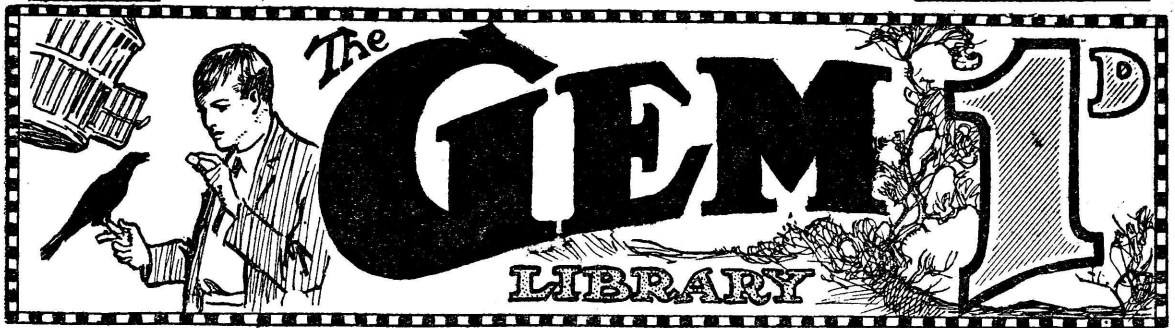


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[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]

TOM MERRY'S TREASURE ISLAND



A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. of St. Jim's
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Luggage Limited.

"TAGGLES!"

"Yes, Master D'Arcy?"

"Pway be careful with the hat-box!"

"Yes, sir."

"And careful with the twunk."

"Yes, sir."

"And vevy careful with the suit-case."

"Suttingly, sir!"

"And with the——"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was interrupted. Tom Merry, of the Shell, came out of the doorway of the School House, with a heavy bag in each hand. D'Arcy was standing on the top step as he gave his instructions to Taggles, the school porter.

Tom Merry did not see him, or, perhaps, did see him.

Biff, biff!

"Oh!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Ow! Weally— Ah! Help!"

The two heavy bags biffed upon the slim, elegant form of the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy was biffed off the top step.

He made a wild spring to save himself, and his eyeglass fluttered to the end of its cord, and his silk hat rolled off, and his cane went flying in one direction, and his gloves in another.

"Ow!"

Crash!

D'Arcy whirled down the steps of the School House, made a vain effort to save his balance at the bottom, and sat down on his silk hat!

"Ow! Ah! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake, who was sitting in a brake outside the School House. "Let's see you do that again, Gussy."

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

"Dear me!" said Tom Merry, from the top of the steps. "What did you do that for, Gussy? You've ruined that topper."

Next Thursday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS," AND "THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON."

No. 174 (New Series.)

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scrambled to his feet. He had certainly ruined the topper. It bore some distant resemblance to an opera-hat now, but was more like a concertina. There was dust on D'Arcy—on his beautifully-fitting Eton jacket, on his elegant grey trousers, on his gorgeous waist-coat.

He groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and glared up the steps at the hero of the Shell.

"Tom Mewwy! You ass!"

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry. "You see, you were in the way of these blessed bags, and something had to go."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard this mewwiment as becastly bad form," said D'Arcy. "I shall have to get out a new toppah now, and change my jacket. It's a howwid bore. You may lose the twain while you are waitin' for me, too."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Herries. "We sha'n't wait long enough for that."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"We start in exactly five minutes," said Blake, glancing up at the old clock tower of St. Jim's. "We can't lose the train; Lord Conway is waiting for us at Southampton."

"Weally—"

"Buck up with the changing, Gussy, or you'll get left behind."

"I should uttahly wefuse to be left behind."

"Clear the way!" shouted Monty Lowther, coming down the steps with a heavy bag in one hand and rugs rolled round umbrellas and sticks under the other arm. "Blessed if I know what you want to get in the way for, Gussy!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a clumsy ass, Lowthah. Blake, will you kindly see that Taggles puts all my pwops in the bwake, while I go and change my things?"

"All there's room for," said Blake cheerily. "We're taking a bag or a box each, and that's the full allowance."

"I have thwee boxes, a twunk, a hat-box, and a suit-case, with my dwessin'-bag and—"

"Out of the way!" shouted Manners, coming out with Kangaroo, the two carrying a trunk between them.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Only four minutes now, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "Better buck up. We've got to get over to the New House for Figgins & Co., and start in five minutes."

D'Arcy gave him one indignant look, and then dashed into the School House. He knew that Blake wouldn't wait, and he was in danger of starting on his journey in a dusty jacket, dusty trousers, and without his hat.

The brake was filling up. Tom Merry & Co. were starting on a journey, and even with only one box each, there was plenty of luggage.

Lord Conway was to meet them at Southampton, to take them upon his yacht, in which they were to sail for the South Seas. The juniors were looking forward to the cruise with the keenest enjoyment, and in their dreams they were already among palm-trees, and coral reefs, and cannibals.

Arthur Augustus never started on a journey without supplying himself with all the things he might need, and a great many he certainly never would need. But it was quite useless to argue with him. The swell of St. Jim's had an un-failing politeness, and an invincible determination. It was useless to point out that silk hats would not be wanted in tropic seas, and that a trousers-press would be nothing but an encumbrance on a coral island. D'Arcy packed his trunks regardless.

Blake was in the brake already, with Digby and Herries. Herries had been persuaded, at a great cost of argument, to leave his bulldog behind. Herries regarded his bulldog, Towser, as a valuable addition to any party; in fact, according to Herries, merely to know Towser was a liberal education. But Herries had been overruled. He was not convinced that Towser would be superfluous. But he was somewhat influenced by a suggestion made by Kerr, of the New House, that the climate mightn't agree with Towser. And there were cannibals to be considered, and poisoned arrows. Upon the whole, Herries had agreed to leave Towser in the kennels at St. Jim's. But Herries had made up his mind that if Towser didn't come, neither should D'Arcy's superfluous luggage; and most of the other fellows agreed with him.

Kangaroo, the Australian junior, climbed in, with Manners and Lowther. Tom Merry followed them in. The party from the School House was now complete, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and his brother, Wally, of the Third Form. They had to call at the New House, across the quad., for Figgins & Co., and then drive to the station.

Taggles, the school porter, came out groaning under a heavy trunk. Taggles always groaned under any trunk; he had found out by long experience that a groan or two had a perceptible effect upon the tips. But he had reason to

groan this time. In that gigantic trunk was the famous trousers-press, and several suits of clothes, additional trousers, and overcoats galore. Taggles bumped the trunk down on the ground, and gasped for breath.

"Which it's 'eavy!" he gasped.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Yes, it looks heavy," he remarked. "It would make a difference to the yacht, I should think, if it ever got aboard."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Luckily, it's never coming aboard," Kangaroo remarked. "Leave it there, Taggy; there's no room for it in the brake."

"Master D'Arcy said—"

"Never mind what Master D'Arcy said," said Blake cheerfully. "Leave it there."

"Wot about the other boxes?"

"Oh, fetch them out, if D'Arcy told you to. Nothing like obeying orders. You can pile them up on the steps."

Taggles grinned, and went into the House again. Blake stood up in the brake, and shouted:

"Gussy! Gussy! Gus!"

A bag with a bag under his arm came out of the School House, and jumped into the brake. It was Wally—D'Arcy minor, of the Third—with his cap on the back of his head, and a cheeky grin on his face.

"Ready, my sons!" said Wally. "Tell the driver to start."

"You cheeky young bounder—"

"Oh, cheeze it! What are you waiting for?"

"Gussy."

"Oh, never mind Gussy!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Hallo! Sorry, Digby! Did I drop my bag on your feet?"

"Yes, you ass! Ow!"

"Blessed if I know what a chap wants with such big feet! Can't you put them under the seat?"

"I'll—I'll—"

"Hallo, here's some more of Gussy's baggage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Taggles came out of the house, carrying another huge box. Toby, the page, lending him a hand. A crowd of juniors had gathered round to see Tom Merry & Co. off, and they burst into a roar.

"Faith, and Gussy's taking enough!" Reilly exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's all right," said Tom Merry; "he's not taking it. Leave it there, Taggy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Werry well, sir."

Taggles tramped gasping into the house again. He had had a liberal tip from D'Arcy, and he meant to bring all the baggage out, whatever became of it. Blake looked over the heap.

"Gussy is entitled to take one bag," he said. "Pick out the smallest, will you, Gore, and hand it up to me."

Gore grinned, and picked up D'Arcy's hat-box. It was the smallest of all the boxes, but it was a good size, for it was constructed to hold two silk hats and a bowler. It was the lightest of the baggage, at all events, and Gore handed it up easily. Blake stowed it away in the brake.

"My word!" said Digby. "Is Gussy going to take nothing but toppers?"

"He's entitled to one bag," said Blake stolidly. "That's the one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy! Gussy! Gussy!"

The fellows all stood up in the brake and roared.

D'Arcy put his head out of a window above.

"It's all wight, deah boys!"

"We're starting."

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"Weally, Blake—"
 "Come down!"
 "I sha'n't keep you waitin' more than five minutes."
 "That you jolly well won't!" agreed Blake. "Drive on, Johnny!"
 The brake moved off.
 "Stop for me!" shouted D'Arcy from the window.
 "Rats!"

And the brake rolled away towards the New House, Blake kissing his hand affectionately to the excited junior at the window.

CHAPTER 2.

D'Arcy Runs For It.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came breathlessly out of the School House. For once, the swell of St. Jim's had lost the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. He stood on the lowest step and waved a glove and a cane, and shouted:

"Stop, you boundahs!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd of juniors.
 "I guess you'll have to sprint, Gussy," grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"Go it, Gussy!"
 "After them!"
 "Faith, and it's left behind ye'll be intirely."
 "Stop, you uttah wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You've left all my baggage behind. I insist upon your weturnin' for my twaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The brake rolled serenely on.
 It halted outside the New House. Figgins & Co. were waiting there, with their boxes all ready—neat little cabin-trunks in a row, with Figgins & Co. sitting on them. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were smiling beaming smiles. Fatty Wynn had a lunch-basket in his hand; Fatty did not mean to risk getting hungry in the train.

"We're ready."
 "Here you are, Figgy!" sang out Blake.
 "Tumble in, or we shall have Gussy piling boxes on us."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn lifted their trunks in, aided by the School House fellows, and came in after them. Blake looked back across the quad.

Arthur Augustus, holding cane and gloves in one hand, a light coat over his arm, and keeping his hat on with a firm grasp, was sprinting across the quad.

Loud shouts of encouragement from the crowd outside the School House followed him.

"Go it, Gussy!"
 "Put her through."
 "Hurrah!"

The swell of St. Jim's did not heed the shouting. He dashed on at top speed; but the brake was in motion again now, and rolling down to the gates.

"Buck up!" called out Tom Merry to the driver.
 And the man grinned and cracked his whip. The brake increased in speed. D'Arcy put on a spurt, and overtook the vehicle as it reached the gates.

"Stop, you wascally boundahs!" he gasped.
 Tom Merry shook his head.
 "Can't stop, Gussy!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Jump in while we're going," said Monty Lowther. "I'll lend you a hand."

"So will I," said Kangaroo.
 "You—you uttah boundahs—what about my baggage?"
 "We've got it here," said Digby cheerfully.
 "Wats! It's left behind, piled outside the house—"
 "We've got all you're going to take," Jack Blake explained. "One box each is the allowance, and we've got one of your boxes."

"The hat-box!" grinned Wally.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I wufuse to twavel to the South Seas with nothin' but a hat-box!" shouted D'Arcy, keeping pace with the brake, which was now outside the school gates, and travelling down the dusty lane at a good speed.

"Jump in, Gussy!"
 "I wufuse to jump in! It is imposs. for me to twavel without my clothes—"

"You won't need them in the South Seas," said Monty Lowther. "I believe it's a universal custom there to save the whole expense of tailor's bills."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, Lowthah—"

"Jump in!" said Manners.
 "I decline to jump in, Mannahs."
 "Fancy a chap preferring to run on a warm day like this!" Figgins remarked. "You must be feeling awfully fit, Gussy."
 "Keep it up, old man."
 "Hoof it!"

D'Arcy gasped with rage and breathlessness. He was keeping pace with the brake, and it was now a good way on the road to Rylcombe.

"I uttably wufuse to leave my luggage behind," he said.
 "I insist upon your turnin' the bwake wound and goin' back for my twaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Buck up, driver!"
 "Yessir!"

D'Arcy dropped a pace or two behind.
 "Better jump in, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "You see, we can't stop, or we shall lose the train, and we can't lose the train and let Lord Conway wait for us in Southampton. Suppose he sailed without us—what about finding the giddy treasure, then?"
 "I insist—"

"Think of the respect due to your elder brother," urged Kerr. "You can't possibly keep Lord Conway waiting."
 "Weally, Kerr—"

D'Arcy was perspiring and dusty. The dust churned up by the wheels of the brake was settling over him in thicker and thicker clouds.

"Vewy well," he gasped at last. "Slacken down, and I will get in, you feahful wottahs. I wegard you as uttah outsiders."

"Pax, you know," said Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Easy, driver."

The brake slackened down, and Arthur Augustus was assisted into it. He sank down into a seat, gasping for breath.

"Feel the better for your exercise?" asked Kerr sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 D'Arcy panted.
 "You uttah wottahs—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I have nothin' but silk hats and a bowlah to take to the South Seas with me—"

"We'll have a whip round for you," said Blake. "Or you can raffle the silk hats against a set of pyjamas, or something of that sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Words failed the swell of St. Jim's. He sat gasping for breath, and mopping his perspiring face with a cambric handkerchief, till the brake rolled up to the station. Then the porters carried the boxes in, and Arthur Augustus reluctantly followed the crowd of juniors upon the platform.

"Suppose we catch the next twain, Tom Mewwy?" he suggested. "We could send back to the coll. for my baggage, and—"

"Rats!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Here's the train!"

The train rolled in. Boys and boxes were soon aboard. The swell of St. Jim's stepped into the train with his nose very high in the air. He had given up hope of the baggage by this time.

"Cheer up, Gussy!" said Blake. "You won't be able to change your clothes in the South Seas, but you can wear two silk hats and a bowler, piled on one another, you know, like an old clothes man—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I wegard you as an ass, Blake."
 "Well, I'm only trying to make useful suggestions," said Blake, in an injured tone.
 "Wats!"

CHAPTER 3.

Left Luggage.

THE St. Jim's party changed at Wayland Junction, where they had to wait a quarter of an hour for the express.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, having seen his hat-box deposited safely on the platform, ready for the express, turned away towards the exit. Jack Blake passed his arm most affectionately through that of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Whither bound, Gussy?" he inquired politely.
 "We have a quartah of an hour to wait here, deah boy—"

"Let's go into the buffet and have some grub," said Fatty Wynn. "Nothing like laying in a good solid foundation for a long journey."

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A Splendid New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

"You blessed porpoise!" said Figgins. "You've got a big lunch-basket crammed as full as it will hold."

"That's for the journey; and some of the others will want some, I think—"

"Pway welease my arm, Blake."

Blake shook his head.

"Can't be did, Gussy. I'm too fond of you to let you go out of my sight."

"Weally, Blake—"

"They have pretty decent sandwiches in this show," said Fatty Wynn, leading the way. "And there is time to have some eggs cooked, and their eggs are really not bad. I should advise all you fellows to have some grub."

"Wats! Welease my arm, Blake. I am goin' out to do a little shoppin'."

Blake chuckled.

"That's exactly what you're not going to do, Gussy. Besides, how can you think of wearing anything you could buy in Wayland. No Bond Street style here."

"Of course, a chap expects to wuff it in the country," said D'Arcy. "Fortunately, I have plenty of money with me, and I shall be able to supply the things you have so wottenly left behind at St. Jim's. When we return from the ewaise, I will give them to the poor, as they will not pwobably be of a kind I shall care to wear for long."

"I'm sorry to do the poor out of a lot of silk socks and giddy pyjamas," said Blake. "But you're not going out of this station."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Oh, let him go!" said Wally. "I dare say he'll come back too late for the train, and then we sha'n't have the bother of his silk socks till we get back to St. Jim's."

"Weally, Wally—"

"But what are you going to do with socks and pyjamas and things if you buy them?" demanded Kerr. "You can't turn up in Southampton with a bundle of socks under your arm, and a suit of pyjamas round your neck."

"You uttah ass! Of course, I shall buy a twunk too."

"The express won't wait, Gussy," said Digby.

"That's all wight—I shall have time. You fellows can come with me if you like."

"No fear."

"We'll wait for you here," said Blake, letting D'Arcy's arm go. "Mind, if you lose the train you lose the voyage, so don't play the giddy goat. And even if you get a new trunk full of new rot, we sha'n't allow you to bring it."

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus marched off with his nose in the air. Most of the juniors followed Fatty Wynn into the buffet, though they did not follow his example when they got there. Fatty Wynn seemed to be bent upon preparing for all possible and impossible emergencies. He might have been going to undertake a siege of Ladysmith by the amount of provisions he laid in. Fatty wasn't a good sailor, and he had a strong suspicion that for the first day or two on the Silver Seud he would not be able to negotiate his usual meals. He was compensating himself in advance.

Blake looked at his watch.

"Train in one minute," he said.

"Come on!" exclaimed Figgins.

The juniors crowded out on the platform. Fatty Wynn gulped down a cup of hot coffee, and gasped and snorted, and followed the others out, with a bun in one hand and a jam-tart in the other.

Jack Blake looked anxiously up and down the platform. In the cheery chat and the popping of corks in the buffet he had forgotten Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but he remembered him again now.

"Where's that ass Gussy?" he exclaimed.

"Gussy! Gussy!"

"He hasn't come back," said Hennes. "The silly ass is choosing new neckties at the other end of the High Street, I suppose!"

"No time to go for him," said Kerr. "The train's signalled."

"Here she comes!"

The express was visible up the line.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps and a panting voice at the entrance to the platform. Just as the express stopped in the station Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared at the barrier.

He dashed upon the platform, holding his silk hat on with one hand.

The luggage of the St. Jim's party was crammed in, and they crowded into the train, as the swell of the school came tearing down the platform.

"Hold on, deah boys!"

"Buck up, Gussy!"

D'Arcy reached the door Blake was holding open for him.

"Hold on—"

"Jump in!"

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"My twunk—"

"What?"

"My beasty baggage, you know!"

"Rats!"

"Keep back the twain!"

Blake looked across to the entrance of the platform. Two porters were staggering on, under the weight of an enormous trunk.

Arthur Augustus had evidently filled up his time well in shopping in the old High Street of Wayland.

Blake burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Stand clear, there!" shouted the guard.

He was waving his flag already.

D'Arcy turned, with his hand on the door.

"Pway keep the twain back a minute, guard! My twunk—"

"Stand clear!" shrieked the guard.

"My twunk—"

"Come in, you ass!" roared Blake.

"Weally—"

Tom Merry and Blake leaned out, and caught Arthur Augustus by the shoulder and fairly dragged him into the train.

The guard was rushing up to pull the swell of St. Jim's away. Instead, he slammed the door after him, murmuring something in railway-guard language.

"Safe!" gasped Blake. "Safe and sound!"

"Ow!"

Arthur Augustus sprawled in the carriage amid many legs. On the platform the two porters had dumped down the huge trunk with a loud bump. The express ran on swiftly past them, and Tom Merry tossed them a two-shilling-piece. They deserved it for carrying that immense trunk into the station, whatever became of it afterwards.

D'Arcy scrambled up.

"Bai Jove, we're off!" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of walls of houses flashing past the window.

"You are, at any rate," said Tom Merry. "Right off—fairly off your rocker!"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Sit down!"

D'Arcy was reaching up towards the communication-cord. Tom Merry grasped him, and dragged him back just in time.

"You ass!" he roared. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm goin' to stop the twain, deah boy."

"What for, chump!"

"I wefuse to be called a chump."

"What are you going to stop the train for?" shrieked Tom Merry.

"My twunk."

"Your trunk?"

"Yaas, watah!"

The juniors did not waste any more words upon D'Arcy.

The fellow who thought he could stop a boat-express to go back for a trunk was not to be reasoned with. They fell upon him and smote him, and he rolled down among innumerable feet.

"Ow! Yow! Yawooh!"

"Bump him!"

"Yawooh! Weally—oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Bai Jove! Oh—ow!"

D'Arcy looked very dishevelled when he was allowed to rise. His silk topper was in a decidedly parlous condition. He groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it in his eye.

"You uttah wottahs!" he exclaimed. "I wegard you as a set of inexpressible boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to speak to you!"

"Hear, hear!"

As the express dashed on towards Southampton, the swell of St. Jim's seemed to recover himself a little. A smile broke out upon his aristocratic visage.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "What are you rejoicing about? Have you found a fancy waistcoat in your handkerchief-pocket, or what?"

"Pway don't be an ass, deah boy. It has occurred to me that we shall have some time in Southampton, and I can do some shoppin' there. I shall be able to take a full outfit to the South Seas after all."

To which Jack Blake rejoined, tersely and emphatically:

"I don't think!"

CHAPTER 4.

Lopez!

WALLY, leaning out of the window, was the first to recognise the tall form of Lord Conway, his eldest brother, standing on the platform at the terminus. Lord Conway was waiting for the train that was to bear the juniors of St. Jim's.

He smiled and waved his hand, as he saw the cheeky face of Wally looking out of the window.

"Here's old Conway!" said Wally, turning back into the carriage.

"Weally, Wally, that is hardly a respectful way of speakin' of your eldest bwothah and a future membah of the House of Peers," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, don't you begin, Gussy!"

"Weally——"

"Train's stopping," said Blake. "Get a move on."

"You are intewuptin' me, Blake."

"Exactly! Buck up!"

The train stopped, and the juniors crowded out.

Lord Conway shook hands with them in his genial way.

"Jolly glad to see all of you!" he said. "Dear me! Have you been having an accident, Gussy?"

"I have been tweeked with gwoss diswepsect, deah boy."

"Too bad!" said Lord Conway cheerfully. "You will come and dine with me, and then we will go aboard."

"I have some shoppin' to do——"

"Shopping?" echoed the viscount.

"Yaas, wathah! Owin' to a wotten tweek, my baggage was left behind at St. Jim's, and a second lot at Wayland," D'Arcy explained. "I shall have to do some shoppin' in Southampton."

Lord Conway smiled.

"Very well, you shall shop while the others dine."

"As a mattah of fact, I am wathah hungwy."

"We have exactly an hour."

"Pewwaps we could put off startin' till to-morrow?"

Arthur Augustus suggested.

The viscount laughed.

"I fear that would not do, even for the sake of providing you with a completely new outfit in the latest fashion," he said. "Come on, boys—this way!"

In a few minutes more the juniors were seated round a well-spread board in a private dining-room in a palatial hotel. Fatty Wynn's plump visage shone like a full moon over the table. The fat Fourth-Former was fairly in his element now. However cruel the sea might be afterwards, Fatty Wynn was sure of a good innings now, at all events.

Lord Conway presided at the meal with a cheery manner and an unflinching flow of pleasant talk. He was very popular with the boys. When the meal had progressed as far as dessert, Tom Merry's chart was produced, to be conned over once more, and handed from one to another.

The chart was of never-ending interest to the juniors.

It was tattooed upon a fragment of leather, which was supposed to have been tanned from human skin—which alone gave it a fearful interest. It had been given to Tom Merry by Peter Raff, the sailor—the man whose cap had been found by the stream in Rylcombe Wood, but whose body was never found, and whose ultimate fate was unknown.

The chart was Tom Merry's, to do as he liked with, if the sailorman did not claim it—and he had never claimed it.

But Tom Merry had determined that if the treasure were discovered, a full share should be kept for the sailorman—for the hero of St. Jim's still hoped that Peter Raff was for the land of the living. He had a lingering hope that the cap by the stream in Rylcombe Wood was a blind to deceive the sailorman's inveterate foe—Lopez, the dwarf Spaniard.

At all events, both Peter Raff and Lopez, the Spaniard, had vanished from Tom Merry's knowledge, and he was left to seek the treasure island if he chose so to do.

And, naturally enough, he did choose—as D'Arcy's eldest brother, Lord Conway, was about to sail on a cruise in the South Seas, and obtained permission from the Head of St. Jim's to take the juniors with him.

Nothing could really have happened more opportunely.

The rivals of St. Jim's—Blake and his chums of Study

No. 6, Tom Merry of the Shell and Manners and Lowther, and Figgins & Co. of the New House—had joined cordially together for the treasure-hunt, and with them went Wally and Kangaroo, the Australian junior—more properly named Harry Noble.

The juniors were very keen on the scent, and, of course, they fully believed in the existence of the treasure.

Lord Conway perhaps was a little sceptical on that point; but he did not say so, to damp the eager spirits of the juniors.

Heads were bent over the map now, and the strange names of the places indicated upon it were read out aloud.

The dining-room was on the ground floor of the hotel, and wide open French windows gave upon the garden—a long, wide garden, planted with old trees and rhododendrons. It was a pleasant afternoon, and the sun shone in at the open window, and a trace of the sea breeze found its way into the dining-room.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked, as he adjusted his monocle and surveyed the map. "Bai Jove, it looks the weal thing, you know! The Piwates' Gwawe is good!"

In his interest in the chart, D'Arcy had for the time forgotten his intended shopping expedition in Southampton—and the others did not remind him. The luggage of the party had already been sent aboard the Silver Scud, and it only remained for the juniors to follow it.

"And Shark Bay!" Monty Lowther remarked, looking at the chart over Tom Merry's shoulder. "That sounds promising for bathing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the caves, too!" said Wally, rubbing his hands.

"It will be ripping, exploring the caves! I wish I'd brought Pongo!"

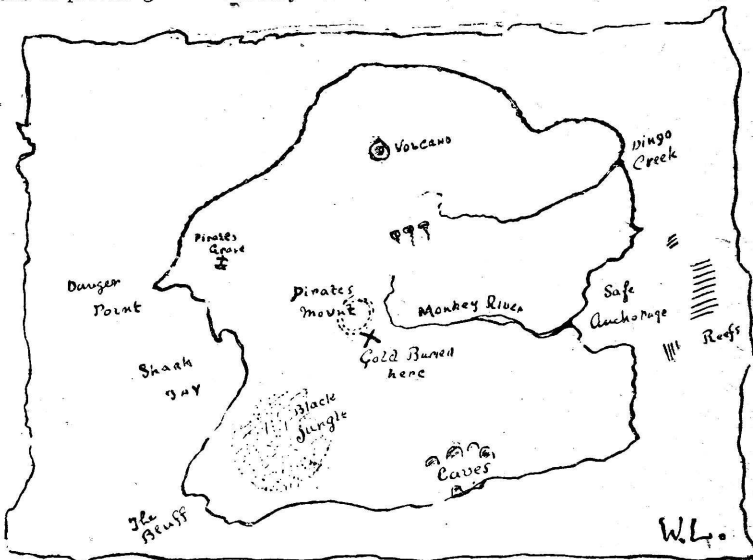
"Wats!"

"Pongo would have been more useful than Gussy," said Wally. "It isn't too late to send Gussy back, and have Pongo instead, if we sail to-morrow instead of to-day."

"And here's the reefs," said Manners. "Jolly ticklish work, I expect, getting through the reefs into that safe anchorage, I should say."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Monkey River," went on Tom Merry. "We may be



The chart of Skeleton Island described on this page.

able to get along in boats. Then there's the Mount, and 'Gold Buried Here!'"

"Bai Jove, it will be wippin'! I shouldn't wondah if there was a million pounds, you know!" Arthur Augustus remarked.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not much!" he said. "Not likely. But there may be a big sum—unless——"

"Unless what, deah boy?"

"Unless the gold's already been lifted," said Tom Merry gravely. "This chart is very old—certainly more than a hundred years, perhaps a hundred and fifty. In all that time lots of people may have landed on the island, and the gold may have been found."

Blake snorted.

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "If the chart's a hundred and fifty years old, look at that!"

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

He pointed to the words, "Latitude of Sydney," scrawled in the left-hand corner of the fragment of leather, some distance from the chart.

"My hat, yes!" said Kangaroo. "That must mean Sydney in Australia!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And Sydney certainly wasn't in existence then."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry smiled. "Those words have been added later," he said. "If you look at them you'll see that they're written on the leather, and not tattooed like the rest. My opinion is that Peter Raff wrote them, or else somebody whose hands the chart had fallen into. Whoever it was, had found out that the island was in the same latitude as Sydney, and wrote it down instead of giving the degrees of latitude."

"True!"

"It's different with the 'W. L.' in the corner of the map," went on Tom Merry. "That's tattooed, and it certainly must mean west longitude."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I think—"

Tom Merry broke off suddenly, and started to his feet. His startled glance was fixed upon the open window.

In the open stood a strange form—a man with a massive head and immensely powerful shoulders, and a dwindling form that dwarfed away towards the ground. The dark, Spanish face, and the singular form, told the juniors at once who it was, even those who had not seen him before.

"Lopez!" panted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"The Spaniard!"

Lopez, the dwarf Spaniard, stood for a single second staring in at the window. Then he disappeared from view.

Tom Merry rushed to the window.

He caught a glimpse of the Spaniard disappearing among the rhododendrons, and that was all. The juniors rushed into the garden in a crowd, and searched it from end to end. But the dwarf Spaniard was gone, without leaving a trace behind.

CHAPTER 5.

The Mate of the Silver Scud.

TOM MERRY & Co. returned to the dining-room, disappointed and angry. The Spaniard was gone. How long had he been there, at the open window, before Tom Merry had seen him? It was an important question, for, from where he had been standing, the Spaniard could have heard every word that was spoken in the room.

If he had heard the discussion of the chart, he had learned all that was to be learned of the position of the island—that it was in west longitude, and in the latitude of Sydney.

That knowledge was sufficient to enable him to reach the island, if he had the means of chartering a vessel. True, of the exact location of the treasure he had no knowledge—that could only be gained by looking at the map.

But if he followed the party to the Treasure Island, he would be an awkward enemy to encounter there.

"The villain must have learned our plans, somehow, and watched us come to Southampton!" Tom Merry said, frowning. "I wonder if he heard?"

Kerr nodded.

"I'm jolly certain!" he said. "He was most likely there all the time we were having dinner. He knows where to look for the island, now."

"He doesn't know where to look for the treasure, though," said Figgins.

"No. We've got the advantage, there."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a pity," said Lord Conway, "but it cannot be helped now. We will lose no time in getting to the island, at all events. And it is time, now, to go on board the Silver Scud."

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter with you, Gussy?"

"I haven't done my shoppin', yet!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on, ass!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass!"

"Oh, come on!"

"Yes, come, Arthur!" said Lord Conway, laughing. "There is really no time. The others will share out some of their things with you, and you can have some of mine. And you are well provided with silk hats, at all events."

"Weally, Conway—"

"Come on!"

"As your guest, my deah fellow, I am bound to yield the point," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

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"Exactly! Come on!"

So D'Arcy yielded the point, and ten minutes later they were on board the Silver Scud, which was already getting steam up. From that moment Lord Conway was busy. He was his own skipper, and his mate was an old college chum, whom the juniors had not yet seen.

Tom Merry caught a glimpse of him as they went below, and noted an athletic, broad-shouldered fellow, about whom there seemed something familiar. But he saw him only for a moment. The juniors went into the saloon.

Black smoke rolled from the funnels of the yacht as she glided out.

The motion was, as yet, barely perceptible; but Fatty Wynn sat upon a cushioned divan, and changed colour several times.

The fat Fourth-Former had done more than justice to the dinner at the hotel, and he had already done more than justice to a feed at Wayland and the lunch-basket in the train. The slightest motion of the yacht was enough to make him wish he had been a little more cautious in laying in supplies.

Blake grinned at the fat Fourth-Former.

"Feeling qualmy, kid?" he asked.

"N-n-no," gasped Fatty. "It—it was the last meringue, that's all. I shall be all right in a minute."

"Bai Jove! I wathah think you will be worse before you are better, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!"

"Hallo! Anything the matter, Fatty?"

"N-no."

"I think we might go on deck, now," Tom Merry remarked. "I want to see the mate again, too. I believe I've seen him before, somewhere."

"Yaas, wathah! He stwuck me—"

"Eh?"

"He stwuck me—"

"Where?" asked Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I didn't see him do it," said Blake, with a shake of his head. "You must have dreamed it, Gussy."

"You uttah ass! He stwuck me as bein' familiah."

"Oh, I see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I believe you were wottin', you uttah wottah! I—"

"Let's go up," said Tom Merry. "We're out at sea, now, and we sha'n't be in the way."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors ascended the steps from the saloon. The yacht, with half-steam on, was heading for the Channel. The sunset was reddening away in the West. The bright steam-yacht glided on like a thing of life, the trim crew looking very sailorlike at their posts. The mate was standing talking to Lord Conway, and his broad back was turned towards the companion.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I've certainly seen him before somewhere!"

"Looks an athlete," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll swear I've seen those shoulders before, somewhere! Behind a wicket, I believe!" said Monty Lowther, thoughtfully. "They're associated, somehow, with your old place, Tom—Huckleberry Heath."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

What he could see of the mate of the Silver Scud certainly reminded him, too, of Laurel Villa, and Huckleberry Heath, and the associations of his early home with Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

Who was the man?

"By George!" Tom Merry exclaimed suddenly.

"You know him?"

"I think so."

Tom Merry ran forward.

The broad-shouldered mate turned round.

His handsome, clear-cut face was turned towards the juniors had grown to like and esteem him very much.

"Mr. Dodds!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Mr. Dodds laughed and smiled.

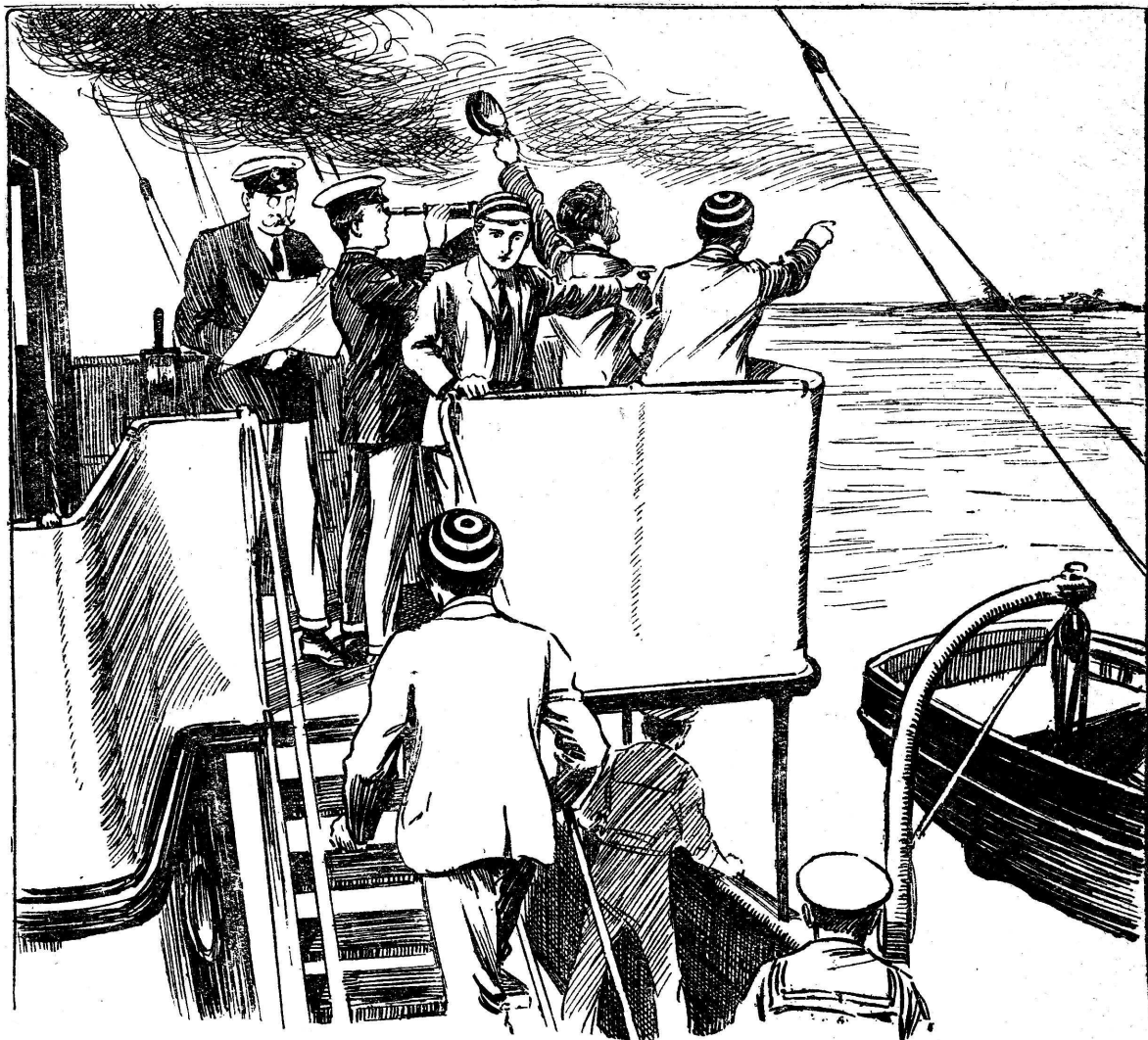
"You are surprised to see me here!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with Tom Merry.

"By George, yes!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Dodds laughed again. He had a very pleasant laugh. Mr. Dodds, the curate of Huckleberry Heath, was an old friend of Tom Merry's. He had begun his acquaintance with the St. Jim's juniors by astonishing them with his powers as a cricketer—the juniors having been under the impression that a curate couldn't play. Mr. Dodds had amazingly undeceived them on that point, and since then the juniors had grown to like him very much.

"I was very glad when Lord Conway told me that my



There was a shout from the look-out—"Land ho!" And there was a rush of the juniors to see. "Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's weally land, you know!" (See page 12.)

young friends were coming on this cruise," said Mr. Dodds. "It was a pleasant surprise to me."

"Bai Jove, and this is a pleasant surprise to us, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "We're awfully glad to see you—ain't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" said the juniors heartily.

"Thank you," said Mr. Dodds.

"But ain't you curate at Huckleberry Heath any longer, sir?" asked Figgins.

Mr. Dodds nodded.

"Certainly! I had to have a change for my health, and Lord Conway heard of it. As I could not afford to go abroad on my own, he very kindly offered me the post of mate on his yacht for the trip to the South Seas. I shall take up my work again when I return to England. Lord Conway's kindness—"

"Oh go easy on the kindness!" said the viscount. "You know I'm jolly glad to have you, Doddy. It's like old times to have you along— Dear me! Is anything the matter with you, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn lurched a little.

"N-n-no, sir!" he gasped.

"Don't you think you had better sit down?"

"Goo!"

Lord Conway led the almost blind and helpless Fatty to a seat. Fatty Wynn sat with a face like chalk, gradually changing to quite an artistic shade in green.

"Poor old Fatty!" said Figgins. "It was the dinner, you know. I warned you to go easy."

"Goo!"

"Bai Jove! I feel a little—a little—gwoo—"

"You, too, Gussy!"

"Gwooh!"

And the subsequent proceedings interested D'Arcy no more. And Fatty Wynn sat the picture of mental anguish.

CHAPTER 6.

The Woes of Fatty Wynn.

SUNNY seas and bright skies! Day after day the steam-yacht had ploughed her way to the southward.

English skies and English waters had long been left behind. After the first couple of days the juniors had got on their sea-legs, with the single exception of Fatty Wynn.

The fat Fourth-Former seemed almost a hopeless case.

Either it was the gigantic feed he had indulged in before leaving Southampton, or else he was peculiarly liable to seasickness.

At all events, he passed the first night in anguish, the second day in misery, and another night in despair.

And all the time he ate nothing.

If he attempted to eat, the mal-de-mer gripped him again, and he suffered untold trouble.

His chums ministered unto him as best they could. For two days all of them were pretty hard hit. Then they

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

recovered, and they ministered unto Fatty Wynn. But it was useless to ask him even to eat.

He couldn't.
A bright morning dawned again, finding the yacht gliding on the bright waters of the Atlantic, and Figgins and Kerr looked in at the bunk of their fat chum before they went to breakfast.

Fatty Wynn blinked at them hollow-eyed.
"Feel better?" asked Figgins sympathetically.
"How are you, Fatty, old man?" said Kerr.
Fatty groaned.
"Still seedy?"
"Ow! Yes."
"Suppose you get up?" Figgins suggested. "You may feel better getting the fresh air on deck, you know. It's a lovely morning."

Fatty Wynn shook his head.
"I—I can't."
"Make an effort."
"I haven't one left."
"Cheer up, Fatty!"
"Groo!"
"Not feelin' any bettah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming along, and turning his monocle upon the fat Fourth-Former. "That's weally too bad! I am all wight now, you know."

"Groo!"
"I have heard of remedies for sea-sickness," D'Arcy observed thoughtfully. "A chap told me once that a good remedy was to tie a piece of fat bacon on a stwing, and lough it gently down the throat—"

"Gr-r-r-r-roo!"
"Bai Jove, he's ill again!"
"You blessed ass!" said Figgins witheringly. "Get out!"

"Weally, Figgins—"
"Buzz off, you fathead!"
"I wufuse to be called a fathead. I—"
"Oh, clear out! You've made him ill again."
"Nothin' of the sort. I was suggestin' a wemedy."
"Ass!"
"Tyin' a piece of fat bacon on a stwing, and—"
"Groo-oo!"
"Lettin' it gently up and down the throat, and—"
"Gerorororoo—gurgle—"

Figgins and Kerr took Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by the shoulders, and gently but firmly marched him away. Fatty Wynn sat gasping and groaning.

After breakfast Mr. Dodds came to see him. The mate of the Silver Scud was very sympathetic, but he was very practical, too.

"Feeling bad, Wynn?" he asked.
"Groo! Yes."
"Better get up."
"Groo!"
"You'll feel better on deck, and get your appetite back," Mr. Dodds said.

Fatty Wynn groaned.
"Ow! I shall never get my appetite back! I shall never eat anything any more! Ow! I wonder if it's very painful to be buried at sea? Ow!"
Mr. Dodds smiled.

"Never mind being buried at sea now, Wynn," he said. "I really think that that is quite a long way off."

Another deep groan from Fatty.
"I—I think I'm about done for, sir. I—I should like Figgins to have my watch, and—and Kerr to have my cricket-bat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, sir!"
"You are not dead yet, Wynn. Make an effort and tumble up."

Groan!
"Tumble up, Wynn!"
Groan!
"Come, Wynn, I'll help you!"
"Ow!"

"This way!" said Mr. Dodds, taking the fat Fourth-Former in his powerful arms, and lifting him out of the bunk, in spite of his weight, which was very considerable.
"Now, get into your clothes."

"Ow! I haven't the strength."
"I'll help you. Are these your trousers?"
"Groo! Yes."
"Jump in!"
"Groo! Ow! Oh!"

In spite of Fatty Wynn's groans and protests, he was inducted into the trousers, and he was dressed bit by bit, till he was in a state to go on deck.

He leaned heavily on Mr. Dodds' arm.
"I—I think I'm going to die," he said feebly.
"Nonsense!"

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"I—I feel it, sir! I—"
"You'll feel differently on deck," said Mr. Dodds encouragingly. "The worst thing possible is to lie in a bunk and get into low spirits."

"Groo!"
"Come on, laddy!"
"Gerrooh!"

Mr. Dodds piloted Fatty Wynn on deck. Lord Conway greeted him with a genral nod and a smile, to which Fatty responded with a sepulchral groan.

"Feeling it still?" asked the viscount.
"Groo! Oh! Yes. Groo!"
"Take in a deep breath," said Mr. Dodds. "Face the wind. Buck up!"

Fatty Wynn groaned, but he did as he was told. Somewhat to his surprise, the keen, fresh air of the sea had a wonderfully revivifying effect upon him.

He breathed it in, and breathed it in more deeply, and his head grew more erect, and his cheeks glowed with a trace of colour.

"Better already!" exclaimed Mr. Dodds.
"Ye-es, I think so, sir."
"Famous!"

Fatty Wynn stood and breathed in the keen salt air. As a matter of fact, his attack had very nearly run its course, and this was all he wanted to set him right again.

He had a dreadfully hollow feeling inside, as if he had had nothing to eat for weeks and weeks.

There was a scent of breakfast from below, and it tickled Fatty Wynn's nostrils very much.

"I—I think I could tackle some brekker," he remarked, about half an hour later.

Mr. Dodds laughed.
"And you shall!" he said. "Shall I help you down?"
"I can manage it, I think, sir."

And Fatty Wynn managed it. He made his way to the breakfast saloon, and a shout from the juniors greeted him. They had finished, but Fatty Wynn was very welcome. The stewards brought fresh supplies in haste.

Fatty Wynn sat down.
"Go it, Fatty!" said Figgins. "Heaps of grub, and the best. We've still got good stuff from England, you know. We shall have harder tack when we get further south."

"I'll have some bacon," said Fatty Wynn. "I think I could manage some ham, too. And half a dozen eggs. And cold beef, certainly. And you can shove over the pork-pics. That will do for a start."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I've got a lot of leeway to make up for, you know," said Fatty Wynn pathetically.

"Yaas, wathah! Pile in, deah boy!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors watched Fatty Wynn with great interest. His performance was really wonderful. He had, as he had said, a great deal of leeway to make up, and he did his level best to make it up. Perhaps he overdid it.

The yacht rolled a little on a wave. Fatty Wynn started in his chair.

"Sit tight, Fatty!" said Figgins encouragingly.
"Oh!"
"Buck up! Have some more sausage?"

"Groo!"
"Try the jam sponge!"
"Yaroo! Gerrooh!"

Fatty Wynn leaped from his chair, and made a rush for a porthole. And history repeated itself.

CHAPTER 7.

Crossing the Line

SUNNY skies—daily growing sunnier—blue seas that grew bluer every day. Swiftly the Silver Scud glided on her way. The Bay of Biscay had left unpleasant recollections, especially with Fatty Wynn, but daily the juniors enjoyed their trip more and more.

Swiftly the yacht was drawing nearer to the "summer isles of Eden, glowing in dark purple spheres of sea."
Past the Azores, past the Canaries, past the Cape Verd Islands.

They were names that teemed with interest to the juniors of St. Jim's—names that had been only names to them—portions of geographical lessons—now realities.

There was music in the very words, a strange subtle attraction in the mere sound of the names.

And now the Silver Scud was drawing near the line. Many of the St. Jim's juniors had been on their travels before. To Tom Merry the Continent was not unknown, or the United States. But he had never crossed the Equator. Earth's central line was strange territory to him.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy remarked, as he stood and watched

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the white foam curling away in the wake of the yacht. "This is weally twavellin', you know. Weally, this beats a week-end at Boulogne, old chap!"

Tom Merry laughed. "It beats our trip to the Far West, Gussy." "Yaas, wathah!" "To say nothing of the afternoon at Southend-on-Sea," murmured Fatty Wynn.

And the juniors laughed. "We're crossing the line this afternoon," said Kangaroo. The Cornstalk spoke with authority. He had crossed the line, of course, coming from Australia to go to school in England. As a fellow who had crossed the line, he was looked upon with a certain respect.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I've nevah seen the Equatah you know." And he jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked round upon the blue waters, as if he expected to see it chalked there.

"Well, you won't see it, ass!" said Monty Lowther. "Do you think it's like a giddy telegraph-wire stretched round the earth?"

"The Equator," said Wally, quoting Third Form knowledge—"the Equator is an imaginary line running round the earth—"

"Or, as a cheerful youth put it once, an imaginary lion running round the earth!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Of course, we shall have to celebrate crossing the line," said Monty Lowther, with a wink at Tom Merry.

D'Arcy nodded at once.

"Yaas, wathah! I have heard that sailahs always celebrate crossoin' the line."

"And chaps who haven't crossed it before, have to go through things," Kangaroo remarked.

There was no doubt as to the accuracy of Kangaroo's statement. But the juniors, with singular unanimity, replied:

"Rats!" Kangaroo had crossed it. They hadn't. And it was not likely that one fellow would be allowed to put eleven others through it.

The Cornstalk laughed. "Must stick to the rules," he said. "However, I won't be hard on you."

"Bai Jove!" "Cheeky ass!"

"Gweat Scott!" D'Arcy exclaimed suddenly. "I've got a wippin' ideah!"

"Whose is it?" "Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It's a jollay wippin' ideah!" said D'Arcy. "Look here, suppose we atah the usual wules, and wag the chap who has crossed the line, instead of the chaps who haven't?"

"Hurray!" "Hear, hear!"

"Ripping!" Kangaroo backed away.

"Oh, don't play the giddy ox!" he exclaimed. "You can't bust up the rules like that! Play the game, you know!"

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"We're not at the Equator yet," said Tom Merry, laughing; "but we get there this evening, Mr. Dodds says. Then there will be fun for somebody!"

It was pretty certain that there would be fun for somebody, though whom that somebody would prove to be was not yet certain.

The juniors were all very much on the watch.

Fatty Wynn had a suggestion to make. He suggested that the usual sort of celebration on the subject of crossing the line should be discarded, and that they should have a big feed instead. Fatty Wynn had quite recovered his appetite, and indeed it was going ahead by leaps and bounds.

Fatty Wynn's suggestion was sat upon with great unanimity.

As a matter of fact, the Terrible Three were already laying plans. Neptune's costume was being prepared in the secrecy of a cabin. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther started it, and Kangaroo joined in with the other Shell fellows. Then Figgins & Co. joined in.

It was clear that if there was to be a rag, there would have to be raggars and ragged, and Tom Merry & Co. had decided to be the raggars. Blake and his chums were to be the ragged.

During the evening the juniors hung round the chart-room for information. As the dusk deepened D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the wide sea several times, as if to see whether the Equator was yet in sight.

To all requests for information as to whether they were near the line, Mr. Dodds returned an answer of "Not yet."

The hour grew late, and D'Arcy grew sleepy, and determined to wait no longer for the Equator. He turned in.

He was in a deep sleep when he was suddenly awakened. "Rise!" said a deep, stern voice.

D'Arcy sat up in bed in amazement. Two figures were in his cabin—two persons draped in long canvas cloaks, with cardboard masks over their faces.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Rise!" "Pway don't wot!"

"Rise!" "You uttah ass—"

"Rise!" "I wefuse to wise! I uttahly decline to do anythin' of the sort! Who are you, you ass?"

"I am one of King Neptune's guards."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Rise! Our lord awaits thee!" "You feahful chump—"

King Neptune's guards waited for no more argument. They seized D'Arcy, and yanked him out of bed.

The swell of St. Jim's came upon the floor with a loud bump and a louder yell.

"Ow! Yow! Yawwoh!" "Come with us!" said a deep voice.

"You ass! I wefuse to come! I know it's you, Kangawoo, you silly ass! Yow!"

"Bring the prisoner along!" "I wefuse to be bwung—I mean, bwought!" "March!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a powerful grasp upon either arm, was marched on deck. He found a crowd there.

The crew had assembled to witness the performance, and Lord Conway and Mr. Dodds could be seen in the chart-room.

There were seven fellows in canvas cloaks and cardboard masks, and they held four prisoners in all—the prisoners being Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy.

It was not difficult to guess who King Neptune's guards were.

But they maintained a stolid solemnity of demeanour that befitted the occasion.

The Fourth-Formers of St. Jim's were struggling a little, but they were quite at the mercy of King Neptune's guards, for they had been taken one at a time in their bunks, and their hands were tied down to their sides.

"Look here!" roared Blake. "You stop this rot! You hear me?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I insist upon your stoppin' this wot at once, deah boys!"

"Silence!" said a deep voice.

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"Silence! King Neptune is about to come on board!"

"Wats!" "Silence!"

"More wats!" "Here comes King Neptune!"

King Neptune came into view from behind a boat. He was clad in flowing garments, upon which seaweed had been pinned for effect; but he looked strangely dry for a monarch who had just arrived from the depths of the sea. He was not very tall, but he was very plump in form—indeed, his ample curves seemed to suggest the well-known figure of Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth.

"Hail!" exclaimed the masked figures.

D'Arcy looked round.

"You uttah asses!" he exclaimed. "There is no hail or wain or anythin'! It is a perfectly fine night!"

There was a chuckle from the masked crowd. The night was certainly fine, with stars gleaming like fire in a deep blue sky, and dancing in reflection on the calm waters.

"Hail!" "You silly asses—"

"Hail, King Neptune!" "Oh, I see! I wegard you as duffahs!"

"Hail!" King Neptune came forward with majestic stride. Unfortunately, his foot caught in his flowing garments just as he reached the spot, and he stumbled, and rolled over, and landed on his hands and knees before the group in a most undignified attitude, considering that he shared with Britannia the empire of the seas.

"Ow!" gasped King Neptune.

And that ejaculation was unmistakably in the tones of Fatty Wynn. Jack Blake put his foot out, and pushed the gasping monarch, and Neptune rolled over like a cask.

"Ow, ow!"

ANSWERS

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

CHAPTER 8.

Rough on Neptune.

"ORDER!"
"Rats!"
"Yaas, wathah! Wats, deah boy, and many of them!"

King Neptune sat up, gasping. It took him a minute or more to get his wind back, and then he was assisted to his feet by one of his faithful subjects—a very long-legged subject, remarkably like Figgins, of the Fourth, in contour.

"Ow!" said King Neptune.
"Get on, Fatty—I mean, your Majesty!"
King Neptune snorted.
"Keep those kids in order, then, Figgy! I'll jolly well

"Get on!"
"Oh, all right!"
And King Neptune lifted up his voice, and chanted:

"My name it is Neptune, I am King of the Deep,
In the caves of the ocean my empire I keep.
My wife, Amphitrite, holds sway with me there,
And we're always together—a most loving pair.
But she's not with me now to extend you her greeting,
As the mermaids are holding a Suffragette meeting!
But I—I—I—"

King Neptune paused, his memory evidently at fault. There was a chuckle along the deck.

"That's enough!" said Jack Blake. "If that's Tom Merry's poetry, the sooner it goes back to the bottom of the sea the better!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I'm here alone on this tropical night,
To help carry out the old time-honoured rite.
I'm King Neptune, obey me—this kingdom is mine—
So bring out all the bounders who've not crossed the line!"

And Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were marched forward.

King Neptune surveyed them sternly. His eyes were twinkling through the holes in his green-painted cardboard mask.

"Are these all?" he exclaimed.
"All at present, your Majesty."
"Bai Jove! The othah chaps haven't cwossed the line, eithah, and you haven't yourself, Fatty Wynn, you howwid boundah!"
"Silence!"

"I wefuse to silence—I mean—"
"Order before his Majesty! Sire, what is the sentence passed upon the bounders who have not crossed the line?"

"One at a time!" said King Neptune, hitching up his voluminous garments. "Youth, what is your name?"

"You know my name well enough, you fat bounder!" roared Blake.

"Duck him!"
Strong hands seized Jack Blake promptly, and he was ducked in a tub of water that was standing ready. The water splashed up on all sides, and Blake gave a terrific yell.

"Oh! Ow! Groo!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Next man in!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Next prisoner, I mean!" said King Neptune, correcting himself. "What is your name?"

"My name's Arthur Digby, you howling ass!"
"Have you crossed the line?"

"You know I haven't, you chump!"
"Duck him!"

Splash!
"Ow!"

Blake was rolled down the cabin stairs after his ducking, and Digby after him. They lay gasping at the bottom, trying to get their hands loose, and breathing vengeance. Herries was brought before King Neptune in his turn.

"Your name, slave?" said King Neptune.

"Rats!"
"Singular or plural?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You ass!" roared Herries. "Look here—"

"Have you crossed the line?"
"You silly chump—"

"Duck him!"
Splash!

Bump—bump!
Herries joined the soaking, furious juniors at the bottom of

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the cabin stairs. Their voices floated up to the calm sky—not calmly.

D'Arcy took his place before the King of the Deep. D'Arcy's hands were not secured; a point that the captors had overlooked.

"Hallo!" said King Neptune. "What's this?"
"Bai Jove!"

"It's a human being, your Majesty."
"H'm!" said Neptune. "It doesn't look like one."

"Bai Jove!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is your name?"
"My name is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, you uttah ass, and you know it perfectly well. I will give you a feahful

twashin'—"
"Have you crossed the line?"

"No, you ass! I—"
"Duck him!"

"Wats!"
Arthur Augustus, as the guards would have seized him again, dodged them, and rushed straight at King Neptune.

In a moment he had Neptune's head in chancery, and was pommelling away for all he was worth, while Neptune, hardly able to struggle in his garments, roared like a muffled bull.

"There, you feahful ass!" panted D'Arcy, as Neptune's cardboard mask crumpled up under his pommelling. "There, you silly boundah! I'll teach you somethin' in the way of mannahs, you know. Take that!"

"Ow! Yaroo!"
"And that!"

"Yah! Help!"
The other fellows were piling on D'Arcy to drag him off. But they were laughing so much that they could afford

Fatty Wynn little help. The unfortunate monarch of the deep rolled on the planks, with D'Arcy rolling over him, still punching.

"Wescue, deah boys!" D'Arcy roared.

Blake & Co., at the bottom of the cabin steps, redoubled their efforts. Blake had his hands loose now, and he tore the cords off Herries and Digby. Together they charged up the steps.

All attention was given to D'Arcy and Neptune, and Blake and his comrades were not opposed. They rushed out on deck, and threw themselves into the fray with startling suddenness.

"Sock it to them!" roared Blake.
"Yaas, wathah!"

"Knock them out!"
"Go it!"

Cardboard masks crumpled up on all hands before punching fists. There were falls and yells and roars. Fellows

locked in deadly embraces reeled about. Lord Conway came quickly upon the scene. The matter was going a little too far, and was in danger of becoming a rough fight.

"Stop!" the young skipper exclaimed. "Stop at once!"
"Wats!"

"Go it!"
"Sock it to them!"

"Hurrah!"
"Pile in!"

Lord Conway smiled grimly. He was a strict disciplinarian. A hose had been prepared for a part of the celebrations—

which had not come off. Lord Conway made a sign to Mr. Dodds, who picked up the hose.

Whiz!
Sloosh!

"Yaroo!" Oh! Yah!"

The jet of water smote the combatants indiscriminately, and swept them away. They separated fast enough now, staggering away under the drenching water, and were glad enough to escape below.

Drenched and dripping and gasping, King Neptune and his faithful subjects, and the victims of the ragging, escaped below in much the same state; and they towelled themselves down and turned in, quite content to have no further celebrations of "crossing the line."

CHAPTER 9.

Round the Horn.

"L AND ahead!"

The cry from the deck made the juniors tumble up in hot haste. Since crossing the "line" they had seen little land. A glimpse of Ascension, and another glimpse of St. Helena—the lonely isle where the great

Napoleon had been held a prisoner after the last throw of the dice at Waterloo—had been all. At St. Helena the juniors would gladly have landed to explore. As Monty Lowther

remarked, they had had Napoleon's imprisonment and death

at St. Helena in their history books at St. Jim's, and after being bored with it in that way, it would have been only a just compensation to have a run over the place. But time did not permit, and, leaving the last prison of a great adventurer behind them, the voyagers had plunged into the wider waters of the South Atlantic.

The next land they expected to see was the solitary island of Tristan d'Acunha, or Da Cunha, to give it the Portuguese spelling. And it was Tristan da Cunha that loomed into view now. The tropic of Capricorn was behind the yacht now, and this was the last land that lay between them and the Antarctic Ocean.

D'Arcy was first on deck, and he turned his eyeglass upon the island.

"Bai Jove! Land!" he said.

"Land-ho!" said Figgins gleefully. "But what land?"

"The treasure island, pewwaps. I say, Con, old boy, is that the treasure island?"

Lord Conway laughed.

"That is Tristan da Cunha," he said.

"Tristan dah Coonyer?" repeated Figgins. "Oh!"

"Our search begins here," said the skipper.

"Bai Jove!"

Lord Conway brought a large chart out of the chart-room, and spread it on a table on deck. The juniors gathered round. The map showed the whole of the southern ocean, from east to west.

Lord Conway followed a line with his finger.

The chart was drawn upon Mercator's projection, and each degree of latitude was marked. Through the latitude of Sydney in New South Wales a line was drawn, extending across the map from side to side.

"On your chart, Tom, the latitude of Sydney is given," Lord Conway remarked. "You see that the latitude of Sydney is, roughly speaking, thirty degrees south of the Equator. A line drawn across the map passes through Cape Colony in Africa, and the Argentine in South America. We have therefore two oceans to search for the island, as the exact longitude is not known—the Atlantic, from the African coast to the South American, and if the island is not there—the Pacific, from the other side of South America to Sydney in New South Wales."

Tom Merry whistled.

"That's a big order, sir."

"Quite so. If the man who tattooed your chart had known the exact longitude—or had cared to write it down—we could have steamed directly to the spot. All the clue to the longitude, however, is contained in the words West Longitude—taking that W. L. to mean west longitude. That gives us exactly half the globe to choose from. The only way to make a thorough search is to follow the thirtieth degree of south latitude right round half the globe—west of Greenwich—excepting where land intervenes."

"Bai Jove!"

"But I do not think we need try that heroic method," the viscount went on. "There are other clues. For instance, that chart of yours was tattooed, certainly, in the Pacific—and that indicates a location in the Pacific, not the Atlantic."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite so, in my opinion!" said Mr. Dodds.

"We shall therefore pass through the Atlantic here under full steam," said Lord Conway, "and search the Pacific first. It is the greater task of the two—but there is no reasonable doubt that the island is in the Pacific. An island here would be known and charted—but in the South Pacific there are many that have not been given attention by navigators. We head therefore for the Pacific."

"I agree, sir. I think you are quite right."

"Bai Jove! We shall have to wound the Horn, then, sir!" D'Arcy exclaimed.

"Quite so."

"Gweat Scott!"

"We might be able to fly over South America, Gussy," Monty Lowther suggested.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Unless we do that, we shall have to round the Horn—didn't that occur to you before?"

"I nevah thought of it, you know."

Lord Conway laughed.

"Well, there is no alternative, unless we steam east and take a much longer route," he said. "We shall round Cape Horn, and take up the search on the western coast of South America. We shall stop at Valparaiso for fresh coal, and then begin."

"Good!"

The yacht steamed on.

Tristan da Cunha vanished astern, and the Silver Scud drew farther and farther into the illimitable spaces of the southern ocean.

The juniors were naturally excited at the prospect of rounding the Horn.

In a trim steam-yacht, it was a very different task from that of the old sailormen, who rounded the Horn in their sailing craft, at the mercy of wind and wave. But even for the Silver Scud it was not easy work.

Bad weather, for the first time in the voyage, came upon them, and the yacht glided on to the south through foaming waves and under black, threatening skies.

Warm weather and sunny skies were behind the voyagers now. They buttoned on thick coats, put on thick stockings over their socks, and tied on scarfs and mufflers, every time they came on deck.

But the Silver Scud made good time.

In the midst of lashing waves and racing billows, the juniors caught a glimpse of the Horn, black and threatening. But calmer weather waited for them in the Pacific.

That ocean justified its name when the yacht glided into its wide waters, leaving the Horn behind.

Northward-ho was the word now—and the Silver Scud steamed on to Valparaiso, with the soaring peaks of the Andes looming upon the starboard.

At Valparaiso the stop was short.

There was no time to waste, and, after taking in the necessary supplies, the Silver Scud put to sea again. The juniors had no time to explore the place; but as they steamed out of the harbour, they inwardly vowed to return some day and see more of the wild and romantic land at the foot of the Cordilleras.

It was upon a bright, crisp morning that the Silver Scud steamed out of the harbour, in the midst of many craft putting out from the busy port.

Tom Merry & Co. watched with special interest a handsome felucca that ran out to sea with her great sails bellying out in the breeze.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy remarked. "That is a handsome cwaft, if you like."

"How she sails, too!" said Kerr. "She's keeping pace with us—just now."

"We shall soon leave her behind," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry suddenly fixed a keen stare upon the felucca.

The handsome vessel had passed so close, that the figures on the deck could easily be distinguished.

"Your glasses, Gussy—quick!" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"What's the—"

"Hand them to me!"

"Certainly, deah boy."

D'Arcy unslung his binoculars, and handed them to Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell put the glasses to his eyes, and scanned the felucca.

His face was pale with excitement.

The others watched him in amazement. What could be the cause of the junior's strange excitement, they had no idea.

"It's he!" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"What!"

"He! Who?"

"Lopez!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Lopez!" exclaimed Manners. "Are you sure?"

"Look, then!"

Manners snatched the binoculars. Several other pairs of glasses were turned eagerly upon the felucca.

Then the figure of the dwarfed Spaniard seemed to rush into view.

He was standing at the wheel, steering the felucca. His face was turned towards the steam-yacht, and Tom Merry & Co. could see the grin upon it. It was Pablo Lopez!

Had the Spaniard been following them, or had he heard, in the garden at Southampton, as much as they knew of the location of the island, and was he bound there?

The latter was doubtless the correct theory.

That he had recognised the yacht was certain from the look upon his face.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "It's a race, then—the Spanish villain is coming there, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lord Conway turned his glasses upon the felucca.

"You are right," he said. "It is the Spaniard. But that felucca, well as she sails, would have no chance with the Silver Scud."

And he signalled full steam ahead to the engine-room.

Swiftly as the felucca sailed, the yacht seemed to walk away from her, and ere a quarter of an hour had passed, the Spaniard's vessel was out of sight astern.

But the sight of Pablo Lopez had given the juniors a thrill.

They realised now that it would be not only a race to the treasure island, but in all probability a struggle for the treasure when they reached it. The dwarf Spaniard remained to be reckoned with.

CHAPTER 10.

Treasure Island.

FROM Valparaiso westward the steam-yacht swept on, over seas again sunny, under skies of deepest blue. Round the Silver Scud rolled the wide waters of the Pacific, gleaming under the tropical sun.

Every day now the juniors watched from the deck with eager eyes. At the sight of a flying fish or a dolphin, glasses were raised to scan the sea.

When would the island be sighted?

In hundreds of miles, or thousands, from the coast of South America? They did not know. They knew that it was on or near the thirtieth degree of south latitude, but the longitude was a secret.

But if the yacht followed that parallel far enough, she must come upon the treasure island—unless the hand that had written those words upon the tattooed chart had written a mistake or a lie.

That was what the voyagers had to discover.

But all of them had faith that the chart was written truly—that they had the latitude, and had only to discover the longitude. Even Lord Conway was catching the infection of the boys' enthusiasm. As for Mr. Dodds, he had been quite keen upon the subject ever since he had been shown Tom Merry's chart.

Morning after morning the juniors scanned the sea.

Day after day nothing met their gaze but the wide rolling waters, and sometimes a glancing sail, or the rolling smoke of a steamer. Whalers and sealers bound for the south passed them, and exchanged greetings, as the yacht ran on.

"We shall get to New Zealand if we keep on far enough," Kangaroo remarked. "We shall pass within sight of the North Cape of the North Island, unless we find our destination this side of Maoriland."

"I don't think we shall go so far as that," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "I'm expecting the giddy island every day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a shout from the look-out.

"Land ho!"

And there was a rush of the juniors to see.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "It's weally land, you know."

"Land!" "Land!"

Lord Conway consulted his chart of the Pacific. No land was marked upon the spot where the yacht was now cutting the blue waters with her keen prow.

The land ahead was evidently one of those innumerable islets dotted upon the wide surface of the Pacific which no one has taken the trouble to chart.

Lord Conway's eyes were gleaming as he came out of the chart-room.

"It is undoubtedly land, sir" said Mr. Dodds.

"Indeed it is."

The yacht changed her course slightly in obedience to Lord Conway's signal, and headed directly for the land.

The juniors watched eagerly.

The land rose more clearly into view, emerging from the blue of the sea, and the feathery fronds of palm-trees could be seen waving in the breeze.

Closer and closer, till the palm-trees stood out clear against the sky, and the high mountain within the isle was black against the clouds.

Between the island and the yacht ran a line of white foam, showing the position of the barrier reef—the reef piled up by the untiring industry of tiny workers under the sea—a reef of coral that reached just to the surface of the waters.

"We shall have to be careful here," said Lord Conway. "Those reefs would go through our hull like a knife through cheese. Send a man forward to sound, Mr. Dodds."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The yacht seemed to crawl now.

Keen and impatient as the juniors were, they would not have had their skipper hurry. A false step now meant destruction to the ship and its crew. And there was no help for the shipwrecked in that lonely sea. The yacht was all that stood between them and the doom of Robinson Crusoe.

"Anyway, it's weal land," said Arthur Augustus. "We shall be able to stretch our legs again, deah boys."

"And they're cocoanut-palms," said Fatty Wynn, with a smack of the lips. "We shall be able to gather cocoanuts—for nothing."

"Good old Fatty!"

"Well, it will be jolly ripping," said Fatty Wynn warmly. "Cocoanuts are jolly good prog., and it's something to get 'em without paying for 'em. Hallo! We're past the reefs."

Lord Conway had followed the indications on Tom Merry's chart. Where the chart showed an opening in the reefs, the yacht tried carefully for way. She glided through the lines of foam, and stopped in a wide bay, marked on the chart "Safe anchorage."

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The anchor glimmered down.
Then the juniors gave a shout.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The hill flung back the sound with a thousand echoes.

"Hurrah!"

It was the treasure island at last! There was no doubt of it. The hill, and the slim curl of smoke to the northward, marking the existence of a volcano—and the configuration of the coast as the yacht approached it—all proved that it was the island of which the outlines were tattooed on Peter Raff's chart. It was the island—the island of treasure!

No wonder the juniors cheered!

The sun was sinking behind the hill, and glimmering on the thick woods round the base of it. The island was silent and still; there was no trace of life upon it. How long was it since that lonely isle had been trodden by human feet?

Years—centuries! It looked like it!

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy's eye blazed with excitement behind his monocle. "Gweat Scott! This is wippin' you know! I feel perfectly convinced that the tuesday is here all wight."

"Oh, of course!"

"Not a doubt about that."

"I suppose we're going ashore now?"

Lord Conway shook his head.

"Not in too great a hurry," he said.

"Why not, deah boy?"

"There may be danger."

"But the giddy island is uninhabited, sir," said Figgins.

"It looks like it; but it may be inhabited all the same, and if it is seldom or never visited by ships, the natives may be in a primitive state of barbarity," said the viscount quietly. "We shall go ashore in parties, and well armed. It would not be pleasant to fall into the hands of cannibals."

"Cannibals!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And you must not forget the Spaniard."

"Lopez!" said Tom Merry. "But he has been left long behind. Could he have come all this distance in that felucca?"

"He could."

"But he would be far behind us."

"I am not so sure of that. That craft of his sailed well, and he may have come on a direct line, you see, while we have been exploring north and south of the thirtieth parallel. We covered more ground—or, rather, more sea—than we need, strictly speaking, have taken in, in order not to let a chance slip. That has taken time. If Lopez chanced it, and came straight on, it is quite conceivable that he may have arrived here first."

"Bai Jove! Then he may have woped in the tuesday."

Lord Conway shook his head with a smile.

"You forgot—he knows the location of the treasure island, but not of the treasure," he replied.

"Bai Jove, yaas! I nevah thought of that."

"If he is here, he is waiting for our arrival," said Lord Conway, "hoping to get a clue to the treasure from us."

"We'll take jolly good care he doesn't," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And when the treasure-hunters landed, it was in a party of a dozen Spaniards and five seamen, all of them armed. If the dwarf Spaniard was on the island, he was likely to find them a formidable party to tackle.

The boat grated on the beach, and the explorers jumped ashore. Soft sand, shelving down to the sea, crackled and crised under their feet.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy exclaimed suddenly.

"Hallo! What is it?"

"Look there, deah boys!"

D'Arcy pointed to the sand.

In the clear soft sand was a deep impression—the impression of a human foot! There needed no further proof that the island was not uninhabited.

The juniors gathered eagerly round the spot. Most of them had been Boy Scouts at home, and they had learned to study tracks and footprints. Tom Merry dropped on his knees to examine the track.

"It's not a bare foot that made this," he remarked. "It was a boot."

"Then it was not a savage," Figgins remarked.

"No fear!"

"And it's a small size in boots," said Tom Merry. "Lopez is a dwarf, and his feet are naturally very small."

"Bai Jove, it's Lopez!"

"I believe so."

Tom Merry rose to his feet. The juniors scanned the shore with anxious eyes. But only the cries of wild birds came from the trees, and a solitary flamingo moved in the distance. If the Spaniard was there, there was no sign of him. But that single footprint in the sand was enough to put the voyagers upon their guard.

CHAPTER 11.

An Alarm in the Night.

WITH the suddenness of the tropics, the sun descended behind the hill, and light was blotted out upon Skeleton Island. But at the same time the full, round moon was sailing up over the Eastern sea.

The juniors stood in the dim, half-light, still looking at the footprint.

"We shall camp on the shore to-night," Lord Conway said. "In the morning we will start for the treasure. According to the chart, we have to follow this river that empties into the bay, and the course should be clear."

With much zest, the juniors helped to camp. It reminded them of their old days of playing Redskins in Rylcombe Wood.

Supplies were brought ashore from the yacht, and only four men were left on board to watch.

The rest of the crew—which was numerous for the size of the vessel—came ashore with the treasure-hunters.

The juniors gathered fuel on the borders of the wood to build up a huge camp-fire. They looked into the gloomy depths of the forest with strange feelings. In those black thickets, what foes might lurk?

They did not venture out of sight of the beach.

A huge fire was soon blazing and roaring away, casting ruddy light far along the beach, and the juniors and the sailors gathered round it, cooking their evening rations and making coffee.

Fatty Wynn was in his element now.

Given a frying-pan and a fire, and something to cook, Fatty Wynn was a fellow who was sure to make his mark, and he made it now.

Couches of fresh leaves gathered under the trees, and camp stools brought from the yacht served for seats as the campers had their supper.

It was a merry supper, and the explorers were in the highest of spirits.

Yet, in the midst of the eager talk and chatter, and the keen discussion of the morrow's explorations, they cast sometimes a glance towards the dark, circling wood.

Two sentries had been posted between the camp and the wood with loaded rifles in their hands.

Their steady tramping to and fro could be heard through the stillness of the shadowed night.

"Bai Jove," D'Arcy said, as he finished his coffee, and lay back lazily on his couch of thick dry leaves, "this is wippin'! It beats picnickin' in Wylcombe Wood, deah boys!"

"Yes, rather."

"What are you lookin' woumd like that for, Kerr?"

"I was just thinking," said the Scottish junior.

"Penny for your thoughts," said Wally, with a grin, "and pass the beef before you tell 'em!"

"You cheekay young wascal—"

"You're interrupting Kerr, Gussy. I'm surprised at you," said Wally. "And pass the beef, too."

"What were you thinking, Kerr, old chap?" asked Tom Merry. "You generally think something when you do think."

Kerr grinned.

"Well, I was thinking that if Lopez, or any chap of his kidney, was in the wood yonder with a rifle, we should make splendid targets sitting here by the fire."

"Bai Jove!"

"Great Scott! Kerr! You don't mean—"

"Lopez is an unscrupulous hound, and he's suspected of having murdered Peter Raff," said Kerr. "And if it's Lopez against us lot, I should think that the more he picked off of us, the easier he would find his job."

"There is something in what the lad says, Lord Conway," Mr. Dodds remarked very gravely. "It is hard to think that the man could be scoundrel enough to fire upon us here, but it is certainly quite possible."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Crack!

The campers sprang to their feet electrified.

Crack-ack!

The echo of the shot died away in the deep woods.

The campers exchanged quick, anxious glances. No one was hit, and it occurred to them in a moment or two that the shot had not been fired at the camp.

It echoed from the depths of the wood, and the sound was flung back from the hill. But there was no whiz of a bullet. Faces were pale, now, in the flare of the camp-fire.

"Who is it, I wonder?" Tom Merry muttered.

"It must be Lopez."

"But who is he firing at?"

"Us, I should think."

"I am sure the bullet did not come this way."

"Quite right, Tom; it did not," said Mr. Dodds.

"Somebody's firing at somebody else in the wood, or else a firearm has gone off by accident," said Lord Conway. "In any case, I think it will be safer to stamp the fire out. It

is no use posing as targets in case a marksman should take a fancy to pot us."

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

The juniors willingly stamped the fire out.

Darkness reigned where the red glare had been—darkness, save for the glimmer of the moon in the dark blue sky, and the glimmer of the wide ocean beyond the bay.

The campers waited and listened.

But the shot was not repeated.

They resumed their seats, and their talk; but there was a tone of anxiety in their voices now, and they frequently glanced over their shoulders.

For the first time, they realised the danger of the quest they had undertaken; they realised to the full that, in penetrating the mysteries of the treasure island, they carried their lives in their hands.

The moon rose higher in the sky, and the explorers prepared to sleep. Lord Conway suggested that the juniors should return to the yacht to sleep, but so vigorous an objection was raised that he did not insist.

"Very well," he said, "remain here. After all, there is little danger if we keep a good look out."

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "Besides; you old chaps would be in a feahful wisk if we weren't here."

"Hear, hear!" said Wally.

And Lord Conway laughed and yielded the point.

The campers rolled themselves in their blankets on the soft sand, round the still warm embers of the fire, and slept.

The juniors had wished to take their turns on sentry-go; but Lord Conway would not agree to that. The watch was kept by the seamen of the Silver Scud, two at a time.

It was past midnight when Tom Merry awoke. He had been dreaming of treasure, and sharks, and Pablo Lopez, and he awoke with a strange feeling of uneasiness thrilling through him. He sat up. The moon had passed behind a bank of clouds, and all was dark. From the forest came strange whispers of the night wind.

Tom Merry sat and listened. The night was warm, and he allowed his blanket to fall. He listened for the steady tramping of the sentries, but it was inaudible.

Had they slept at their posts.

The mere thought, and the knowledge that the savage Spaniard might be lurking in the wood, sufficed to bring Tom Merry with a bound to his feet.

He stood with beating heart peering into the gloom.

Ah, there was the sound! Tramp, tramp, tramp, on the soft sand, to and fro. The sentries were awake and at their posts.

But what was that softer sound nearer at hand?

Tom Merry strained his ears to listen. It was a soft and swishing sound, and, for the moment, he could not make it out.

But suddenly it came home to him what it was. It was the sound of a man dragging himself softly, along the sand towards the camp. Tom Merry shivered.

The creeping man, whoever he was, was within the distance of the sentries. He had succeeded in passing them unseen in the darkness.

He was close upon the camp now. Who was it?

Lopez?

Tom Merry groped for his rifle, which lay beside him in the sand. Quietly, with beating heart, but steady nerves, he put it to his shoulder.

The moon was about to emerge from the clouds.

As the edge of silver glimmered in the sky, and a faint light fell upon the beach, Tom Merry scanned the shelving sand in the direction of the sound he had heard. He levelled the rifle at the creeping figure of a man.

"Halt!" he shouted.

The man leaped to his feet with an inarticulate cry. The rifle in Tom Merry's hands was levelled at his breast, steady as a rock.

The moonlight glimmered on his face.

Tom Merry saw it, and uttered a cry of astonishment. He lowered the barrel of the rifle.

"Peter Raff!"

CHAPTER 12.

The Enemy.

PETER RAFF stared at Tom Merry blankly, blinking in the moonlight.

He was shaking in every limb, and there was no colour in his sunburnt cheeks. He had a rifle in his hand, but it was of little danger to anyone but himself. It was evident that the man's nerve was gone.

"Master Merry!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry allowed the butt of his rifle to fall into the sand. "So it's you!" he exclaimed. "You—alive! You weren't drowned in the stream in Rylcombe Wood, after all?"

Peter Raff grinned faintly.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 174.

A Splendid New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

"No, Master Merry; that was a trick. It put the Spaniard off my track."

"I'm glad to see you alive, my man," said Tom Merry. "Come on. There's nothing to be scared about. We're all friends here."

"Who is that, Tom?"

Half the camp was awake. It was Mr. Dodds who asked the question.

"Peter Raff, sir," said Tom Merry. "The sailorman I told you about, sir, who gave me the chart of the island."

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, sitting up, "I'm jolly glad to see you alive and kickin'. Petah, my boy! You fellows will wemembah that I said all along that Petah wasn't dead."

"I don't remember," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And I don't," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Well, he is alive and kicking, whether you said so all along or not, Gussy," Figgins remarked; "and I'm sure we're all jolly glad. Sit down, Peter, my son. Was it you shooting in the wood awhile back?"

The sailorman shuddered.

"No, sir; it wasn't me. I was shot at."

"Who by?" asked Lord Conway quietly.

"Pablo Lopez, sir."

"Then he is here?"

"As large as life, sir; and armed to the teeth, and ready for any devilish work," said the sailorman, with a shiver.

"You'd better tell us all about it," said Tom Merry.

"How did you get here? You never asked me to let you have the chart again."

The sailorman shook his head.

"I meant you to have it, Master Merry, for your kindness to me," he said. "I never thought I should get away from the Spaniard. But the trick I played took him in, or else he found out that you had the chart, and not me. Anyway, I saw no more of him. And when I found that I was clear of him, I thought to myself that I would have a shot at the treasure. For I remember every line of that chart in my mind, sir, as if I had it under my eyes still."

"I suppose so."

"So I came out this way on the fastest boat I could," said Peter Raff. "And I got a passage to Kermadec on a fast whaler, and some Kanakas brought me over here on their schooner. I filled them up with a yarn of having left some papers on the island, and I should have got the gold safe enough, I dessey, but—"

"But Lopez arrived?"

"Ay, ay, sir! The day after I was here I saw a felucca in Shark Bay, and then I guessed that he had come. The Kanakas fled in their schooner at the first shot from that demon of a Spaniard, and they left me marooned here, and ever since then I've been skulking to save my life from Pablo Lopez. He's been hunting me, to make me show him where the treasure is hidden, but I swore to myself that I'd jump off the Bluff into the sea before I'd do it. But I've kept off his course till now, knowing the island so well—for I've been here before, sirs—and you could have knocked me down, sir, with a captain's biscuit when I saw a steamer coming round the reefs this blessed day.

"I hoped it might be Master Merry and his friends, and yet I thought it couldn't be; and then I hoped it might be a stranger, but all the time I had a fear that it was friends of the Spaniard, who had come to help him carry off the treasure. That's why I didn't show myself, sir. And that's why I came creeping up here like a thief in the night, to see if I could tell whether you were honest seamen, sir, by listening to something that might be said among you. Thank Heaven, sir, I've fallen among friends! But Pablo Lopez is in the wood, watching the camp. Heaven deliver you from him!"

Lord Conway smiled.

"I think there are enough of us to give a good account of Lopez if he ventures to interfere with us," he remarked.

The sailorman shook his head.

"You don't know him, sir," he said.

"Is the man alone here?" Mr. Dodds asked.

"No, sir. He has four niggers in the felucca with him, but they ain't any account," said Peter Raff. "They stick in the felucca, and there ain't any fight in them. It's the Spaniard himself, sir."

"Well, I think we shall be able to handle him amongst us," said Lord Conway, with a smile.

Peter Raff responded only with another shake of the head. It was evident that the dwarf had impressed him with a terror that would not easily be removed.

The treasure-hunters did not share it, however. They were not likely to allow themselves to be scared by a single man, however desperate.

The campers returned to their sleep; and Peter Raff, after eating a hearty supper, rolled himself in blankets, and slept, too.

The moon was sailing high over the island, and in the clear light it was easy to keep watch; but the Spaniard did not appear.

At earliest dawn Tom Merry & Co. were astir.

It was a fine, clear morning, the skies blue and sunny, and a soft breeze waving the feathery fronds of the palm-trees. Fatty Wynn cast a hungry eye upon the cocoanut palms.

"I'm jolly well going to have some of those cocoanuts!" he remarked.

"Keep out of the trees, Fatty," said Tom Merry. "You remember the orders. We're not to leave the camp, excepting in a party."

"Yes; but—"

"We're going up the river this morning, and there will be heaps of cocoanuts."

"Oh, all serene!"

But Fatty Wynn could not give up the idea. There were no cocoanut palms near at hand, but plenty in sight in the distance, further along the Monkey River. Fatty Wynn helped to gather fuel for building up the camp-fire to cook the breakfast, and the cocoanuts overcame his prudence. There was no sign of an enemy near the encampment, and Fatty resolved to risk it. It meant only a run of a hundred yards, and then an armful of cocoanuts, and a run back to the camp.

Leaving the fuel he had gathered in a heap, Fatty Wynn started through the thicket. Tom Merry saw him go, and called after him.

"Fatty—Fatty!"

The fat Fourth-Former of St. Jim's did not appear to hear.

"Fatty!" shouted Tom Merry. "Come back, you duffer!"

But Fatty Wynn ran on.

A belt of flowering bushes hid him for the moment from Tom Merry's sight, and the hero of the Shell started after him.

He dashed past the bushes, but Fatty Wynn had disappeared.

"Fatty—Fatty!"

Only the echo of his own voice answered Tom Merry.

He ran on a dozen yards or more, but the thickets were round him now, and prevented him from seeing any distance. He stopped, frowning.

"Fatty!" he shouted. "Fatty, you duffer, come back!"

There was a rustle in the bush.

Tom Merry turned quickly towards the sound.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "Fatty, you chump, come back to the camp! You can get the cocoanuts afterwards."

"GEM" FREE HAMPER WINNERS.

The six boys marked with a X on the photographs published on the back page of No. 168 of the "GEM" Library, having sent in their applications, have duly received the six "GEM" Free Hampers. The names and addresses of the lucky winners, who attend the Rosevale Street School, Glasgow, and the Higher Grade School, Gourcock, are as follows:

ROSEVALE STREET SCHOOL, GLASGOW.

MASTER HARRY TAYLOR, 3, India Street, Partick.
 MASTER ANDREW MCKAY, 16, Hayburn Street, Partick.
 MASTER ALEX SHEARER, 208, Hozier Street, Partick.

HIGHER GRADE SCHOOL, GOUROCK.

MASTER GEORGE S. ESKDALE, 6, Binnie Street, Gourcock.
 MASTER WALTER LOGAN, Broomberry Terrace, Gourcock.
 MASTER JOHN HOLMES, 13, Cardwell Road, Gourcock.



"I'm here alone on this tropical night," chanted Fatty Wynn, "'To help carry out the old time-honoured rite. I'm King Neptune. Obey me—this kingdom is mine. So bring out all bounders who've not crossed the Line.'" And Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were marched forward. (See page 10.)

There was no reply, and Tom Merry plunged through the bush in search of the fat Fourth-Former.

As he did so a sudden grasp was laid upon him, and he was dragged backwards and borne to the ground.

"Fatty, let go, you ass! Oh!"

Tom Merry broke off as he saw who his assailant was.

A dark, evil face was bending over him. The arms that grasped him were stronger than those of Fatty Wynn.

"So we meet again, *senorito!*"

The voice was low and mocking.

Tom Merry struggled furiously, but he was as a child in the hands that grasped him. It was Pablo Lopez who was bending over him.

CHAPTER 13.

In the Hands of the Enemy.

LOPEZ planted a heavy knee upon Tom Merry's chest, pinning him helplessly to the ground. The boy struggled and gasped for breath. He strove to shout for help, but even as his lips opened something cold and sharp touched his neck. It was a knife, in the swarthy hand of the Spaniard.

"Not a sound, *senorito*," said Pablo Lopez—"not a sound! At the first cry, my knife is in your throat!"

The unuttered cry died upon Tom Merry's lips.

The Spaniard meant what he said. The junior's life hung by a thread. The knife was ready for its murderous work.

Tom Merry gazed up speechlessly into the savage, cruel face above him.

The Spaniard smiled down upon him, a strange and tigerish smile.

"You understand, *senorito*? Ere your friends can reach you, you are dead! Sabe?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Ah! You are a sensible boy," said Lopez, with a grin.

"If you speak, speak only in a whisper, *nano!*"

"You scoundrel!"

The Spaniard laughed.

"If it is any comfort to you, *senorito*, to call me pretty names, you may do so, so long as it is in a whisper," he said.

"Villain!"

The Spaniard made a gesture.

"Silence!"

There was a sound of trampling in the thickets and of

voices calling. The edge of the knife pressed closer to Tom Merry's throat, till it almost cut the skin. The junior felt a cold shiver run through his body. Even then he wondered why Lopez did not drive the weapon home. The man was villain enough.

But Lopez did not.

Pinned to the earth by the heavy knee, with the blade at his throat, Tom Merry could not venture to make a sound. The thick, tangled bushes round them hid them from sight.

"Tom Merry!"

"Tom!"

"Where are you?"

Tom Merry caught a glimpse of a straw hat through the bushes, but it passed. It was as well that it passed, for if the Spaniard had been discovered, and had to run, he would not have left Tom Merry living behind him.

"If they find you—" murmured Lopez.

But the footsteps and the voices passed on.

A few minutes of terrible tension, then silence.

The Spaniard smiled grimly.

"They have not found you, *senorito*."

"They will search again," said Tom Merry.

"But they will not find you, then. You are coming with me, *senorito*."

"I will not!"

"You will come with me, or remain here dead!" said Lopez. "Mind, a cry or a struggle, and I drive my poniard home!"

He meant every word. That was clear from the savage look upon the swarthy face. Tom Merry did not resist.

Lopez crammed a foul handkerchief in his mouth to gag him, and tied a cord round his head to keep it there.

Then he dragged the junior to his feet.

"*Vamos!*" he said briefly.

With a tight grip upon the junior's arm with his left hand, and the knife still held in his right, he led the junior through the thicket.

It was impossible to resist. And Tom Merry, with his heart beating with anger and a set look upon his face, walked beside the Spaniard quietly.

Deeper and deeper into the wood they went, but there was one feeling of satisfaction in Tom Merry's breast. The chart was not upon him now; that had been left with Lord Conway, to guide the party that was to start after breakfast.

If the Spaniard had captured him hoping to gain the chart, he would be disappointed.

Deeper into the wood.

At last, in a deep glade among the trees, half hidden from the sun by thick boughs and trailing vines, Lopez halted.

He gashed a length of a wiry creeper with his knife, and tied Tom Merry's wrists with it.

Then he released the junior.

"You may talk now, if you choose," he said. "They will not hear you. We are safe from them now."

Tom Merry gasped as the gag was dragged from his mouth.

"Oh, you scoundrel!" he muttered.

"Where is the chart?"

"It is not upon me," said Tom Merry steadily.

"You lie! Give it to me, or—"

"I cannot give it to you, and I would not if I had it."

"*Carambo!* I shall soon see to that."

The Spaniard returned the knife to his belt, and began to search the junior. Tom Merry submitted quietly.

Lopez searched him again and again, leaving no nook of his clothing uninvestigated, till even the suspicious Spaniard was satisfied that the chart was not there.

He gritted his sharp, white teeth.

"Where is the chart, then?" he demanded.

"It is with my friends."

"Which of them?"

"Lord Conway."

"Who is that?"

"Our captain."

The Spaniard muttered a curse.

"*Carambo!* It will not be easy to get, then!"

Tom Merry smiled scornfully.

"It will be impossible," he said. "Lord Conway will not run the risk I ran—especially after I am missed. You will never get the chart."

"We shall see. Do you know why I did not drive my knife to your heart as soon as I saw you?" asked Pablo Lopez, in a hissing voice.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. You are villain enough."

"It was because I suspected that you might not have the chart upon you," said the dwarf. "I suspected that they might not leave it in the hands of a boy. And without the chart you are more valuable to me alive than dead."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 174.

Tom Merry did not reply. The dwarf watched his prisoner with scintillating eyes.

"You have counted over the chart, and mastered it, I do not doubt?" he said.

"I have examined it, certainly."

"You remember it?"

"To some extent."

"Could you follow the clue to the place where the gold is buried, from memory?"

"I do not know."

"You shall try," said the Spaniard. "Listen! If you help me to find the gold, I will set you free, and give you some of the treasure. That I swear by all the saints!"

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"I do not believe you!" he said.

"*Carambo!* Be it so, then. But unless you guide me, you shall die by torture!" said the Spaniard, between his teeth. "Will you be my guide?"

"No!"

"Mind, I am a man of my word," said Lopez hoarsely. "Unless you guide me, I will bind you to the tree, here, and set fire to the dry bushes round you. You will burn slowly to death—slowly! You understand?"

Tom Merry shuddered, but he made no reply.

"Will you guide me, *senorito*?"

"No!"

The dwarf did not speak. He flung the junior against the sapling, and wound long, wiry creepers round him to secure him there. Tom Merry struggled furiously, careless of the knife now. But it was in vain. The terrible dwarf seemed possessed of superhuman strength. Tom Merry was like an infant in his powerful grasp. In a few minutes he was bound fast to the tree.

Then the dwarf gathered fuel and heaped it up round him waist high.

"Have you changed your mind, *senorito*?" he sneered.

"No! Help—help!" shouted Tom Merry.

The dwarf grinned, and took a tinder-box from his coat. A spark flickered out, and he blew a flame in the tinder. Then his evil eyes turned upon Tom Merry again.

"For the last time, *senorito*?"

CHAPTER 14.

The Track of the Treasure.

TOM MERRY looked at the dwarf with dilated eyes. It seemed almost impossible that the man could intend to set fire to the fuel that was heaped around him, that he could really mean to burn the junior alive.

But there was no doubting the purpose in the scintillating eyes, in the savage, swarthy face.

"Think again, *senorito*," said Lopez—"think again. Once I have fired this pile, I leave you, and no power on earth can save you. Think again!"

Small blame to Tom Merry if he surrendered then. What was the treasure, in comparison with life itself?

"Shall I hold my hand, *senorito*?"

"Yes," gasped Tom Merry.

"You will guide me?"

"Yes."

Lopez gave an ugly laugh.

"I thought I should bring you to reason," he said. "Let us go."

He dragged the twining bonds away. Tom Merry's hands were still bound. His face was white and set.

His brain was in a whirl. What if he guided the ruffian to the very spot where the gold was buried—what then? A thrust of the Spanish knife would reward him. Lopez had no object in allowing him to live.

It was but deferring his doom.

But while there was life there was hope. The tendrils that bound his hands were not so secure as a cord would have been, and Tom Merry hoped to work his wrists loose. He might turn the tables upon the villain yet.

"Where is the cache?" said Lopez. "Where is it, to the best of your recollection, *senorito*?"

"By the mountain, near the river," said Tom Merry.

"Exactly where?"

"I cannot remember, but I may be able to follow the direction from the river," said the junior.

"Good! You shall try."

With the Spaniard's iron grasp upon his arm, the boy was led through the wood. The trees thinned away, and there was a gleam of sunlit water ahead.

"That is the river," said the Spaniard. "You meant the river that empties into the bay where your yacht rides?"

"Yes."

"That is it. We keep on till we reach the mount?"

"Yes."

"A SCHOOLBOY'S HONOUR" is the title of the Splendid, Complete, School Tale of "MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on Sale
Marry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's One Penny.

CHAPTER 15.

A Fight for Life.

"Muy buen!"

They tramped on side by side—with how different feelings! The Spaniard's dark face showed exultation and anticipated triumph. Tom Merry's face was white and desperate. As they tramped through the trees, he was working his hands cautiously, in the hope of working them loose. The wiry tendrils held them fast, but they were coming looser and looser.

Lopez did not notice it. Perhaps he did not care. It was proved very clearly that Tom Merry was no match for him in a struggle, and he was armed and the junior was not.

The ground became more rocky and uneven, and the trees were sparser. Tom Merry had the bearings of the chart imprinted upon his mind.

Through the rocky slopes ran a natural path from the river, leading up the acclivity to the mount. They followed it. From the trees, black-faced monkeys grinned and chattered, and wild goats looked out from the underwoods and scampered away at their approach.

Suddenly the Spaniard halted, with a muttered imprecation.

Tom Merry followed his startled glance, and shuddered at what he saw.

In a deep cleft between two great rocks, gleaming white in the sun, now high in the heavens, lay a skeleton.

The bones were almost perfect, and the skeleton had evidently never been disturbed from the time the body had fallen there—perhaps in strife a century or more ago.

One arm was outstretched, pointing away towards a clump of heavy trees that grew thickly among the rocks of the slope.

"Carambo!" muttered the Spaniard.

It was clear that, in his wanderings upon the island, he had never come upon that grisly object before.

He stood and regarded it in silence for some minutes. Tom Merry's face was very white. Would his bones lie and whiten in the sun among those silent rocks?

It seemed only too likely.

"Carambo!" said the Spaniard again. "Is that a sign?" Tom Merry started.

The idea had not occurred to him, but it was only too probable. It was like one of the fearful deeds of the old buccaneers, to leave a dead man with outstretched hand pointing, as a guide, to the treasure.

"Come!" said Lopez.

He started off again, following the indication of the dead hand, dragging the junior after him.

Tom Merry was breathing hard. The tendrils round his wrists were loose, now, and he could tear his hands free at any moment he pleased.

But what was the use?

He was a child against the dwarf, and he had no weapon. He glanced at the knife in Lopez's belt. But he would never be allowed a chance of snatching it. There was a rifle slung over the shoulder of the Spaniard, but that he could not seize.

His heart was beating wildly, now.

He felt that they were drawing near to the hiding-place of the treasure, and when it was found, what was to be his fate?

Lopez halted again.

He stopped at the clump of thick trees. His eyes turned savagely upon Tom Merry.

"Is this the direction, nino?"

"So far as I remember."

"Good! Then we must be near!"

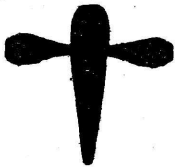
"I think so."

"Come!"

They plunged into the trees.

A sudden cry burst from the Spaniard—a cry of triumph. In the midst of the trees was an open, rocky space, shut in darkly and closely, as by a wall of green.

And there, upon a huge trunk, the bark had been gashed away by heavy blows of an axe, and in the tree-trunk a huge cross was cut.



It was the fellow of the cross upon the chart.

"The treasure!" shouted the Spaniard.

And he turned upon Tom Merry, and there was a murderous glare in his eyes, and his hand flew to the knife in his belt.

TOM MERRY sprang away at the same moment, and with a wrench freed his hands.

As the Spaniard came at him, he struck out fiercely, and the blow was so unexpected that Lopez received it without defence, and it sent him reeling backwards. He had not known that Tom Merry's hands were loose.

Tom Merry stood, panting, for a second.

To dash into the bushes was his first thought, and then he remembered that the Spaniard had a rifle. To run was to be picked off like a rabbit.

It was only a fraction of a second that he had to think, but it was enough. He followed up his blow by leaping upon the Spaniard.

Crash! crash!

His right, and then his left, came home upon the swarthy face of the tottering Lopez, and the dwarf crashed heavily to earth, panting.

Tom Merry was upon him in a second.

The Spaniard's hands were sprawling helplessly out, and in the twinkling of an eye the junior snatched the knife from his nerveless fingers.

It flashed in the air in the grasp of Tom Merry.

To drive it to the hilt in the scoundrel's body would have been justifiable, and only cautious, but Tom Merry could not do it. He planted his knee upon the ruffian, and held the knife aloft.

"Keep still!" he said. "If you resist, I swear I will strike!"

And he meant that.

And Lopez knew that he meant it, and he lay still, panting convulsively, his lips drawn back from his teeth in a savage snarl.

"Carambo!" he hissed.

"Lie quiet, you hound!"

And the Spaniard obeyed.

His rifle had fallen beside him, in the grass, still held to him by the sling. Tom Merry brought down the knife, and severed the leather strap with a single cut. The rifle lay loose.

The Spaniard was watching him like a cat.

"Mind what I say," said Tom Merry, in a hard, concentrated voice. His heart was beating like a hammer, but his head was quite cool. "I will pin you like a beetle if you attempt to struggle."

"Carambo!"

Tom Merry picked up the rifle with his left hand, and rose. The Spaniard made a movement, and Tom Merry had him covered with the rifle in a flash.

"Lie there, you hound!"

"Carambo!"

"I will shoot if you move."

The Spaniard did not move. It was proof that the rifle was loaded. Tom Merry had not thought of that until it was levelled at the Spaniard. But it was not likely that Pablo Lopez would be carrying an unloaded weapon.

Lopez lay with glittering eyes, like a cornered rat.

His rage was too great for words; but he read the desperate determination in the boy's face, and he understood it. It was as much as his life was worth to move.

"You scoundrel!" said Tom Merry. "You deserve that I should shoot you down, like a mad dog. And I will do it, if you make the least movement to attack me."

"A thousand curses—"

"Hold your tongue, you villain! Get up!"

"Senorito!"

"Get up, and keep your distance, or I will fire!"

Lopez rose to his feet.

"Walk before me," said Tom Merry.

Lopez made a passionate gesture.

"Where? Carambo, where?"

"Towards the river."

The Spaniard gave him a terrible glance. But he dared not disobey.

"I do not intend to risk being attacked from behind, you treacherous villain," said Tom Merry scornfully. "Mind, I will pull the trigger if you make a single movement that is suspicious."

"Carambo!"

"March!"

The Spaniard marched.

He strode away, with Tom Merry half a dozen paces behind him. That he could march the Spaniard as far as the camp, and make him a prisoner, Tom Merry did not hope. But he meant to get out of the thickets with the ruffian at a safe distance. They came out upon the bank of the gleaming river.

There the Spaniard halted.

He turned a dark, furious face upon Tom Merry.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 174.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

A Splendid New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Are you satisfied, *senorito*?" he asked, in a choking voice.

"You will wade across the river," said Tom Merry. "I shall keep you under cover till you have reached the other side. They you can go."

"It is too deep, *senor*."

"Swim, then."

"I cannot swim."

"You must take your chance."

The Spaniard faced round at him, his features working convulsively.

"Ah, *senorito*, I can swim, but I will not," he said. "Shoot if you choose, then."

Tom Merry's eye glanced along the levelled rifle.

"I give you two seconds!" he said.

"Carambo!"

The Spaniard made a sudden spring forward.

Tom Merry kept his word.

Crack!

There was a fearful yell from Pablo Lopez.

He staggered back, with the blood streaming down his face. He yelled wildly again, and clapped both his hands to his head.

"Oh, I am killed!"

Tom Merry's face was white. But he had fired only in self-defence, and he did not regret it. The dwarf's blood was upon himself.

And it might be a trick! Pablo Lopez reeled and crashed heavily to the earth, falling in the thick grass.

Tom Merry watched him.

He had no cartridges to reload the rifle; and he dropped it in his left hand, and drew the knife from his belt. If Pablo Lopez was tricking him, it was necessary to be careful.

Lopez groaned heavily.

Tom Merry turned to go his way, and paused. Could he leave the man, brute as he was, so? Lopez was evidently wounded; there was blood upon his face, and blood upon the grass.

Tom Merry approached.

"Lopez!"

The man groaned.

The junior bent over him.

And as he did so, the strong arms of the dwarf flashed up, and the boy was caught in an iron grasp.

"Now, *nino*—oh, oh!"

Tom Merry, the instant the treacherous scoundrel's hands touched him, hacked out with the knife. It was a trick—Lopez was not seriously hurt! But the junior of St. Jim's was ready for his treachery.

He hacked fiercely with the long, keen knife, careless where his blows fell, for his life was in the balance.

Lopez shrieked with rage and pain, and released his hold, and sprang away. Blood was streaming from three or four wounds where the knife had gashed him.

Tom Merry faced him, panting.

"You scoundrel! You hound!"

The Spaniard, mad with rage, sprang at him again. Tom Merry slashed with the knife, and the ruffian leaped back. Then the junior followed up the attack, slashing savagely, and Lopez, with a howl of rage, turned and ran.

Tom Merry did not pursue him.

He was panting and giddy from the struggle—sick with the sight of blood, and with the knowledge that he had almost killed a man.

He picked up the rifle, and hurried away down the river, in the direction of the bay. Over the trees he could see a column of smoke from the camp-fire.

"Tom Merry!"

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

"Merry! Thank Heaven we have found you!"

A party of juniors and seamen from the Silver Scud, with Mr. Dodds at their head, burst from the trees and surrounded Tom Merry.

The hero of the Shell gasped with relief.

"Bai Jove! Are you hurt, *deah boy*?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy anxiously.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"But there is blood upon you—upon your hand—your coat!" exclaimed Mr. Dodds.

"It is not my blood!"

"Good heavens! Whose, then?"

"Lopez!"

Tom Merry dropped the knife, from which red drops spattered on the grass as it fell. And then Mr. Dodds caught him just in time as he fainted.

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CHAPTER 16.

The Last of the Spaniard.

TOM MERRY came to himself to find his head upon Mr. Dodds's knee, and the curate of Huckleberry Heath bathing his face with cool water from the river. The junior's eyes opened wildly.

"It's all wight, old chap," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You're all wight."

Tom Merry shivered.

"What an ass I am!" he muttered. "Did I—did I faint?"

"You need not be ashamed of fainting, Tom," said Mr. Dodds quietly. "You have been through a fearful experience. Are you better?"

"I'm all right now, sir."

Tom Merry rose with the curate's assistance.

"Tell us how it happened," said Lord Conway.

Tom Merry explained.

"All my fault," said Fatty Wynn remorsefully. "And I never got the coconuts after all; I went back instead."

"You ass," said Tom Merry. "That's how I couldn't find you, I suppose."

"You see—"

"I wegard Wynn as a feahful ass," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the fat Fourth-Former. "I wegard you as a feahfully dweadful ass, Wynn."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me—"

"Well, I do; and many of 'em."

"Then I shall have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'. I—"

"Order!" said Figgins. "You can look for Lopez, and give him a fearful thrashing, Gussy. Peace in the family."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Yes, order," said Wally. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy."

"Weally, Wally—"

"It seems that the Spaniard knows where to look for the treasure, then," said Lord Conway anxiously.

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Tom Merry. "I hope you don't blame me for guiding him. He was going to set fire to the wood round me—he really meant it."

"Bai Jove! What a feahful beast!"

"I don't blame you, Tom," said the viscount. "You could hardly do anything else. But the Spaniard knows as much now as he could learn from the chart."

"Yes, sir—I suppose so."

"Then we have no time to lose."

"Bai Jove, wathah not!" said D'Arcy. "But didn't you say the boundah was hurt, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes; I don't know how severely, though."

"If he is in a condition to look for the treasure, he will certainly do so," said Lord Conway. "Fortunately, he is unarmed. Of course, he would have no chance against us, but it would be terrible to have lives lost in dealing with such a scoundrel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let us keep on," said Lord Conway. "I have the chart here; but it appears to me that we shall not need it now."

"Lead the way, Tom Mewwy, *deah boy*."

"Right-ho!"

"By gum, sir!" said Peter Raff, in great admiration, as he tramped beside Tom Merry through the underwoods.

"By gum, sir, you're the only one I've ever heard of who came off best in a tussle with Pablo Lopez. But I wish you had put the bullet through his head, sir."

"I'm glad I didn't," said Tom Merry.

The sailorman shook his head.

"It would have been safer, sir; nothing's safe except that, with Pablo Lopez."

They tramped on over the rocky slopes. There was a general exclamation as they reached the spot where the skeleton lay.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy exclaimed, with a shudder. "Let's get on!"

And Fatty Wynn, who had been nibbling at a sandwich, put it away unfinished. The sight had taken even his appetite away.

As they drew near the clump of thick trees, Lord Conway held up his hand.

"Hark!"

There was a sound of scuffling and scratching, from the thick cover of the trees. There was no doubt what it meant. The Spaniard was there. He had had no time to obtain digging implements from the felucca, and he was making a desperate attempt to get at the buried treasure before the English party could arrive.

They broke into a run.

"Don't shoot unless he attacks," said Lord Conway.

"Make him a prisoner if you can."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

They burst through the trees.

Pablo Lopez was there. He was on his knees under the tree marked with the blazed cross, tearing feverishly at the soil with a wooden stake.

The soil was soft, and it turned up rapidly under the primitive implement. The Spaniard had already excavated a foot deep, and he had dragged away the earth with his hands.

In the excavation a corner of an iron-bound chest showed through the earth.

"Seize him!" shouted Lord Conway.

The Spaniard sprang to his feet as the Britishers burst upon the scene.

He presented a terrible sight.

Tom Merry's bullet had gashed along his cheek and ear, and the scar was still raw and red, and his clothing was torn and stained with blood where the knife had struck him in the hand-to-hand struggle.

"Carambo!"

"Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! Go for the cad, deah boys!"

They rushed at the Spaniard in a body.

The ruffian whirled the stake aloft, but as he did so Mr. Dodds dodged under his arm, and closed with him.

The stake went flying from the Spaniard's hand, and he whirled back in the grasp of the athletic curate; but he returned grasp for grasp, and the two struggled fiercely.

"Look out, sir!" yelled Peter Raff. "He'll strangle you, sir!"

"Stand back!" said Mr. Dodds. The curate's voice was cool and steady. "I can handle him!"

They gathered round the combatants.

Strong as the Spaniard was, he had met his match in the Britisher.

To and fro they reeled, struggling fiercely, tearing up the soil with their feet in the desperate wrestle, till the Spaniard was forced backward and backward, and fell to the earth, gasping and overcome.

The curate stood over him.

He was panting, too, now with the terrible exertion, and his face and clothes were stained with the blood of Pablo Lopez.

"Now, take him!" he said.

The Spaniard scrambled up. With a spring like a tiger, he escaped the outstretched hands, and plunged into the wood.

"After him!" shouted Lord Conway. "He must not escape!"

"Wathah not!"

"After him!"

They rushed in fierce pursuit. Through the crackling underwoods they swept, the Spaniard leaping desperately on, the pursuers shouting and whooping close behind.

"Wun like anythin'!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, chase me!" gasped Blake.

Round the base of the mount they ran, through the jungle paths, up slopes, and over arid ridges, the wounded Spaniard still keeping ahead.

"My hat!" Figgins gasped. "The beggar can run!"

"We'll have him now!" said Kangaroo, as the gleam of water showed ahead. "There's the sea!"

Tom Merry panted.

"And there's the felucca!"

"My hat!"

The Spaniard had reached the shore of Shark Bay. Out in the bay the felucca lay at anchor, with four negroes on deck. They stared stupidly at the sight of the Spaniard and his pursuers bursting from the woods.

Lopez did not halt.

The crisp sands rang under his hurrying feet, and he dashed straight into the water and swam.

With desperate strokes he swam for the felucca.

"After him!" yelled Kerr.

But Lord Conway's voice rang out:

"Stop!"

Unwillingly the juniors halted, their boots crunching up the sand on the water's edge.

"We could overtake him before he reaches the felucca, sir!" Figgins exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You remember what this bay is called?" said Lord Conway. "Probably it was not given a name without a reason."

"My hat!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" exclaimed Peter Raff. "There are sharks here—I've seen them—dozens of them! Great Davy Jones! Look there!"

A fin showed above the blue waters, close by the swimming Spaniard. The trail of blood in the water had drawn a shark to the spot.

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

He grasped a rifle in his hands. The Spaniard was a deadly foe—a murderous ruffian. But such a death as this!

Lopez had seen his danger. He redoubled his efforts to reach the felucca. A negro stood ready with a rope to throw to him.

But the shark was quicker. There was a gleam of white as the horrible monster of the sea turned over to seize his prey.

Crack!

It was the report of Tom Merry's rifle.

Unerringly the bullet sped to its mark. It struck the white belly of the shark as a hailstone strikes glass.

There was a wild flounder in the water, and the shark sank under. The Spaniard reached the dangling rope, and the negro hauled him aboard. The next minute the shark was swimming close by the felucca. The bullet had not been fatal. But it had saved the Spaniard's life.

Dripping, exhausted, the Spaniard stood upon the deck.

He turned and shook a furious fist at the party on the shore. But the felucca was within easy rifle range. Lopez grasped a firearm for a moment, but a shot would have brought a volley upon him in return, and he knew it. He screamed to the negroes in Spanish, and the sails were shaken out, and the felucca glided out of the bay.

The glancing white sails flashed out to sea. Pablo Lopez was gone, leaving behind the treasure island and the treasure.

CHAPTER 17.

The Treasure.

"WELL done, Tom!" said Mr. Dodds, clapping the hero of the Shell upon the shoulder. "Well done, my lad! A splendid shot!"

"I couldn't let him be killed like that, sir," said Tom Merry. "I'm glad I hit the shark! It was lucky!"

"Quite wight, Tom Mewwy! The man's an awful wascal, but that would have been too howwid!" said Arthur Augustus. "Aftah all, he won't trouble us any more!"

"And now for the treasure," said Lord Conway.

"Hurray!"

The explorers turned back towards the mount.

It did not take them long to reach the spot where they had discovered Pablo Lopez.

They had come provided with digging implements, and the Spaniard had already exposed the buried chest.

The seamen were soon hard at work digging.

Round them the juniors gathered with keen and eager faces. There was no doubt that they had discovered the exact spot where the treasure was hidden. As the chest was exposed more and more to view, they could see that it was a strong, old-fashioned sea-chest of oak, clamped with iron, and evidently very heavy.

One man could never have carried it to that place and buried it there.

Was the skeleton whose grisly hand pointed to the spot one of the men who had carried it? Had he fallen, to keep more surely the secret of the pirate—the pirate who had amassed the treasure, and had hidden it there, and was himself dust long since?

What tale of tragedy could those shadowy old trees have told?

Deeper and deeper grew the excavation.

"I think we can lift the chest out now," said Lord Conway.

Four strong seamen stood in the excavation, and with their united efforts the chest was lifted from the depths, and dragged out.

It was locked, and there was no sign of a key, and the oak and the iron clamps were still stout and strong, in spite of the time they had been in the earth.

"We will open it on the yacht!" said Lord Conway.

Keen as the juniors were to see the contents of the treasure-chest, they raised no objection.

The chest was not easy to carry. Four of the party shouldered it, and then the pace was slow, and the bearers were changed several times before they reached the beach by Safe Anchorage.

The chest was deposited in the boat at last, and the explorers rowed off to the yacht. The treasure had been discovered, and there was nothing to delay them at Skeleton Island.

On the deck of the Silver Scud the chest lay amid the eager crowd, while the steam was got up, and the yacht moved out to sea.

"Bring an axe here!" said Lord Conway.

Crash!

Crash!

The axe, wielded by Peter Raff, crashed upon the old chest. Crash, crash! The lock flew in pieces, and the lid was loose.

Tom Merry raised it.

There was a buzz of deep-drawn breath as the lid of the chest was thrown back and the interior exposed to view.

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The juniors had expected to see masses of gold, piles of old coins, bags perhaps of diamonds and pearls. But nothing of the sort met their view. In the tray in the top of the chest was nothing but old moth-eaten sailor clothes, folded up.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Blessed if we haven't raided a giddy rag-and-bone merchant, instead of a pirate!" murmured Jack Blake.

Mr. Dodds quietly lifted out the tray. Then a shout burst from the juniors:

"Gold!"

"Gweat Scott! Gold!"

"Hurray!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Gold at last!

Gold it was, undoubtedly—dulled and dim, but gold, real gold!

Gold in bars, and gold in ingots—gold in old coins crammed carelessly together, gold in every shape and form.

The gatherings of many a wild cruise, the plunder of many a hapless ship in the wild old days—the price of many a life!

Gold!

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "My only hat! It's real!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gold, and no mistake!" said Kerr. "And I wonder what that little lot is worth in cash?"

Lord Conway smiled.

"It's impossible to tell now," he said. "But certainly thousands of pounds—many thousands of pounds."

"Bai Jove!"

"And it's yours, sir," said Peter Raff, with a peculiar effort. "It's yours, Master Merry!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Nonsense!" he said. "It's not mine!"

"Ay, ay, sir! I gave you the chart!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"And I should have been murdered by Pablo Lopez, gentlemen, if you hadn't come 'ere to find the treasure!" said Peter Raff. "You've saved my life; and I gave you the chart, Master Merry, and a sailorman's gift is a gift!"

"You will take your share, at all events," said Tom Merry. "We've already settled that, my son! You will take a third of the treasure, and a third goes to myself because you gave me the chart, and a third to the others here. That was what Lord Conway considered a fair arrangement."

"I think so," said Lord Conway. "Peter Raff cannot be left out, certainly, and Tom Merry, as owner of the chart and originator of the enterprise, is bound to take a third, at least. The remaining third goes to the rest of the party; but my share I shall divide among the crew of the yacht as prize-money!"

And there was a cheer from the seamen of the Silver Scud.

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Peter Raff. "But I gave Master Merry the chart!"

"We'll leave it to the church to decide," said Lord Conway, with a smile, turning to Mr. Dodds. "What do you say, Mr. Dodds?"

Peter Raff touched his forelock. He had all an old sailor-man's respect for a parson.

"Ay, ay, sir; I'm willing to leave it to the gentleman!" he said.

"Then I endorse Lord Conway's decision," said Mr. Dodds. "I think it is the fairest arrangement possible. And there is certainly sufficient gold here to make everyone concerned quite rich."

"Bai Jove! It's wippin'!"

"Hurray!"

Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed. He grasped Figgins by the arm.

"Figgy, old man! I say, Figgy!"

"Hallo?"

"What a feed we'll stand when we get back to St. Jim's!"

Figgins roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Trust you to think of that, Fatty!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I suppose we ought to celebrate finding a treasure of this sort," said Fatty Wynn warmly. "It will be Coronation time when we get back to St. Jim's, and we'll stand a regular glorious Coronation feed to all the fellows. That's what I think."

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Fatty Wynn's ideah as weally wippin', undah the circs."

"Only we haven't got the treasure to England yet, gentlemen," said Peter Raff.

"Nothing but foul weather can stop us now," said Lord Conway. "It's a straight run home, my man!"

"I was thinking of Pablo Lopez, sir."

"He cannot harm us now."

But a shadow of doubt remained upon the sailorman's sunburnt face. Wounded, defeated, put to flight, the Spaniard still filled him with dread and uneasiness.

"There goes the Treasure Island!" Kangaroo exclaimed.

The juniors turned to take their last look at the Treasure Island.

The lonely isle was sinking into the blue Pacific behind them. The shelving sands, the dark belt of trees, the curling waters on the barrier reefs sank from sight, and the wooded hill sank last into the shining waters.

Against the dark hill, ere it vanished, Tom Merry caught for a moment a glimpse of the white sail of a felucca. Felucca and island vanished astern, and the Silver Scud throbbed on over the vast Pacific, homeward bound!

THE END.

Next Thursday.

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A Thrilling Tale of Modern Adventure on Land and Sea.



By **ROBERT W. COMRADE.**

INTRODUCTION.

Frank Kingston, a young Englishman, is engaged on a secret campaign against a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, his aim being to break up the society by ruining the members of the Inner Council. He has the assistance of Miss O'Brien, an accomplished young lady, Professor Graham Polgrave, a clever scientist and inventor, Carson Gray, a detective, Fraser, a manservant, and a lad named Tim.

Kingston has brought nine Inner Councillors to book, one by one, when he hears of a plot to kidnap the Crown Prince of Balataria. Kingston learns that the prince is to be taken to the Iron Island, where he himself was once confined.

He therefore works out an ingenious scheme to checkmate the Brotherhood, and proceeds to put it into practice. He disguises himself as the prince, and allows himself to be kidnapped and taken aboard the Unicorn, the Brotherhood's yacht. On arrival within ten miles of the Iron Island, however, the sham prince turns the tables, and is shortly joined by his own yacht, the Coronet, and his submarine, the Dart.

He takes the three Inner Councillors to the Iron Island in the Dart, but is himself captured by the two men he had left there years previously. He manages, however, to escape, and, after taking the prince and the professor to see the island, leaves for Europe, and Balataria. On arrival there he hears that the old king is dead. Prince Zavier has just been proclaimed king when Kingston receives an urgent message from Carson Gray, Detective, asking him to return at once to London.

(Now go on with the story).

A Gigantic Undertaking.

"I am afraid you will have to return alone," replied Kingston. "Personally, I should advise you, professor, to take Dolores to your scientific institutes, and then come on to London by the Coronet. By that time, in all probability, I shall have learnt exactly what is in the wind."

So it was arranged. That night, with no apparent flurry Kingston boarded the overland express, and commenced the long journey to England. As to what he would learn on his arrival he did not worry himself in the slightest. It was his policy to take things exactly as they came, and deal with them at the right moment.

Frank Kingston had been away from London for several weeks, and during that time much had happened. The

Brotherhood of Iron, despite the loss of nearly half its Inner Councillors, was conducting its work of robbery and fraud as busily as ever.

True, when the Unicorn returned and reported the deaths of Formby, Brecken, and Lyle, the Chief had been thrown into a state of considerable agitation and excitement. He had a long talk with Browne, the chief officer of the Unicorn, and, although the sudden deaths of his three councillors was a shock, the news that the deadly secret enemy had himself committed suicide was ample compensation.

"There is no doubt that this man who impersonated the Crown Prince did meet his end by drowning!" Lord Mount-Fannell had asked.

"Not the slightest, sir," replied the first officer. "We found the boat overturned, and plenty of signs around it to show that the whole four of them had gone to the bottom. It's a pity we should lose three—"

"Of course," the Chief had interrupted; "but that cannot be altered now. It is a very great relief to know that this secret enemy who has been doing so much against the Brotherhood has at last owned himself beaten. He knew that if he stepped aboard the Unicorn he would be exiled for life, so he chose to commit suicide after settling with as many of his enemies as he could lay hands on."

A short time after this conversation, a general meeting had been held, and although the deaths of Brecken, Lyle, and Formby were generally bemoaned, they all agreed that it was worth the price to have their all-powerful enemy safely out of the way.

The fact remained, however, that the Crown Prince of Balataria had escaped their clutches, and after due consideration, the Chief decided to let the whole matter drop. Von Brecken was dead, and as General Stolzenburg did not know of his connection with the Brotherhood, it would be impossible for the latter to take a hand.

So, during the following few weeks, matters began to right themselves a little. The Brotherhood's work proceeded as before, and Lord Mount-Fannell decided to make no further additions to the Council to make up for those who had dropped out. At one time the number of Inner Councillors had been twenty-five, but now there were only thirteen all told, and although one or two members objected to this number, saying that it was unlucky, the Chief was adamant.

And now, while Kingston was hastening to England in response to Carson Gray's wire, one of the most gigantic enterprises the Brotherhood had ever undertaken was being enacted.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

A Splendid New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

As a matter of fact, it had been in the Chief's mind for months—he had been planning it for months, and now the time had come when the plan was to be put into execution. For this reason a general meeting was called—a general meeting in every sense of the word. Every Councillor had to be present, no matter how far distant he might be. This meeting took place on the very same night as the Coronet steamed into the Balatariar port.

At six o'clock precisely the whole thirteen members were seated in the Council chamber beneath the foundations of Lord Mount-Fannell's mansion in Grosvenor Square. The Chief himself was looking particularly serious, although most of the councillors wore very eager and expectant expressions.

"Gentlemen," commenced his lordship, "you all know the reason for this meeting. The subject under discussion to-night is one of very great importance, and I hope you are all prepared to pay great attention to what I am about to say. Some of you are unaware as to the exact plans, and it is now my intention to relate them in detail."

"You refer, of course," put in one of the councillors, "to what we have called the Coronation case?"

"Precisely. As you know, I have had the germ of this idea in my head since January last, and certain steps have already been taken by the common-members. The robbery—for it is a robbery, and one of a most exceptional kind—should prove the biggest and greatest coup the Brotherhood has attempted for years."

"What is the precise nature of it?" asked one councillor, who had been abroad for the past few months, and therefore knew nothing of this scheme. "You call it the Coronation case. Why?"

"For the simple reason," replied No. 1, "that it deals intimately with the Crown Jewels. In other words, we are simply going to organise a scientific raid on the Tower of London, and possess ourselves of the Royal Regalia!"

The members of the council to whom this came as news expressed their astonishment very loudly. Then one of them laughed.

"You are joking, of course?" he exclaimed.

"On the contrary, Mr. Chambers, I am deadly serious," replied the Chief. "It is the Brotherhood's intention to rob the Tower of the Crown Jewels, and then, in a manner which will absolutely preclude discovery, demand the sum of one million pounds for their return!"

A murmur passed round the large room—a murmur of amazement.

"A million pounds!" echoed the man addressed as Chambers. "Why, if it comes off, it will be the most stupendous thing that ever happened! But it can't succeed—it simply can't!"

Lord Mount-Fannell smiled in the manner of a man who knows what he is saying.

"And why?" he asked. "I know there are many difficulties, but they are not insuperable by any means. All it wants is organisation."

"But think how the Regalia is guarded," protested Chambers. "I have been in the Wakefield Tower myself only recently, and I realised then more than ever how perfectly they are safeguarded. In addition to being watched day and night, a burglar would have no chance whatever."

"I quite agree with you," smiled the Chief. "An ordinary burglar would very soon find himself in custody. Even if he succeeded in getting past the iron bars and the glass cases, he would set bells ringing all over the Tower as soon as he touched the first article. But if you will listen, I will tell you exactly how we mean to set to work."

The Inner Councillors were intensely eager now. They waited anxiously for the Chief to unfold his plan. Only one or two of them were in his confidence; the others had merely heard rumours concerning the great coup.

"To begin with," said Mount-Fannell, "the matter is in the capable hands of No. 7—the Hon. Percy Claydon. As you all know, he has rendered extremely good service to the Brotherhood, and is quite confident that he can bring the thing off triumphantly."

His lordship indicated a tall, lean individual on his right-hand side. The Hon. Percy Claydon was attired in the latest of fashion, and hardly looked the sort of man to occupy the position he was now in. To the outer world, he was a man of considerable means, and knew all the best society. In fact, he was extremely popular, and invitations to house-parties and dances were literally showered upon him.

But, although he appeared such an innocent, aristocratic "Johnnie," he was, in reality, nothing more nor less than the Brotherhood's secret spy. It was his duty to find out the lie of the land, as it were, and as he was constantly moving in the best society, it was quite a simple matter for him to gain admission to the best houses. Once there, he learnt all he could, saw all he could, and then reported to the Chief.

"But," went on Lord Mount-Fannell, "although the case will be nominally in Claydon's hands, there will be several

other men—common-members—who will have a great deal to do. In a matter such as this, everything depends on organisation."

"Quite so," put in the Army officer; "but I fail to see how all the organisation in the world is to overcome the steel and electricity which guards the Crown Jewels. Would the theft be committed at night?"

"No; in broad daylight."

"In broad daylight! But there will be hundreds of visitors about," protested Chambers, who was completely puzzled. "At this time of year, when the summer is nearly upon us, the Tower of London will be crowded."

"That makes no difference whatever. The Regalia will be in our possession by to-morrow evening."

"Good gracious! So soon as that?"

"Yes. You seem to overlook the fact that Claydon and myself have talked over the matter, not once, but a hundred times. Everything is prepared, even to the minutest detail. And to-morrow, without fail, the attempt will be made."

"How do you intend to set to work?" inquired Milverton, the barrister. Lately he had been very much engaged with a murder trial, and knew practically nothing about the Chief's latest scheme.

"Well, the first thing will be to kidnap the Lieutenant of the Tower," replied the Chief calmly. "That will take place to-night. Sir Henry Kenning is a retired Army officer, and has not long been appointed to his present post. When you hear all you will realise how extremely simple the task really is."

"How can you kidnap Sir Henry?" asked Chambers. "You do not even know his habits—when he is in, or when—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Mount-Fannell, "but you are going a little beyond the mark there. It may interest you to know that the lieutenant's butler, who has occupied his present post for two months, is a common-member of the Brotherhood. By this time he has grown very familiar with his master's movements. In addition, no less than six of our men hold various posts within the walls of the Tower. They are spies, and their information has been of the utmost value to me."

"But how will you kidnap the lieutenant?" repeated the Inner Councillor. "And for what reason are you going to do it?"

Lord Mount-Fannell lit a cigar.

"That point," he exclaimed calmly, "I am now about to make quite clear. And if you will listen, and make no interruptions, I will set forth the whole outline of my scheme. I think you will admit that it is one that can hardly fail."

The Lieutenant of the Tower Receives a Mysterious Communication.

Sir Henry Kenning, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, stood for a moment in the centre of the Tower Green gazing at the western sky. The sunset was, indeed, a glorious one, and the birds in the trees around about were singing merrily.

"Another fine day to-morrow, by the look of it," Sir Henry told himself, as he continued his walk to the King's House. At that time of the evening the greater bulk of the visitors had departed. Here and there could be seen a Beefeater in his picturesque costume, and now and again the familiar form of a policeman.

The lieutenant entered the hall-door, where a sentry stood on guard—the same door through which Lord Nithsdale escaped in female attire the night before he was to have been beheaded in 1716—and passed through to his library. He had scarcely been there five minutes when a tap sounded on the door.

"Ah, Baldwin, what is it?" he inquired, looking up, and addressing the staid-looking individual in evening-dress who stood just outside the door. It was the butler, the man Lord Mount-Fannell had referred to.

"A letter for you, sir," replied Baldwin, stepping forward with the tray he held. "It just came, sir, by District Messenger."

"Very well; lay it down on the table."

Sir Henry did not look up. Had he done so he would have seen a momentary flash of amusement appear in the stolid-looking butler's eyes. A moment later he was alone, but seemed in no hurry to read the letter which had just been delivered.

The lieutenant was a tall, thin man, with a perfectly straight back, grizzled hair and moustache, and a soft, smooth manner of speaking. He had only lately retired from the Army, where he had occupied the position of major-general. He had served in the Crimea, and had greatly distinguished himself at Inkerman. He was just the man to fill the responsible post of Lieutenant of the Tower.

He finished the work he was at, and was on the point of

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opening the door, when he caught sight of the envelope which the butler had lately brought in.

"I had nearly forgotten it," he murmured.

The flap was ripped open, and Sir Henry drew a small sheet of notepaper from the envelope. There were not many words on it, and a puzzled expression entered his eyes as he read them.

"Dear Dad,—Can you meet me, by hook or by crook, at the Underground station at Mansion House at nine o'clock exactly? Please come alone, as I want to speak to you privately. Impossible for me to tell you here what's up, but it's really urgent. I know you won't disappoint me.

"HARRY."

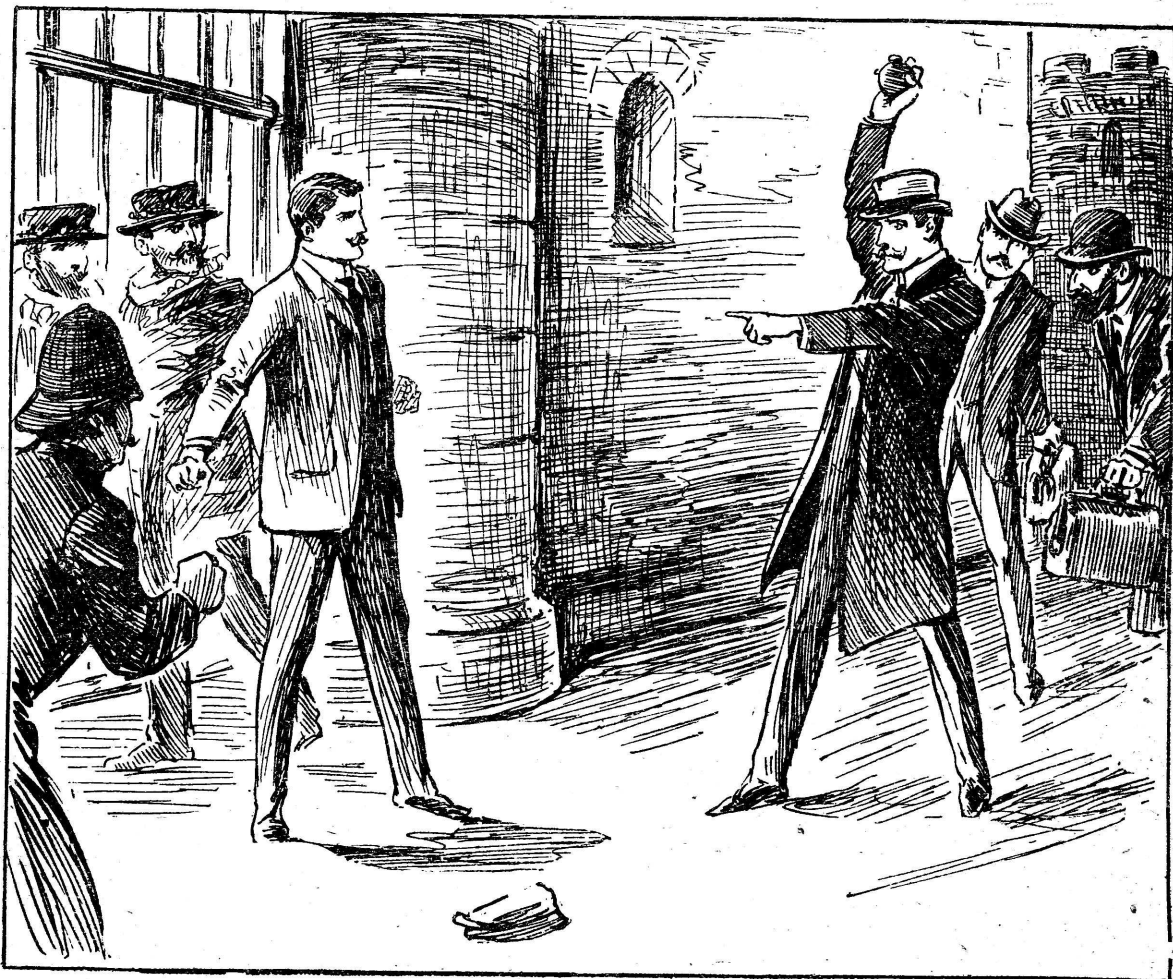
Never for an instant did the thought cross his mind that the letter was not from his son. Yet, in reality, Harry Kenning was at that moment in his study at Oxford busy at work. The Brotherhood had found little difficulty in getting hold of some of his correspondence in order to forge the handwriting.

The Lieutenant of the Tower glanced at the marble clock on the mantelpiece.

"Dear me, it is a quarter to nine! I must go immediately. This business is worrying me, for it seems somehow as though Harry has got into a scrape. Well, my anxiety will soon be satisfied."

He hastened out of the room, his thoughts full of this strange communication. Outside he met the butler again.

"Baldwin," he said, "please fetch my hat and stick. I



"If any man moves, he dies!" cried the bogus Lieutenant of the Tower; and those at the gates could see that he held a bomb in his hand. "Stand clear while I and my companions pass out!" (See page 23.)

Sir Henry stood for a moment looking at the note. Frankly, he could not understand it. It was written by his son—who was an undergraduate at Oxford. A suspicion of deception never entered the baronet's head, but, needless to say, the note was nothing but a mere forgery.

"This is very strange," murmured the lieutenant, stroking his moustache. "What ever can Harry be doing in London? It looks very much as though something is wrong, and he is afraid to come here to tell me. Good gracious, I hope it is nothing serious! From the tone of his note one might think he were in danger of some sort. I must go—certainly I must go and see what he wants!"

He picked up the envelope and examined it. It was merely an ordinary white linen-faced one, and bore his name and address on it in his son's bold handwriting. Sir Henry was one of those men who are totally unsuspecting—the kind of man who can be imposed upon left and right through sheer kind-heartedness and faith in his fellow-creatures.

have had an unexpected summons, and shall probably not be home until late. If I am not in by half-past ten you may go to bed."

"Thank you, sir!"

Sir Henry passed out on to the Tower Green, and walked across it with his usual rapid and brisk step. That night he had made arrangements to go into certain matters connected with the Coronation, but these thoughts were now banished from his mind. He loved his son very dearly, for he was the only child, and his mother had been dead several years. Therefore, Sir Henry was rather anxious.

Once outside the precincts of the Tower, he entered Mark Lane Station, and took a ticket for Mansion House. When he stepped out of the train at the latter station the time was exactly two minutes to nine.

"Good!" he murmured. "I hate keeping people waiting."

He passed up the steps, and emerged into the street. For

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS."

a moment he stood looking round him in the bright light of the street, scanning the faces of the people round him. The noise of the motor buses and taxis was considerable, but he distinctly heard a voice behind him say:

"Pardon me, sir, but are you not Sir Henry Kenning?"

The lieutenant swung round, and looked at the man who had addressed him. It was a small man, dressed in the garb of a chauffeur, and he touched his cap respectfully. Sir Henry nodded.

"Yes," he said, "I am the person you mentioned. Might I ask—"

"Did you get a letter from your son, sir, Mr. Harry?"

"It was delivered less than half an hour ago."

"He told me as you'd be here, sir. I'm his new man, and if you'll step in this car, sir, I'll drive you to the hotel where Mr. Harry's stayin'. He said he was goin' to meet you himself, didn't he, sir?"

"Yes," replied Sir Henry anxiously. "Why has he not come?"

"He couldn't, sir—he daren't! Oh, I hardly know how to tell you! It won't take us twenty minutes in the car, sir, if you'll get in. It's very urgent."

All manner of thoughts passed through the old baronet's head. The chauffeur before him spoke very respectfully, and in a tone of genuine anxiety. The words he said were enough to cause the other to instantly comply with his request. Sir Henry was too stirred and too trusting to suspect foul play.

"The man speaks as though Harry were afraid to come out himself," he murmured, as he stepped across the pavement. "This is beginning to look serious."

He entered the automobile, and the chauffeur shut the door after him with a bang. A moment later the car was speeding along the smooth road, and Sir Henry had walked into one of the simplest traps that could possibly be imagined. Yet he was not to be blamed. In the whole course of his life he had never had such a thing occur to him, and it was unlikely in the extreme that he should be suspicious now.

The motor-car sped on, and presently came to more open roads. Sir Henry's thoughts were busy, but he could not help realising that he was being driven rather a long way. He looked out of one of the side-windows, and recognised his whereabouts.

"Fulham Road!" he muttered. "Where on earth is this car taking me? This business grows more mysterious than ever. I am absolutely bewildered, for Harry's never done such a thing as this before. I can only think he has landed himself in some very serious scrape—"

The motor suddenly slowed up, and came to a standstill against the kerb. Before Sir Henry could open the door, however, the handle was turned from the other side, and the dark figure of a man could be seen.

"Is that you, Harry?" asked the baronet quickly. "Are you—"

"Right away!" said the new-comer in a sharp tone, taking no notice of what the Lieutenant of the Tower said. And as the automobile once again started, he swung himself aboard and closed the door after him.

"Pardon my intruding, Sir Henry," he exclaimed in a suave voice, "but it was absolutely essential. Your troubles will be ended in a very few moments."

"What do you mean?" cried the other. "Who are you, and why do you come in here? Ah, what is this smell? What—"

The rest of his sentence ended in a muffled cry, as the stranger clapped a large pad over his mouth and nostrils. Before Sir Henry could offer any resistance the chloroform had done its work, and he lay back on the cushions limp and silent. His companion chuckled.

"Well, upon my word," he said under his breath, "could anything be more simple? The old fellow has been taken in all the way round. The rest will be as easy as a Chesterfield couch."

The Hon. Percy Claydon laughed silently, and lit a cigarette. This kind of business was entirely new to him, but he seemed as comfortable as possible. He was, as a matter of fact, an extremely cool customer, and would have made, had he chosen the straight path, a first-rate detective. He was dark, clean-shaven, and about forty years of age. In build he resembled Sir Henry Kenning very closely. It was for this reason as much as any that he had been chosen by the Chief for this task.

The motor-car continued its journey over Putney Bridge, up the High Street, and so on up Putney Hill to the Heath. The journey was very nearly at an end now, for presently the car came to a standstill outside a dark, gloomy-looking house. It stood quite alone, no other houses being within five hundred yards. The front garden was shaded by many large trees, and the road thereabouts was quite deserted.

"Good!" exclaimed the Hon. Percy, as he stepped to the ground. "Now, then, Jacobs, lend me a hand with this unconscious man. There's not a soul in sight, and we can have him indoors in a couple of seconds, more or less."

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Jacobs, the chauffeur, a common-member of the Brotherhood, stopped the engine, and stepped to the ground. It was very short work to grasp the inert form of Sir Henry Kenning and rapidly carry him up the pathway to the front door. The latter opened as though by magic the instant they arrived, and closed tightly again as soon as they had carried their burden into the hall.

"Did everything pass off satisfactorily?"

"Rippingly!" replied Claydon. "By Jove, Milverton, the old chap is about as credulous as they make 'em, and walked into the trap with his eyes wide open."

Mr. James Milverton laughed silently.

"I don't think we could have thought of a better scheme," he exclaimed. "Sir Henry is extremely fond of his son, and would naturally do as the letter asked without question. Never having been mixed up in an affair of this sort before, he, of course, would be utterly unsuspecting."

The two Inner Councillors looked at the baronet's form as he lay on the floor. They were in the hall, and the dim light from a half-turned-up gas-jet showed them that there was no sign of returning consciousness. There were two other men present, but these were only common-members.

"Grab hold of him," directed Claydon, turning to his subordinates. "You know where to go."

Without a word the men grasped hold of Sir Henry and carried him into one of the back rooms. This was brilliantly illuminated, and the Lieutenant of the Tower was propped up in an easy-chair against the centre table.

"You can go now," said Milverton briskly. "When we have done we will give you a call. Don't forget to keep a sharp eye open, and you, Jacobs, take the car away and go for an hour's spin. By the end of that time we shall be ready for you again."

"Very good, sir!"

The common-members left the room, and the Hon. Percy glanced at his watch.

"Half-past nine!" he exclaimed. "We've got tons of time at our disposal, Jimmy. I can be back at the Tower by eleven as easy as winking. This show is getting rather interesting."

"You seem to take it very lightly," remarked the barrister, opening a travelling-case which lay on the table. "You mustn't forget you'll have to be extremely careful if you're to pull it through all right."

"Don't you worry about me," laughed the other. "When I am myself I like to be myself, if you can understand that. You will see a great difference directly when I have become the Lieutenant of the Tower."

The two of them continued to talk in the same easy fashion, and although Claydon had before him an extremely difficult task, he did not worry about it in the least. He had plenty of confidence in his own ability, and was certain of success.

Gradually, with the aid of Milverton, the Hon. Percy's face was transformed into an exact counterpart of Sir Henry's. At last the barrister laid his implements down, and, stepping back, looked keenly from the original to the counterfeit.

"You'll do!" he declared finally. "I'll warrant no one could detect the difference. The only thing which might betray you will be your manner or the tone of your voice."

"Don't you worry about that, Jimmy," returned the other coolly. "I've got Sir Henry's voice off perfectly, and as I shall only occupy his post for a few hours there will be nothing to do which could betray me. All the same, there's Baldwin, the lieutenant's butler, to give me the tip. He knows the old chap's habits perfectly, and I can rely on him to tell me what to do."

Nearly the whole of this speech had been said in Sir Henry Kenning's own tones, and Mr. Milverton, who had spoken on several occasions to the baronet, could not help admitting that the Hon. Percy simulated his voice very well indeed.

"A trifle husky, perhaps," he said critically; "but that doesn't matter in the least. They'll merely think you've caught a slight cold. Well, it's nearly time the car was back, so I should advise you to make the final preparations."

Together they stripped Sir Henry of his outer clothing. This done, his double lost no time in donning them. Now, more than ever, the resemblance was startling.

"Do you think the old chap will be all right here?"

"Perfectly safe," replied Milverton. "There are a couple of men in the house all the time, and one of the collars below has been made fairly comfortable. As soon as you have gone he will be taken down and laid upon the bed. There's not the slightest need to worry, for it will be absolutely impossible for him to escape or communicate with the outside world. But if I'm not mistaken, I can hear somebody in the hall."

He crossed the room and opened the door.

"The car's back, sir," said one of the men in a whisper.

"Good! Mr. Claydon will be out in a moment."

The barrister went back into the well-lighted room, and

once more took a critical look at the new Lieutenant of the Tower.

"I can't see anything wrong," he said, "so you'd better be off as quickly as possible. The car's outside, waiting."

"Right. Now, let me see, I know exactly what to do. The Chief has arranged that everything is to happen at mid-day?"

"Exactly," replied Milverton. "Twelve o'clock to the minute. The whole thing relies upon organisation, and if you do your part properly, failure is simply impossible."

The Hon. Percy shook hands.

"You can trust me," he said lightly.

The next moment he had left the house, and was striding with erect carriage to the waiting automobile.

Preliminary Preparations.

"Now, Jacobs, you can get home as quickly as you like!"

Sir Henry Kenning, or, rather, his double, handed the common-member a liberal tip, and then strode away down the street. Five minutes later he was in sight of the Tower of London, and he smiled as he glanced at his watch.

"Ten minutes to eleven," he muttered. "Everything considered, I have done jolly well. There's nothing now but to have a talk with Baldwin and then get off to bed. I sha'n't worry about to-morrow till it comes."

He met one or two of the sentries as he passed through the grounds, and they saluted respectfully. He did not stop and talk to anyone, for that would have been taking unnecessary risks. Despite the Hon. Percy's careless mannerisms, he was in reality an extremely cautious individual. He knew what had to be done to the minutest detail, and had no intention of going a fraction of an inch beyond that which was necessary.

Being attired in the baronet's own clothing, he, of course, found the latchkey in his pocket, and let himself into the "King's House" without the slightest trouble. He knew exactly where to turn, and what to do.

"Now, I wonder where Baldwin is?" he thought, as he hung his hat up in the hall. "He will probably appear before long. Let me see, the only other persons in the house are Mrs. Thomas, the housekeeper, a parlourmaid, and a kitchenmaid. They, of course, are in their own quarters, and are by this time in bed and asleep. What they do is none of my business, so I shall have to confine myself to Baldwin. By Jove, what a smart move of the Chief's to place the fellow in here as butler a month or two ago! But, of course, a thing like this couldn't be planned and executed in half an hour."

He proceeded to Sir Henry's library without the slightest difficulty, for he had thoroughly studied a plan of the house on many occasions. He could not help realising how fortunate it was that the Lieutenant of the Tower was a widower, and lived, practically speaking, a lonely life.

He had hardly been seated at his desk in the library above a minute, when the door softly opened, and the obsequious figure of the butler appeared. Without hesitation the Hon. Percy lifted his right hand and stroked his hair. This was merely a signal to tell Baldwin that everything had passed off smoothly, and that the man before him was now a counter-terfite, and not the original.

"It's all right, Baldwin!" exclaimed Claydon easily. "There's no necessity to look startled. The old fellow was duped beautifully, and is now imprisoned in the house on Putney Heath."

"Lord, sir, it's marvellous!" said the butler hoarsely. "You look like Sir Henry from top to toe! If you hadn't given me the signal I should never 'ave known as it was't in 'imself!"

Claydon picked a cigar from a box that lay on the desk and snipped the end off.

"I think Milverton has made a decent job of it!" he remarked. "Now, as I want to get to bed at a respectable hour, don't you think you'd better put me in possession of all the facts, as the police detectives say? I want to know exactly what Sir Henry does first thing in the morning, what his duties are, where the keys are kept, and, in fact, everything there is to be known."

"Very good, sir, I'll do my best. When is the job to come off?"

"To-morrow, at noon!"

"To-morrow! Lord, you ain't wasting much time, sir!"

"Did you imagine I should remain here for a week?" said the Hon. Percy, puffing at his cigar. "I mean to take as few risks as possible, and the longer I am here the greater the risks. Now, come along, we don't want to waste any more time!"

For the best part of an hour the two men sat in the library in close conversation, and then the pseudo-Lieutenant rose

to his feet with a smile of satisfaction. He had now all the information he needed at his finger-tips.

"Good," he chuckled—"very good! I imagine there will be no hitch whatever. It's straightforward work from beginning to end, and it won't be my fault if anything goes wrong. Now, you get off to bed as quickly as possible. I know where my apartment is, so you needn't wait."

"Suppose we get the jewels, sir," asked Baldwin eagerly, "what will it mean?"

"Suppose we get them, man? There's no supposing about it—we are going to!"

"Well, then, sir, how much will it be worth?"

"Nothing more nor less than a cool million," Baldwin, replied Claydon complacently. "It's the biggest thing the Brotherhood's ever attempted, and it will set the whole of the country in a blaze of excitement. 'Theft of the Crown Jewels!' Great Scott, I can imagine the newsboys rushing along yelling the latest news! It will be a great thing for the Press, if for nobody else—eh?"

"Rather, sir," said the butler seriously. "But some'ow, I don't seem to catch on very well. To me it don't seem possible that we're goin' to nick all them wonderful diamonds an' things. I've been an' looked at 'em many a time, and —"

"Look here, Baldwin, don't you worry your head about what doesn't concern you. Your business is to remain in this house in the capacity of butler, and as long as you confine yourself to that you'll be all right. I'm going to attend to the rest, and I think I can do it without your advice. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir."

Baldwin realised that he had been a little too forward, and uttered the words very humbly. He himself would make a nice little sum out of the business if it passed off satisfactorily, and he had no wish to displease his superior. So he retired from the room without another word.

Ten minutes later the Hon. Percy himself switched the electric light off and made his way to the old baronet's bedroom. He was one of those men who took matters very casually, and did not worry himself over imaginary difficulties. So within another ten minutes he was fast asleep.

In the morning he was awakened by Baldwin knocking on the door, and proceeded to dress himself. He did not wear the same suit as he had been doing the night before, but chose one from Sir Henry's wardrobe. Then, without the least sign of uneasiness, he descended to the dining-room, and proceeded to enjoy a hearty breakfast.

The morning was a beautiful one, the sun blazing down from a cloudless sky. The river looked particularly fresh, and the old towers and turrets, some of them built so far back as 1078, seemed as strong and sturdy as ever. The White Tower, or Keep, the oldest part of the whole fortress, looked very imposing in the bright morning sunlight.

It happened to be a free day, and the grounds were crowded with visitors, most of them consisting of country folk, Americans, and foreigners. Londoners themselves never thought of paying a visit to the Tower of London. The Beefeaters, in their gay uniforms, seemed quite genial, and smiling faces were the order of the day.

The Wakefield Tower, where the Regalia was kept, was thronged, and many were the expressions of wonderment and admiration when the visitors' eyes rested on the treasures so rigorously guarded by steel and electricity.

The treasure chamber is a large, circular apartment, with deep window recesses, in the centre of which stands the massive double showcase. In this are arranged the priceless treasures which form the British Regalia. To see them one has to look through a kind of steel cage, and as there are a couple of Beefeaters constantly on guard, to tamper with the showcase is utterly impossible.

At about ten-thirty o'clock the Lieutenant of the Tower summoned certain responsible individuals to his library, and orders were given that at a quarter to twelve the Wakefield Tower was to be closed to visitors, as the Lieutenant wished to examine—for reasons not explained to the subordinates—the King's Crown. In addition the electric current was to be switched off at the same time.

The Beefeaters and other officials were considerably curious when they learnt of this sudden order, but, after all, it was none of their business what Sir Henry Kenning chose to do. "Sir Henry" himself, having accomplished this preliminary work, lit a cigar, and strolled out on to the Tower Green. The time was just about eleven.

He had not been there long when he suddenly quickened his pace and cordially grasped the hand of another gentleman who was examining the site of the scaffold. They talked of the weather for a few moments, then strolled off to a part of the Green which was bare of visitors. Here they could talk without any fear of being overheard.

"Well," said the stranger, "has there been any hitch?"

"Hitch, my dear Milverton?" repeated the Hon. Percy,

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"Not the slightest! I have just given the necessary orders, and shall go to the Wakefield Tower at about five minutes to twelve. The visitors are to be excluded for half an hour on account of my visit."

"Good! You had no trouble, I suppose? I mean, no trouble about getting the orders carried out?"

"None. I can gain access to the jewels as though they were in my own desk. The difficulty will be in getting away with them. They are no light weight, let me tell you, and certainly bulky. What time will our men arrive?"

"Some of them are already here," replied Mr. Milverton, who was, of course, disguised. "The rest will put in an appearance one at a time; but you may rely on them all being in readiness when the exact moment arrives."

"And the others? Those who are to work in the other part of the ground?"

"They know precisely what to do, and will act on the stroke of twelve. When you hear the—er—signal, you will then do your part."

"Right-ho!" returned the Hon. Percy complacently. "Now I think you'd better drift away among the other visitors. It won't do for us to be seen here too long together. The next time I meet you, I suppose, will be in the Council Chamber?"

"Yes, undoubtedly!" replied Milverton, with a smile. "Well, I wish you luck, and don't forget if there is a hitch, to save yourself first. The common-members don't matter much!"

Clayton laughed, and the two parted, Milverton still remaining in the grounds of the Tower. As he had nothing particular to do he decided to wait and see that everything passed off satisfactorily.

And while this villainous plan was being put into execution Frank Kingston was miles away, seated in a railway train, racing to England in response to Carson Gray's wire. Had he been in London, the Brotherhood's scheme would never have succeeded, and the Crown Jewels would have been saved. As it was—

Well, the next chapter will show what happened.

The Theft of the Crown Jewels.

"Ten minutes to twelve. Nearly time I was starting."

The Hon. Percy Clayton was standing in Sir Henry Kenning's library, looking at the clock impatiently. Although he had been cool and self-possessed beforehand, now that the precise moment had arrived, he was feeling just a little nervous.

Not that he suspected any hitch, but such an audacious theft as he and his colleagues were about to perpetrate was calculated to try a man's nerves. It was no ordinary robbery, for the Crown Jewels were about the most rigorously guarded treasure in the whole Kingdom, and the most valuable. For, in addition to their intrinsic value, they were heirlooms of the State, and the State would pay almost any sum for their safe return.

So the Hon. Percy had good reason to feel a little nervous. If he succeeded, he was to receive himself, the sum of £100,000 out of the proceeds—this was a tenth of what the Brotherhood expected to get. It was a vast fortune of itself, so Clayton was not working for nothing.

He poured himself out a stiff glass of brandy, and drank it off.

"The scheme can't miscarry," he told himself confidently; "and, anyhow, I could make my escape easily enough, so there's no danger. But I mean to have that money if it can possibly be got. It would come in deuced handy!"

He glanced at the clock again, then, with a shrug of his

shoulders left the room. The Beefeaters who were about looked at him curiously as he walked down the Green to the entrance of Wakefield Tower—this is a narrow doorway on the left, just before one comes to the low arch under the Bloody Tower, where the infant Princes, Edward the Fifth and his brother, the Duke of York, were murdered.

Several visitors looked at the Lieutenant of the Tower with interest as he walked briskly, with erect figure, to the narrow doorway. A Beefeater stood on guard, and he saluted respectfully. The Hon. Percy did not stop a moment, for he knew that the time was very close upon twelve.

Inside the Tower no one was present but a Beefeater and a couple of constables, and they also looked with curiosity as their governor, with a nod, walked up to the massive cage-like apparatus in the centre of the apartment. In a very short time Clayton had opened the steel structure, and was closely examining the King's Crown, having lifted it from its velvet resting place at the top of the pedestal.

He was doing this, of course, merely to keep up appearances until he heard the signal, which was even then due. But as he fingered that brilliant mass of gold and jewels he could not prevent a thrill passing through his frame. It was a prize worth risking something for, and no mistake!

The Hon. Percy gazed at the hundreds of diamonds and pearls as if fascinated, and examined especially the large oblong brilliant, weighing 309 carats, cut from the "Cullinan" rough diamond. Then, with startling suddenness, he was brought back to reality.

A second before, everything had been still and hot in the precincts of the Tower, for the day was sweltering and breezeless. Most of the visitors were in various parts of the Tower buildings, and they were all amazed to hear, with startling abruptness, a shattering roar.

It sounded more than anything like a prolonged peal of thunder, but immediately following it came the low rumble of falling masonry, and the whole ground quivered as though by an earthquake. Then there was utter silence, followed, after a second, by a perfect babel of voices.

"Good heavens!" cried "Sir Henry Kenning," turning round with the Crown in his hand. "What can that be? What— Now then, you fellows, settle these three chaps without a second's delay!"

The tone of Clayton's voice changed suddenly, as a whole stream of well-dressed visitors came hastening into the Jewel Room. They were all common-members of the Brotherhood of Iron, and knew exactly what they had to do. So far things seemed to be going smoothly.

In less than thirty seconds the two constables and the Beefeater were lying flat on their backs unconscious. They were not bodily hurt, but a chloroformed pad had very soon disposed of them for the time being.

"How about the one below?" asked the Hon. Percy quickly.

"He's here, sir," returned one of the common-members excitedly, from the neighbourhood of the door. "We collared him as we came in, an' brought him up!"

"Good! Now then, get your bags, and be ready! If there's any confusion the game's up!"

With amazing speed Clayton took the priceless objects from the showcase and handed them to his subordinates. Each of these was provided with a large collapsible bag, and each man took no more than a single article. Some of the treasures contained in the case were too large and bulky to take, but as one or two of the men wore long, light overcoats, it was an easy matter to conceal such a thing as the Royal Sceptre. This latter was one of the most valuable objects

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in the whole Tower, containing as it did the largest of the Cullinan diamonds, not to mention numerous other precious stones.

One man, a stout individual apparently, had been specially prepared to take charge of this. He was, in reality, a thin person, and the measurements of the Royal Sceptre being known, a receptacle had been specially prepared to accommodate it. In fact, everything that could possibly have been prepared beforehand had been carefully attended to.

The main objects that were taken were the King's Crown, the Queen's Crown, with the Koh-i-Noor in the centre, St. Edward's Crown, the Coronet of the Prince of Wales, the Royal Sceptre, the King's Orb, the Queen's Orb, and numerous other valuables impossible to enumerate. The whole thing had been organised so magnificently, that the transferring of the Crown jewels from the showcase to the various receptacles carried by the common-members had been accomplished in less than two minutes.

"Everything ready?" inquired Claydon tensely.

"Yes, sir. We've got the blessed lot!"

"Then stroll out as leisurely as you possibly can. Remember, the slightest sign of hurry may undo all our work. Those of you who do not carry bags had better go to the scene of the explosion, and remain there for about five minutes. The rest follow me! In case of sudden alarm you know what to do!"

The Hon. Percy endeavoured to compose his features as much as possible, then marched boldly down the short winding stairway to the exterior of the Tower. As he had expected, not a soul was to be seen. The ruse had worked magnificently, for the explosion had taken everybody away from the vicinity of the Wakefield Tower.

"So far, so good!" murmured the Hon. Percy, as he passed under the gateway with the others following. "By Jove, I believe the thing's going to work like a charm! If they'll only stop in the other part of the grounds until we're outside we can do it as easy as opening a safe!"

But the Hon. Percy Claydon was not to get clear as easily as he imagined. There was one man in the grounds of the Tower that day who had already encountered the Brotherhood. He knew nothing whatever—at least, nothing material—of this carefully planned scheme, but he was very nearly the cause of bringing it to an abrupt conclusion before those who had perpetrated the robbery could escape.

That man was Carson Gray.

A Clean Sweep.

"Well, there couldn't be a better day for this sort of thing," thought Carson Gray, as, cigar in mouth, he stepped from a taxi near the main entrance of the Tower. He walked down the slope, obtained his pass at the office, and strolled into the grounds.

He was not paying this visit for the mere pleasure of it by any means. And on the other hand, it was not because he suspected the Crown jewels would be stolen that day. For the information he had received was practically no information at all.

The day previous Crawford, Frank Kingston's trusted servant, had paid a visit to Gray's apartments in Great Portland Street, and had told the great detective that a rumour was going round among the common-members to the effect that the Regalia was to be stolen.

Gray had laughed at the idea at first, but Crawford had been so serious and emphatic that at last the detective had decided that there was something in the story. Crawford could not tell him how the theft was to be perpetrated, who was to take charge, and when it was to be brought off. So Gray sent the man away, saying that he would do what he could in the matter.

That same day a wire had arrived from Frank Kingston, who was then in Balataria. Gray had seized the opportunity immediately, and had wired for Kingston to come to London with all speed. That had been yesterday, and to-day he was visiting the Tower merely for the purpose of looking round, and with no set motive.

Curiously enough, the time happened to be precisely twelve o'clock as he stepped through the gates, and he was just as surprised as anybody else when, from a distant part of the old building, came a shattering roar. Immediately it was over, crowds of people rushed towards the place where the explosion had occurred. Even the ticket clerk left his post and followed the others, for such a thing as this had never before occurred.

Carson Gray himself, with thoughts of Anarchists in his mind, instinctively followed the crowd, who were shouting very excitedly. The explosion had attracted attention from outside, for Gray, as he looked round, could see people both in the road and in the gardens which surrounded the Tower rushing for the entrance.

The explosion had occurred in the neighbourhood of the Well Tower, and the crowd were gaping open-eyed at the gigantic gash which had been rent in one of the massive walls. In addition the ground for a distance of many feet had been literally torn up, and debris of all descriptions was lying about.

"Has anybody been hurt?" demanded Carson Gray, of a constable who was endeavouring to keep order.

"Three people, sir," replied the man. "Two visitors and a Beefeater. One of 'em's got 'is leg broke, an' the others are knocked about more or less severely. It's a bad job, sir!"

Carson Gray found himself being pinned in by the people who were coming up behind, and as he hated having his movements restricted in any manner whatever, he quickly elbowed himself out. He could hear all sorts of conjectures being voiced by the people around him, but he himself was puzzled as to the reason for this seemingly pointless outrage.

The place where the explosion had occurred was simply ruined, the Well Tower and the neighbouring Cradle Tower being partially demolished. The Beefeaters had nearly all left their posts, and were now doing their best to quieten the eager sightseers. Carson Gray was jostled about until he walked several paces away to a quiet spot.

He was thinking deeply. Suddenly a strange light appeared in his eyes, and he unconsciously slapped his thigh. A thought had just struck him, and in a moment he guessed the reason for this blowing up of the Well Tower.

"By Jove!" he murmured. "That must be it! What a blockhead I am not to have thought of it before! And while I am standing here the jewels may be disappearing. Great Scott, I shall be too late!"

The people round about him thought that the tall, slim gentleman in the quiet lounge suit had suddenly gone out of his mind, and they were hardly to be blamed, either. For Carson Gray, with no warning whatever, suddenly twirled round and commenced running as if for his life back towards the entrance gates.

He realised the urgent necessity for speed, and never stopped to consider what people thought of him. So, without once looking back, he continued his headlong rush until he arrived at the gateway of the Bloody Tower. He was just about to turn in here when he perceived Sir Henry Kenning—as he thought—followed by several other men, leisurely walking down towards him.

Carson Gray's mind worked very rapidly, and he grasped, as if by instinct, the fact that these men were in possession of the priceless Regalia. He did not stop to consider further, for the fact was almost self-evident to his mind. Unless his surmise was correct, why was the Lieutenant of the Tower, to mention nothing of the visitors, walking so unconcernedly away from the Jewel-Room? Had everything been as it appeared to be, Carson Gray told himself, Sir Henry Kenning would never have been in this quarter of the grounds.

So the detective slowed down suddenly, and without looking a second time at the men he suspected, he walked quickly towards the entrance gates. He had only seen eight or nine persons, for the simple reason that the rest, when they left the Wakefield Tower, had turned to the right instead of the left, and made for the scene of the disaster by a roundabout route. The others, who had in their possession the priceless Crown jewels, intended getting away with as little delay as possible.

At the gates Gray found a couple of constables talking excitedly with three or four Beefeaters who had been forced to remain on duty to prevent the public from rushing in pell-mell. As a matter of fact the gates were closed—a contingency the Hon. Percy Claydon had foreseen as possible.

"Stop these men at all costs!" said Carson Gray quickly, to the two policemen. "Take no notice whatever of what they say, but detain them. And you," he added, turning to the surprised Beefeaters, "see that the gates are kept securely fastened!"

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the policemen together.

"I've no time to explain—"

"But that gentleman's the Lieutenant!" protested one of the officers. "If he orders us to let him through, we shall have to do so."

Carson Gray grasped the man's arm impatiently.

"I tell you they must be stopped," he said in a low, earnest voice. "Don't quibble, but do as I say. I am a detective, and I suspect that these men are thieves, that they are in possession of the Crown jewels—"

"Crown jewels!" gasped the constable, then he burst into a loud laugh. "Why, love us, sir, you're getting at me!" he cried. "The Crown jewels are as safe as the blessed Bank of England! You're on the wrong tack, if you don't mind my saying so—"

"Confound it!" cried the detective angrily. He was

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 174.

unable to proceed further, for the Hon. Percy Claydon was now at the gates, the other "visitors" lounging after him, in twos and threes. Certainly, they did not look at all suspicious.

"Open the gate, constable!" cried the Lieutenant, with a smile. "This explosion seems to have sent everybody off their heads. It is very slight, however, and as these gentlemen here wished to go out, I thought I would escort them. Try as I would, I could not find a Beefeater to do so."

"Right, sir," replied the man, with a half-grin at Carson Gray. One of the Beefeaters moved forward to unlock the gates, but the detective stepped in his way.

"I order you, in the name of the Law, to have these men searched!" he cried. He was slightly disguised, so he knew that the Brotherhood's men would not recognise him. "Take no notice of Sir Henry, but do as I say. Don't you realise your responsibility better than to let them escape in this manner? Look at the bags they carry—isn't that enough for you? No bags are allowed inside, yet they—"

"Who is this fellow?" cried Claydon furiously. "Open the gates at once, or I'll dismiss every one of you! Do you hear?"

The Beefeaters hesitated a moment, then moved forward to execute the order. Carson Gray realised immediately that his word, unbacked, was not enough to go against the Lieutenant's, and that if he was to save the Crown jewels he would have to resort to other measures. By this time he had come to the certain conclusion that his first surmise had been correct. The robbery was being carried out in the very way the Brotherhood would carry it out.

Gray's thoughts were very swift, and before the man could open the gate he dashed forward—but not in the direction of the gates. On the contrary, he confronted one of the men with a bag. In a second his fist shot out, and the visitor reeled to the ground.

"Now," cried Carson Gray, with the folding bag in his hand, "we'll see!"

But before he could open it, three of the fallen man's companions sprang upon him, and wrenched it from his grasp. The Hon. Percy ground his teeth at the smartness of this unknown individual, and thrust a hand into his pocket. He knew that the situation was desperate now, and meant to adopt a desperate expedient.

"If any man moves he dies!" he cried in a loud shout. And those at the gate could see that he held a round object in his hand—a bomb. "Open those gates, and stand clear of them until I and my companions have passed through!"

The Beefeaters and constables literally gasped with stupefied amazement. What was this they saw? Sir Henry Kenning, the Lieutenant of the Tower, threatening to blow them to pieces with a bomb! It was stupendous! For a moment they were struck motionless, rooted to the ground on which they stood. Then the same voice awakened their bewildered senses.

"Unless those gates are opened in three seconds I shall open them myself—with this infernal-machine!" cried the Hon. Percy, in real desperation. "It will kill you all, but the path will be clear— Ah, I thought that would wake you up!"

The gates swung open, and the common-members, who had collected together in a crowd, pushed forward. All their faces displayed excitement, and they were listening for a signal. After a moment it came. Carson Gray, during this incident, was standing aside, impotent and helpless.

"Now, men—let them go!" cried the Hon. Percy suddenly.

Suiting the action to the word, he jerked his arm forward and flung the bomb at the feet of the two constables who stood against the gate. A cry of alarm escaped them, then a sharp, snappy report rang out; altogether different to that which had been expected. Then Carson Gray saw the ruse.

The very instant the bomb burst a terrible cloud of thick, impenetrable smoke arose. It could hardly be called smoke, however, for it was white and opaque, and seemed to spread with amazing rapidity, for in three seconds the gateway was enveloped in its clinging folds. The worst London fog was thin compared to it.

Following close upon this, the other men threw similar missiles in all directions. So that in less time than it takes to tell, the roadway for yards around the main entrance to the Tower was obscured in the choking fumes. For the fog caused those who breathed it in to gasp and choke violently.

The people who had been collected outside had vanished like steam as soon as Sir Henry had threatened to blow the gate down, and now the whole road was in a terrific state of tumult. In the obscurity of the thick white fog the Brotherhood's men were enabled to slip through the gateway and gain the road completely unobserved.

"Stop them—for Heaven's sake, stop them!"

It was one of the constables who shouted these words. He realised now, when it was too late, that he should have taken notice of the gentleman in the lounge-suit, and searched the Lieutenant and his companions.

But what was the good of shouting? Outside hundreds of people had gathered, and these were hovering on the outskirts of the wall of fog. How could they tell which were the thieves and which were the ordinary visitors? It was an impossible task to single them out—and, anyhow, of what use is a street crowd when it comes to actual action?

In that fog nothing could be done but make a noise, and while everybody was colliding with everybody else the jewel robbers had made good their escape. Nothing could have been simpler, for they all made off in different directions with their spoils. Once away from the vicinity of the Tower, to track them was out of the question, and long after they had disappeared the crowd round the gates continued to shout and rush about in wild excitement.

The raid had been a triumphant success, and Carson Gray gritted his teeth with rage and disappointment when he saw what had occurred. He was wise enough to see the futility of giving chase, and straightway ran to the Wakefield Tower. He found the place deserted, and the three men who had been on guard still suffering from the effects of the drug. With hardly a glance at them, he examined the huge, steel-protected show-case.

One look was sufficient.

"A clean sweep!" he muttered. "By Jove, they've left hardly anything at all! Of all the audacious robberies, this surely is the greatest! Never in the whole course of my career have I heard of anything to equal it. And to occur at this time, when the Coronation is to take place in less than a fortnight! It will set the whole country in a blaze of excitement, and the high Government officials off their heads with worry."

(Another splendid instalment next Thursday, relating how Frank Kingston gets on the track of the stolen Crown jewels. Order your copy of THE "GEM" LIBRARY in advance.)

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