



MUTINY ON THE SPINDRIFT!

By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A WILD NIGHT

ONE! The deep note from the old clock-tower of Greyfriars sounded through the night, and Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory.

The old school was buried in slumber.

In the Close the wind from the sea rustled the branches of the old elms. Far in the distance the waves rolled on the rocks of the bay with a dull boom that could be heard by wakeful ears at the school.

It was but seldom that the hour of one, booming out from the clock-tower, was heard by junior ears. As

a rule, the Greyfriars fellows were fast asleep. But there was at least one fellow wakeful in the school now. Vernon-Smith was grinning as he sat up in bed and called out in cautious tones:

"You fellows awake?"

A mutiny at sea—with only two schoolboys and the wounded captain to keep the desperate mutineers at bay! A vivid, life-and-death experience on the Spindrift is the result of a midnight escapade of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry of Greyfriars!

There was no reply. The steady breathing of the sleeping juniors and the deep snore of Billy Bunter alone broke the stillness of the

Remove dormitory.

"Wharton! Cherry!"

Still silence.

Vernon-Smith stepped out of bed and approached the bed of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. Wharton was sleeping soundly as the Bounder of Greyfriars bent over him.

Vernon-Smith shook him by the shoulder.

"Lemme alone!" murmured the junior drowsily.

"Wake up!"

Wharton's eyes opened.

"Hallo! What——"

The Bounder laughed softly.

"Have you forgotten?"

Harry Wharton sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"By Jove! I had—I was asleep!"

The Bounder laughed again unpleasantly.

"Convenient to be asleep, isn't it, when one doesn't want to keep a promise?"

Wharton flushed hotly in the darkness.

"You cad! Do you think I was pretending?"

"Well, you're awake now," said the Bounder, without answering the question. "If you're going to keep your word, now's your chance. Bob Cherry's fast asleep, too; or he's putting it on."

"Rotter!" said Wharton angrily.

"You agreed to call us!"

"Well, I've called you."

"Bob!"

Deep breathing came from Bob Cherry's bed.

"Bob, old man!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice. "'Tain't rising-bell!"

"It's one o'clock!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, rats!"

"If you want to funk it——"

Bob Cherry rolled out of bed, and disentangled himself from the bed-clothes. He groped his way towards Vernon-Smith in the darkness.

"Where are you, Smithy?" he asked.

"What do you want?"

"I want to punch your head."

Vernon-Smith backed away.

"Look here, Bob Cherry——"

"I'm looking—looking for you," said Bob Cherry. "I think you mentioned the word 'funk,' didn't you, Smithy?"

"Look here," said the Bounder, "I don't want any row now! Yow-oh!"

Biff!

Bump!

Bob Cherry's heavy fist smote the Bounder, and he sat down on the dormitory floor with sudden violence.

"Ow! You beast! Oh!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"If you still think I'm funking, Smithy, you can get up, and I'll show you I'm not a funk before we start. Plenty of time."

Vernon-Smith scrambled to his feet.

"Hallo! What's the row?" came Bolsover major's voice. "What are you waking us up for in the middle of the night?"

"I'm having a little argument with Smithy."

"Well, shut up!"

"Yes, shut up!" said Frank Nugent. "What's the row?"

"The rowfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur. "What is the cause of the wakefulness of my esteemed chums?"

"Cheese it, Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "We don't want a fight here now. If we get the prefects on the scene, Smithy will say we've done it on purpose to be stopped from going out."

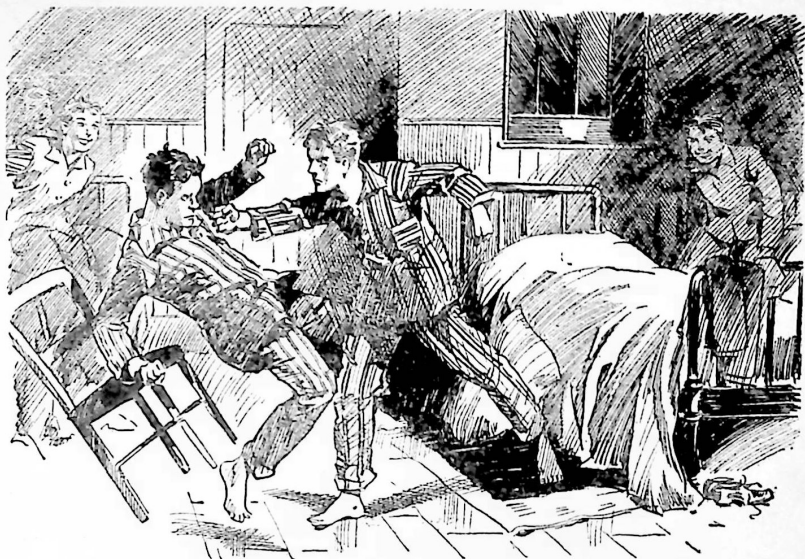
The Bounder snarled.

"I believe that's your little game, too!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, dry up!"

"Well, I've woke you up, as we agreed," said the Bounder sulkily.

"It's past one o'clock. If you're



"Look here," said the Bounder, "I don't want any row now! Yow—oh!" Bliff! Bump! Bob Cherry's heavy fist smote the Bounder, and he sat down on the dormitory floor with sudden violence.

going out in the boat, now's your chance. If you don't go, you'll have to own up to all the Remove that you're funking it."

"We're going!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

A gust of wind from the sea rattled the windows of the dormitory, and the trees in the Close creaked and shivered.

Nugent shivered as he sat up in bed.

"It's blowing to-night!" he said.

"Oh, it's only a puff of wind," said Vernon-Smith. "But if Wharton and Cherry feel nervous, they'd better stay in."

"They'd better stay in, anyway," said Nugent angrily. "We didn't calculate on a blow coming on to-night. There'll be a gale before morning. Are you dressing, Harry?"

"Yes."

"Then you're going?"

"Yes."

"It's too risky."

"Oh, we shall be all right."

"It's all rot!" said Johnny Bull, getting out of bed. "Look here, you shan't go, Wharton! It is going to be rough on the bay before morning."

"Can't be helped."

"Ass! The boat may capsize."

"We shall be careful."

"You may be drowned."

"Chaps born to be hanged can't be drowned," remarked Bolsover major comfortably.

"Look here, you're silly asses to go!" said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "Most of the Remove were awake now. It can be put off to another night."

"We're going to-night," said Bob Cherry.

"But the wind's rising."

"We shall be back before it blows very hard, I hope."

"But if you're not?"

"We shall have to chance that. We're not going to have Smithy going round the school saying that we've funk'd doing what he's done!"

"Faith, I'd rather let Smithy rip than take a boat out on the bay to-night!" remarked Micky Desmond.

Bob Cherry and Wharton finished dressing. The wind was certainly rising, and the trees in the Close were not silent for a moment. Again the dormitory windows rattled under a heavy gust.

"You can come down and let us out, Smithy," said Harry Wharton.

The Bounder hesitated.

"Look here," he said, "the wind's really rising. If you want to put it off——"

"And have you crowing over us to-morrow, you cad," said Bob Cherry. "We're going to-night."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, please yourself," he said.

"The boat's ready to-night, too," said Wharton. "I don't think it will be very rough, either. And it's only a quarter of an hour's pull out to the Shoulder, Frank."

"You oughtn't to go," said Nugent uneasily. "I don't like the sound of the wind."

"It will be all right."

"Look here——"

"I'm waiting for you," said the Bounder.

"We're ready."

Vernon-Smith opened the door of the Remove dormitory and the chums followed him out into the passage. The dormitory door closed behind them.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

BLOWN OUT TO SEA!

GREYFRIARS was buried in silence and slumber.

Save for the wind, there was no sound in the old School House as the three juniors trod softly upon tiptoe along the passage.

They made no sound as they passed the door of Mr. Quelch's room. The master of the Remove was a light sleeper. But they passed the door in silence, and descended the stairs.

Harry Wharton's face was very grim. He was thinking. The chums of the Remove were going out into the dark, windy night; but that was not all. The previous night Vernon-Smith and Bolsover major had gone out in a boat on the bay, and the Bounder had challenged the captain of the Remove to do the same.

Harry Wharton had refused the challenge at first. He had broken bounds before, certainly—he was not a perfect youth. But he didn't want to break bounds for no reason but to show that he dared do it.

Harry Wharton and the Bounder were old rivals, and Vernon-Smith was always looking for a chance to score. And he had not hesitated to use the word "funk"—a word always unpleasant to schoolboy ears. And others had echoed it.

Wharton had ended by accepting the challenge, and had agreed to go that night—if the Bounder called him. The Bounder was not likely to fail to do that.

Wharton and Bob Cherry were to take the boat out and row to the Shoulder—the great cliff across the bay—as the Bounder and Bolsover major had done.

They had not calculated upon rough weather setting in. But if the

weather had been rougher still, it would not have stopped them. It was better to face danger on the sea than to face the sneers and innuendoes of the Bounder the next day, and the covert mockery of the other fellows.

Wharton had been "chipped" into accepting the challenge, and he would certainly be chipped still more if he drew back from the task after accepting it.

The Bounder stopped at the hall window and opened it silently. Outside, the wind was blowing in great gusts, and the trees groaned and rustled. From the distant shore the boom of the sea could be heard.

"My hat, it's rough!" said Bob Cherry.

"Are you going?" asked the Bounder, with an undertone of mockery in his voice.

"Yes."

"I'll close the window after you—and wait up. Throw up a stone to the dormitory window when you get back."

"Right!"

The two juniors climbed out of the window and dropped to the ground outside.

"Bon voyage!" grinned the Bounder.

He closed the window.

"Come on, Bob!" said Harry Wharton shortly.

They tramped in the darkness across the Close. They reached the school wall and climbed it, and dropped into the road.

The wind came sweeping down the road, and

they held back against the wall for a minute or two while the gust passed.

Bob Cherry caught his breath.

"We're a pair of fools, Harry!" he said.

Wharton grunted.

"I know we are, Bob!"

"We ought to have hammered Smithy instead of taking up his silly challenge!"

"I know we ought."

"It'll be rough out on the bay."

"Can't be helped!"

Bob Cherry hesitated.

"Look here, Harry," he said at last, "we didn't count on bad



Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry climbed out of the hall window and dropped to the ground outside. "Bon voyage!" grinned the Bounder.

weather. It wasn't in the programme. Let's chuck it ! "

Wharton smiled bitterly.

" And have Smithy crowing over us for ever and ever ? No, thanks ! "

" We could go another night. "

" The weather will get worse. There won't be a chance for days. Something may get out, too, to prevent us going—if the prefects got a hint of it— "

" Phew ! "

" It would be like Smithy to let a word drop, so that we should be prevented from going again—so that he should have the whip-hand of us. "

" I suppose it would ! " grunted Bob Cherry.

" He would like to get us labelled as funks, " said Wharton savagely. " It's no good, Bob ; we've got to go, or else admit that we don't want to do it ! "

" I suppose you're right, " said Bob. " But—but it's rotten ! Come on ! "

They tramped down the dark road, with the wind whirling past them.

It was a short walk to the sea from Greyfriars School, but in the strong wind it was slow going. But they came out on the seashore at last.

The night was dark, and the wind was blowing the great drift of clouds inland. On the wide bay the stars were glimmering. The dim light showed the sleeping village of Pegg, and Cliff House School away to the left. The waves were breaking on the beach with a dull, heavy murmur.

Out at sea little white crests danced and glimmered in the starlight.

But the chums of the Remove did not hesitate. They dragged a boat down to the water's edge. There were a good many boats on the beach, drawn up beyond the reach of high tide. It was not easy work launching the boat, and the juniors were drenched with surf before they succeeded.

But the boat was launched at last, the rudder was shipped, and Harry Wharton sat down to the oars. Bob Cherry steered as he pulled out to sea.

The water was chopping and foaming round the boat as it glided out over the bay.

The little craft rocked dangerously. Wharton pulled on grimly.

They had to reach the low belt of sand under the shadow of the Shoulder and upon a high, flat rock to leave something as a proof that they had been there—to be found the next day by the Remove fellows.

And they were determined to go through with it, though at every moment the sea was growing rougher and the wind increasing in violence.

" My hat, how it blows ! " gasped Bob Cherry at last.

" It will help us back, Bob. "

" It won't help us back ; it's veering ! "

" Can't be helped. "

The wind had been hammering at them, but now it veered, and progress became easier. It was blowing to the south now—hard and strong. Another shift of the wind, and it blew off-shore, and now progress became quite easy.

The boat made good progress over the water, and the great shadowy mass of the Shoulder loomed over them.

Bob Cherry peered anxiously past Wharton.

" Steady ! " he said. " We don't want to go to pieces on the rocks ! Get the oars in ! "

Wharton pulled the oars inboard.

The boat rocked on towards the Shoulder.

Bump !

The gunwale bumped against the big rock, rising abruptly from the sea, which was the goal. Farther

on, the Shoulder loomed up huge and threatening.

"Hold her a minute, Bob!"

"Right!"

Bob Cherry caught hold of the rough rock and held on. Wharton drew a broken cricket-stump from his coat, and clambered on the rock, and jammed the stump into a crevice. That was the proof that the juniors had accomplished their task. Whatever happened now, the Bounder would not be able to say that they had shirked it.

But what was to happen now?

Wharton jumped back into the boat, and shoved off from the rock.

"Now we've got to get in, Bob."

Bob Cherry set his teeth.

"That won't be so easy," he said.

"Hang the wind!"

The bows were turned towards the distant shore, and Harry Wharton bent to the oars.

But the boat made no progress.

The wind was now blowing sheer off-shore, and it was increasing in force.

Bob Cherry relinquished the tiller, and took one of the oars, and the two juniors pulled away desperately.

After ten minutes of fierce pulling they looked round to see what progress they had made.

Bob Cherry uttered a startled exclamation.

The boat was farther off-shore than before.

"Harry!" Bob's voice was hoarse with exertion. "Look!"

Wharton nodded grimly.

"I can see it!" he said.

"We're being blown off-shore!"

"Yes."

"Blown out to sea!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes—looks like it!"

They said no more.

Each of them realised the deadly peril that menaced them. If they did not succeed in pulling back to the beach, they would be blown out to sea—out into the wild North Sea that night.

They pulled desperately at the oars. The minutes passed—minutes of fearful strain. They rowed as they had never rowed before.

But it was in vain. Even while they strained at the oars they knew that it was in vain. They looked round again, and the shore was gone from sight—only the summit of the Black Pike and the great Shoulder showing up against the sky.

Bob Cherry, with a gasp of exhaustion, let his oar go.

"It's no good, Harry!"

"Another pull, Bob!"

"What's the use? I'm worn out—I can't!"

Wharton laid his oar inboard. He knew it was useless to row. The wind was too strong for them, and a heavy sea was running.

Wharton's face was white as he looked at his chum.

"Bob, old man, I've got you into this," he said huskily.

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry, with a cheerfulness he was far from feeling. "We both got into it, like a pair of silly duffers."

"You would have turned back."

"No, I wouldn't!"

"I should never have let the Bounder badger me into this," said Wharton passionately. "I was a fool; and I've got you into it."

"Rats!"

The boat was dancing like a cork on the waves. Slowly the great Shoulder sank out of sight.

Round the boat the sea was running high, and white-crested waves raced past. Bob Cherry gripped the rudder

lines again. The bows of the boat swept to seaward.

"Better run clear," he said. "If this sea takes us on the gunwale, we'll capsize, Harry. After all, it may turn out all right."

"The land's out of sight now."

"It's a good boat!"

Wharton was silent.

Well he knew that the chances were a thousand to one against the boat living through the night on the rolling, swamping sea.

Away swept the little craft, farther and farther from the land, into the wilderness of wild waters.

In the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars most of the Remove fellows were still awake.

They lay in bed listening to the increasing roar of the wind and the groaning of branches in the Close.

An hour passed—two hours!

Four rang out from the clock-tower, the deep tones ringing out on the wind.

Wharton and Bob Cherry had not returned.

Vernon-Smith, a little pale now, had waited and listened for the pebble at the window—the sound that did not come. He had gone down once to the window in the hall, in the faint hope of seeing something of the chums; and he had seen nothing.

All the Remove were awake now, with the exception of Billy Bunter. Billy Bunter could have slept through earthquakes.

Five o'clock!

"Good heavens!" said Frank Nugent, as he sat up in bed and listened to the wind. "They've been gone four hours!"

"And not back yet!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"The wind's blowing out to sea

now," said Tom Brown. "If they haven't got back long before this they won't get back at all."

"I—I—it isn't my fault," muttered Vernon-Smith. "I—I warned them not to go. You all heard me."

"It is your fault," said Nugent. He slipped out of bed. "Something's happened to Wharton and Bob Cherry. I'm going to wake up Mr. Quelch."

"Hold on! They may be back any minute."

"If they were coming back, they'd be back before now."

"Quelch can't do anything if—"

"Better wake him," said Ogilvy.

Frank Nugent left the dormitory.

The juniors lay wakeful, shivering. What had happened to their two Form-fellows out on the windy sea?

The dawn came creeping in at the windows of Greyfriars School. But Wharton and Bob Cherry did not return.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

PICKED UP AT SEA!

"BOB!"

Harry Wharton's voice was low and tense.

The boat was rocking on the windy sea, sweeping down into the trough of the waves and rising again on a foamy crest, with the spray splashing over the drenched juniors.

How long had it lasted? Wharton hardly knew. It was hours—it seemed like centuries. Land had long since disappeared; indeed, Wharton no longer had a clear idea in which direction the shore lay.

Bob Cherry had sunk down and was sleeping. The rocking of the boat, the lashing of the spindrift, could not keep the exhausted junior awake.

But Harry Wharton did not close his eyes.

He held the rudder lines now, and was keeping the boat's head steady, the only thing to be done to save her from being swamped.

Wharton's face was white and tired.

His conscience reproached him bitterly. It was weakness to yield to Vernon-Smith's mocking challenge, as he had done, and to undertake a reckless task because he was afraid of being called a "funk." It was worse than weakness to persist in it after it had become certain that there was danger for his comrade as well as himself. He was glad to see Bob Cherry close his eyes in weary slumber. He could not sleep himself. He held the rudder steady and watched the tumbling sea.

Outside the bay the sea was rougher, and the boat was miles

from the bay now. A faint hope was in Wharton's breast that some ship might be sighted. They were in the track now of ships that came and went from the Channel.

Yet on that dark night, in a gale of wind, what chance was there of being picked up? But there was a chance, however faint, and Wharton watched the sea with untiring eyes.

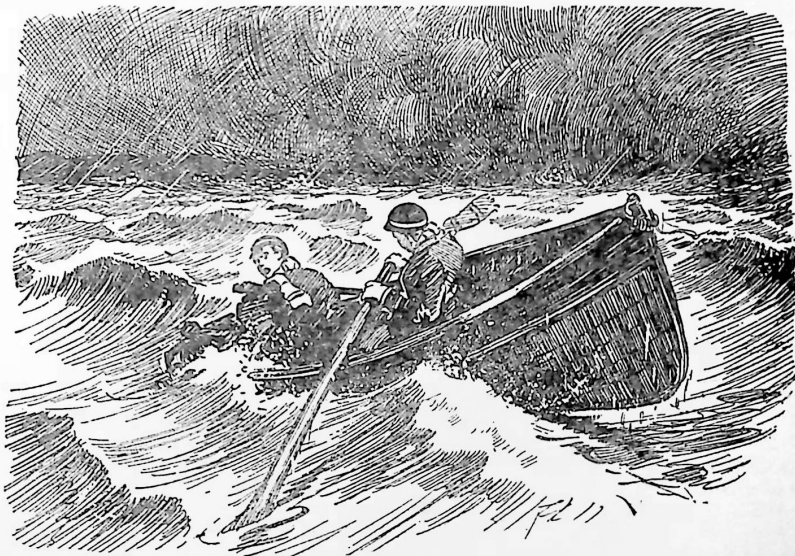
His heart gave a throb as he caught sight of a looming form in the gloom, of a light that glimmered through the night.

It was a ship!

Then he called his chum.

Deep breathing only answered him. Bob Cherry was fast asleep. Harry Wharton bent towards his chum and shook him by the shoulder.

Bob started.



Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry pulled desperately at the oars. The minutes passed—minutes of fearful strain. But their struggle was in vain. The two juniors were being blown farther out to sea!



Specially painted for the "Holiday Annual" by L. Shields

Facing page 80

SAVED FROM THE SEA!

An exciting incident in the story "Mutiny on the Spindrift!"

HA

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! 'Tain't light yet! What— Oh!" He remembered. "Hallo, old man; we've not gone under yet."

"There's a ship, Bob!"

"My hat!"

"Look!"

Bob Cherry stared in the direction of Wharton's pointing finger. A red light glimmered through the haze, and then a green one. They were evidently head-lights, and meant that the vessel was coming towards them.

"My hat! She'll run us down if we're not careful," said Bob, seizing an oar.

"They're coming right on us, Bob!" Wharton's voice throbbed with hope. "They will pick us up, if—if we can make them hear."

Bob Cherry cast a glance at the tumbling sea. With the best will in the world, it would not be easy for the crew of the approaching vessel to pick them up. But it was the only chance.

"Yell!" said Bob.

The juniors put their hands to their mouths and shouted.

"Help!"

Slowly, steadily, the great shape loomed up through the night. It was not a steamer, evidently, but a sailing vessel—a large brig, with close-reefed sails. She surged heavily through the tumbling seas.

"Help!"

Like two strange eyes, the lights winked and blinked through the spin-drift at the juniors in the boat.

"Help!"

Close now—so close that in the gleam of the stars the boys could make out her rigging, could make out the form of a man in oilskins on deck.

"Help!"

Did the look-out hear them?

The wind was howling, but it should have carried their voices to the ship. Surely if the watch on deck saw them they would make some effort to pick up the boat?

"Help! Ship ahoy! Help!"

A face looked over the side, a dark face, and so close that the juniors could catch the glitter of two black eyes.

Wharton waved his hand.

"Help!"

The ship seemed to be rushing down upon the boat. The fate of the two schoolboys hung in the balance.

Then a voice came sharp and clear from the brig.

"Stand by to catch a line!"

Wharton waved his hand to show that he understood.

"It's the only chance, Bob!" he exclaimed thickly. "If we get the rope—all right; if we don't, this cockshell will be washed over, and it—"

"And it's good-bye!" said Bob huskily. "I understand!"

"Bob, old man, I'm sorry I—"

"Rot! Look out for the rope!"

The brig seemed to be bearing down upon them. It was only too evident that she could not round to pick up the boat, even if her skipper felt inclined for the risk. It was only too evident, too, that the wash of the brig as she rushed by would swamp the rocking boat.

The line was the juniors' only chance—if they caught it! And it was all passing in seconds; there was little time to think.

Yet—so clear had peril made the boy's brain—Wharton watched the brig with perfect calmness as she rushed down, and noted the swarthy face of the man who was looking at him, his gleaming black eyes, and the gold ear-rings in his ears.

He saw the rope flung—he caught the heavy knotted end as it crashed into the boat. Bob Cherry's grip was upon it at the same moment, and Harry Wharton's grip was upon the rope and upon Bob Cherry.

Then followed what seemed a nightmare.

Deep under a swamping wave the boat vanished from sight, and the two juniors were struggling in the water; but Harry Wharton's left arm was wound about the rope and his right was gripping his chum.

Bob Cherry's hands had slipped from the rope, but Wharton's grip held him fast.

Thumping, crashing water, a strain on his arm that seemed about to tear it from his shoulder, choking in his throat, darkness before his eyes.

Then he was swinging clear of the water, and the rope was still about his arm, and Bob Cherry was still in his grip.

Then hands grasped him; he felt himself dragged clear of the water; he was conscious of being dropped heavily upon hard planks, and his senses fled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

IN STRANGE COMPANY!

HARRY WHARTON opened his eyes. A terrible ache was in his left arm, still coiled in the rope.

He was drenched and dripping with water.

Lantern-light gleamed in his eyes; there was a burning, bitter taste in his mouth, a sickening smell of spirits.

He gazed wildly round him, blinking in the light.

He was lying on the deck of the brig, with the roar of the sea in his ears. Round him men were standing, staring at him. The man with the

black eyes and the glimmering ear-rings was bending over him. Bob Cherry lay by his side, very still. Wharton tried to rise, and sank back.

The man with the ear-rings laughed. "You are safe, youngster." His voice had a strange, soft foreign accent in it, but his English was good. "Both alive, for a wonder!"

"Bob——"

"He is all right."

"Thank heaven!"

"Thank Captain Silver, I should say," said the man with the ear-rings, laughing again, and showing two rows of white, gleaming teeth. "Take another swig of this!"

"What is it?"

"Rum."

"Thank you, no!"

"That's what brought you round," said the man with the ear-rings, putting the flask to Wharton's lips.

Wharton took a sip; he did not want to refuse the man who had saved his life. The spirit had revived him, no doubt; but the mere taste of it sickened him. The man laughed again, and drew the flask away.

There was a grunt from Bob Cherry, and he sat up dazedly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he said faintly.

"Bob, old man——"

"You are all right, Harry?"

"Yes."

"Thank goodness! How did I get here? I lost the rope——"

"Your mate held you," said the man with the ear-rings. "If he had let you go, you'd be in Davy Jones' locker now, nino!"

Bob gasped.

"Harry, you've saved my life!"

Wharton staggered to his feet. They had been picked up; so far all was well. He gave a quick glance

round him. The ship was straining under the gale, surging heavily through the rough sea under close-reefed canvas. The men standing round him were sailor-men, by their clothes. But their faces? Wharton caught his breath as he saw the hard, grim looks. They were not ordinary sailor-men, and the man with the ear-rings——

What ship had they fallen upon?

A big man standing near Wharton, with a bloodstained bandage across one eye and cheek, laughed hoarsely as he caught the boy's look.

"I guess you're safe, kid," he said. "No need to be scared. You're safe—so long as you're useful—eh, Captain Silver?"

The man with the ear-rings showed all his teeth again in a grin.

"Quite safe, nino," he said. "Look after them, Peter Bones!"

"I guess so, captain."

The man with the ear-rings walked aft.

Bob Cherry picked himself up and stood close to his chum. Instinctively the boys knew that this was no ordinary ship that had picked them up. There was something strange about the vessel—about the crew.

What was the meaning of the blood-stained bandage upon the big man, Peter Bones, as the captain had called him? And the man with the ear-rings—he did not look like a sea-captain; he was not dressed like one. What was the meaning of the revolver stuck in the big man's belt? Sailor-men do not go armed in British waters.

"What ship is this?" asked Wharton, addressing the big man.

"The Spindrift, I guess."

"British?"

"I guess so."

"And the captain——"

"Jim Silver is skipper of this hyer craft. I'm boatswain. Peter Bones, of Nantucket—that's me!"

"Thank you for picking us up!" said Harry, in a shaking voice. "You've saved our lives."

"I guess so."

"I—I suppose you can't put us ashore in this gale?"

There was a chuckle from five or six men standing around them.

Peter Bones grinned hugely.

"No; I guess we're not puttin' anybody ashore jest now!" he remarked. "The fact is, we're short-handed this trip—some accidents have happened."

The men chuckled again.

"Accidents will happen to sea-faring men," said Peter Bones, who was evidently a humorist in his way, though at present the Greyfriars juniors could not quite see where the joke came in. "It's a dangerous trade. And when there's a capful of wind, there's no tellin' what may happen, I guess."

"Is this ship equipped with wireless?" asked Wharton.

"I guess not, kid—not this old tub."

"I suppose we shall have to wait till you get to port, then?"

"Yep, I guess you will!" said Peter Bones.

"Anyway, we're very much obliged to you!" said Bob Cherry.

"You ought to be, I guess. You owe your lives to Captain Silver. But enough talk—that will do in the morning. Just take them below, Bill Dunn!"

"Just a minute," said Wharton. "Where are you bound?"

"We're bound on a long voyage."

"But you'll touch land before——"

"I guess not."

"We're schoolboys," Wharton

explained. "We've been blown out to sea. They'll be anxious about us at the school if we don't turn up."

"I shouldn't wonder!"

"Would it be possible to send a message somehow——"

"I guess not."

"You might put us on some other ship, when the gale goes down——"

"Yunker, you talk too much!" said Peter Bones. "Ain't I told you that we're short-handed this trip—owin' to accidents?" He chuckled—a chuckle that sent a cold chill to the juniors' hearts. "You're goin' to work your passage!"

"We don't mind doing that," said Harry; "we're not slackers."

"Good! Stick to that, and you'll get on! Take 'em into the fo'c'sle, Bill Dunn, and pitch 'em into bunks! They can have Thompson's and Fin-sen's bunks. They won't be wanted any more."

And there was a laugh.

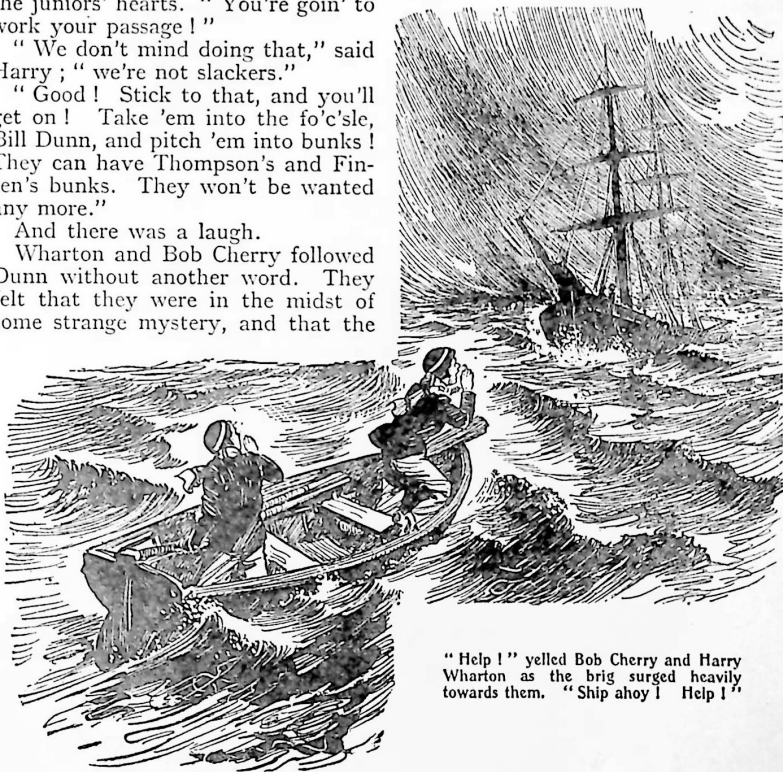
Wharton and Bob Cherry followed Dunn without another word. They felt that they were in the midst of some strange mystery, and that the

big man with the bandaged face did not intend to enlighten them. They staggered along the deck, finding it difficult to keep their feet on the heaving planks. Dunn pointed into the opening of the fore-castle, where a swinging oil-lamp was burning dimly.

"Them's your bunks," he said. "Turn in. You'll 'ave to report to Captain Silver in the morning."

"Thank you!" said Harry.

The juniors scrambled into the fore-castle. They were glad enough to



"Help!" yelled Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton as the brig surged heavily towards them. "Ship ahoy! Help!"

get off their drenched clothes and wrap themselves in blankets.

But, exhausted as they were, they did not think immediately of sleep.

The strangeness of their situation excited them.

"This is a queer ship," said Bob, in a low voice.

Wharton nodded.

"Very queer!" he said.

"That man with the ear-rings doesn't look like a captain."

"And you noticed how familiar the men were with him," said Wharton, "especially that big chap, Peter Bones? And—and Bones was wounded."

"I noticed that."

"And he had a revolver in his belt."

"I noticed that, too."

"And they're short-handed, owing to accidents," said Wharton, in a strained voice. "What sort of accidents do you think, Bob?"

Bob Cherry's face was pale.

"I don't like to think," he said.

They were silent.

It seemed to them that a shadow of tragedy was brooding over the ship. Into what company had they fallen?

Wharton looked round the forecastle. There was nobody in it but themselves. The crew were all on deck, evidently. Where was the watch below? Had all the hands gone up on account of the gale? But the gale, though rough to an open boat, was little enough for a ship—it was not severe enough to call all hands on deck. Why were none of the crew in their bunks?

Wharton's eyes, as they wandered round the forecastle, fell upon a dark patch on the floor.

He started, and looked at it again.

"Bob!" he said in a hushed voice.

"Look!"

"Oh!"

The juniors gazed as if fascinated at the dark patch on the planks.

It was a deep stain—and it was still wet!

"You know what that is, Bob?" Wharton muttered huskily.

"Yes."

"Blood!"

"Yes."

"There's something horrible been going on here, Bob," said Harry. "They are short-handed—we know why now."

"Yes," muttered Bob Cherry.

"They saved our lives," said Harry, "but——"

"No good thinking about it, Harry," said Bob quietly. "They saved our lives, so we—we can't be in any danger from them. Better turn in."

The juniors turned into the bunks. But it was a long time before they slept.

They lay listening to the creaking and groaning of the timbers and the wail of the wind, and wondering—wondering what had happened that dark night upon the sea before they came aboard the mysterious brig. They slept at last, but in their sleep strange dreams haunted them—of the dark, mocking face of the man with the ear-rings, the bandaged face of the boatswain, and that dark and terrible stain upon the planks of the forecastle.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

NEW HANDS.

THE two juniors of Greyfriars slept deeply, in spite of the dreams that haunted their slumber. It was broad day when they awoke. No one had been down to disturb them, but as Harry Wharton sat up in his bunk and rubbed his eyes, he saw that two or three of the other bunks were occupied.

There was still a sound of straining cordage from above, but the vessel was not rolling as much as during the night. The gale was going down, or the vessel was getting beyond the radius of it.

Wharton did not feel any uneasiness from the motion of the vessel; he was a good sailor. He clambered out of the bunk, and shivered in the cold draught that blew upon him. His clothes lay where he had left them, wet and hardened with sea-water. It was not much use thinking of putting them on; and he wondered if the men of the Spindrift would give him a change of clothes.

A hoarse voice from the scuttle hailed him, and he looked round and saw the boatswain looking in upon him, a grin on his bandaged face.

"So you've turned out, younker?" he grunted.

"Yes," said Harry.

"Feeling pretty sick, eh?"

"Thanks, I feel all right."

"That's right; I guess you've got to earn your rations this trip."

"We're quite willing to do that," said Wharton. "But can you give me some clothes? My own are soaked with water."

The boatswain looked at him doubtfully.

"Well, them clothes ain't much good for a sailor-boy, that's a fact," he said. "I'll tell Cookey to see what he can do."

The boatswain moved away from the fore-castle opening, and a few minutes later a negro came down the steps into the little dusky place. He was a big, powerful fellow, but his look showed that he was under the influence of fear. He had a bundle of rough sailor clothes in his hands, a pair of scissors, and a needle and thread.

"Mass' Bones say I make dese clobber for you," he said.

"Thank you," said Harry.

"Dis chile soon fit you out."

"Wake up, Bob, old man!"

"I'm awake," said Bob Cherry, looking out of the bunk. "I say, this is a bit different from the dorm. at Greyfriars, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather."

"Still, it's good of them to send us their own tailor," said Bob with a grin.

The negro grinned, too. He was cutting down the clothes with a very rough-and-ready hand, and their fit was likely to be very much at fault. But the schoolboys were only too glad to get clothing of any sort.

"What port did this ship sail from?" Harry Wharton asked the negro, as he sat on the edge of a bunk, with his black fingers busy.

The darcy did not answer.

"How long have you been to sea?"

No reply.

"What's your name?" asked Bob.

"Mark Antony."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"Are you the same chap who killed Julius Caesar, or one of his ancestors?"

The negro grinned.

"Why don't you answer my questions, Mark Antony?" asked Harry.

"Don't you want to tell me where this ship sailed from?"

"Mass' Bones, he say no talk."

"What happened here last night, before we came on board?" asked Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

"Mass' Bones say no talk."

"You won't tell us anything?"

"Mass' Bones get mad if I talk."

"Mass' Bones seems to have scared the wits out of him," said Bob.

"He'll scare the wits out of you if there's too much of your lip, young 'un," said a rough voice, as the

boatswain looked in. "I guess you ain't hyer to ask questions. You mind your own business."

"There's no harm——"

"I'll guess you'll obey orders," said Bones, with a scowl that made his bandaged face look hideous. "I keep a rope's-end for youngers who have too much jawing tackle."

Bob Cherry flushed.

"Hurry up with them clothes, Cookey, and get back to the galley."

"Yes, Mass' Bones."

"And don't jaw!"

"No, Mass' Bones."

"And clean up this fo'c's'le," said Peter Bones, looking round. "The place wants swabbing up, I guess."

"Yes, Mass' Bones."

Peter Bones' eye lingered for a moment upon the dull red patch on the floor. He looked at the juniors and observed that their eyes were upon it, and an extremely ugly look came over his face.

"Kinder noticed it, I see?" he remarked.

"We could not help seeing it," said Harry.

"Made you think—eh?"

"Yes." you think—eh?"

"And what are you thinking about it?" said Peter Bones, coming nearer to the juniors.

Wharton faced him fearlessly. There was a threat in the man's manner, and a very unpleasant look in his deep-set eyes.

"I don't know what to think," said Harry.

"Man fell out of his bunk and hurt his head," Bones explained.

"Is that all?"

"Wot more should there be?" demanded Bones, with another scowl.

"Very well; I don't want to ask questions."

"You'd better not!" said Bones, scowling.

He tramped away to the deck, leaving the juniors with a sick feeling in their breasts.

If they doubted that a tragedy had occurred on board the Spindrift before they set foot upon her planks, they could have doubted no further. The fear of the negro, and his secrecy, added to Bones' manner, told them plainly enough.

The cook did not speak again. He glanced once or twice furtively at the boys as he sewed the rough clothes, and that was all.

When they were finished he left the forecastle.

The juniors dressed in silence.

Bones looked into the forecastle again.

"You're wanted on deck!" he exclaimed.

"Very well!"

"Report aft to Captain Silver."

"Yes."

"Can't you say 'Aye, aye!' like a sailor-man?" demanded Bones.

"Yes; if you like. Aye, aye!"

Peter Bones grinned and turned away. The two juniors exchanged glances.

"Well, we'd better go up," said Bob.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Come on!" he said.

They ascended to the deck of the Spindrift.

The sea had gone down, and the sun was shining in a cloudy sky. There was still a roll upon the sea, and the vessel pitched and swung, but the short-lived gale was over. Most of the men of the Spindrift were on deck, and Wharton and Bob could not help observing that the brig was indeed short-handed. The men on deck and those in the bunks below did not number more than eight,



"Mass' Bones seems to have scared the wits out of Mark Antony," said Bob Cherry. "He'll scare the wits out of you if there's too much of your lip!" said a rough voice, as the boatswain looked in.

including the captain and the boatswain. Of mates they could see nothing.

Captain Silver was on deck smoking a cigar. His golden ear-rings glistened in the sun as he walked to and fro, at times scanning the sea with an anxious frown. There was no sign of land in any direction. But the mist that was creeping over the sea might account for that. That they were still in the narrow seas the juniors were sure; the brig could not have got out of them during the night.

The main and top sails were out now, and the brig was moving rapidly through the water.

The juniors' hearts were heavy

as they looked over the expanse of glimmering water. Every moment the belling canvas was drawing them farther away from Greyfriars, farther away from England and home.

Captain Silver caught sight of them and beckoned to them to approach. The juniors scrambled aft along the sloping deck.

The man with the ear-rings eyed them curiously.

Now that they saw him in the daylight, they could see that he was a foreigner, with no trace of English blood in him. His face was swarthy, his eyes deep black, and his short moustache jetty. He belonged to the South; but whether in America or in

Europe they could not tell. His English was good, and only occasionally when he spoke a Spanish word escaped him.

"Ah! So you are awake, ninos?" he said.

"Yes, sir!" said Harry.

Silver nodded.

"You know I'm the skipper of this craft?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I'm short-handed!"

"Yes, we noticed that."

"I've lost some of my men," said the man with the ear-rings, "and some of my officers. You two boys will be useful to me. You will have to work your passage in the Spindrift, ninos. Are you willing to work?"

"Quite willing, sir!"

"Good! As a matter of fact, I picked you up for that purpose," said the man with the ear-rings. "As soon as I saw you in the boat it occurred to me that you would be useful. But I saved your lives, and you owe me that."

"We shall not forget that," said Harry.

"Very good! Work, do as you're told, and don't ask questions, and you'll find you're all right on board the Spindrift. Give trouble, and you'll go back where you came from—quick! Savvy?"

"I understand," said Harry.

"That's all!"

"One moment, sir. Can you tell us when we're likely to have a chance of going ashore again?" said Harry.

Captain Silver showed his white teeth in a smile.

"I think not," he said.

"We belong to a school——"

"Then you would have done wisely to stay in it," said Captain Silver.

"We know that now," said Harry.

"How did you come out at sea in

that open boat?" the captain asked abruptly.

Wharton explained.

Captain Silver laughed when he had finished.

"A pair of foolhardy young swabs," he said. "You deserve what's happened to you, and more. If I had not picked you up, you'd be food for fishes. You'll have to earn your keep on this craft. Get forrard!"

"Would it be possible to let our people know we're safe somehow, sir?"

"No!"

"You might put us on a passing ship."

"I might," assented Captain Silver. "But I didn't pick you up to put you on a passing ship. You're going to belong to the Spindrift for this voyage."

"Can you tell us how long the voyage will last, sir?"

"Didn't I tell you not to ask questions?" demanded Silver.

"Yes; but——"

"That's enough! Get forrard!"

"But——"

Silver drove his hand into his pocket, and drew it out again with something in it that glimmered and flashed in the sun. The juniors started at the sight of a revolver.

"If hands talk to me after I've told them not to ask questions, I'm liable to drill holes in them," said Silver.

"Get forrard!"

"We're not hands here," said Harry Wharton indignantly. "We're willing to work and to obey orders while we're on this vessel; but we don't belong to her, and——"

"Peter Bones!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Take these ship's boys forrard, and if they don't work give them two dozen apiece."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The juniors went forward without another word.

They were helpless to resist, and they knew that they were in desperate hands. The sea, surging by the side of the brig, seemed to tell them what they might expect if the crew of the Spindrift did not find them useful.

Peter Bones rapped out orders, and the juniors obeyed him unquestioningly. And there was plenty of work to be done. The crew, short as they were in numbers, did not seem inclined to make up for that by extra exertion. Indeed, excepting for the handling of the ship, they seemed to do nothing at all; and if the captain or the boatswain gave an order, it was obeyed slowly and sullenly or not at all.

The juniors worked; but they kept their eyes and their ears open. And ere the sun of noon shone down upon the vessel they were quite clear in their minds upon one point—that Jim Silver, the man with the earrings, was not the true captain of the Spindrift, although he occupied that position, and that, excepting for the actual sailing of the ship, the men were by no means inclined to obey him.

Where were the rest of the crew? Where was the true captain? The juniors asked themselves those questions, and looked at the rolling sea and shuddered.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

THE MUTINEERS.

"My hat! What's that?"

Harry Wharton muttered the words with blanched lips.

The juniors had been working for hours under the rapping orders of the boatswain, and so willingly that even Peter Bones found nothing to grumble at.

But they had not been below aft, and

once when Bob Cherry stopped near the companion-way Bones shouted to him and ordered him forward.

It was evident that for some reason the boys were not to be allowed to enter the cuddy or the cabins.

Wharton wondered why.

He had been swabbing the deck near the cabin skylight, when a low sound from below came to his ears.

It was a groan.

He started, and listened, pausing with the mop.

Groan!

The sound was repeated, and, faint as it was, it struck heavily upon Harry Wharton's ear.

It was the groan of a man in pain—wounded. He knew that. Was it one of the crew, several of whom bore signs of conflict, or—

"What are you loitering there for?" shouted Peter Bones, coming threateningly towards the junior.

Wharton faced him fearlessly.

He did not need to answer, for as Bones came striding up the sound of the groan from the cabin was repeated.

"Oh, you heard that, eh?" said Peter Bones.

"Yes," said Harry.

"And you was wondering about it, eh?"

"Yes."

"Ain't you been told to mind your own business on this craft, eh?" demanded the boatswain furiously.

"I couldn't help hearing that," said Harry. "There is a wounded man down there."

"S'posin' there is, that don't concern you, I guess. You keep forrard."

"Very well."

"Don't you come aft agin!" said Peter Bones. "Nor the other one, neither! You ain't got any business hyer!"

The two juniors went forward.

Bones ordered them to scrub out the forecandle, and they obeyed.

But as they worked Wharton told Bob in low tones what he had heard.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"A wounded man in the cabin!" he muttered.

"There's no doubt about it, Bob."

"Who can it be?"

"It can't be one of this gang, or Bones wouldn't be so particular about our knowing."

"No. Then——"

"It may be the captain."

"The real captain?"

"Yes."

"Harry, old man, what do you think has happened on this ship?" asked Bob Cherry, pausing in the scrubbing and looking hard at his chum.

"Mutiny!" said Wharton briefly.

"I was thinking the same. But I——"

"Mutiny!" repeated Harry. "Jim Silver is no more a sea-captain than I am, though he seems to know how to sail a ship. He may have been mate. Some of the crew are missing—we can guess what has become of them. We know how Bones got that damage to his head. There must have been a fight here last night, Bob, and the mutineers got the best of it. They picked us up because they wanted hands—not from humane motives. We don't owe the villains any gratitude."

"I'm not troubling about that. But—if the skipper's there wounded—why have they let him live? They must have killed the others."

Wharton shook his head.

"I don't know. Silver had a reason—I don't know the reason. But I'm going to find out."

Bob Cherry gave his chum a startled look.

"What Harry?" are you going to do,

"If there's an honest man left on board this ship, we're going to help him, Bob!" said Harry, in low, determined tones. "We're not going to make ourselves parties to a crime!"

"They'd pitch us overboard as soon as look at us if they had trouble with us, Harry."

"I know they would. But how do we know that they won't pitch us overboard, in any case, when we're no longer any use to them? If they're running away from justice, they won't want to leave two witnesses alive."

Bob shuddered.

"It's only too jolly likely," he said.

"They've seized the ship, and they're making off with it. I don't know if there's anything valuable on board they mean to steal, but they won't want us to remain to tell about them. They mayn't be able to put us ashore, even, without danger to themselves. We've got to get out of their hands somehow, Bob, if we're to save our lives. And if the captain is alive——"

Bill Dunn entered the forecandle at that moment, and the juniors ceased to speak.

But Harry Wharton's brain was busy.

Darkness was falling over the sea.

The Spindrift, with her lights gleaming ahead through the shadows of the night, plunged on through the heavy waters.

The juniors had slaved hard all day and were exhausted; but there was to be no rest for them yet. They helped the cook with the washing-up in the galley, and waited on the seamen. The forecandle hands of the Spindrift evidently considered that they were not under the necessity of turning their hands to anything. And their manner showed quite plainly that if Captain Silver gave them

orders against their inclinations they would not obey.

The most inexperienced eye could have seen that the men of the Spindrift were not captain and crew, but a gang of adventurers who had selected one member as chief for their own interests.

It was late at night before the juniors were free from the many tasks laid upon them. Two or three of the men had gone below, and were smoking, and drinking rum, in the forecabin.

The watch on deck were also drinking rum and water, and a hoarse sea-song rang through the ship.

Captain Silver glanced at the men and scowled, but he did not interfere with them. Peter Bones was talking aft with the captain, but presently he joined the watch and drank with them.

Silver took the wheel.

Harry Wharton had thrown himself to rest in a dark corner of the deck, but he was not asleep. Bob had gone into his bunk in the forecabin. But Wharton was on the watch. He meant to discover what mystery was hidden aft, and he thought now that his opportunity had come.

Keeping in the shadows, he stole aft.

Wharton was very cautious. The moan of the sea against the sides of the vessel warned him of what he was risking.

It was half an hour more before he slipped down the companion-way,



"Harry, old man, what do you think has happened on this ship?" asked Bob Cherry, pausing in the scrubbing. "Mutiny!" said Wharton briefly.

while Jim Silver's face was turned to the sea. The watch on deck were too fuddled now to notice anything. Wharton wondered what would become of the Spindrift if the gale came on again.

The junior reached the bottom of the cabin steps, his heart beating violently.

All the men were on deck or in the forecabin; he had counted them. But someone was below—the man who had groaned.

There was a swinging lamp burning in the cuddy, shedding a dim light. It had evidently not been trimmed for a long time. The juniors had not been allowed to enter the cuddy, and no one else had done any work there.

Wharton glanced round the cuddy.

There were the remains of a meal on the table, and the place was untidy. He glanced into the alleyway where the doors of the cabins opened.

A low groan came from the nearest cabin. Wharton stepped silently to the door, and opened it with caution.

Groan!

The cabin was dark; only a faint glimmer of starlight shone on the glass of the porthole.

Wharton made out the bunk dimly. There was a man in it—a man who moved restlessly, like one in pain.

He had evidently not heard Wharton enter.

The junior hesitated.

If this was a prisoner of the gang above, Wharton was his friend, and could trust him. But if it was a member of the gang, wounded in the fight that he knew had taken place, he would only be drawing down the vengeance of the mutineers upon himself by making his presence there known.

He stood hesitating, doubting; and as he stood, silent, he heard a step on the companion ladder.

His heart throbbed.

Someone was coming down—he guessed that it was Silver.

Was he coming to the cabin?

If he found him there—

The dull surge of the sea struck

upon Wharton's ears and upon his heart.

He acted quickly.

Dim as it was in the cabin, Wharton had made out the interior of the room with quick eyes. There was a table, clamped to the floor, with a long cloth over it. Wharton sank down upon his knees, keeping the table between him and the bunk where the injured man lay, lifted the edge of the cloth, and crawled beneath.

There was just room to conceal himself. He let the cloth fall. So long as he kept silent, and was not missed above decks, he felt that he was safe.

But his heart throbbed faster as he heard the footsteps drawing nearer.

They had paused in the cuddy, and he heard the clink of a bottle and glass. Then they came into the alleyway, and the cabin door was opened again.

"Sapristi! In the dark, señor?"

It was the voice of Jim Silver.

A groan from the bunk answered.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE CAPTAIN OF THE SPINDRIFT.

HARRY WHARTON crouched silently and still, scarcely daring to breathe.

There was the scratch of a match, and light glimmered in the cabin.

He heard Silver lighting the lamp on the table, and the man's boots were within six inches of him as he crouched there.

The cabin was lighted now.

But it was evident that Silver had no suspicion that anyone was there, with the exception of himself and the man in the bunk.

The man with the ear-rings stepped across towards the bunk, and stood looking down at the occupant.

A face, bronzed and sunburnt, but

now strangely pale, and with dull, red stains on the forehead, looked back at him.

The man with the ear-rings nodded and grinned.

"How do you find yourself, captain?"

A groan was the only reply.

"You are no better?"

"You know I am not, Silver!" said the man in the bunk. "If I were able to move or help myself, you would not leave me here unguarded."

Jim Silver chuckled.

"You are right, captain."

"What do you want?" asked the man in the bunk faintly.

"I want a few words with you, Captain Curll."

"I am in your hands. Give me something to drink."

"Here is my flask."

"Water!"

Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"Water if you choose," he said.

The wounded man drank greedily.

"Now for our little talk," said Silver. "You are not so badly hurt as you suppose, captain. Given a chance, you might pull through—you've a good constitution. You've only had a crack on the head."

"From behind, you coward!"

Silver laughed.

"I didn't want to give you a chance to use your shooter, captain. I have let you live; there were seven who went over the side!"

"You will have to answer for that."

"Who knows?" said Silver, with a shrug of the shoulders. "But that is not the business now. You know why you did not follow the rest?"

"I know."

"You have hidden the money—two thousand pounds in solid cash—

that you were taking back to Buenos Aires."

The captain groaned.

"I knew you'd hidden it," resumed Silver. "You suspected—only a little while before we struck, though. But you were too quick for me."

"You will never get the money, Silver. You may as well finish your work now," said the man in the bunk hoarsely.

"Where have you hidden it?"

"Where you will never find it."

"You did not throw it overboard. I know that."

"I wish I had done so."

"But you did not," said Silver quickly.

The captain was silent.

"Listen to me," said Silver quietly. "Your injury is not serious. With proper care, you would recover easily. I offer you the chance. Tell me where the money is hidden, and I will put you safely ashore."

"You lie!"

"I swear——"

"Do you think I believe that you would let me live to denounce you? You are lying, Silver! You would throw me into the sea the moment you had your dirty fingers on the money! But you never will!"

Silver gritted his teeth.

"I shall find it, you fool!" he muttered. "It is only a question of searching, and searching again, until it is found."

"Then why have you spared me?"

"You can save me the trouble. And I have no time. Do you know what the men are doing now?" said Silver. "They are drinking—they've done little else since——"

"Since the mutiny."

"Yes. Suppose a blow came on now——"

"Heaven send one!" said the

skipper. "It would be a comfort to take you rascals to Davy Jones' locker with me!"

"If the gale came on again now we should all go to the bottom together," said Jim Silver. "The hands are all fuddled by this time, and they won't listen to me. I can't keep them away from the rum."

"They're not likely to obey you, after turning on their captain."

"Listen to me! We're all in danger every minute now! Tell me where the money is hidden, and I swear to set you ashore!"

"Lies!"

"Will you speak?"

"No!"

Silver made a gesture of rage.

"Listen, Captain Curll! I am not a soft man—you know that. Seven men went into the sea last night for the money you have hidden. I am not the man to stick at trifles, or to stay in this floating coffin because you are obstinate. If you do not speak, I shall find a way to make you."

"You cannot."

"You shall see. There are more ways than one," said Silver, with an ugly gleam in his eyes. "I have left you here to lie all day in pain, thinking that it would bring you to your senses."

The man in the bunk did not speak, but his pale, pain-lined face showed nothing but hard and grim determination.

"But it has done no good," said Silver. "You are as obstinate now as when I held a pistol to your head last night."

"And I shall remain so," said the captain.

"The men are losing patience. They want to see the money. We've worked for it, and we want it. We're going to pile the Spindrift up and

clear ashore when we have it. If you want to live, tell me where it is."

Silence.

"I give you until the morning," said Silver, in a low, concentrated tone of rage. "If by eight bells you haven't made up your mind to speak——" He paused.

"What then?"

The voice of the man in the bunk was unyielding.

"Then I shall make you. I'll have you tied up on deck, wounded as you are, and flogged as hard as Peter Bones can flog you, till the skin peels off your back!" said Silver, in a savage voice. "That will make you speak."

"It will not make me speak!" said the skipper.

"You fool! We shall see."

Silver strode from the cabin and slammed the door behind him. Wharton heard his furious footsteps die away on the companion ladder. The man in the bunk groaned.

Harry Wharton raised the cloth of the table and crawled out. The lamp had been left burning in the cabin, and the man in the bunk saw him as he came out of his hiding-place. He stared fixedly at the Greyfriars junior.

"In Heaven's name," he muttered, "who are you?"

Wharton put his finger on his lips.

"Quiet! I'm a friend. I'm going to help you if I can. But quiet. If they knew I was here——"

The man in the bunk nodded. A flush had come into his face, and his eyes were bright. Hope was in his breast again now.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

A FRIEND IN NEED.

WHARTON stepped silently towards the bunk and spoke in a whisper.

"I understand now; I know all that's happened. You are the captain of this craft?"

"Yes."

"There was a mutiny——"

"Last night," muttered the captain. "Silver was second mate. He stunned me from behind and the men who were loyal went overboard. You heard what the villain said?"

"Yes."

"I hid the money; I felt a warning of what was coming," muttered the captain. "They will never find it. They'll pile up the ship soon, the drunken scoundrels, and that will be an end of the money—and of them."

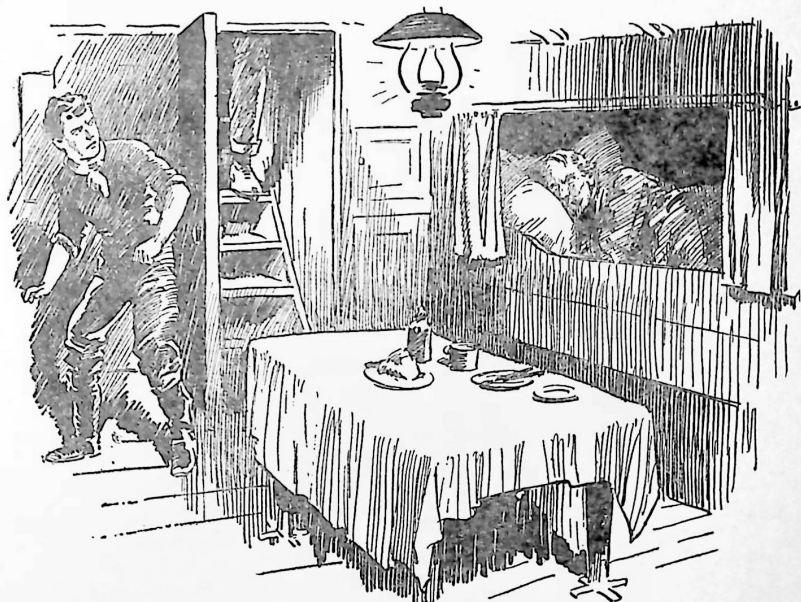
"Can't I help you?" whispered

Wharton. "Isn't there anything that can be done? I've got a chum aboard. We were picked up from a boat last night. We'd do anything. We're not afraid——"

"You're a plucky youngster." The captain of the Spindrift made an attempt to move, and groaned again. "Look here, youngster. I'm not so bad as I've led those scoundrels to believe. You understand?"

"Yes."

"If I could get a chance, there might be hope yet. They mean to find the money, and then let me go down with the ship, while they escape. Silver would deceive me if he could, but I know him now." The



Harry Wharton stood hesitating, doubting; and as he stood, silent, he heard a step on the companion ladder. Someone was coming down, and if he was caught in the cabin he would have to face the vengeance of the mutineers.

captain groaned. "I wish I had known him in his true colours before. He means what he says. In the morning I shall be lashed to death if I do not tell him where the money is hidden."

"And if you do——"

"Then he will be done with me, and I shall be thrown overboard."

"The scoundrel!" said Wharton between his teeth.

"It was Providence that sent you aboard this ship," whispered the captain. "Are you game to help me?"

"Try me!" said Harry.

"But, you understand, they will stop at nothing——"

"What chance have we got, anyway? When they're done with the ship, they won't leave two witnesses alive to tell the police."

"That's true. We're both in the same boat," said the wounded man. "But—you're only a boy."

"Tell me what I can do."

"Listen to me! If we could down Silver, we might be able to handle the rest—if I were armed. Silver will come in here in the morning——"

"Yes, yes."

"If I tell you where to find a revolver and cartridges, could you get it and load it and bring it here to me?"

"Quite easily."

"And you and your mate, you could smuggle yourselves in here, to help me when Silver comes in the morning——"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

He understood the scheme that had outlined itself in the mind of the wounded captain of the Spindrift, and he was ready.

There was a step on the companion-way.

Wharton started.

"Get out of sight!" breathed the captain.

The Greyfriars junior darted under the table again.

But it was only the black cook who entered the cabin.

"Mass' Silver he say put out light," he said.

The captain did not reply.

The black cook extinguished the lamp and left the cabin without another word, closing the door behind him.

Wharton waited till his shambling footsteps had died away.

Then he emerged once more from his hiding-place.

"All right, lad!" came the captain's voice from the bunk. "The darkey didn't see you."

"Is he one of them?" asked Harry.

"No; he's frightened out of his wits, that's all. They're keeping him to cook for them, but he is not one of the mutineers. Do you know how many men there are on the vessel now—you have seen them?"

"Eight."

"Then Silver told the truth about those who have gone overboard. Eight men—to be tackled by a wounded man and two boys!" muttered Captain Curll.

"It can't be worse if we show fight than if we don't, from what I can see," said Harry in a low, steady voice.

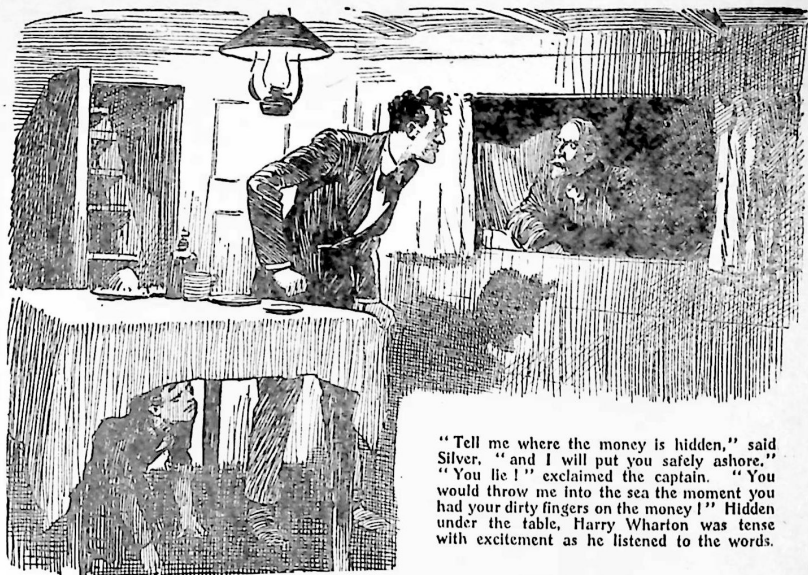
"That's true enough. You are a plucky youngster. What is your pal like?"

"Right as rain!" said Harry. "I'll get back and explain to him, and we'll sneak in here in the night somehow. But now I've got to get the revolver for you."

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

The captain did not reply for a moment.



"Tell me where the money is hidden," said Silver. "and I will put you safely ashore."
 "You lie!" exclaimed the captain. "You would throw me into the sea the moment you had your dirty fingers on the money!" Hidden under the table, Harry Wharton was tense with excitement as he listened to the words.

Wharton, fearing that the exertion of talking had overcome him in his weak state, made an anxious movement towards the bunk.

But the captain's voice went on:

"I can trust you, kid?"

Wharton flushed in the darkness.

"I should have thought I'd shown that already," he said.

"Yes; but——"

"But what?"

"There is a revolver—hidden in——"

He paused again.

"Yes; where?"

"In the same place with the case of coin," said the captain slowly. "If I tell you where to get the revolver, you will know where the money is."

"I see."

"Swear that you will never tell Jim Silver, even if—even if he should treat you as he threatens to treat me!"

Wharton was silent.

"You are not answering me, lad."

"I'll do my best," said Harry honestly. "I promise not to tell Silver anything about the money if I can possibly help it. But if he should find out that I know, and should put me to torture as he has threatened with you, I don't know what I might say. If that isn't good enough, don't tell me where it is!"

There was a long silence.

"That's good enough," said the captain at last. "Don't say a word on the subject, and Jim Silver can't learn that you know."

"Right-ho!"

"Listen to me—carefully. You will see that I trust you. Go into the cuddy—mind you are not seen——"

"Not much danger of that. The rotters are all drinking on deck or in

the forecastle," said Harry—"all excepting Silver, and he was at the wheel when I came down. I think he has gone back to the wheel, but I can soon see."

"Good! In the cuddy——" Captain Curll paused again, as if reluctant, after all, to utter the secret; but he went on: "There's a locker—you may have seen it——"

"I noticed it—it had been broken open!" said Harry.

The captain chuckled slightly.

"Yes; but that locker has a false bottom. If you feel over the wood, you will find a little depression in the corner, and if you press there hard, you will see the bottom of the locker tilt up, and there is an opening underneath. You understand?"

"Yes."

"There you will find my spare revolver—Silver has the one I carried in my pocket. There are cartridges there also, and the money. Leave the money where it is, and bring me the revolver and the cartridges."

"Good!"

"You can do it without being seen. If they see you——"

"I shall be careful."

"There is a light in the cuddy?"

"Yes; the lamp is burning, but it is very dim. I shall take care not to be seen. It will not take me long."

"Then go! Good luck, my lad!"

Wharton glided out of the cabin in the darkness.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

HARRY WHARTON'S heart was beating fast.

He knew that he was carrying his life in his hands.

If Jim Silver suspected—if the mutineer captain of the *Spindrift* even discovered that he was aft at

all—he knew what he had to expect.

The rascals who had already stained their hands with blood, and who had only picked him up from the open boat to make him useful to them, would not hesitate in dealing with him if they found him dangerous.

He needed all his courage now.

True, to leave matters as they were would not save his life. It was plain enough that Jim Silver intended to "pile up" the *Spindrift*, and leave all but his confederates to go down with her. In that way, and that way alone, he could save himself from the penalty of his crimes. He would already have done so if he had found the hidden two thousand pounds.

If the juniors fell in the struggle with the mutineers, it would be but hastening the end. Yet it required courage and determination to face that struggle. Wharton's heart was beating hard. But he was not afraid.

He crept to the companion-way and listened.

There was a sound of a drunken chorus from the deck forrard, where the watch were making merry. Wharton distinguished the hoarse voice of Peter Bones, the boatswain, above the others.

Then the sharp tones of the man with the ear-rings rang out:

"Belay that, you drunken swabs!"

Only a laugh answered from the seamen. The mutineers of the *Spindrift* were not in the least under the control of their ringleader. The brig was in danger, with the sea running high after the gale, and only one man in the mutineer crew sober. But the mutineers did not care for that. They were free from discipline now, and they were making the most of it.

If the man with the ear-rings had not taken charge of the wheel, the

catastrophe would have come already. Harry Wharton breathed a breath of relief. The drinking mutineers were not likely to come below, and the man with the ear-rings was too busy.

Wharton found the locker. It had been broken open and searched, evidently, but the secret of the false bottom had not been discovered. Articles lay loosely in it, and Wharton removed them quickly and silently, and then felt for the depression in the wood the captain had described to him.

He found it immediately, and the bottom of the locker tilted up as he pressed, revealing a cavity below.

Wharton felt in it, and felt the revolver under his hand, and a packet, which he guessed to contain the cartridges. There was a larger and heavier packet, too, and he guessed what that contained.

He took out the revolver and the case of cartridges, and closed the secret lid, and replaced the articles upon it.

Then he groped his way back to the captain's cabin.

He entered the cabin, and closed the door without a sound. But the keen ears of the disabled man in the bunk caught his breath.

"Who is it?"

"It's I, sir."

"Good! You have the pistol?"

"Here it is."

"Do you know how to load it?"

"Yes."

"Good! Do so, every chamber!"

"Right!"

In the glimmer of light from the porthole, Harry loaded every chamber of the revolver, and handed it to the captain. Captain Curll thrust the case of cartridges under his pillow; the six-shooter he kept in his hand beneath the bedclothes.

"You've left nothing to show them——"

"Nothing, sir."

"They won't see——"

"No, no!"

"Good! I can't help being anxious, lad. It isn't only that Jim Silver shan't have the money; but when that is found, he is going to scuttle the Spindrift or else pile her up the Channel. I want to save my ship, and to save our lives. Now get back forrard and tell your chum—if you're sure you can trust him."



It was no time for half-measures. Their lives hung upon a thread. Bob Cherry held his bludgeon ready, while Harry Wharton bound the drunken boatswain.

"That's all right."

"If we get through this alive, I shall remember what you've done for me!"

"We'll be back here as soon as it's safe," said Harry.

"I shall wait for you, lad."

Wharton quitted the cabin.

He crept up the companion-way. A mist was creeping over the sea, and it clung clammy to the rigging of the Spindrift. A white haze was on the deck, and it made Wharton's task easier. He crept out and glided forward, keeping in the shadows. On the deck two or three of the men were sleeping from the effect of the rum, but Peter Bones and Bill Dunn were still drinking.

"Harry, where have you been?"

Bob Cherry grasped Wharton's arm, near the fore-castle.

Wharton drew a quick breath.

"I thought you were asleep, Bob."

"So I was," said Bob. "They woke me up with their giddy chorus, and I found you hadn't come down. Where have you been?"

Wharton explained in whispers.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "So the captain is still alive, and we're booked for a row with these blackguards in the morning?"

"That's it, Bob!"

"It's a jolly serious business, Harry."

"I know it is; but what else can be done?"

"Nothing. I'm ready."

"We'll leave it a bit later before we get aft," said Harry. "Those rotters will all be fast asleep soon, and it will be easier."

Wharton was right.

About an hour later, Bill Dunn came staggering down into the fore-castle and threw himself into a bunk and snored heavily.

Peter Bones went down the companion-way and disappeared.

Jim Silver remained at the helm.

The Spindrift glided on through the misty night. The juniors did not feel like sleeping now. They were tired enough, but they were too excited to sleep even if they had had the leisure to do so.

Each of them secured a weapon, the best they could find. Wharton had an iron belaying-pin, and Bob Cherry a heavy billet of wood of a handy size to use as a club. The mist was thickening over the sea. Once or twice the juniors heard steamer sirens hooting through the mist.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry murmured. "If a ship came right on us now, the Spindrift would go down like a stone. Those idiots are risking their lives and ours by getting drunk now."

"I don't envy Silver his crew," said Harry. "He couldn't run the ship long on these terms."

"It's not far from dawn now, Harry."

"Let's get aft."

The juniors stole aft through the misty darkness.

They reached the companion-way and slipped below. They had seen Peter Bones go down that way, but they were sure that he was deep in a drunken slumber, and that they had nothing to fear from him. They were right. The deep snore of the boat-swain could be heard from the mate's cabin as they went down.

A new thought flashed into Wharton's mind. He paused in the alley-way, and caught Bob Cherry by the arm.

"That rotter is dead drunk, Bob," he whispered.

"Sounds like it," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Why shouldn't we make sure of him now we've got the chance? It will be one less to tackle when the row comes."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"I—I don't mean to hurt him," said Harry hastily. "But he's drunk. We can tie him up while he's asleep. There's plenty of rope here, and——"

"We'll try," said Bob. "If he wakes up, I'll give him a crack with this, and he'll go to sleep again. We can't be particular now."

"I should say not."

Wharton cautiously opened the door of the mate's cabin, which the boatswain had taken possession of.

The room was pitch dark but the heavy snoring of Peter Bones guided them to the bunk.

They paused there, hesitating and listening. Wharton had caught up a rope from the cuddy, and he uncoiled it silently.

As their eyes grew more used to the darkness, they could dimly make out the huge form of the boatswain stretched in the bunk fully dressed.

He was evidently plunged in a deep torpor from the quantity of powerful spirit he had consumed.

"Ready, Bob?"

"Yes."

"If he wakes up, he mustn't call out."

"He shan't!" said Bob grimly.

It was no time for half-measures. Their own lives hung upon a thread. Bob Cherry held his bludgeon ready, and Harry Wharton cautiously bent over the sleeper. The drunken man did not move as Harry passed the rope round his legs, and then round his arms, making slip-nooses in it. Then the junior cautiously drew the slipknots tighter and tighter, and knotted them again and again. Peter Bones snored on heavily. He was a

helpless prisoner now, unable to move a hand or foot when he awoke.

Bob Cherry breathed a sigh of relief when Wharton had finished.

"I'm glad I didn't have to hit him," he said.

"Same here. But he mustn't be allowed to yell out when he wakes up, or we've taken all our trouble for nothing."

"Shove something into his mouth. He can breathe through his nose if he wants to go on breathing," grinned Bob Cherry. "His nose is big enough, anyway; and he's using it as a musical instrument now."

Wharton chuckled. Whatever danger might be threatening him, Bob Cherry was always ready to crack a joke. Wharton gently stuffed his handkerchief into the wide-open mouth of the boatswain, and passed a string round his head to secure it there. The drunken ruffian was gagged now, and unable to cry out if he awoke. Wharton had finished the last knot when he became aware that the man's eyes were wide open, and gleaming in the gloom. The junior started back a little, startled.

Peter Bones made an effort to move.

He only wriggled in the bunk. Wharton had done his work well.

The man was still deeply under the influence of drink, but some of his senses had returned. The deadly gleam in his eyes showed that he recognised the juniors, and knew what they had done.

He struggled in his bonds. But his great strength was useless to him now. A hoarse gurgle came from his throat as he tried to shout.

Bob Cherry grinned down at him.

"Yes, you can try as hard as you like, my beauty," he said. "But you won't be able to sing any more to-night!"

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Gurgle!

"You're jolly lucky not to have your silly brains knocked out. That's what you'd do for us, if you could."

Gurgle!

"You're going to stay here," said Bob Cherry. "Give that gag another twist, Harry; his gurgling gets on my nerves."

The gag was jammed tighter, and Peter Bones' gurgling died away.

He lay helplessly in the bunk, his eyes gleaming with deadly hate and rage at the two juniors.

"The brute's safe," said Bob. "We'll lock him in and take away the key. If we can only make sure of Silver, I don't think the others will give much trouble. But Silver won't be nabbed so easily as this."

"I'm afraid not."

"Come on."

There was a key in the lock of the cabin door. Wharton transferred it to the outside. They left the cabin and locked the door, and Wharton dropped the key out of the nearest porthole into the sea. There was no danger of Peter Bones being released in a hurry now.

Then the juniors entered the captain's cabin.

Captain Curll was wide awake.

"We're here, sir," said Harry, in a whisper. "I've brought my chum with me."

"Good!"

"And we've put Peter Bones out of the way for a bit."

"What! How?"

Wharton explained.

"By James!" said the skipper.

"You are plucky youngsters, and no mistake. You couldn't have done better. Peter Bones was the most dangerous of the gang after Silver. You've locked the door?"

"Yes; and dropped the key overboard."

"Good! They'll have to smash in the door to release him, and the door is just opposite this one, across the alleyway. They won't smash it in while I've got a six-shooter in my fist, with this door open. I begin to think that we shall get out of this all right. Once Silver is settled the men may come round. Anyway, we've a good chance of handling them now. Keep out of sight when Silver comes in, my lads, and be ready to pile on him when I give the word."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"You've brought a rope in case it's wanted?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Now we've only got to wait for morning—and Jim Silver."

They waited with beating hearts.

The Spindrift plunged on through a heavy sea, as the dim light of dawn struggled up through the mist.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

AT CLOSE QUARTERS!

DAWN on the sea! The light came feebly in at the porthole, which was a circle of white vapour. The mist had thickened on the sea. There was no sound of stirring on the Spindrift. In the mate's cabin Peter Bones, whether asleep or awake, could not stir. In the forecabin the seamen were still buried in drunken slumber. On the deck of the brig only Jim Silver was awake.

They heard his step upon the companion presently.

Harry Wharton drew back into the darkest corner of the cabin, where he would be behind Silver as he came in. Bob Cherry crouched under the table. There was room for only one there, and Wharton would not be seen as the mutineer came in. When he was inside the cabin, it was Wharton's

business to close the door behind him and lock it. Then the ringleader of the mutineers would be shut up in the cabin, with the two juniors and the wounded captain to deal with.

As the man was armed, and quite certain to use his weapon if he had a chance, there was no telling how the struggle in the cabin would go. But they would have the advantage of a surprise; and in the captain's hand

face dark and savage, his golden earrings glistening in the light.

He strode directly towards the bunk.

"Awake, captain?"

Captain Curll was sitting up in the bunk.

"Yes," he said. "I am awake, Silver."

"Have you decided——"

Crash!



As Silver's hand went into his pocket for his weapon, the captain fired on the instant. Crack! There was a fierce, sharp yell from Silver, and he grasped his right arm.

under the bedclothes was gripped the loaded revolver, and the grim expression upon his pale face showed that he would not hesitate to use it.

The mutineer's steps came along to the cabin.

The door was open.

Jim Silver stepped in, his swarthy

Silver started round.

Wharton had shut the door hurriedly and turned the key, and now he faced the mutineer, panting, the belaying pin in his hand.

Silver saw him for the first time.

"You cub! What——"

"Silver, keep your hand out of

your pocket ! " came the captain's sharp tones. " I've got my finger on the trigger."

Silver stared blankly at the skipper.

The revolver had come into sight now; it was levelled at the breast of the man with the ear-rings, and the skipper's hand did not falter.

His finger was on the trigger, and the hammer was rising slightly.

Silver glared at him.

" You—you—— Where did you get that barker ? "

" Keep your hands out of your pockets. I shall spare your life if I can. But—ah ! Would you ? "

In spite of the warning Jim Silver's hand went into his pocket for his weapon. The captain fired on the same instant.

Crack !

The cabin seemed filled with deafening noise.

There was a fierce, sharp yell from the man with the ear-rings, like the yelp of a dog in sudden pain.

His hand did not enter his pocket. His right arm dropped to his side like a lump of wood. The bone was broken by the bullet.

The swarthy man reeled back, his face white and ghastly with pain.

" Sapristi ! "

" Do you want another, through your heart ? " said the captain. " Put your left hand over your head, Silver, or you're a dead man."

The man with the ear-rings ground his teeth.

But there was no mistaking the captain's deadly earnestness. The mutineer raised his left hand in the air.

The revolver in the hand of the wounded skipper never wavered.

" That's better," he said.

" Oh, curse——"

" That's enough, Silver. Hold your tongue ! " said the captain tersely.

" I'm skipper of this craft again now. You're going to obey orders. Understand ? "

" Caramba ! Is it this boy who——"

Captain Curll nodded.

" You've hit it."

" Thousand curses ! " muttered the man with the ear-rings. " If I had left him to drown——"

" You did not save me for my own sake," said Harry. " You wanted to make use of me. You said so, you scoundrel ! "

" Hang you I——"

" Search him for his weapons, lad," said Captain Curll. " If he resists, I'll lay him dead on the floor ! "

The man with the ear-rings did not resist. He was almost fainting with pain, and he sank heavily upon a stool, still, however, keeping his left hand above his head.

Harry Wharton extracted a revolver and a case-knife from his pockets.

" His teeth are drawn now," said the captain, with a grim laugh. " Tie his left arm to his side. He won't use his right arm again in a hurry."

The mutineer's left arm was tied down.

He was utterly helpless now.

He sat dazed, clenching his teeth to keep back a cry of pain. Jim Silver was a scoundrel, but he was game.

The shot in the cabin had caused no commotion outside. It was doubtful if the drunken seamen above had heard it, or at all events had noticed it. And Peter Bones, bound hand and foot in his cabin, could not move.

" You shall pay for this, all of you ! " muttered Silver at last. " You have got the rest of the crew to deal with yet ! "

" Six rough scoundrels," said the captain. " But I shall deal with them."

"And Peter Bones——"

"Peter Bones is in his bunk, trussed up like a turkey."

The man with the ear-rings ground his teeth again.

Bob Cherry had come out of his hiding-place, but his bludgeon was not wanted. He grinned, and nodded cheerfully to the man with the ear-rings.

"Bit of a change in the programme," he remarked.

"You cub!"

"I'd better look after that fin of yours, I think," said Bob. "I suppose even that brute oughtn't to be allowed to bleed to death, sir?"

"Serve him right if he does!"

"But I think——"

The captain gave a short laugh.

"Look after him, if you like."

"Leave me alone!" muttered Silver savagely.

Bob Cherry took no notice of him. He ripped away the man's sleeve with Silver's own knife, and showed the wound. The bone was broken, and Bob Cherry could do nothing for that. But with a sheet from the bed, torn into pieces, the two juniors made bandages and bound up the wound, stopping the flow of blood. They had learned first aid as Boy Scouts at Greyfriars, and their knowledge was useful now.

"The mutineers don't seem to be awake yet, sir," said Harry, listening at the door. "What's the next move?"

The captain groaned.

"If I could get on deck I'd handle them easily enough, the brutes! They would knuckle under fast enough if they saw me with a shooter in my grip, now that this scoundrel is safe. But——"

"You can't get up, sir?"

"No."

The captain was sinking back in his bunk, his face deadly pale.

The exertion and excitement had told upon him, and he was overcome, now that the reaction had set in.

Jim Silver regarded him with a savage grin. The man's endurance of pain was wonderful. The juniors knew how the wound in his arm must have made him suffer; but, save for a pallor in his swarthy face, he hardly showed a sign of it.

"You'd better have made terms with me, captain," said Silver. "You can't handle six men, stuck in your bunk as you are, and these boys can do nothing. As soon as the crew are on to what's happened here you'll have them upon you."

"They won't find me easy to deal with," said the captain. "Can either of you kids use a revolver?"

"I can, sir," said Harry.

"Then take that rascal's weapon. Is it loaded?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry, examining the revolver.

"Keep it in your fist. They will attack the cabin soon, and then it will be wanted. You can shoot?"

"I've had a good bit of rifle practice," said Harry. "I can handle a revolver, too, I fancy. I'll try, anyway. It won't be a long range."

"Tie that villain to the stanchion there," said the captain, "just opposite the bunk. If the trouble goes against us, he's going to have my last bullet."

Silver was placed against the wall on the stool, and secured to the stanchion with another length of rope.

There was still no sound of stirring on the deck.

If the captain had been able to move it would have been a great opportunity for tackling the rest of the mutineers, but for the two boys

to attack them unaided was not to be thought of. The odds would have been hopeless. The only thing to be done was to wait till the mutineers discovered what had happened in the cabin, and then to deal with them when they came.

The cabin door was set wide open at the captain's order, and he watched the doorway, revolver in hand. Exactly what the wounded skipper intended to do the boys did not know, but it was evident that he had some plan in his mind. It was not for them to speak. Captain Curll was commander of the Spindrift, and it was for the juniors to obey his orders.

Bob Cherry brought in biscuits and cold meat from the cuddy, and the juniors ate their breakfast while they waited. The captain ate, too. The strain of the situation, and their extreme peril, had not destroyed their appetites, and it was necessary to eat to keep up their strength.

Presently a hoarse voice came rolling down the companion.

"Ahoy, Peter Bones!"

The captain propped himself up in the bunk a little higher, his hand closing on the butt of the revolver.

"Ahoy, Jim Silver!" came the hoarse voice again. "Where are ye, man? Did ye lash the helm and go to sleep, ye lubber?"

"That's John Mallet's voice," said the captain, with a grim look. "He'll be coming down here soon, I fancy. Not a sound, Silver. I'd kill you as soon as look at you, after what you've done, and glad of the excuse!"

Silver was silent.

He wondered why the captain had not shot him dead in the first place, and he knew that his life hung upon a thread now.

There was a sound of heavy footsteps coming below, and then the

seaman came tramping into the alleyway.

His burly form was framed in the open doorway of the cabin, and he stared stupidly in, utterly amazed by what he saw.

He had no time to recover from his astonishment.

The trigger of the captain's revolver was already rising.

Crack!

Mallet yelled, and fell.

"Good heavens!" muttered Harry Wharton. He had not been prepared for that.

Mallet rolled in the doorway, groaning. Wharton started towards him.

"Don't be scared, young 'un," said Captain Curll quietly. "He's not dead. But he won't walk again till he's had a spell in hospital, I fancy."

Mallet groaned deeply, and fainted. The bullet was in his right leg, and it was certain that he would not walk again for a long time.

"That leaves five of the brutes," said Captain Curll. "Hark! I can hear them coming now. Now's the time. Courage, lads!"

"We're not afraid, sir."

There was a trampling of footsteps outside, and a hubbub of voices. But the mutineers did not come past the open doorway. Mallet, lying in the doorway, was a plain enough warning for them, though they did not know what had happened.

"Who's done that?" roared the voice of Bill Dunn.

"I did, Bill Dunn," called back the captain; "and I'm ready to do the same for you if you'll step up."

Dunn did not accept the invitation.

"Captain Curll!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

"Yes, you mutinous dog!"

"I thought you were a goner, captain."

"That was a little mistake Silver made, too."

"Where is Silver, captain?"

"He's here—trussed up, and with a broken arm."

"Souse me!" said Dunn.

"There are three of us here," said Captain Curll. "If you men choose

to return to your duty, I'll let you off as lightly as I can. If not——"

There was a hoarse laugh from the mutineers outside.

"Not this time, captain. We ain't looking for penal servitude."

"We can do without Jim Silver, captain," said another voice. "Peter Bones will skipper us as well as he could."

"Peter Bones is a prisoner, too."

"Where is he?"

"Tied up like a turkey, same as Silver."

"Souse me!" said Bill Dunn again.

"Rush 'em!" said another voice.

"We'll have them kids overboard in a



Through the mist Wharton saw the shape of a vessel. Clinging to the binnacle, he shouted for help. "Help! Ship ahoy!" But there came no answer from the other vessel.

jiffy, and then we'll hack the place inside-out and find the money."

"Shet up!" replied Bill Dunn.

"We'll take the captain's offer. If he'll promise to let us off as light as he can, we'll go back to our duty."

"You fool, Bill Dunn——"

"Shet up!"

Whispering followed, and the occupants of the cabin could distinguish no words, but they knew very well what the whispering meant.

Dunn, who had assumed the leadership of the reduced gang, intended to deceive the captain, if he could, with a clumsy pretence of submission, and he was explaining his scheme to his more obtuse comrades.

The intended treachery was so plain and palpable that the captain smiled grimly as he waited for the mutineers to speak again.

Bill Dunn called out at last.

"I've talked 'em over, captain. We're going to give in."

"Good!" said Captain Curll.

"Give us your word not to shoot, and we'll come into the cabin, and——"

"You'll come into the cabin one at a time, holding your hands above your heads, and these boys will tie you up, one at a time," said the captain curtly.

There was an outbreak of angry oaths immediately. The mutineers realised at once that the captain was not to be deceived, and the flimsy pretence was thrown aside at once.

"Cap'n," said Bill Dunn hoarsely, "if you don't give in, we'll rush the cabin and cut you to pieces—you and them cubs!"

"Come on, then!"

"Give in, and let us have the money, and we'll leave you alone, and clear off in the longboat."

"Bah!"

"You won't do it, skipper?"

"No, you dog!"

"Rush 'em!" muttered Bill Dunn.

The captain gave the juniors a quick look.

"They're coming," he muttered.

"It's life or death now, my lads. Fight for your lives, and heaven help us all!"

There was no time for more.

There came a heavy rush of feet in the alleyway, and the next moment the doorway was blocked with struggling, furious, cursing men.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

THE FATE OF THE SPINDRIFT

CRACK!

Crack!

The first shot came from the captain's revolver, the second from Wharton's.

Bill Dunn staggered, and fell heavily across the insensible Mallet. Another man reeled back into the passage, shrieking. Wharton's bullet had hit him—where, the boy did not know. He had fired into the crowd of them, sure of hitting somebody.

The doorway was blocked by the fall of Dunn, added to Mallet, and the mutineers—only three of them now—raged there, scrambling in, and the captain fired again before the first report had died away.

A man fell on the planks with a choking cry.

Crack! Crack!

But the last bullets were wasted. The two remaining mutineers, sickened of the struggle, had fled. They were heard stumbling up the companion-way, and hurrying along the deck to the forecastle, so great was their terror. Three badly-wounded men were groaning about the cabin doorway.

"Beaten them!" said Captain Curll.

A loud voice rang out from the mate's cabin. Peter Bones had succeeded in chewing away his gag at last.

"Help here, you lubbers! Help! Come and cut me loose!"

Deep groans from the wounded men answered him.

Wharton was very white. He had fired in self-defence, but the thought that the shot might prove fatal was a terrible one. But he was soon relieved. The man who had been hit by his bullet picked himself up and dragged himself away to the companion and crawled on deck.

The others had lost consciousness now.

The captain fixed his eyes upon Jim Silver.

"What price your mutiny now, you scoundrel?" he said.

Silver gritted his teeth.

"The game isn't played out yet," he said. "You've got a clumsy old tub to sail in a mist on a rough sea without a crew. We'll all go to Davy Jones together."

"Well, I'll have the pleasure of your company there, at any rate," said Captain Curll. "I don't think those two frightened scoundrels on deck will give any more trouble."

"Hang you!"

"Wharton, call Cookey, will you? Cookey will be on our side now that he's not in any more danger," said the captain, smiling.

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Wharton hurried to the galley. He found Mark Antony trying to conceal himself under a tub and whimpering with terror. The black cook had evidently heard the firing.

"You not shoot Cookey?" he roared, as Wharton came in. "Cookey all right! You not shoot poor ole Cookey?"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"It's all serene, Cookey!" he exclaimed. "We've beaten the mutineers, and you're to go to the captain's cabin."

Cookey stared at him in wonder.

"Beaten dem mutineers!"

"Yes; beaten them hollow!"

"Beaten Mass' Silver?"

"Yes, rather!"

"De Lord be praised!" said Mark Antony. "Me look after Mass' Captain like anything. Me not afraid!"

"No; you're a brave chap—anybody can see that," agreed Wharton. "Come along."

The black cook went aft to the cabin. The two mutineers who had taken refuge in the fore-castle looked out, but at a motion from Wharton's revolver they scuttled into cover again. It was evident that there was nothing more to be feared from them.

Wharton cast a glance out over the sea.

The mist shut off the view at a distance, and it was impossible to tell where the vessel was. Land might have been within a mile, and he would have been no wiser. A ship might have been passing within a dozen cables'-lengths, and he would not have seen it.

The peril of the brig was borne in very clearly upon his mind. The Spindrift was drifting, and there was no one to handle her—no one to help if trouble arrived. And on that misty sea troubles was sure to come to the unmanned craft.

The struggle with the mutineers was over, but the position of the chums of Greyfriars was not much less dangerous now, though the danger was from a different quarter.

Bob Cherry joined him on deck.

"Queer business!" he remarked.

"What are we going to do now,

Harry? We've beat Jim Silver & Co., but——"

"Blessed if I know!"

"There will be an accident sooner or later if we drift on like this," said Bob, staring into the mist. "What on earth's to be done?"

"We may get help from another ship."

"We can't get any signals seen in this mist."

"Let's speak to the captain."

Captain Curll was still in bed, exhausted by the strain of what he had gone through, but still grim-faced, and keeping the revolver in his hand.

He had rapped out orders to the black cook, and Mark Antony was obeying them.

The wounded mutineers were carried on deck by the powerful negro, and put into their bunks in the fore-castle.

Peter Bones was still a bound prisoner in the mate's cabin, roaring out furious curses at intervals.

It would not have been safe to release him for a moment, and the juniors paid no attention to him. Jim Silver was still bound in the captain's cabin, and the hard, grim, sneering grin was still upon his face.

"You're not out of the wood yet, nino!" he said, as Harry Wharton came in.

Wharton did not reply.

"What orders now, sir?" he asked, looking at the skipper.

Captain Curll suppressed a groan.

"Are the two hands giving any trouble?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Where are they?"

"In the fore-castle."

"If they come abaft the mainmast, you're to shoot! Do you hear? Shoot them as you would mad dogs!"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't think they'll give trouble now, though. Rudge and Leache were the least guilty of the gang, I think, and the biggest cowards," said the captain. "They hung back fast enough when the shooting began, and I don't think they'll be looking for any more. But keep your eyes peeled. If they get a chance to dig you in the back, they may turn the tables again."

"We'll be jolly careful, sir," said Bob Cherry. "What about the wounded men? They ought to have some care——"

"Let Leache and Rudge look after them, if they choose! You boys are not to go into the fore-castle. You would be set on at once."

"Very well, sir."

"We must get out signals of distress," said the skipper, "then we may get help from another craft. There are plenty of ships in this sea. It's this infernal mist that troubles me! But it's the only chance. I——"

He broke off.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The brig reeled and trembled from end to end.

There was a yell of terror from the deck where the two mutineers in the fore-castle came running out like frightened rabbits.

"Good heavens!" gasped Bob Cherry.

He had been flung across the cabin by the shock, and he found himself rolling against the man with the ear-rings. Wharton was clutching at the clamped table. The captain held on to his bunk, white as death.

A roar of voices from the mist, then silence.

Wharton gathered himself together and clambered madly up the companion-way.

The deck was aslant.

The mainmast had broken off short at the maintop, and the topmast and the maingallant were cumbering the deck and the side, loaded with their reefed canvas.

For a moment Wharton thought he could see a dark shape looming in the mist.

"Sheer off, or I'll fire!" roared Captain Curll. But the longboat came plunging on. The captain fired, and the juniors saw Peter Bones fall forward into the boat.



It was the shape of the vessel that had run the brig down.

Then it vanished, swallowed up by the white vapour.

The Spindrift was rocking drunkenly, and there was a heavy wash of water below.

Wharton clung to the binnacle and shouted for help. He had a faint hope that the crew of the other vessel might hear him.

"Help! Ship ahoy! Help! Help!"

But there came no answer from the mist.

The other vessel, probably damaged by the collision, too, though not so severely as the Spindrift, had backed away and disappeared.

She had struck the Spindrift full amidships with her bows.

But she was gone now.

The mist swallowed her.

Only the dim, faint echoes of Wharton's shouting answered him:

"Help! Help!"

Back faintly from the mist came the echo:

"Help! Help!"

But that was all.

No answering voice. The mist did not carry his shouting—the vessel was too far off for ears to hear.

If they were in a condition to search for the vessel they had run down, the crew of the stranger were probably doing so; but the mist hid everything.

Wharton realised, with a sickening feeling, that there was no help to be found.

The Spindrift, crippled and sinking, was left alone.

Wharton hurried below.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

ADrift ON THE SEA!

CAPTAIN CURLL was out of his bunk now, trying feebly to dress himself. Bob Cherry was helping him. The skipper had been half-dressed, and Bob helped him on with his coat and his boots.

Jim Silver's face was like a demon's. But no one glanced at the man with the ear-rings. In the cuddy, the black cook was whimpering with terror.

"It's all up with the Spindrift!" the captain muttered. "The poor old Spindrift! All up with her!"

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Harry.

"The maintopmast is down."

"Did you see the ship—"

"She's disappeared. I thought I saw her for a moment. If they're searching for us—"

"They won't find us in this mist."

"That's what I was thinking, sir."

The wash of water below could be plainly heard. It was only too clear that the brig had received severe damage beneath the waterline.

"Help me on deck, lads!" said the captain.

They supported his weight up the companion ladder.

Weak as he was, feeble from his injury and from loss of blood, the peril seemed to have given the hardy sailor-man new strength.

Leache and Rudge came running aft.

"Captain, she's sinking!" called out Leache.

"All your fault, you dogs!" said the captain.

"We've got to save our lives, captain!" said Rudge savagely.

"That's an old story now."

"Give us orders, sir!" said Leache.

"Look after yourselves!" said the captain. "Keep your distance, that's all! Take the longboat, and get your mates into it!"

"It's all we can do!" said Leache, with an oath.

"The quarter-boat will do for us, lads," said the captain quietly. "Get up provisions and water, and get them into the boat! Take your time—the Spindrift will float half an hour yet, if I'm any judge."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Cookey! Where are you, cookey?"

"Here I am, Mass' Captain!"

"Help to load the boat!"

"Yes, sah."

Rudge and Leache were cramming necessities into the longboat. The Spindrift was settling down deeper into the water. From the forecabin the wounded men were shrieking for help.

Wharton and Bob Cherry and the black cook laboured manfully at getting provisions and kegs of water into the quarter-boat.

It was finished at last.

"Now for the gold!" said Captain Curll. "We must take that with us!"

Leache and Rudge, who had been

whispering together, approached the captain. The skipper eyed them grimly, his revolver in his hand.

"What do you want?" he demanded sharply.

"The money, captain——"

"What about it?"

"You're not going to leave it to sink with the Spindrift, sir?"

"We'll return to our duty, captain—we'll obey your orders. Bring it into the longboat with you, and we'll——"

The captain laughed scoffingly.

"And you'll pitch me overboard, and keep it," he said.

"We swear, skipper——"

"Enough said! I'm not coming in the longboat. I'm going to take the gold in the quarter-boat, with me and these lads and Cookey."

The two men exchanged fierce glances.

"Captain, if you'll take us back, we'll leave the others in the lurch."

"Enough said."

"Will you——"

"Get for'ard!"

"But, captain——"

"Get for'ard!" cried the skipper, swinging up his revolver. "Now, then, hop it for the fo'c's'le—double quick—before I drill holes in you!"

The seamen sullenly retreated forward.

"Into the forecastle!" shouted the captain.

"Look here, captain——"

Crack!

A bullet whistled past Leache's head, and the men did not stay for further talk. They bolted into the forecastle like rabbits taking to earth.

"Now get up the gold," said the skipper. "You know where it is, boys."

"Yes, sir."

The juniors ran down into the

cuddy, and Wharton opened the secret receptacle in the bottom of the locker.

The case of gold was carried on deck and placed in the boat. From the opening of the forecastle the mutinous seamen watched them, but they did not venture out.

"All's ready now," said the captain. "You'll have to get me into the boat before you lower away. You can manage to lower the boat without up-ending her? Cookey will help you."

"We'll manage it, sir."

"Good!"

The captain was helped into the boat.

Then the juniors and the black cook released the falls carefully, and the boat slid into the water. The Spindrift was very deep in the sea now, and the boat had not far to go.

"Now come aboard," said the captain.

The black cook jumped into the boat.

The juniors hesitated.

"Come on!" called out the captain. "What are you stopping for?"

"What about the injured men, sir?"

"Those mutinous dogs can look after one another!" said the captain savagely. "I tell you you wouldn't be safe among them."

"Silver and Peter Bones are tied up. You don't want them to drown like rats, sir."

"Serve them right if they do! But Leache will set them free and give them a chance."

"All right, sir."

"Come aboard at once. We shall be sucked down by the brig if we don't hurry."

The juniors clambered into the boat.

Wharton quickly seized an oar and pushed off.

Leache and Rudge could be seen now at work with the longboat again. But as the smaller boat pushed away from the brig the mist swallowed them up.

The captain's face was very white as he looked back at the disappearing vessel.

"The poor old Spindrift!" he muttered. "That's the last voyage for her. But I've got the money safe. The owners will go easy when they know that's all right—if we save it."

"The money will be saved if we're saved ourselves, sir," said Harry Wharton.

The captain nodded.

The mist had swallowed the brig now, and they did not see her sink.

"Those rascals won't find us very easily here," said Bob Cherry. "One can't see fifty yards in this fog."

"No; I reckon we're safe from Jim Silver now, even if that gang take the trouble to put him in the boat."

"Do you think they might leave him bound there?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, horrified.

Captain Curll shrugged his shoulders.

"They might."

"Oh, it would be horrible!"

"It will save him from hanging," said the skipper. "But it's no business of ours what they do now. We've got to save ourselves."

There was a short silence. No one on board the boat had the faintest idea of their situation. The juniors had been aboard the brig for more than thirty hours, and all that time she had been in motion. But they did not know what course she had taken, and for a great part of the time she had been simply drifting under reefed canvas. The thought occurred to Harry Wharton that probably they were not very far from

the place where the juniors had been picked up at sea.

"The wind's changed," he remarked. "It was blowing a gale east by south when we were blown out to sea. It's chopped right round now."

"We're in the North Sea, that's all I know," said Captain Curll; "but we might be close on Holland, or close on the English coast, or drifting to the Channel, it's impossible to tell. Keep a look-out for steamers' lights, and listen for sirens."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Hallo! What's that?"

A dim shape loomed up in the gloom. It was a sail, but so close down to the water that it was evidently the sail of a boat, not of a ship.

"Might be a fishing craft," exclaimed Bob Cherry hopefully. "Give 'em a yell!"

And the juniors and the black cook shouted together:

"Boat ahoy!"

The boat came sweeping down towards them under the sail. Captain Curll uttered a sudden exclamation.

"By James! It's the longboat!"

The longboat of the Spindrift it was! It loomed into view out of the mist, and the juniors saw the man with the ear-rings, his right arm in a sling, and his face chalky white. They saw Peter Bones, and the two seamen, Leache and Rudge, and on a pile of canvas the group of wounded men, lying helplessly and groaning.

Captain Curll raised his revolver.

"Sheer off, or I'll fire!"

There was a curse from Peter Bones, who was at the tiller.

"Sheer off, I tell you!"

But the longboat came plunging on. It was evidently the boatswain's intention to run down the smaller craft.

Captain Curll fired with a steady hand.

The juniors saw Peter Bones release the lines and fall forward into the boat. The bows of the longboat sagged round, and with a snap the mast came down, and the sail was plunged deep into the water.

Then the longboat drifted out of sight in the mist.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

CAST ASHORE !

ALONE on the sea. Round the boat was choppy water and the thick, enveloping mist.

There was no sign of a passing vessel, but one might have passed within a hundred yards and the castaways would have been none the wiser.

The longboat had vanished hours ago. The captain's boat drifted on over the misty waters. It was useless to row when it was impossible to tell which direction should have been taken.

At intervals the juniors shouted, and fired a pistol in the hope of making themselves heard on some ship.

But no answer came from the mists, nothing but sullen echoes.

It was fortunate that the sea had gone down considerably ; as it was, the boat rocked and plunged in the trough of the waves.

Suddenly, late in the afternoon,

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet, his face flaming with excitement.

The captain was sleeping on a pile of rugs, well wrapped up in coats. Bob Cherry looked up at Harry.

"What is it, Harry?"

"Can't you hear?"

"I hear nothing."

"Don't you know the Shoulder?" exclaimed Harry Wharton excitedly. "Look at it, Bob—look at it!" "My only Uncle Christopher John!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. Chance had brought them to shore within a mile of Greyfriars itself!



"Listen—there it is again."

Bob Cherry put his hand to his ear and listened.

"My hat!" Bob breathed hard.

"It sounds like a bell."

"It is a bell!"

"But—on a ship——"

"It isn't on a ship!" cried Harry excitedly. "It's on land!"

"Land! Oh!"

The sound came more clearly through the mist.

Harry Wharton awoke the captain. The wounded skipper looked somewhat wildly about him as he started out of slumber.

"What is it? What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"We're near land, sir!"

"Land! How do you know?"

"I can hear a church bell."

"By James!"

The captain's worn face lighted up as he listened.

There was no mistake about it. At times the sound was lost as the wind veered, but then it came again clearer than before.

Church bells!

The old familiar sound brought joy to their hearts. It even seemed to Wharton that he had heard those bells before; that he knew their chime.

The sound ceased at last.

But the direction of land was certain now; and the two juniors and the black cook pulled out the oars and rowed for shore.

They rowed with energy, new hope in their breasts.

An hour passed.

Then a big, dusky shape loomed up in the gloom. Night was falling, and thickening the mist. But the shape of the great cliff loomed up clearer and clearer.

The rowers bent desperately to their oars. Safety was in sight at last. Whether the shore was English or Dutch did not matter; it was firm land, and safety lay there.

Bigger and bigger the great cliff loomed up.

And now the sound of the sea could be heard as it broke on the shore, and the rowers eased a little.

It would be a sorry ending if the boat had come to grief on the rocks, so near to safety.

Something familiar in the dim outlines of the great cliff had struck Harry Wharton's mind; but he kept to himself the strange thought it brought to him.

Captain Curll was sitting with flushed face and eager eyes.

"Land!" he said. "No doubt about that! Looks as if it will be a bit tricky getting ashore; but—look out——"

Bump!

The boat scraped upon a sunken rock.

"Look out!"

Wharton sprang with his oar to shove off the rock.

The boat glided into a narrow channel with great rocks on both sides. Wharton's eyes were gleaming now.

"We're shipping water!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Bale her out!"

The boat had started a plank in the collision with the rock. Bob Cherry baled out the inflowing water with a tin can, while Wharton rowed carefully.

Bump!

It was upon sand this time; the boat's nose was deep in shelving sand!

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

He leaped upon the shore, knee-deep in water and soft sand, and dragged the boat farther on. Wharton jumped after him and helped, and then the cook. The boat was dragged up to safety.

The mist still blotted the surroundings from their eyes.

But behind them the great cliff loomed up like a giant keeping watch and ward over land and sea.

In the distance, unseen, they heard

the heavy boom of the waves upon hard rocks.

Bob Cherry looked round him.

"I wonder where we are?" he remarked.

"Safe ashore, at any rate," said Captain Curll. "Help me out of the boat. It must be a civilised country, and when the mist clears off we shall get help."

The captain was lifted ashore, and the boat cleared of its contents. The wounded skipper was made comfortable with coats and rugs.

"Golly!" said Mark Antony. "Dis am better. S'pose dis chile get a fire started, and sumfin to eat, and hot coffee, Mass' Captain."

"Good for you, Cookey!"

"We'll find out where we are in the morning," said Captain Curll, after a pause. "I fancy it is the English coast."

"I know it is, sir," said Wharton, his face flushed with excitement.

"How do you know?" asked Bob.

"I thought I knew the bells," said Harry.

"The bells?"

"Yes."

"But—but——"

"Bob!" exclaimed Harry, grasping his chum by the arm, almost wild with delight. "Don't you know the bells of Friardale Church by this time?"

Bob Cherry almost staggered.

"Friardale Church!"

"Yes! Don't you know the Shoulder?"

"The Shoulder!" gasped Bob.

"Look at it, old fellow—look at it! Don't you know the old Shoulder again?" shouted Wharton.

Bob Cherry looked up at the dim cliff and gave a yell.

"My only Uncle Christopher John! You're right, Harry!"

"Yes, rather! I knew it."

"It's the Shoulder!" roared Bob Cherry. "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"What are you talking about?" asked Captain Curll. "Do you mean to say that you know this place?"

Wharton's eyes were dancing.

"I should jolly well say that we do!" he said. "Eh, Bob?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Bob Cherry gleefully.

"This is the Shoulder, sir—Pegg Bay's over yonder in the mist—and Pegg village, and Cliff House School. And less than a mile back there, behind the cliff, is Greyfriars."

"Greyfriars?"

"Our old school, sir."

"By James!" said the captain.

There was no doubt about it. The brig, drifting on the sea, had floated at the mercy of wind and wave, and had drifted to the same place where the juniors had first seen her. The boat had brought them to safety—and home! Chance—or was it Providence?—had brought the Greyfriars juniors back to the English shore, within a mile of the old school itself.

No wonder their eyes were bright.

"I can get over the cliff, sir," said Harry. "It will be rather stiff work in the mist, but I know it like a book. I can get over it to Greyfriars, and get the fellows here to help. I'll start as soon as we've had something to eat."

"By James!" was all the skipper could say.

"Jolly risky, climbing the cliff at night, Harry," said Bob Cherry gravely.

"I can manage it."

"I'll come with you, then."

"Can't leave the captain alone."

"But——"

"Suppose the other boat came ashore in the same place," said Wharton. "It's quite possible that

we haven't done with Jim Silver yet, Bob."

"I forgot that," said Bob Cherry. "Right you are; I'll stay. Get help here as soon as you can, old chap."

"What-ho!"

And ten minutes later Harry Wharton disappeared in the mist, following the rough path over the cliff with unfaltering steps.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

THE RETURN OF THE WANDERERS.

"ANY news?"

"No!"

"Oh, it's rotten!"

A gloomy group were talking in the junior Common-room at Greyfriars.

It was evening; but the Remove fellows were not thinking of their prep.

They had other things to think of.

It was the second night since Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry had gone down to the bay upon their foolhardy mission.

And since they had been let out of the school by the Bounder nothing had been heard of them.

The same night search had been made, after Nugent had awakened Mr. Quelch.

But the search had discovered nothing.

The next day the alarmed Head had communicated with the police and the coastguards, and the search was extended.

Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and several more Greyfriars fellows had taken a boat out to the Shoulder, in the faint hope of discovering some clue there to the missing juniors.

They had discovered the broken cricket-stump jammed in a crevice of the rock; sure proof that the missing juniors had carried out their compact.

But that was all.

The whole day the search went on. But no body was washed ashore, and the boat had disappeared. It was only too certain that the two juniors had been caught in the gale and blown out to sea.

There was a faint chance that they had been picked up at sea; but when the fellows remembered how rough the night had been they had to acknowledge that the chance was very faint indeed.

Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Singh were plunged into misery too deep for words.

They felt that they would never see the other two members of the famous Co. again.

Wharton and Bob Cherry had gone; they had vanished out of the life of Greyfriars; their fate to remain unknown, probably, until the sea gave up its dead.

Vernon-Smith was not much happier than the Co.

The Head had learned all about the challenge and its reckless acceptance; and he had spoken very plain words to the Bounder. The Bounder had not been punished; his anxiety and remorse were punishment enough.

For the Bounder, hard as he was, was not insensible to remorse; and the thought that he had sent his two schoolfellows to their death haunted him.

The second day had passed gloomily. A shadow hung over the school.

Searching had been given up now. It was useless to carry it further. Nothing could be known unless the bodies were washed ashore, or unless news was received that the juniors had been picked up by some passing vessel. And the latter hope was too faint to be counted on.

Johnny Bull had just been down to

Pegg village, and as he came in after returning, the other fellows greeted him with inquiries.

But the junior only shook his head.

There was no news.

"It's rotten!" said Frank Nugent miserably.

"The rottenfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, whose dusky face was as pale as its rich complexion would allow. "We shall never see our esteemed chums again."

The Bounder came into the Common-room.

No one spoke to him. The Bounder flushed as he looked round at the averted faces and came towards the Co.

Nugent gave him a bitter look.

"Keep your distance!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Bounder bit his lip.

"You needn't rub it in like this," he said, in a low voice. "I'm as sorry as you are for what's happened."

"It was your fault," said Nugent.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"I know it was, in a way," he said. "But—but I couldn't guess it was going to turn out like this. They needn't have gone."

"You know why they went, because you'd have accused them of funk-ing if they hadn't gone!" said Johnny Bull savagely. "You'd better hold your tongue."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles, "this is really rotten about Wharton



The juniors gave Wharton a hearty welcome. They shook his hands and thumped him on the back. In their relief and glee they could not make enough of him.

and Cherry. They can't possibly be coming back now, can they?"

"I'm afraid not," said Nugent.

Bunter was blinking very thoughtfully.

"They won't want their things any more," he remarked.

"Eh?"

"Oh, Bull, I wish you wouldn't bawl out at a fellow like that so suddenly!" said Bunter, in a peevish tone. "You quite startled me. I was only saying that if they're not coming back they won't want their things any more."

"You fat beast!"

"Look here, Bull, I don't see that you've got any reason for calling me names," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "We must look at these things in a sensible light. As it happens, Colonel Wharton is abroad now, and he hasn't been told; but he won't want his nephew's things. I'm sure of that. There's no harm if——"

Johnny Bull glared at the fat junior.

"If what?" he asked, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"If we all have our whack out of them," explained Bunter. "I want Wharton's camera. I'm sure he would have wanted me to have it, poor fellow; you know how fond he always was of me."

"You—you toad!"

"Oh, really, Bull! Wharton and I were great chums before you ever came to Greyfriars, and I'm sure he'd like me to have the camera; and you're jolly well not going to have it, I can tell you; and—— Ow—ow—ow!"

The juniors fell upon Bunter and bumped him, and smote him, and hurled him forth from the Common-room. Billy Bunter roared as he fled, and he did not come back again.

But the bumping of Billy Bunter did not relieve the feelings of Harry Wharton's chums. They conversed in low tones, with gloomy looks.

Suddenly there was a shout in the passage.

"Come out, you fellows! Hurrah!"

Nugent jumped.

"Does that mean news—good news?" he exclaimed.

"Sounds like it," muttered Johnny Bull huskily.

The juniors rushed out of the Common-room in an excited crowd. Wingate, of the Sixth, was in the passage.

"What is it, Wingate? Quick!"

"He's come back!"

"He—who?"

"Wharton!"

"And—and Bob?"

"Here I am!" shouted Harry Wharton, from the hall. "Where are you fellows? Come and give a chap a welcome!"

"Where's Bob?"

"Safe as houses."

"Thank goodness!"

They gave Wharton a welcome—a right, hearty welcome. They shook his hands and thumped him on the back till he was aching and breathless. It was Harry Wharton right enough—Wharton unwashed and unkempt—but Wharton! And the juniors, in their relief and glee, could not make enough of him. Frank Nugent kept hold of his arm as if afraid that he would suddenly melt away. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was shaking his hand in the same moment. Johnny Bull mechanically thumped Wharton on the back. He was a fellow of few words; but his actions spoke for him.

"Wharton, old man," exclaimed Mark Linley, "then you weren't drowned!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I don't look like it, do I?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I say, you fellows, it's really Wharton. Jolly glad to see you back, Wharton. I said all along that you'd come back safe and sound!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Why, you fat Ananias!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Oh, really, Brown, I said to Nugent that I knew Wharton was all right, and I told Bull distinctly that he mustn't think of taking Wharton's camera——"

"Why, you——"

"Now you know I did, and—and—yaroo!" And Billy Bunter disappeared among the legs of the juniors as Johnny Bull smote him.

Dr. Locke, the reverend Head of Greyfriars, came rustling out of his study. His face lighted up at sight of Wharton.

"My dear lad! So you have come back! Where is Cherry?"

"He's quite safe, sir."

"Thank heaven! You did a very wrong and reckless thing in going out that night, Wharton."

"I know, sir."

"But in the present happy circumstances, I shall forgive you. I presume that you were picked up at sea?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the vessel has come here——"

"The vessel's at the bottom of the North Sea, sir."

"Bless my soul! Then you——"

"We came ashore in a boat, sir. It's a long story; but the captain and cook of the vessel are with us, sir; and they want help. I've come to fetch some of the fellows to help them. They're on the beach round the Shoulder, sir. Can I take a dozen chaps to look after them, and bring them here, sir?"

"Most certainly. Wingate, you shall go with the prefects, and if you care to go, Mr. Quelch——"

"Most certainly, sir."

"I am more pleased than I can say, Wharton, to see you again," said the Head, shaking hands with the junior. "Good heavens, what is this on your shirt—blood?" He started.

"It's not my own, sir," said Harry hastily. "It's from a wounded man. There was a fight on the ship, sir—a mutiny! And we saved the captain's life, sir."

"Dear me!"

"He says so, sir. We've got him ashore. He's wounded."

"Oh, this is too rich!" exclaimed Nugent. "Harry, you bounder, what do you mean by getting into a thing like this and leaving your pals out? Don't I wish I'd been there!"

"The wishfulness is terrific."

"It wasn't so ripping while it was going on," said Harry. "But, buck up, some of you, and let's get to them."

And in a few minutes more an eager party of Greyfriars fellows, with electric torches gleaming, were following Harry Wharton to the rescue of the castaways.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

GREYFRIARS TO THE RESCUE!

CRACK!

Crack!

Two sharp pistol-shots rang out in the misty night.

They came clearly to the ears of the Greyfriars fellows, scrambling over the rough cliff path.

Wharton turned pale.

"That means that Silver and his gang have found them!" he exclaimed. "Hurry!"

On the way to the cliff Wharton had hurriedly explained the situation in which he had left his friends. And the Greyfriars fellows, to tell the truth, were rather hoping that they would find the mutineers there as well as the castaways. They wanted to have a little of the fun, as Coker, of the Fifth, explained. Indeed, Coker declared that it was like the cheek of those Remove kids to have it all to themselves as they had done.

The sound of the ringing pistol-shots from the beach, however, suddenly impressed the Greyfriars fellows with a sense of the seriousness of the situation.

But they did not hesitate.

They scrambled on faster than before.

Through the misty night a dancing gleam of flame guided them—the fire the black cook had lighted upon the beach.

As they came scrambling down the cliff, the Greyfriars fellows could see, in the light of the fire, what was passing on the beach.

Harry Wharton recognised the Spin-drift's longboat, bumping on the sand, with a bunch of men in her.

He recognised Jim Silver and Peter Bones, ashore, knee-deep in sand and water, and with iron belaying-pins in their hands.

Bob Cherry and the black cook and Captain Curll were in a group close against a big rock, and the captain's revolver was levelled. He had fired twice, hastily, and though none of the enemy was hit, they had paused. But Leache and Rudge, with oars in their hands, were scrambling ashore to help their leaders.

Jim Silver called out hoarsely to the captain:

"Captain Curll! It's all up with you!"

"Come on, and you will see, you swab!" said the captain grimly.

"Give us the money, and we will go."

"You'll go without it."

"Then your blood be on your own head," said Silver.

Bob Cherry gave a yell. He had caught sight of the dark figures swarming down the cliff.

"Help! Here come the fellows, sir! It's all right!"

Jim Silver and his confederates swung round furiously. They saw the advancing crowd, and realised that the game was up.

The man with the ear-rings made one leap into the boat. Peter Bones

and the two seamen followed him. The boatswain pushed off with furious haste, while the Greyfriars fellows raced down to the beach to stop them.

But the mutineers were too quick for them.

The longboat glided off and disappeared into the mist, and a yell of mockery came back from the man with the ear-rings.

Jim Silver was gone.

He had gone without his prize—without the two thousand pounds he had schemed and plotted and stained his hands in blood for! But he was gone! He had saved his liberty—if the stormy sea spared him!

The Greyfriars fellows, disappointed, turned back from the beach.

They surrounded the castaways, and Bob Cherry's hand was shaken until he had an ache in the wrist.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob cheerily. "All alive and safe, you see, and jolly glad to be back again! Only two days, too! It seems weeks since we got out of the old dorm. Hallo, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith put out his hand in a shamefaced way.

"I'm glad you're back," he said.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Not so glad as I am," he said.

"I was cut up when—I thought you'd both been drowned," muttered the Bounder. "I hope you'll believe that."

Bob Cherry gave him a grip that made him wince.

"Of course I believe it!" he said.

"It's all right, Smithy! I never thought I should ever be glad to see your mug again; but I am—jolly glad! Honest Injun!"

Mr. Quelch was directing the seniors to make a stretcher for the wounded captain.

Captain Curll was borne away in it,

to be placed under the doctor's hands in Friardale Village, and the black cook went with him. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were marched back to Greyfriars in the midst of a triumphal procession of fellows.

It was a joyous homecoming for the chums of the Remove.

In the dining-room a most magnificent supper had been prepared for the returned wanderers, and Billy Bunter was already seated at the board, disposing of the lion's share. But

everyone was so happy that Bunter was allowed to do as he liked.

And over that supper the heroes related their adventures on board the Spindrift, to be listened to with breathless interest by seniors and juniors alike. Even the Head came in to listen.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "You have had a narrow escape, my dear boys, and I am glad—very glad—that you had this opportunity of helping the captain of the Spindrift. There is no doubt that you saved his life, my dear boys. You have acted very well, and very bravely."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Johnny Bull.

And Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry went to bed at last, tired out and very happy. Bob Cherry yawned luxuriously as he stretched himself between the clean white sheets of his bed in the Remove dormitory.

"Harry, old fellow!" he called out.

"Hallo!" said Wharton sleepily.

"This is better than the forecastle of the Spindrift—eh?"



As they came scrambling down the cliff, the Greyfriars fellows could see what was passing on the beach. Jim Silver and Peter Bones were wading ashore from the longboat; while Bob Cherry, the black cook, and Captain Curll, his revolver firing, were grouped against the rock. Harry Wharton had brought rescue only just in time!

Wharton chuckled.

"Yes; rather!"

"I say, Harry——"

"Groo!"

"Going to sleep?"

"Groo! Snore!"

"Good-night, old son!" Bob said.

And in another minute he was asleep, too.

The adventures of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were over, but they were glad enough to get back to Greyfriars.

Captain Curll recovered from his injury, and before he left Friardale he came to the school to thank the juniors for what they had done for

him. And they made him have tea in the study, and the study, needless to say, was crammed with other guests to see the captain of the Spindrift.

Of the boat that had fled seaward with Jim Silver and his battered crew, nothing more was heard. Whether the man with the ear-rings had escaped, or whether the sea had closed over the boat and its ruffianly crew, was unknown. But Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, as they went about their daily occupations at Greyfriars, often wondered what had happened to the mutineers. It would be a long time before they could forget their thrilling adventures during the mutiny on the Spindrift.

OUR CHAMBER OF HORRORS



MR. MANDERS

By TOMMY DODD

TO Manders, the Modern House master, we fix

Harsh names which are often unlawful!
His liver went wrong about 1906,

And ever since then he's been awful!
His features alone would turn any milk sour,
He's snappish, ill-tempered and sneering,
He'll jaw bitter words at a chap for an hour,
Until the chap loses his hearing!

And then he will lovingly pick up his cane,

For punishing chaps he's a glutton!

He knows it is going to give a man pain,

But what does he care? Not a button!
Does he choke back a tear as we wriggle and yell?

No fear! He is cold and disdainful!

He thrashes us grimly and thrashes us well,
Though I'm sure he must know it is painful!

Sarcastic as always, he tells us to go,

And we do, with a haste that's unseemly!
It's not that we mind being walloped, you know,

But we're sure he enjoys it extremely!

"Ha, ha!" he will laugh to himself, the old beast!

"I think that will do for the present.

I must have administered twenty at least;
I found it exceedingly pleasant!"

He creeps about looking for faults he can find,

And then his behaviour is drastic!

He has a suspicious and horrible mind,
And he wears boots with sides of elastic!

I wouldn't mind any man trying to spot
The faults which are seldom detected

If he were a gentleman. Manders is not,
And that's why he's never respected!