your tardiness!"

A figure was silhouetted against the



HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

Spurred on by the call of the sea, young Roger Bartlett sets out in search of adventure. He joins forces with a gallant dandy known as "The Chevalier," who possesses the chart of an island on which a great treasure lies buried, and the two comrades set sail for the Spanish Main. It is soon evident that two villainous pirates named Abednigo One-Eye and Slim will stop at nothing to get hold of the chart, and with the aid of a cut-throat crew on board their barque, the Swordfish, they capture Roger and the Chevalier. After many perilous adventures, however, the latter make their escape with the treasure plan when the Swordfish is blown up at the island of Cuyacos. The Chevalier decides that their only hope is to seize single-handed his old schooner, the Celestine, which had been captured by the pirates and is lying at anchor in the island lagoon. Their desperats attempt is successful, but suddenly, as he stands at the wheel of the schooner, Roger is gripped from behind by One-Eye and flung into the sea. With the Celestine scudding along in a fair wind, the lad is left swimming in shark-infested waters.

(Now read on.)

doorway—a figure which bore food and water upon a wooden tray. But the figure was one which caused a gleam of hope to spring into the heart of Roger.

For it was none other than Jem, the powder-monkey, who, too, must have been flung clear when the Swordfish went to its last reckoning!

Condemned to be Keelhauled!

"JEM!" The word came involuntarily to the lips of Roger, but was spoken in a whisper that carried not to the ears of One-Eye.

Jem, with a frightened expression upon his face, laid down the tray, and placed one finger upon his lips to betoken silence. He would have spoken, but at that moment One-Eye loomed in the doorway and, cursing, cuffed the powder-monkey out of the way.

"Delay not, ye scum!" he growled; and then turned to Roger. "There is food for ye, whelp, an' ye ha' me to thank that ye are still alive to eat it, for Slim would ha' had the heart o' ye out had I but let him! Sink me if I am not a tender-hearted rogue!"

He chuckled again, and closed the door; but Roger was not deceived by his words. He knew that One-Eye, too, would willingly have murdered him there and then had he not believed that Roger was now their only chance of getting the Chevalier—and the chart—into their hands.

But even though he had not been able to speak with Jem, Roger knew, by the expression on the powder-monkey's face, that he was a friend. He had further evidence of that some considerable time later, when a hand appeared at the opening in the wall of the hut and a paper fluttered down at his feet.

In the dim rays of the setting sun which came through the opening Roger opened the paper, and read:

"An' I can, will I aid ye. Bide your time.—JEM."

Fearful lest One-Eye should see the missive, Roger put it in his mouth and swallowed it.

On the following day, when Jem again brought him food, under the gaze of One-Eye, Roger nodded to the boy, to show him that he had received the message, and understood.

But it seemed, as time went on, that Jem was unable to come to his aid.

Days came and went, and Roger marked their passing by the sun's rays, which struck through the opening in the hut. But still there was no news of the Chevalier. Jem, too, it seemed, was unable to bring any aid to Roger, for it was rarely indeed that One-Eye or Slim left the hut. Both were suspicious of the other, and with good cause, too, for while Slim had endeavoured to blow up One-Eye with his barque, One-Eye had repaid this act of treachery by his attempt to seize the schooner and leave Slim and his fellow-scoundrels on the island.

At last, by the unaccustomed sounds that reached his ears from outside the hut Roger gleaned that something new had happened, and it was not long before he heard the oft-repeated words:

"A sail! A sail!"

The words thrilled him. Had, then, the Chevalier returned to the island, bringing aid with him to rout the pirates from their hornets' nest? In that case what would become of him? One-Eye and Slim would not part with their prisoner without a struggle. They

might even hold him to ransom, and endeavour, under threat of putting him to torture or to death, to make terms with the Chevalier.

In that case, Roger knew, they would not remain in their camp by the beach, for it was open to cannon-fire from the vessel. They would take to the forest or to the hills inland.

Roger waited, with what patience he could muster, to see what would befall him.

It was not long, however, before the door of his prison was thrown roughly open, and One-Eye entered.

"Come, lad!" he growled, seizing Roger roughly by the shoulder and hauling him from the hut.

Roger blinked in the sunlight, while One-Eye, still holding him tightly with one hand, pointed to the lagoon.

"Look ye there, lad!" he cried. "A sail!"

Roger looked in the direction, and discerned a vessel floating on the placid waters of the lagoon. But his heart sank as he marked it, for it was not the trim and neat *Celestine*, but a dirty, black brigantine, her yards all askew, her condition bearing witness to the lack of discipline aboard her.

"See ye that, lad?" continued One-Eye. "Are ye not pleased to know that our time o' marooning is at an end? We are saved, lad, and not before time, for, rip me, an' our stores are fast failing!"

The note of triumph in One-Eye's voice told Roger that this was no friendly craft that had put into the lagoon. Had it been an honest trading vessel One-Eye would not have been so pleased.

Roger was prepared for the worst.

"'Tis the craft o' Sharktooth!" grinned One-Eye. "Sharktooth, the rover—one o' the brotherhood, lad! An' I warrant me that Sharktooth will be glad to take us off when he learns what we ha' to tell him—when he learns that there is rich, red gold to be had for the taking!"

The way One-Eye gloated brought a wild, unreasoning anger into the heart of Roger. So help had come—but help for One-Eye, Slim, and their rascals! Things seemed more desperate now than ever they had been, for, doubtless, this Sharktooth was just another such villain as they.

Roger twisted his shoulder from the grip of One-Eye and sprang at the scoundrel's throat. His fingers closed around it; but it was the most foolish thing to do, for One-Eye's men were near at hand, and even as the roguo staggered beneath Roger's onslaught four or five of the pirates hurled themselves upon the lad, and dragged him, kicking and struggling, from One-Eye.

"Truss up the whelp!" yelled One-Eye. "Rip me, but he shall pay for this, an' dearly!"

It was but a matter of moments before Roger was tied up and thrown down heavily upon the ground. There he lay, in angry impotence, while One-Eye, Slim, and a score or so of the pirates went down to the shore of the lagoon to greet the longboat which had put off from the brigantine and was rapidly approaching. There, too, Roger stayed, until One-Eye and Slim held a consultation with a giant of a man, whose much-scarred and sallow face was marked by two protruding teeth which jutted from his jaws, and which, no doubt, was the scoundrelly Sharktooth himself.

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Apparently the marooned pirates came to a satisfactory agreement with Sharktooth, for One-Eye wheeled round and rapped out orders in his croaking voice.

Immediately Roger was seized and carried to the longboat. Sharktooth, accompanied by One-Eye and Slim, also scrambled into the boat, and all were rowed off to the black brigantine.

Reaching the mysterious craft, Roger was hauled roughly aboard, and thrown into a vile hold between decks.

What happened after that Roger could but guess, for it seemed ages that he was incarcerated there. But he could tell, from the stamping footsteps, the creak of yards and ropes, that Sharktooth had taken the rest of the pirates aboard his craft and the vessel was putting to sea again.

Ages passed, and then three men, bearing a lantern, came to his prison hole and dragged him roughly to his feet. He was still bound fast hand and foot, and was dragged roughly to the deck, by the break of the poop. One-Eye, Slim, and Sharktooth were there, surrounded by pirates, their expressions telling Roger that something unusual was afoot. Roger sent his gaze travelling seaward—to see no trace of the island they had quitted. Naught but the open sea was to be seen on either hand.

"See ye, lad!" growled One-Eye, stepping forward. "I ha' had enough on ye, and ye speak not now, ye are likely never to speak again. Mark ye that, lad?" He pointed to an arrangement of tackles and ropes which was fastened to either arm of the mizzen-yard. "Know ye what that is?"

"I know not, neither do I care," answered Roger, gazing but little at the litter of ropes, which seemed to vanish down one side of the vessel, pass under the bottom of her, and come up again on the opposite side.

"Then ye are likely to know 'ere ye are many minutes older, lad!" croaked One-Eye. "For an' ye speak not, then shall ye be keelhauled!"

Keelhauled!

Though he strove not to show his feelings, some gleam of what was passing in his mind must have mirrored itself upon Roger's countenance, for One-Eye and his fellow-rogues chuckled grimly.

Roger had heard of the terrible punishment of keelhauling, and knew, too, that only the strongest could hope to survive it.

"I shall speak not, neither now nor later!" he answered.

"Enough o' this!" yelled One-Eye. "Trice him up, lads, and let's see if his cursed spirit will break then!"

Before Roger could do anything he was triced to the ropes which led from the yardarms under the keel of the brigantine. Then, several men bending to the ropes, he was jerked by his wrists from off the deck, and left suspended from the yardarm.

"Now will ye speak?" yelled One-Eye; and as Roger set his lips tightly and ventured no reply, he rapped out: "Then under with the cub, lads!"

Roger felt the ropes that were to drag him under the keel tighten, as the pirates bent their weight to them.

An Encounter Aboard the Black Brigantine!

IN a moment that seemed an age to the helpless Roger, he felt the ropes that encircled his wrists bite deep into his flesh. His ankles, too, were securely made fast. Then

came a tug at his ankles, and he found himself being hauled down towards the water. He took a tremendous breath, hoping against hope that he could hold it, and not let the water enter his lungs as he was hauled under the keel of the vessel.

But Roger's blood ran cold as he anticipated the terrible sensation of being crushed up against the barnacled side and bottom of the ship. He could almost feel the barnacles scraping the clothes and skin from him, and he closed his eyes momentarily, and waited for the sudden plunge into the water.

But the plunge came not!

A mighty boom rang out upon the air. Something whizzed, hissing, towards the brigantine, and there came a mighty splash. Pandemonium broke loose aboard the black brigantine. The tension was taken off the ropes which held Roger, swaying on the yardarm. He opened his eyes again, to see that the pirates had thrown down the ropes upon which they had been hauling, and were hastily lowering gun-ports and hauling cannon into position.

One-Eye, his face transfigured with rage, was dancing up and down the deck, shaking a fist in frenzied impotence over the bulwarks of the pirate craft. Sharktooth, upon the poop of the vessel, was rapping out orders interspersed with many an oath.

Turning his head, so that he could see the direction in which One-Eye gestured, Roger beheld a sail upon the rolling waters.

Even as he did so a puff of smoke came from the bulwarks of the oncoming craft, and the crash of a cannonade rang out upon the air. It was followed by the screaming of a cannon-ball as it tore its way through the air. Then came a sickening crash as the ball smashed into the bowsprit of the black brigantine, and carried it away, bringing a melee of ropes and yards crashing to the deck.

"Sink me, what vessel be this that attacks Sharktooth?" yelled that scoundrel from the poop. "D'ye know her, One-Eye—d'ye know her?"

One-Eye spat out an oath.

"Know her?" he repeated. "Ay, to my cost do I know her! 'Tis the *Celestine*—sink me else!"

The *Celestine*! Roger's heart gave a leap as he heard the words, and he surveyed the oncoming ship with eager interest. There could be no doubt that it was indeed the *Celestine*. He could recognise her cut now and the fact that she was attacking the black brigantine of Sharktooth could mean only one thing!

The Chevalier had won through, then! He had been successful in recruiting another crew, and he must have hung around the island, watching and waiting his time. He had seen Sharktooth's brigantine leave, and he had followed it. He could not have come upon it at a more opportune time for Roger. A moment later and Roger would have undergone the tortures of keelhauling.

Perhaps the Chevalier, through powerful glasses, had seen that figure trussed up to the yardarm. Perhaps he had been reserving his fire until then. The pirates had been so intent upon the torturing of their prisoner that they had not marked the coming of the *Celestine*. And now the latter craft would be upon them!

"Run for it, Sharktooth!" yelled One-Eye.

(Continued on page 28.)



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WOLVES OF THE SPANISH MAIN!

(Continued from page 26)

Eye. "Rot me, but an' we escape not, that cursed Chevalier will make dead men o' us all! He'll ha' no mercy, Sharktooth, mind ye that! About ship, and crack on every inch o' sail!"

Apparently Sharktooth was of the same opinion as One-Eye, for he shouted out an order to the man at the helm, and the brigantine turned so as to bring the breeze right behind her. The pirates scurried up the ratlines hastily, and soon every available inch of canvas was spread. Her stern chasers were brought into action, and again and again they thundered out, shaking the vessel with every discharge.

But those aboard the Celestine had anticipated the manœuvre, and even as the brigantine changed course, the Celestine did likewise. Soon both vessels were running swiftly before the wind, and the schooner was slowly but surely gaining upon the pirate craft.

The brigantine pitched and heaved. Everyone aboard her seemed to have forgotten Roger, and he still hung suspended, swaying dizzily by the wrists from the yardarm. The sea was now whipped into little fountains, where the balls from the cannon of the Celestine were plunging into the water. Now and again a ball would crash heavily upon the deck, and make the air ring with the splintering of the planks. And, as the schooner steadily reduced the distance between the two vessels, the fire became more accurate.

Sharktooth, in a desperate attempt to fight off this resolute attacker, brought more cannon into action, and soon the air was hideous with the crashing of the cannonades, while heavy clouds of black smoke wreathed above the decks, and blotted out the vision of Roger. As the breeze sent the smoke wreathing hither and thither, however, he caught occasional glimpses of the Celestine holding on like an avenging demon, and coming closer—closer—with every minute that passed!

"Let's ha' that boy down!" came a cry from the deck of the brigantine, and Roger, looking down, saw that One-Eye had remembered him, and was pointing to him. "Rot me, but an' the

Chevalier makes shark's meat o' me, the lad shall go wi' me! Bring him down, and guard him, ye rats, for he's the only hostage that be of any use to us."

Pirate hands were bent to the ropes. There came a rattle of blocks and tackles, and Roger came swooping down from his lofty altitude. By means of the line around his ankles, he was not allowed to drop into the sea, but was hauled aboard the brigantine. There the ropes which had held him suspended from the yardarm were cast off, leaving his ankles and wrists still tied.

"Mark ye, boy, an' we have to go to Davy Jones, ye shall come wi' us!" growled One-Eye. "Rip me, but I wish I had finished ye off before this. I be in two minds whether or not to finish ye now as ye lie there."

Roger bent a look of scorn upon the baffled scoundrel.

"An' ye do, One-Eye, ye know full well that the Chevalier will not rest till ye ha' paid in full for't!" he answered calmly.

"Hold your peace, whelp!" stormed One-Eye. "Sink me if your skin shall not pay for this impudence!"

He aimed a kick at the helpless Roger as he lay there on the deck, but the lad twisted quickly and avoided the blow. One-Eye would have kicked again, but a hail rang along the decks:

"Stand by to repel boarders!"

A feeling of relief swept across Roger. So the Celestine was almost near enough now for a boarding-party to spring from her on to the brigantine.

Roger tugged desperately at the bonds which held him, eager to be on his feet and to join in the coming fray.

One-Eye turned, a volley of oaths breaking from his lips, and he whipped his cutlass from its sheath, while he sprang towards the bulwarks, ready to engage those of the Celestine's crew who leaped aboard.

Roger, his eagerness lending him strength, worked his wrists continually, and presently had the satisfaction of finding that the ropes which bound them were slackening somewhat.

In the excitement that prevailed, none of the pirates had time to spare upon him, and he was left alone. The pirates were clustered by the bulwarks, cutlasses and pistols in their hands, ready to engage the attackers as soon as they boarded.

Working with the courage of despair, Roger had just managed to free one hand from the ropes which held it, when the brigantine lurched and quivered like a stricken thing, and the splintering of woodwork in the region of the bulwarks told him that the Celestine had crashed alongside.

The next instant the air was alive with noise as the triumphant crew of the Celestine swarmed over the bulwarks like an avenging wave. Then came a clatter of steel against steel, and men were locked in mortal combat as they staggered here and there across the heaving decks.

Yells and cries rose high above the din of battle. The attackers were not having everything their own way, for the pirates of Sharktooth were mighty ruffians and well-used to such encounters.

After the first onrush the pirates rallied and drove back the intrepid attackers, forcing them against the bulwarks. The decks ran blood, and men crashed down to lie in pools of crimson which stained the ugly, unwashed decks of the pirate craft.

Again and again did the men from the Celestine re-form and press back upon the pirates, but the fight was arduous. Little by little they won their way along the deck, and it became apparent that it was but a matter of time before the pirates were forced to yield.

Roger tugged madly at his bonds, striving to free himself, but, before he could do so, a figure loomed up above him from the haze of powder-smoke which wreathed the deck.

It was One-Eye, and his single optic glittered balefully.

"So ye are beaten, One-Eye!" cried Roger. "Your time has come, gallows rat!"

"Ay, and your time, too!" hissed the scoundrel, and his arm rose in the air, flourishing a dagger with which he aimed a blow at Roger's heart!

(Never has young Roger Bartlett been in deadlier peril. Will One-Eye's dagger find a victim, or— But that's what you'll discover for yourself when you read next week's gripping instalment of this powerful yarn of adventure on the Spanish Main!)

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By DICKY NUGENT



Who is this mysterious spectre that is terrorising everybody at Lickham Lodge, making the nights so hideous with its mocking laughter and weird shrieks? That's just what Jack Jolly & Co., the heroes of St. Sam's, are determined to find out.

I.

It was Christmas Eve at Lickham Lodge, and Dr. Birchmell and the four St. Sam's juniors who were Mr. Lickham's guests were in high spirits. Outside, the snow-covered landscape gleamed in the bright wintry sun, and skaters' hearts gladdened at the sight of frozen ponds and lakes, for there had been a severe frost overnight. Inside Lickham Lodge, however, the party was by no means a frost; on the contrary, it was proving a grato success.

The only inmate of the stately old Elizabethan house who did not fall full of beans, and pass and goodwill to all men was Mr. Lickham himself. The Fourth Form master wore a distinctly worried look on his face as he paced the library. It seemed almost as if some dark shadow hung across his life. And so, as a matter of fact, it did, for the curtains in the library had not yet been drawn.

"If only they would all go home for Christmas, so that I could do a bunk before I'm twiggled!" he muttered to himself, as he paced two and fro. "But they won't do that, I suppose, so long as there's plenty of frock left. Even that wretched ghost which makes the nices hideous hasn't driven them away yet, so they'll stay over Christmas now, as sure as eggs-—and if the other Lickham turns up—the real owner of Lickham Lodge—it will be a pretty fine show-up for me. In fact, I can see myself spending Christmas in a prison cell on a diet of skilly, instead of turkey and plum-pudding!"

Mr. Lickham shuddered and turned pale at the thought. Of course, the difficulty in which he found himself was really his own fault. If he hadn't boasted in the first place that he was the mysterious Crocus who owned the fine old mansion, he would never have been handed there with five guests. But it was no use calling himself names now. Here they were, anyway, and here they looked like staying. And with the possibility of the other Mr. Lickham turning up at any moment, the master of the Fourth at St. Sam's felt very uneasy.

His gloomy thoughts were rudely interrupted by the entrance of Dr. Birchmell. The rosy and majestic headmaster of St. Sam's was attired in a THE MAJESTY LIBRARY—No. 1,088.

loud cheek suit of sporting cut, and wore a cheerful grin on his face. He gave his host a hearty slap on the back. "Salve, Lickham, old scout!" he cried, mixing up Latin and English with skilful ease. "I've just come in to see if you'll join the skating party. During the night the lake has friz—"

"I presume you mean the lake has froze!" grunted Mr. Lickham, who was just in the mood to correct bad grammar. "The Head shrugged. "Friz or froze, it has turned into solid ice. What about coming down with me and cutting a figger for a couple of hours?"

"Yes, I'll come," said Mr. Lickham, after a pause. "By the way, sir, are you thinking of staying here over Christmas?" "Most decidedly," answered the Head of St. Sam's. "Hurry up and get your skates, Licky!"

Mr. Lickham blushed, and said no more. Meanwhile, on the steps of Lickham Lodge, Jack Jolly, and Merry, and Bright, and Tubby Barrell were waiting for the Head. They filled in the time by discussing the only unforchunit fechtler of their holiday—the Specter of Lickham Lodge.

Since they had been at Lickham Lodge, the employment of the evenings had been spoiled several times by the appearance of a gamarly shrouded figger in various parts of the house. Tubby Barrell was simply terrified of it. Jack Jolly & Co., of course, were of the fearless type who didn't care a rap for ghosts, but even they felt their knees knock together whenever they heard the sound of its mocking laughter and weird shrieks.

Jack Jolly wasn't at all satisfied with this state of affairs. "I think it's about time we put our foot down with a firm hand," he said. "Suppose we arm ourselves to-night, and give the giddy specter what for?" "Yes, rather!" said Merry and Bright at once. Mr. Lickham and the Head, each carrying slates, trotted out from the hall just then, and the subject was dropped. And in the excitement of a jolly good day on the ice, with no end of lark and sport, the matter of the mysterious specter was forgotten until next!

heard that their intentions were to put an end to the spook, he looked quite pleased. "Good look to you in your enterprise, my boys!" he cried. "I wish I could come with you. Unfortunately I am suffering acute pain at the moment, due to eating too many mince-pies this evening."

With that, the Head hopped to, only too glad to reach the sanctuary of his bedroom. II. The juniors then continued their nocturnal journey. Down the stairs they crept, and into the hall, which was faintly illuminated by the ghostly light of the moon. So far, they had seen nothing of the ghost they were looking for, but as they crossed the hall, a sudden peal of mocking laughter smote their ears. The juniors hid in their voices as they heard it. There was no mistake about it, this time. It was the Specter of Lickham Lodge!

Jack Jolly gritted his teeth, and pulled himself together with the cord of his dressing-gown. "Curridge, you chaps!" he whispered. "After all, it can't do more than kill us!" "Yow-ow-ow!" howled Tubby Barrell, miserably. "I'm going back!" But one look at

the Specter peered and staggered under the furious onslaught of Jack Jolly & Co., as if it felt a rain of blows descending on its peals. A moment later it started behaving very strangely, for a ghost, by hitting out right and left! "Collar him!" roared Jack Jolly, a hotman being!

The Fourth Form leader and his chums, hardened by their discovery, did their best to overcome their mysterious opponent. But the Specter of Lickham Lodge turned out to be a fierce scrapper, with a powerful punch, and in spite of their valiant efforts, Jack Jolly & Co. all finished up on the floor.

The specter then turned tail and hopped off! "After him!" shouted Jack Jolly, and the gallant chums jumped to their feet again and rushed in pursuit. Through the hall they chased their quarry, and then into the library. No doubt the specter fully expected to find the library empty at that hour of the night. But such was not the case, for Mr. Lickham was still there, toasting himself in front of a blazing fire, and roaring with laughter over the Christmas number of a comic paper.

Of the Fourth Form, however, not a trace was to be seen. They had jumped up hurriedly, and his roar of laughter changed to a yell of alarm, as the Specter of Lickham Lodge bounded in. "What the thump!" he cried. "Catch him, sir!" yelled Jack Jolly, as he rushed in the doorway. "He's only a spook spook!"

Mr. Lickham was not usually very quick on the uptake. But for once in a way, he jumped to it. He was snoking an orange as the

the stairs was snuff to make the fat junior change his mind. For the gamarly shrouded figger that haunted Lickham Lodge was standing at the foot of them! "There it is!" cried Merry, between chattering teeth. The specter burst into another peal of sinister laughter, which ended up in a gamarly

specter came in. It was the only weapon he had—but it was a good one! With all the strength he had mustered in years of practice on colonnades, he flung it unmercifully in the face of the "ghost."

"Yooooooop! Crooooooo!" roared the Specter of Lickham Lodge, as his foxy oranges fastened itself over his forehead. He seemed staggered by the blow, and pitched over on the carpet and rolled right at Mr. Lickham's feet. "Quick!" snapped Jack Jolly. "Tie him up!"

Mr. Lickham dived a hand in his trousers pocket, and brought forth a stout length of cord. Before you could say "Jack Robinson," the juniors had bound the "ghost" hand and foot.

In the light of the library, the juniors and Mr. Lickham eagerly egged him their captive. He turned out to be a fierce-looking fellow of forin appearance, who snarled as they bent over him. "So you had got me, hadn't you?" he hissed. "And a jolly good job, too, you beauty scoundrel!" said Jack Jolly, his eyes flashing. "But what I want to know is: who are you, and what's the idea of going about dressed up as a specter?"

"Ar-r-r! You would like to know that, just as he concluded that remark, there was a terrific peal on the front-door bell. Mr. Lickham went gamarly white at the sound of it. "Stay here, boys!" he murmured. "I will go and see who our invidious visitor is."

Leaving Jack Jolly & Co. and Tubby Barrell to guard the front-door, Mr. Lickham hurried to the front-door. He drew the bolts and opened the gate portal. Standing before him was a tall, distinguished-looking gentleman who eyed him suspiciously through a glittering monocle.

"And who the merry dickens might you be?" asked the newcomer. Mr. Lickham groaned. He could guess who had turned up. "Who—who are you?" he gasped. The answer confirmed the St. Sam's master's worst fears. "I am Mr. Lickham—the owner of Lickham Lodge!"

THE END.

(Next week's story of Jack Jolly & Co., is absolutely spiffing, chum, so prepare yourself for another hearty laugh.)

