



A Thrilling Adventure Story Staged in the Wilds of East Africa

By CECIL FANSHAW

THE FIRST CHAPTER
A Shock for Plet Merwe!

"I WONDER what the dickens is wrong with that river, Harry, that makes coast natives scared to row up here?" Sid Gibson frowned thoughtfully as he stared at the broad N'gombi River, which flowed slowly between bush-clad banks. "If we could scotch the mystery, I bet uncle's trading-store would double its profits in no time."

Harry Gibson, tall Sid's younger brother, let out a laugh. Round-faced and cheeky-looking, young Harry made light of mysteries, even in East Africa.

"We'll scotch it, Sid!" he grinned. "Sharks are the trouble, I'll bet."

"Sharks can't empty canoes, you chump!" Sid snorted. "But natives say they've found their friends' canoes floating empty, so they won't come up here any more. It's the deuce!"

"Crocs or hippos, then?" suggested the younger lad.

"There are no crocs near the mouth of the N'gombi and no hippos either!" retorted Sid. "And we've never seen anything queer when we run down to sea in the

trading-schooner. The coast natives yarn about a demon."

"Native mumbo jumbo!" Harry grinned. "I'm not so sure."

"Well," exclaimed Harry, "I vote we take the schooner directly we can find time and go demon hunting! Show the black fellows there's really nothing to be scared of, and they'll fairly flock up to trade. I'm game to tackle any sort of demon to help Uncle George," he added warmly.

"Same here!" said Sid, and he gazed from the river to the boulder-strewn kopjes, towering up amongst the bush on the farther bank. What on earth was wrong? he wondered.

All around the two brothers, who wore shirts, shorts, and puttees, and floppy felt sun-hats, was a sea of flat-topped mimosa bush, with red sand under foot. Above the thorny mimosas, vivid green after recent rains, thrust steep rocky kopjes, where baboons barked by day and lions and leopards hunted by night.

It was a brilliant scene, with gorgeous flowers in the rocky crevices, and the sun flaming in a cloudless blue sky. There was no sound except the droning hum of the

N'gombi River, the bark of a baboon, and the scream of an eagle wheeling overhead. All seemed peaceful, but the two brothers frowned in bewilderment. The success of the sisal plantation and trading-store owned by their uncle, old George Gibson, was threatened by the mystery terror of the river.

Situated on the bank of the N'gombi River, the plantation was about ten miles inland from the rocky East African coast.

Annually the small crop of sisal, a cactus-like plant from which fibre rope is made, was run down to the sea in old Gibson's schooner, to be sold at coast towns down south. But there were few native kraals near the plantation, and, since coast natives feared to row up the N'gombi, the store was doing very little trade.

"We must get at the mystery, or we'll all go broke," remarked Sid. "The sooner the——"

"Getting in the sisal crop could wait a day or two," Harry cried eagerly. "Hallo!" He broke off. "What's all that row about?"

To the ears of both lads came the sound of voices raised in anger from the direction of the homestead, mingled with the furious barking of a dog. They distinguished their uncle's crisp tones, the hoarse, guttural voice of a stranger, and the chatter of several natives.

"Come on, Harry!" snapped Sid. "It sounds to me like a Boer butting in and getting nasty about something."

"Then we'll jolly soon shift the bounder!" cried Harry.

The brothers raced through the thorny green mimosa, red dust flying from their heels, and burst out into a big clearing to see the homestead, where they lived with their uncle.

The clearing was planted with long rows of sisal shrubs; a stone-walled, iron-roofed bungalow stood in the centre, with the domed thatched huts of the native workers in the background. In front of the bungalow the two lads saw their uncle, old George Gibson, bony, grizzled, and sun-bronzed. They saw he was confronted by a burly

white man, who wore long trousers thrust into knee-boots, a battered sombrero, and a pistol on his hip, and who had a following of four natives in savage war-paint. Angrily the voices rose on the heat-laden air.

"What's wrong, uncle?" yelled Sid.

At the lad's shout the befeathered natives, who were bronzed, muscular Masai, armed with spears and shields, spun round abruptly. The huge, bearded white man also swung round, and the fact that he was a Boer was revealed by his first words.

"Machtig!" He exploded, his little eyes flaming. "You cubs clear out quick, or I vos set der Masai to beat you off. Ja! I haf come to talk business. Footsack!"

"Footsack yourself!" Sid retorted. "What's the fellow want, uncle?"

"The schooner, my lad." Old Gibson laughed shortly.

"Our trading-schooner?" cried Harry. "What a nerve!"

"He won't have it, my boy!" said old Gibson firmly, his lean face red with anger. "I won't take his money, and I'm not scared of his threats."

Round on old Gibson whirled the hefty Boer.

"Und I vos say I will haf the schooner!" he bellowed, his black beard bristling. "Not another can be bought for three hundred miles! I offer you sixty pounds!"

"It's not for sale!" snapped old Gibson. "That's final!"

"One hundred pounds!" roared the Boer.

"No; not at any price!"

"One hundred and fifty!"

"Get out!" barked old Gibson as Sid and Harry stood by with fists clenched. "I don't know why you offer twice its value, but——"

"Ja! I go!" The Boer gulped maliciously. "But I go with der schooner! Run, you black dogs!" he barked fiercely at his Masai followers. "Get aboard der schooner while I drive these 'rooineks' indoors!" And out came his heavy pistol.

Then things happened at racing speed.

With whoops of glee, the feathered Masai made to dash off to the trading-schooner,



Teeth clashing as he bounded in and out, Buster was like a streak of lightning. Furiously but vainly the savages lunged at the whirling hound as they skipped and hopped, with dust rising in clouds. (See Chapter 1.)

which was moored to the river bank at the far end of the sisal plantation. The grinning Boer held up old Gibson and motioned him into the bungalow.

Plainly the ruffian ignored the two lads, also he ignored Sid's great hound, a tawny beast of African breed as big as a mastiff, which was again barking furiously. But forward leapt Sid and Harry, to unleash the hound in a twinkling, send him at the whooping Masai, then hurl themselves at the bearded Boer.

"Round 'em up, Buster!" Sid yelled at his hound.

From the Masai burst shouts of anger, and their great spears flashed in the sunlight; but Buster was amongst them with

a booming bay, teeth clashing as he bounded in and out like a streak of lightning. Furiously but vainly the savages lunged at the whirling hound as they skipped and hopped, with the red dust rising in clouds. The same instant the big Boer sent Sid reeling against Harry with a round-arm swipe, then his pistol glinted as the hammer came up.

"No, you don't, you bearded bounder! You don't shoot my dog!" Sid roared.

With an effort Sid recovered his balance, brushed past Harry, and dived into the Boer's legs. He got a hold round the ruffian's ankles, heaved mightily, and brought him crashing down. Bang went the pistol, but the bullet whistled harmlessly

skywards; then Sid and the Boer were rolling on the ground, fighting furiously.

"Grab his pistol!" Sid gasped. "Quick, Harry! He's too strong for me!"

With a shout of anger, young Harry plunged forward, but a flying shield, hurled by a Masai warrior, caught the lad across his knees and he pitched headlong. It was old George Gibson who pounced on the Boer's thick wrist, to wrestle for the loaded weapon.

Pandemonium raged outside the bungalow, with the roars of the Boer, the howls of the Masai, and Buster's frenzied baying, as he leapt and tore blankets and slashed at brown legs. The racket brought the plantation "boys" running to the scene. But directly the "boys" saw the plumed Masai warriors, dreaded by all the other tribes, they all took to their heels except the head boy, a strapping Swahili, by name Sixpence.

"Me fight um, bwana!" Sixpence belowed, and waded in with a heavy hoe.

That very moment, old George Gibson wrenched free the Boer's pistol and scrambled to his feet. Instantly Sid bounded up, but the Boer rose, too, to fall upon the lad with a hurricane of blows.

Crack! Smack! In vain Sid let drive at the ruffian's bearded face, getting home a couple of straight lefts that shook the fellow but didn't stop him. Borne back by the gnarled, whirling fists, Sid was vaguely aware of the tumult all about him, the fierce baying of his hound, the howls of the Masai, and the shouts of Sixpence as his hoe thudded on stout shields of buffalo hide.

For a few seconds more there was a wild mix-up, spears and brown faces dim-seen through the swirling dust-clouds. But, leaping to his brother's help, Harry brought the Boer down again by diving for his ankles. With a couple of shots over their heads, grizzled old Gibson sent the Masai scattering, with Buster bounding after them, Sixpence whooping and brandishing his hoe.

"Well, done, my lads! Sixpence and Buster will see those savages off," old Gibson

laughed delightedly. "Let that Boer up, and we'll send him trekking, too."

Panting, dishevelled, but triumphant, the two brothers rose to their feet, and up scrambled the big, dust-grimed Boer. One glance he shot at the spears dropped by his routed followers, another at his own pistol, firmly gripped by old Gibson, and shook his fist in the latter's face.

"Ja! You und der cubs win now, rooi-nek!" he breathed thickly. "But you don't beat Piet Merwe so easy as that! I don't offer to buy der schooner again—I take it!"

With that the huge ruffian spun on his heel, then tramped off, to vanish in the bush. Sid and Harry sent defiant laughter echoing after him, and more loudly they laughed seeing Sixpence returning with a broad grin and Buster with his tail up.

"I bet that outfit won't come back in a hurry!" Harry whooped. "They've left us some jolly fine spears and quite a good pistol, uncle. Who the dickens is that Piet Merwe?"

"I never saw him before, my lad, and I don't expect to see him again," smiled old Gibson. "You and Sid were too quick for him."

"But what d'you suppose he wants the schooner for?" exclaimed Sid, the keener-witted of the two brothers. "It's a queer thing for a fellow to offer a heap more for a thing than it's worth, and to get so fighting mad when he's refused that he lugs out a pistol. He must want it mighty badly for some funny game!"

But none of the trio could solve the problem. All laughed at the furious Merwe's threats, but decided to sleep on the schooner for a few nights in case the ruffian did try to steal it stealthily. A second thrashing would certainly dishearten his savage followers.

Then Sid switched off to the mystery of the N'gombi River, suggesting that they ran down to the mouth of the ill-omened river in the schooner, to make a determined effort to clear up the mystery.

"Let Merwe go to hang! We aren't running from him," laughed the sinewy lad. "But we'd double the store trade if we could scotch that mystery, uncle. We'd

have all the coast natives paddling up here in canoes."

"Yes," frowned old Gibson. "Later, perhaps! But that new bush clearing can't wait, lads. Take half the boys, and get at it at once. I'll want Sixpence and the rest here."

Both lads were a trifle disappointed, for they were longing to probe the mystery of the supposed demon, which was said by terrified natives to haunt the mouth of the N'gombi.

After the rout of the Boer and his Masai, however, the plantation boys had plucked up enough courage to emerge from their huts. Off went Sid and Harry with half a dozen of them, and with tawny Buster trotting at their heels.

The lads were making for the new bush clearing over a mile away, where old Gibson had discovered a patch of excellent black soil, which he urgently wanted to plant with sisal. The lads' job was to clear the ground of tree-stumps and every boulder. Little did either dream in what strange surroundings they would next see their uncle, nor did they dream of the hair-raising experience awaiting them!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Raid!

"EVERYTHING sounds jolly quiet, Sid," laughed Harry. "D'you think uncle's pushed off to scotch that river mystery without us? I shouldn't half be fed up if he did!"

Sid frowned anxiously.

Dusk was at hand, the flaming red sun sinking rapidly behind the towering rocky kopjes, and both lads were returning homewards from the new bush clearing with the six boys and tawny Buster. The only sound in their ears was the droning hum of the N'gombi River, and the occasional coughing bark of some hunting leopard, already astir in the darkening bush. Sid thought the silence mighty suspicious.

"I can't hear any boys whooping round their huts, Harry," he said slowly. "They usually kick up no end of a racket when they've finished work. It seems something's wrong. Come on!"

Both lads broke into a run, with Buster bounding beside them, the black boys running at their heels and glancing at each other uneasily. Suddenly the little party burst from the bush into the sisal plantation and pulled up with gasps of dismay.

In the fast-fading light they saw the iron-roofed bungalow, with the thatched huts of the boys beyond. And they saw that nearly every window was broken, the front door of the bungalow smashed and wrenched from its hinges, and saw wrecked furniture strewn in the veranda.

"Great Scott! The place has been looted!" yelled Harry.

"There's been the deuce of a scrap!" snapped Sid. "Uncle, where are you?"

Twice Sid shouted, even as he leapt forward furiously, but there was no reply to his ringing hails. Even the thatched huts seemed deserted, and there was no sound except the sullen hum of the broad N'gombi.

Filled with dismay and fury, the two brothers dashed into the littered veranda, to see smashed boxes and chairs lying everywhere. A glance through a broken window-pane showed a scene of ruin indoors also, but it was plain that the invaders had not stopped to steal much.

"They've just smashed the place up," said Sid. "Uncle!" he roared again. "Sixpence! Sixpence!"

No voice made reply. The six boys, who had been with the brothers, bunched together, chattering in terror. Buster growled threateningly and showed his white teeth as he sniffed around. Fearful for their uncle's fate, Sid and Harry tore through the bungalow, searching frantically, and Sid almost went head-foremost over a dark shape lying huddled in the back doorway.

"It's Sixpence!" he gasped.

Sixpence it was. The strapping Swahili was not dead, but he was unconscious and breathing heavily. The two lads' shouts roused him, however, and he looked up, blinking and rolling his white eyeballs.

"What happened, Sixpence?" Sid barked, on his knees.

"The Boer, bwana!"

"That big scoundrel who came here with four Masai!" Both brothers gasped with fury.

Sixpence nodded. It was plain the Swahili had had a crack on his skull which would have killed a white man, but Sixpence had only been stunned, and was fast recovering his scattered wits.

"Boer came back with ten Masai, masters, and rushed suddenly from the bush with spears," he groaned, trying to rise. "Plantation boys run plenty fast, but Masai catch two and spear them, same time Boer and the rest attack me and the big master."

"Where is he—the big master?" asked Sid, knowing that Sixpence meant old George Gibson.

"Taken away, bwana," came the hoarse reply. "In um schooner."

"In the schooner!" Sid and Harry roared together.

Fury gripped them both. After all, the villainous Piet Merwe had made good his threat to seize the trading schooner. In addition, he had kidnapped old Gibson, and his savage followers had wantonly wrecked the bungalow to avenge the morning's defeat. How Merwe had so quickly gathered more Masai warriors bewildered Sid.

"The Masai country's miles from here, away across dense jungle," he gasped.

"Boer left um hiding back in bush when he come here this morning," said Sixpence.

"Ah!" barked Sid. "Then where's he taken the big master?" he shouted, excitedly shaking the Swahili's shoulder. "Do you know what his game is?"

Fortunately Sixpence had learnt something of Merwe's plans. After being struck down by a Masai war-club, he had heard the Boer and the savages roaring triumphantly before unconsciousness swept over him. And now he flung out an ebony forearm, pointing away across the N'gombi River the rocky, bush-clad hills beyond.

"Boer go take big master to um Masai kraal," he cried, trembling with fury. "He will go down to sea in schooner, then up Kipia River. Large Masai kraal up along that Kipia River, and Boer go leave big master with um chief."

"Why? Why?" yelled Sid and Harry.

"Sell um guns!"

"To the Masai chief?"

"Yes, bwana. I heard. Boer want um schooner to fetch guns for Masai plenty times. Make big trade in guns along Masai!"

Gasps of fury and dismay escaped from both brothers.

Merwe's fiendish game was at last plain. He meant to run rifles to the war-like Masai, buying the weapons and ammunition from Arab coasting dhows, then running his villainous cargo up the Kipia River to a powerful Masai chief there. For his gun-running schemes, he had determined to secure the Gibsons' trading schooner at any cost.

"The boulder will plant uncle with the Masai as a hostage," yelled Harry, "to prevent anyone stopping his game! We'll jolly well have to rescue uncle before Merwe starts his gun-running. But how the deuce can we?"

Sid said nothing, but his eyes flamed.

Obviously once Merwe had got guns aboard the trading schooner and started to arm the Masai, both he and his savage allies would be too powerful to tackle. And already he had slipped away down the N'gombi River with old George Gibson in the schooner, and he would swiftly dash round the coast, then up the Kipia River into Masai country. How could he be caught?

"I've got it!" Sid shouted, in sudden triumph. "The Wezi tribe will help us. Wezis fear the Masai, and directly they know that a Boer means to trade guns to the Masai, they won't lose a second in helping us! We'll surround that Masai kraal on the Kipia River with Wezi warriors just as soon as Merwe's landed uncle there. We'll catch that ruffian of a Boer before he's got time to get away, and we'll rescue uncle and get back our schooner."

"But the Wezi tribe live miles off, bwana," exclaimed Sixpence, "beyond the Masai country!"

"We'd never be in time!" gasped Harry. "Through all that jungle——"

"We're not going through jungle!" whooped Sid. "We'll go down the N'gombi River in the schooner's old boat, then run up the coast to the Wezi country. We'll land and collect Wezi warriors, and bring them down on Piet Merwe's allies in no time! Come on! We'll beat that black-guard Boer after all!"

With a whoop of glee, Harry leapt after his brother, but Sixpence stopped them.

"Not go down the N'gombi River in um small boat, master!" he cried fearfully. "The demon lives there! No canoe can——"

"Blow that mystery now!" bawled Harry. "We jolly well must! Come on, Sixpence!"

Frantically, Sixpence protested that it would be worse than useless to attempt to rush up the coast by way of the mouth of the ill-omened N'gombi River. He vowed that the occupants of a small boat could never survive. But Sid and Harry meant to rescue their uncle at any cost, and knew they would have no chance to be in time if they went across country. Merwe

would shortly be off for rifles in the stolen schooner, and the Masai would hide old George Gibson where no one could find him!

"We've got to surround the Masai kraal with Wezis before that Boer's left it!" Sid cried. "A boat down the N'gombi is the only way."

Still Sixpence hesitated. The strapping Swahili would face a charging lion or a

spear-armed Masai, but greatly he feared the mystery terror of N'gombi River. Seeing that Sid and Harry were determined, however, he screwed up his courage, though his teeth chattered.

"Good for you, Sixpence!" cried Harry. "Now to find weapons. I bet we're likely to need some."

In the wrecked bungalow, however, they



"What happened, Sixpence?" Sid barked, on his knees beside the half-conscious Swahili. "Boer came back with ten Masai, masters, and rushed suddenly from the bush with spears," he groaned, trying to rise. (See Chapter 2.)

could only find an axe and a boathook, for the ruffian Merwe had stolen all the rifles when he rushed the place. Nothing daunted, the plucky lads and black Sixpence rushed down to the river, to find their old boat, which was luckily moored some distance up-stream from the schooner, so the raiders had missed it.

"I'm not going to risk Buster," said Sid.

"He might get speared if there's a big scrap."

And he left his protesting tawny hound in the charge of the six boys who had worked with the lads in the new clearing.

Two minutes later the boat was rushing down the N'gombi River, its anxious crew of three tugging at the oars.

Caught by the current, the small craft made excellent speed, and Harry saw the bush-clad banks reel past, dim-seen in the falling dusk. At last the thunder of breakers on rocks reached the ears of the trio. They were nearing the sea, and all three were keyed up with triumph and excitement.

Wide now was the Ngombi River, running between gigantic beetling cliffs whose frowning crests were outlined sharply against the sky. Harry heard the scream of gulls whirling overhead. He glanced up at the mountainous cliffs, then let out a whoop.

"We'll raise the Wezis!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "Won't that bounder Merwe get a shock when we round him up in the Masai kraal! We've got him beat!"

"Not yet!" Sid laughed shortly.

"Well, I bet the mystery demon doesn't stop us now!" Harry hooted. "We're quite close to the river-mouth. I bet it's all a yarn——"

That very instant the lad felt something grip the blade of his oar. He felt a violent tug, then the oar was whipped from his hands and pulled under water!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

A Fight for Life!

"**G**REAT smoke!" roared Harry. "What the deuce did that?"

The boat rocked violently as the lad sprawled backwards, but nimbly he recovered his balance, shouting in surprise and anger. From Sid burst a shout of dismay as the boat spun round, partly out of control. As for Sixpence, the black face of the muscular Swahili went grey with fear and his eyes bulged.

"The demon, masters!" he yelled. "I warned——"

"Demon be hanged!" bawled Harry. "Where's the spare oar?"

The shout died on his lips, for something like a black snake shot up out of the water, to grip the gunwale of the boat like a vice. Followed another and another, snaky arms that waved like the trunks of elephants, seeming to search for prey. In a second the horrified occupants of the boat saw half a dozen menacing arms, studded with deadly suckers.

"It's an octopus!" roared Sid. "That axe—quick!"

Plain it was that the lads' boat was attacked by an octopus, and a perfect monster at that, with tentacles many feet long. Before Sid could reach the axe, two more thick tentacles were thrown on to the gunwale to grip it, and cause the boat to careen wildly.

There burst from Sixpence a howl of horror, for the black fellow felt a snaky arm like a steel cable flung round his naked waist, felt a ferocious heave that almost dragged him overboard, felt the sting of the deadly suckers.

"Save me, bwana!" he shrieked, clinging to the boat for dear life. "The demon! Chop um!"

Wildly and terribly rocked the boat as Sixpence struggled in the monster's grip. But Sid was on his feet with a yell and a bound, his jaws clenched, the heavy axe swung above his head.

Thud!

Down smashed the blade, to sever the horrid tentacle and bite deep into the gunwale. The severed arm writhed like a snake on the boat's bottom, but even as Sid gave a roar of triumph, more of the brute's tentacles came lashing at the lads. The air seemed filled with them.

Quick as lightning one wrapped round Sid, and the lad felt as though circled by fire. Again Sixpence was gripped. Harry felt himself seized by the leg. Followed a fight to the death that was like a nightmare.

Thud! Crash! went the axe, lopping off another arm of the sea monster. Slashing at the tentacle that was tugging at Harry's leg, Sid almost lost his balance.



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AT GRIPS WITH THE DEVIL-FISH

H.A.

The increasing darkness added to the horror of the moment. None knew whence another arm would rise and strike, and vainly Harry roared and slashed the water with an oar. All the time the boat rocked and heaved, threatening to spill the fighting occupants into the water, and Sixpence's howls of terror re-echoed from the frowning cliffs.

"Pull, Harry! Grab an oar, Sixpence!" roared Sid, sweat running down his face as he braced himself, swinging the axe. "Pull away from the brute!"

"Can't! It's got us anchored!" yelled Harry.

In fact, the giant squid, the biggest of all octopi, had got a grip on a boulder under water with three of its arms; with others it was trying to overturn the boat, which could not be pulled away from it. Once in the water, not one of the trio would have a chance for their lives.

For seconds that seemed hours the wild fight raged. In vain Sid lopped off three arms, saving himself and Sixpence by a hair's-breadth. The monster grimly continued its attacks, and its grip on the boat was not relaxed.

"We done finished!" moaned Sixpence.

"Not yet, by thunder!" Harry shouted.

Just as Sid tugged furiously to release his axe, of which the blade was stuck fast in the gunwale, following a mighty blow, Harry spotted the boathook and whipped it up with a mighty shout. All seemed up, for Sid's weapon was stuck and a tentacle whipped round his thigh, but Harry flung himself forward with the boathook.

In deadly peril, the lad glared over the side down into the dark water. He could see the squid's horrid head, with pale eyes like great saucers, could see its horny beak, and could make out its gigantic body and anchoring tentacles.

Another arm waved in the air about his head, but he ground his teeth and drove the boathook between the baleful eyes.

Followed appalling convulsions, the water boiled and bubbled, and the squid's arms lashed and writhed in the air. Harry felt a jar as the hook's sharp spike drove

home, but he wrenched his weapon free. Then downwards he plunged it again and again, stabbing at eyes and beak.

"Boat going!" howled Sixpence.

In fact, it seemed that the boat was in the grip of a whirlpool as it spun and rocked. Undaunted, however, Harry lunged more fiercely than ever, and the same moment Sid wrenched free his axe, to lop off the arms gripping the gunwale. A last stab Harry gave, then a roar of triumph left his lips as he saw the monster fall away, to sink rapidly. The sharp spike of the boathook had inflicted mortal blows, also the defeated brute had lost most of its ferocious sucker-armed tentacles.

"It'll die!" Harry forced out a whoop as he reeled backwards. "We've killed your demon, Sixpence! So we've scotched the mystery of N'gombi River, after all! But who'd have thought of an octopus?"

Sid was too breathless to speak for a minute, and Sixpence was gulping down air like a man recovering from drowning. All three collapsed on to seats, then they took stock of each other, to find each was bleeding where the deadly tentacles had got a hold.

"You save life of Sixpence, masters!" panted the muscular Swahili. "And you kill um demon!"

"It was a mighty close call, by Jove!" Sid gasped, glancing at the gashed gunwale, and the severed portions of tentacles lying on the boat's bottom. "But we're through, and I reckon we'll be in time to save uncle from Merwe and the Masai ruffians, after all! Grab the oars, then we'll hoist sail when we reach the sea."

In a very short time the boat reached the open sea, then went flying up the rock-bound East African coast under sail. An hour later the triumphant lads and black Sixpence landed in Wezi country.

Then they had little difficulty in persuading the Wezi chief to turn out his warriors as soon as the fellow understood that the ruffianly Boer, Merwe, meant to trade rifles to his enemies, the Masai; for once the Masai had got enough guns they would wipe the Wezi off the map of Africa.

"Now Piet Merwe's going to get a shock!"

whooped Harry as the brothers headed for the Masai kraal, on the Kipia River, with a hundred Wezi warriors. Piet Merwe did.

The Masai kraal was surrounded and rushed at dawn, the surprised inhabitants getting no chance to make much resistance. Sid and Harry found their uncle bound in the Masai chief's hut, and they swiftly liberated him.

"But how on earth——" began that astonished individual.

"No time to explain now," gasped Sid, gazing out of the hut. "Quick, Harry, that rotter Merwe is bolting."

The Boer, seeing the game was up, was racing for the schooner. It was a bold bid for freedom, and it would have succeeded but for the promptitude of the two boys. Racing like the wind, they caught up with the Boer and charged at him recklessly.

Fighting like a wild-cat, Merwe struggled and scratched, and punched and kicked, but Sid and Harry clung to him like glue.

"The game's up!" gasped Sid. "We've got you, you rotter!"

Sixpence, running up, an expansive smile on his dusky face, decided the issue, and behind Sixpence came a number of Wezi warriors. Sid and Harry left the Boer to them.

"No gun-running for you, Merwe!" cried both lads triumphantly. "You're for jug."

Vainly the captured Boer struggled in the grip of Wezi warriors, but he was dumped aboard the schooner he had stolen—as a prisoner! Then Sid and Harry told their uncle how they had managed to arrive in time to rescue him and foil the Boer.

"We've scotched the mystery of the N'gombi River, thanks to Merwe!" exclaimed Sid joyfully. "Of course, that monster squid never attacked our big schooner, so we'd never have seen it if we hadn't been forced to come down in the old boat."

"I bet coast natives'll flock up to trade now!" whooped Harry.

Directly the coast fellows learnt of the death of the "demon," they did, paddling up in canoes, unmolested. The Gibsons' store did a roaring trade in consequence.

High Days & Holidays



CAMPING OUT.

By Dick Penfold

WHETHER the rain is teeming down,
Or winds are raging madly;
No camper-out will wear a frown—
We take our pleasures gladly!
And if King Sol should chance to smile
Upon our gay activities;
Sure, camping will be well worth while—
A lovely life to live it is!

In one of Farmer Hayseed's fields
Our tents are gleaming whitely;
A feast of pleasures camping yields
To schoolboys gay and sprightly.
One glorious whirl of happy days,
When every heart rejoices;
By night, around the camp-fire's rays,
We blend our happy voices!

Bob Cherry and his cheery chums
Are old and tried campaigners;
They never grouse, whatever comes,
Nor join the sad complainers.
With Billy Bunter, I'm afraid,
It's quite another story;
We hear his plaintive voice, dismayed:
"The dinner's burnt to glory!"

But Bunter's face grows longer still
When camping days are over;
And we must "trek" across the hill
To catch the train at Dover,
Back to our famous school in Kent,
With faces brown as berries;
Passing from "tent" to "discontent"—
(The jest, of course, is Cherry's!).