Every Thursday.

The GEM LIBRARY 1D

Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem!

[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.]

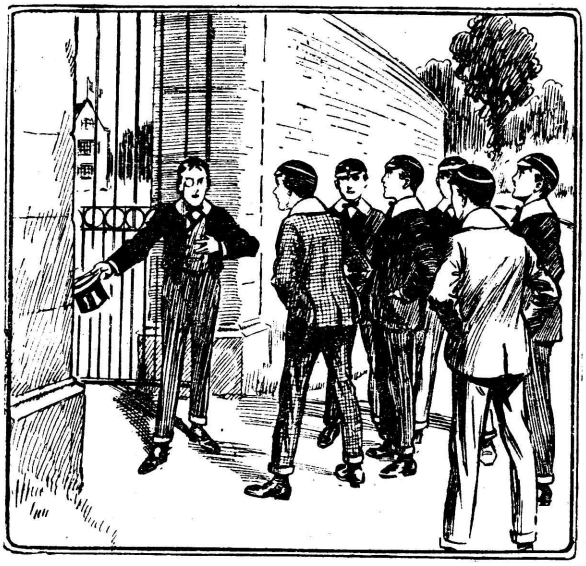
CORONATION DAY AT ST. JIM'S

A Special, New, Long, Complete School Tale.

—※※※—

..By..

MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Dealing with the Adventures of TOM MERRY & CO. of St. Jim's and their rivals of Rylcombe Grammar School.

CHAPTER 1.
Golden Quids.

"TWO hundred pounds!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Two hundred quids—golden quids!"

"Ripping!"

"Let's see them, Tom Merry! Ladle them out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry unlocked the little box that lay on his study table. Round the table a crowd of juniors had gathered.

It was an exciting moment. It was seldom indeed that a junior at any school found himself in possession of such a sum as two hundred pounds. And it wasn't in banknotes, or in a beastly cheque, as D'Arcy put it. It was in gold—glittering gold—two hundred gleaming coins marked with the pleasant features of his Majesty King George the Fifth—two hundred golden quids.

It did not all belong to Tom Merry; it was common property among a dozen juniors of St. Jim's. But it had come down to the school in the box, addressed to Thomas Merry, of the School House, St. Jim's. And Tom Merry had called the other fellows together to see it opened.

Two hundred pounds!

True, the juniors had expected, not so long ago, to be in possession of thousands; but the thousands had vanished like a dream. The treasure Tom Merry & Co. had discovered in their memorable voyage to the South Seas reposed at the bottom of the Pacific.

"Welcome, deah boys!" said the swell of St. Jim's, sweeping off his silk hat and bowing gracefully to the Grammarians, "Welcome in the name of his Majesty King George!"

Of that treasure they had retained only a number of Spanish doubloons which they had crammed into their pockets before the chest was lost. And Lord Conway had disposed of the coins for them in London, and here was the result—a handsome little box closely packed with English sovereigns.

There was a buzz of deep-drawn breath as the lock clicked, and Tom Merry opened the lid of the box.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass a little more tightly in his right eye, and turned his aristocratic gaze upon the box of sovereigns. Wally—D'Arcy minor—calmly pushed Monty Lowther out of the way to get nearer. Jack Blake said "Good!" and Herries said "My hat!"

The sight was a very pleasing one. Nice little rows of golden sovereigns, packed closely together, their milled edges glimmering in the light.

"Two hundred quids!" repeated Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, that is wathah a wotten expwession!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his monocle upon Lowther. "Why can't you call them soveweigns, deah boy?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally——"

Next Thursday:

"THE FIGHTING SCHOOLMASTER," AND "THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON."

"Don't you begin, Gus!" said Wally. "Give us a rest! Turn the quids out, and let's count 'em, Tom Merry! My only Aunt Jane! Ain't they nice?"

"Weally, Wally——"

"There are two hundred of them," said Tom Merry, laughing. "'Just two hundred,' Lord Conway said in his letter. It was very kind of him to see to it for us. Two hundred quids—I mean pounds, Gussy! Sorry!"

"Not at all, deah boy!" said D'Arcy graciously. "I was only pointin' out to Lowthah——"

"Exactly! The question is, what are we going to do with them?"

"Spend 'em!" said Wally.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes; I suppose we shall do that," he assented. "The question is, how? We've agreed that the cash is to be expended upon a ripping Coronation celebration, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!" said all the juniors together, very cordially.

"All the country is celebrating the Coronation, and it would be absurd for St. Jim's to be left out," Jack Blake remarked. "What we want to have is a really ripping, first-chop, top-notch, A1 at Lloyd's celebration, which will make the Grammarians green with envy. I've heard that the Grammar School are going to celebrate, and, of course, we shall have to knock them sky-high!"

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins, of the New House. "In a matter like this, both Houses at St. Jim's stand together. We shall have to give the Grammarians the kybosh, of course!"

"Yaas, wathah! I agwee with my fwiend Figgay. I do not exactly appwove of the word 'kybosh,' but I agwee with Figgay in spiwit."

"Bonfires and fireworks and bunting and flag-wagging," said Manners. "That's the idea! What are you looking so thoughtful about, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn started.

"I was thinking of a ripping idea," he said. "I'll tell it to you fellows, if you like."

"Go ahead!" said Kerr.

"Well, you remember when we were in the South Seas, we went very short of grub at one time—you remember how awful it was, missing whole meals?" said Fatty Wynn, with a reminiscent shudder.

"Must have been fearful for you!" said Digby.

"It was rotten for all of us!" said Tom Merry hastily, as Fatty Wynn turned a wrathful look upon Digby. "What about it, Fatty?"

"Well, I was thinking——"

"About grub!" said Kangaroo.

"Look here, you ass——"

"Don't interrupt, Kangy!" said Tom Merry. "Order! Go it, Wynn!"

"Well, I was thinking that as we had such an awful experience, missing whole meals, that the money couldn't be better spent than in standing a regular, big, ripping, stunning feed," said Fatty Wynn—"a feed that would make a record at St. Jim's! Think of the tuck we could get for that money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you asses——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared.

"Two hundred pounds' worth of pork-pies!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Oh, ripping!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's my idea!" said Fatty Wynn, with a grunt. "If you don't want to adopt a really ripping idea, you can go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Wynn——"

"Well, we shall have a big feed, of course!" said Tom Merry. "But I think we ought to have something more than that—something in the nature of a procession, and a big celebration, to end up with a feed."

"Well, that's all right!" said Fatty Wynn, with a nod. "We might start with a feed, and then have a bit of a procession or something, and then a big feed!"

"Or we could start with a feed," said Lowther, "and go on with another feed, then have still another feed, and finish with a—a feed, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"Decorations, too," said Figgins. "We want the whole school to look gay on an occasion like this. We've been given a whole holiday for the occasion, and we ought to maffick in proper style, I think."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now's the time for showing what we really can do," said Tom Merry. "Suggestions welcomed from everybody! What do you say, Herries?"

"Well, if you fellows would care to hear my idea——" began Herries modestly.

"Go it!"

"I was thinking that we might do something that would commemorate the date, and leave a sort of reminder always with us," said Herries—"something a bit more permanent than a procession or a feed."

"Thinking of building an hospital or a row of almshouses in connection with the school?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No. I was thinking of Towser!"

"Eh?"

"Towser!"

"My bulldog!" said Herries, with a touch of defiance. "I was thinking that we might get Towser a gold collar, with the date of the Coronation set in diamonds on it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, of all the rotten ideas——" said Fatty Wynn.

"I wegard you as an ass, Hewwies! I was thinkin'——"

"What with?" asked Lowther.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah! I was thinkin' that a kind and chawitable deed would be a good ideah——"

"Ahem! What sort of a deed?"

"Well, I was thinkin' about all those poor chaps in the Chawity School at Wayland," said Arthur Augustus. "You know they have to wear a howwid sort of uniform, and nevah have any decent clothes. They are vewy decent chaps, and I feel a sort of pwotectin' intewest in them. I was thinkin' that, as they nevah have a chance to wear anythin' decent, a pwesent of a set of silk hats——"

"Eh?"

"A bwand-new silk hat for each of the chaps in the Chawity School," said D'Arcy firmly. "I was thinkin' of that! I wegard it as a good ideah! I would send a big ordah to Lincoln & Bennett's——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

But a roar of laughter drowned D'Arcy's voice. The juniors could not help it. Fatty Wynn's idea had been humorous, and Herries' idea was comic. But D'Arcy's idea, as Monty Lowther said, really took the whole cake.

The juniors shrieked.

"Silk hats!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah; bwand-new toppahs!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I fail to see the cause of this wibald mewwiment. It stands to weason that a chap who has nevah had a silk hat must want one more than anythin' else!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it would be a vewy kind and thoughtful action!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hands up for Gussy's idea!" gasped Tom Merry.

No hand went up. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in a minority of one.

"Hands up Herries' wheeze?"

Herries put a hand up.

"Now for Fatty Wynn!"

Fatty Wynn put both hands up.

"Negatived!" said Tom Merry. "No go! Done in! Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any more ideas?"

"Yes," said Figgins.

"I've been thinkin'——"

"Oh, cheese it, Gussy! You can't expect us to swallow that! Go it, Figgy!"

"Well, this is my idea," said Figgins. "The Grammar School chaps are going to celebrate, and they're raising subscriptions for decorations and so forth. My idea is to spend this cash in making a Coronation corner."

"What!"

"A which?"

"A corner," said Figgins calmly. "You know what a corner is? Chap buys up stuff so that nobody can get any—makes a corner in it, you see. Rotten financiers in Chicago, for instance, buy up all the corn, and make a corner in grub, and raise the price of bread. Of course, a decent chap couldn't do anything like that. But a corner in fireworks and flags and bunting would be a jolly good idea—no harm done, and one in the eye for the Grammarians! I can imagine Frank Monk's feelings when he gets to Rylcombe and finds everything bought up over his head. Of course, we'll let the Grammar cads down lightly—they can come round here and celebrate, if they like! But——"

There was a cheer at once.

"Hurray!"

"Bwavo, Figgay!"

"Hip-pip!"

And slaps on the back were bestowed upon the ingenious Figgy, till he gasped for breath, and picked up a cricket bat to defend himself.

CHAPTER 2.
Chucked Out!

FIGGINS'S idea was evidently the "thing." It was jumped at by the juniors, and agreed upon at once. A Coronation celebration which would also be a score over their deadly rivals of the Grammar School was exactly what they wanted. And the idea of a corner in Coronation accessories tickled the fancy of the St. Jim's juniors very much.

With such a sum as two hundred pounds to spend, the juniors were certain to have things all their own way, as far as purchasing went. The Grammarians could not hope to "rise" to that. The thought of Frank Monk & Co. going down to Rylcombe in the afternoon, and finding everything they wanted bought up in great quantities over their heads, made the Saints roar.

"It will be simply ripping!" said Blake. "It will be shrieking—screaming, in fact!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should like to take a snapshot of Frank Monk's face when he goes for his giddy purchases and finds the stuff's all gone," Manners remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah——"

"Hallo! Who's that?"

The study door had opened, and a face looked in. It was the face of Levison of the Fourth. Nobody was glad to see him. Levison was not popular, especially in Tom Merry's study; and it was cheek on his part to put his head in without even knocking.

"Well?" said Tom Merry, looking at him.

Levison nodded coolly.

"I hear the cash has come," he said.

"Yes, it has."

"No harm in a fellow looking at it, I suppose?" said Levison, his eyes turning towards the open box on the table.

"You can look at it if you like."

Levison came into the study. His eyes glittered as they fastened upon the rolls of sovereigns packed in the little box. The sight of them seemed to have a fascination for him.

"By gum!" he said. "By gum! How much have you got there?"

"Two hundred quids," said Lowther.

"Soveweigns, deah boy."

"Quids!"

"Soveweigns!"

"Rats!"

"Wats!"

"Two hundred!" said Levison. "My hat, what larks a chap could have with a sum of money like that! Look here ——"

"Got any suggestions to make?" asked Manners.

"Yes. I could show you chaps round at the races, and you could have a gorgeous time with cash like that in your pockets."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"Well, we don't want to be shown round at the races—nor any caddish rot of that sort," he said. "Astonishing as it may seem to you, we are going to be quite decent."

Levison laughed. It was not easy to hurt his feelings.

"Every chap to his taste," he said. "If I had that money I should have a flutter with it. What are you going to do?"

"Coronate," said Monty Lowther.

Levison stared at him.

"To what?"

"Coronate."

"What on earth's that?"

"A new verb," said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "I coronate, thou coronatest, he coronates. Nous coronatons, vous coronatez, ils coronataient."

"You ass!"

"A verb of my own invention," explained Lowther. "To coronate—intransitive verb. It means celebrate the Coronation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison sniffed.

"And you're going to waste that money coronating, as you call it, when you might have the time of your lives?" he exclaimed. "Of all the duffers——"

"Thanks!"

"Of all the silly chumps——"

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind finishing your remarks out in the passage," Tom Merry suggested politely.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Levison as a wude beast; and if he wepeats one of those oppwobwious phwases again I shall give him a feahful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass severely upon the cad of the Fourth.

"Rats!" said Levison.

"Weally, you wottah——"

"Of all the fatheads——"

D'Arcy pushed back his beautiful white cuffs.

"You heard what I said, Levison?"

"Yes, I heard," said Levison coolly.

"Undah the circs., as I do not wish to spoil my linen or to disawwange my necktie, I will give you one more chance to wetire fwom the studay without bein' thwown out," said the swell of St. Jim's, with a great deal of dignity.

"Rats!"

It really looked as if Levison rather enjoyed the prospect of soiling D'Arcy's linen and of disarranging his necktie.

"You uttah wottah——"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus did not expend any more energy in words. He rushed right at Levison and clasped him round the neck.

"Out you go, you wottah!"

"Go it!" said Blake. "Chuck him out!"

"Hurray!"

The juniors stood back out of the way. D'Arcy as a chucker-out was very entertaining.

Levison stood his ground and resisted. D'Arcy's necktie was soon disarranged, and there was no doubt that his linen was soiled. There was a loud crack as his collar parted company with his shirt.

"Ow! You uttah wottah!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Chuck him out!"

"I'm chuckin' him out—it's all wight, deah boys!"

Round came Levison, swinging towards the door, in the grasp of the swell of St. Jim's. In spite of his elegant ways, D'Arcy was an athlete.

But the cad of the Fourth swung right round, and, instead of going through the door, he came whirling back towards the table, bringing D'Arcy with him.

"Oh!" gasped D'Arcy. "You wottah!"

"Rats!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! Outside, you ass!"

Round they whirled again, just missing the doorway, and they staggered over towards the bookcase and crashed upon it. There was a crash of breaking glass, and a thunder of showering books and papers.

"Here, look out!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Sowwy, deah boy——"

"Don't wreck the blessed place!"

"Awf'ly sowwy! Out you go, you wottah!"

"Rats!"

"Waltz me round again, Willie," murmured Blake dreamily. "Waltz me round again, do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Mingle your eyebrows with mine, love," sang Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—— Ah! You wottah! There you go!"

With a herculean effort, D'Arcy brought Levison through the doorway. But Levison held on to him, and they went through together. There was a sound of terrific bumping in the passage.

"Hurray!" roared the juniors. "Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy, unfortunately, had fallen underneath in the passage. Levison promptly sat astride of him, pinning him down.

The swell of St. Jim's gasped.

"Gewwoof, you wottah!"

"Rats!"

"Gwoo! Gewwooff!"

"Not till you apologise," said Levison.

CHAPTER 3.
A Young Man In a Hurry.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY lay on his back on the cold linoleum and gasped. With Levison sitting on his chest, he could not get up, neither could he throw off the cad of the Fourth. The chucking-out of Ernest Levison had ended rather unfortunately for the swell of St. Jim's.

"You uttah wottah!" D'Arcy gasped. "I insist upon your gettin' off immediately. You are wuinin' my clothes!"

"Rats!"

"I am gettin' howwibly dustay——"

"Serve you right!"

"I insist——"

Wally came out of the study, and, without saying a word, he laid hold of Levison's ears and pulled.

The Fourth-Former roared.

"Ow! Leggo! Yow!"

Wally did not let go. He pulled as if he were pulling in a tug-o'-war. Levison went backwards off Arthur Augustus and crashed on the floor in the doorway.

D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

"Now, you wottah——"

Levison had turned furiously upon the scamp of the Third. But he had no time to deal with Wally. The swell of the Fourth was upon him like a whirlwind. D'Arcy did not close with Levison again. He hit out.

"Put up your hands, you uttah wottah!" he shouted.

Levison put up his hands. He had no choice about the matter. But it did not serve him very much. D'Arcy's fists came home in rapid postman's knocks, and the cad of the Fourth staggered out of the study under a shower of blows.

In the passage he fairly took to his heels; and D'Arcy came back into the study, gasping and triumphant.

"I've given him a feahful thwashin'!" he panted.

"Hurray!" said Wally.

"Good!" said Lowther. "You must be a useful chap to have in a study, to fall on visitors in this way."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"It's very obliging of Gussy," Manners remarked. "By the way, what did you go for Levison for? Had he done anything?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"If Gussy has done with playing the hooligan, we might as well get down to Rylcombe, before the Grammarians get there," Figgins remarked.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Awful ruffian that chap is to take about," Blake said. "We try to keep him in order—but, bless you, it's no use!"

"You uttah ass——"

"Well, suppose we get out?" said Tom Merry. "It's a whole holiday—Coronation Day—and no blessed passes required. We can go where we like."

"Come on."

"Pway wait for me, deah boys. I shall have to change my clothes aftah gettin' into this howwid state."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't wait, Gussy. The Grammarians may be first in the field if we don't buck up; there's not a minute to waste."

"I shall not keep you more than an hour——"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm jolly sure you won't!"

"Pewwaps I could get weady in half an hour——"

"I think I can see us waiting half an hour, and letting the Grammar cads get ahead of us. Come on, you chaps!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I cannot go in this state, and you fellows will get into some twouble if you don't have me with you. You wemembah the time I took you all to London, and you all got lost. What is wequired on an occasion like this is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Come as you are," said Blake.

"Quite imposs., deah boy. I could not disgwace the coll. by appeawin' in public in this dirtay and dishevelled state."

"You should have thought of that before you started fighting!" said Blake severely. "Let this be a lesson to you, my young friend. Come on, you chaps!"

"Weally, you fellows——"

The juniors, laughing, crowded out of the study. Tom Merry stayed behind to lock the box of sovereigns up in the cupboard. D'Arcy followed him out into the passage, still expostulating.

"Pway wait, deah boys! I might possibly cwam it into a quartah of an hour——"

He was still expostulating when the juniors went downstairs. Arthur Augustus indulged in a scornful sniff, and went to the Fourth-Form dormitory to change. He intended to change as quickly as possible, and follow on, hoping to arrive in Rylcombe in time to prevent the other fellows making a mess of things. For D'Arcy was firmly possessed with the conviction that unless he was present something was bound to go wrong. The other fellows held that things were less likely to go wrong if he were absent.

The change, for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, was very quick. He was finished in twenty minutes. He came out of the dormitory, and ran downstairs, and dashed out of the School House. There was a yell from a big senior on the steps, as D'Arcy ran into them.

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove! Sowwy, Kildare!"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, gasped, and seized the swell of the Fourth by the arm.

"Ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Ow! Leggo! You are disawwangin' my collah, you silly ass! Wow! Leggo!"

"You young duffer!"

"Pway, leggo, deah boy! I'm in a feahful huwwy. Those boundahs have started without me, you know, and I know they will get into some feahful twouble."

D'Arcy jerked himself loose, the captain of St. Jim's good-naturedly letting him go. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed down the steps, and ran into Gore, of the Shell. Gore gave a roar.

"Sowwy, Goah!"

"You ass!"

"Sowwy, but I'm in a feahful huwwy!"

"You fathead!"

D'Arcy rushed on without stopping to argue with Gore. He sped across the quadrangle as if he were on the cinder-path, holding on his silk hat with one hand, while his eyeglass fluttered in the breeze at the end of its cord.

He had almost reached the gates when his name was yelled.

"Gussy! Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy! Stop for us!"

D'Arcy halted, petrified. He looked round, groping for his eyeglass. Tom Merry & Co. were behind him, strolling lazily towards him from the direction of the School House.

D'Arcy jammed his glass into his eye, and stared at them. They came up with an easy saunter.

"You might stop for a chap," said Monty Lowther.

"Besides, what's the fearful hurry?" asked Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"We can't possibly run all the way to Rylcombe," Figgins remarked. "May as well take it easy, Gussy."

"You—you wottahs!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Then you haven't started at all."

"Started! We're starting now."

"You—you feahful boundahs! Where were you when I came out of the house?" demanded D'Arcy.

"Leaning up against the wall waiting for you," said Tom Merry innocently. "You asked us to wait, didn't you?"

"You—you feahful ass! Why didn't you tell me, then?"

"Well, it was rather funny to see you biffing into people," Monty Lowther observed, "and I must really compliment you on the way you sprinted."

"You—you——"

D'Arcy was speechless, as he realised that while he was bolting at top speed to overtake the juniors, they had not started at all. They walked on in a leisurely way to the gates, and D'Arcy walked on behind them, with feelings too deep for words.

CHAPTER 4.
Wholesale!

D'ARCY did not speak all the way to Rylcombe. An expression of deep indignation was on his face, and he cast glances of scornful dignity at the juniors, which apparently they did not see. When Rylcombe was reached, Tom Merry stopped outside the shop of Mrs. Murphy, more familiarly known as Mother Murphy, and the others stopped, too.

"We've got to do this thing in order," Tom Merry remarked. "We'll make the round of Rylcombe, and order every blessed thing in the decorative and mafficking line that there is in all the shops. Fortunately, Rylcombe isn't London or Glasgow or Manchester. We can buy up all the Coronation stuff they've got here, I imagine, if we buck up, before the Grammarians start their shopping."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps it would be bettah to twust the shoppin' to me!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Have you found your voice again?"

"I did not intend to speak to you wottahs any more; but I don't want the whole affaih messed up for want of a little common-sense on the subject!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Of course, I don't want to put myself forward in any way, but what an affaih of this sort wequires is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"I don't know,' said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Of course,

"Pay up!" yelled Tom Merry's creditors. "Pay our bills! Pay——" "Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry, in dismay. "Can't you give a chap a chance? I've lost the money, but I believe it's in this study.'

I may be wrong, but I believe that I could manage to buy fireworks unaided, or if two or three of us put our heads together, we could manage it between us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Let's start with Mother Murphy."

The juniors crowded into the shop. Mrs. Murphy came out to greet them with an expansive smile. The good dame knew that it was a whole holiday at St. Jim's, and she was expecting a rush of custom that day. Mrs. Murphy sold everything excepting aeroplanes and grand pianos. Pastry of all sorts, from the delicate jam-tart to the festive dough-nut, fireworks and flags and Chinese lanterns, everything that the heart could desire, in fact, could be purchased at Mrs. Murphy's for cash, or on "tick," if the credit was good.

"Yes, young gentlemen, what can I do for you this nice morning?" asked Mrs. Murphy, gently rubbing her plump hands. "What can I get for you, Master Merry?"

"Everything," said Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"How much tuck have you in the shop?"

"I—I don't quite know, Master Merry. What sort?"

"All sorts?"

"Jam-tarts, and cakes, and dough-nuts——"

"Yes, and everything else to eat. How much would the lot come to?"

Mrs. Murphy gasped. She was used to generous orders from the juniors of St. Jim's. When they were in funds they were accustomed to spending money royally, especially Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was frequently the recipient of a fiver, above his usual pocket-money, from his father, Lord Eastwood.

But an order on this scale had never fallen in Mrs. Murphy's lot before.

"You—you are joking, Master Merry!" she gasped.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not at all," he said. "I want the lot."

"The—the lot?"

"Yes. You know we've just come home from the South Seas, don't you, Mrs. Murphy?" said Tom Merry, with a laugh.

"Yes," said the good dame, with a very admiring look. "All the village is talking of it, Master Tom. They say you found a pirate's treasure on an island."

"So we did, Mrs. Murphy, only we lost it again—all but two hundred pounds—and we've got that at the school."

"Two hundred quids in a box!" said Monty Lowther.

"Soveweigns, my deah Lowthah."

"Quids, my dear ass!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"We're blowing the whole lot on Coronation festivities," Tom Merry explained. "We think it's our duty as loyal subjects of King George the Fifth to make a little bit of a flutter on Coronation Day. You see, a chap doesn't get a chance to coronate every day."

"To—to what, Master Tom?"

It was Mrs. Murphy's first introduction to the new verb.

"To coronate," said Tom Merry. "Now to come back to bizney, how much will all the tuck come to—the whole lot of it?"

"Ginger-beer and all," said Figgins."

"And eggs."

"And butter."

"And cheese."

"Everything eatable, in fact."

"I—I don't think I could tell at a moment's notice," said Mrs. Murphy breathlessly, "but it would not be less than twenty-five pounds."

"Good," said Tom Merry, making a note in his pocket-book. "Very good! Twenty-five pounds, so far. You can send in the exact bill along with the goods, and we'll pay on delivery. My word is good enough, isn't it?"

"Dear me, yes, Master Tom. I would trust you with my shop and everything in it, and all I have in the bank, too, if you gave your word."

"Thank you, mum," said Tom Merry, smiling. "Mind, you're to send up everything, and we'll pay carriage, too, if it costs you anything. Every blessed thing in the show to be delivered at St. Jim's as quickly as possible."

"Yes, Master Tom."

"What about fireworks?" said Kerr.

"By Jove, yes, I forgot! I want your whole supply of fireworks, Mrs. Murphy."

"That will be quite ten pounds, Master Tom."

"All right. Send them along."

"Very well," said the good dame, almost dazed at the prospect of doing a turnover of thirty-five pounds in a single day.

"Very well."

"When can you deliver them, ma'am?"

"I will get the carrier to take them by noon, Master Tom."

"Good! Mind, everything in the shop belongs to us now," said Tom Merry impressively. "It's all our property, and you're not to sell a single article to anybody else."

"Certainly not, Master Tom."

"Especially the Grammar School chaps. If Frank Monk and his lot come along, don't forget to tell them that you've sold right out to St. Jim's."

Mrs. Murphy smiled.

"Deary me, what a boy you are, Master Tom!"

"It's a bargain, Mrs. Murphy."

"Yes, indeed."

"Good! We've finished here, you chaps. Come on!"

The juniors crowded out of the shop in high spirits. Thirty-five pounds was a large sum of money, certainly; but it would hardly be missed out of two hundred pounds. And Mrs. Murphy's establishment was the best supplied of its kind in Rylcombe. The other shops would be sold out at lower figures.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his good humour quite recovered by this time, "I wegard this as wippin', you know!"

"Gorgeous," said Herries.

"Hallo! Grammar School cads!" shouted Manners.

A youth with a mortar-board cap tilted on the back of his head came swinging down the old village street. Another fellow in a similar cap followed him round the corner. The first was Frank Monk, the son of the headmaster of Rylcombe Grammar School, the second was Gordon Gay, both of the Fourth Form at the Grammar School. They stopped as they saw the Saints. Between St. Jim's and the Grammar School warfare had existed ever since Dr. Monk opened his establishment on the outskirts of the village of Rylcombe.

"Grammar cads!"

"St. Jim's worms!"

Tom Merry whispered hurriedly to his companions.

"They can't be allowed in the village now. They'll find out what we're up to—and they may offer higher prices and bust the game. Chase them!"

"Good egg!"

And the Saints rushed at the Grammarians. They did not stand upon ceremony. Frank Monk and Gordon Gay had to be got rid of till the "Coronation corner" was complete, and any means were good enough. In a moment the two Grammarians were surrounded.

CHAPTER 5.

Eggy.

GORDON GAY and Frank Monk backed against a shop-front. It happened to be the shop of Mr. Sands, the village grocer. Outside, great boxes of eggs were exposed for sale, and the great boxes covered the flanks, as it were, of the Grammarians, on either side, leaving them open to only a frontal attack. They put up their hands at once. Under the circumstances, with the odds so heavily against them, the Grammar School chums would not have disdained to take a flight. But they had no chance.

"We're sorry," said Tom Merry, taking off his hat politely, "but we can't allow you here."

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "Have you bought up the village street?"

"Not exactly; but we can't allow Grammar cads around. Run back to school."

"No fear!"

"We're willing to give you a couple of minutes start."

"Rats!"

"Will you buzz off?"

"What for?"

"Because we tell you to."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No, we won't!" roared Gordon Gay wrathfully. "We won't do anything of the sort. Go and eat coke!"

"We want the village this morning," said Tom Merry, still with a manner of the greatest politeness. "We can't allow you here."

The two Grammarians simply snorted.

"Yaas, deah boys, that's how it is," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The best thing you can do is to wun."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Are you going?"

"No!" roared Frank Monk and Gordon Gay together.

"'Ere, don't you row outside my shop, please," said Mr. Sands, coming to his door, with an uneasy eye on his egg-boxes. "Go a little further on, please."

Tom Merry laughed.

"We want some eggs, Mr. Sands," he said.

"Yessir," said Mr. Sands, all business at once. "Certainly, Master Merry. 'Ow many, sir?"

"Say three dozen," said Tom Merry. "Catch!"

He tossed a five-shilling piece to the grocer.

"Thank you, Master Merry! I'll select them for you."

"Thanks, we'll select them ourselves," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "They're intended as a present to our friends here, so we want to select them ourselves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well, Master Merry——"

"Look here——" began Frank Monk.

"Look here——" Gordon Gay started.

"Three shies a penny, and all the Grammarians you knock down!" sang out Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's juniors grasped the eggs from the box.

Biff! Biff!

Splash!

Crunch!

Eggs spattered upon the shop-front round the two Grammarians. They spattered upon the Grammarians, too. Frank Monk gave a wild yell as an egg broke on his waistcoat, and Gordon Gay roared with a breaking egg on his chin.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monk and Gordon Gay clutched at the box nearest them, and hurled them back. As they stooped, fresh eggs caught them on the ears, and the eyes, and the necks. They roared, and, half-blinded by broken eggs, began to hurl the same missiles wildly back, almost at random.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Mr. Sands. "'Old on! You ain't paid for them heggs!"

But Gay and Monk did not stop to think of that. They only wanted to get some of their own back, so to speak, on the Saints.

Biff! Biff! Squelch!

"Ow!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Ow! You uttah wottah! Yoop!"

An egg had caught the swell of St. Jim's fair and square upon his aristocratic nose. It broke there—naturally—and squelched all over his face. As a rule, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cultivated the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. But an egg on the nose would surely disturb the serenity of the Vere-de-Verest of the noble line of Vere de Vere. It disturbed D'Arcy's, at all events.

He yelled and jumped into the air.

"Ow! Groo! Ooooch! Oh! Ah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

Biff! Biff! Squel-l-l-lch!

"Yawooh! Ow! You beastly cads! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. pelted away wildly. Their fire was too hot for the Grammarians, and Frank Monk and Gordon Gay sprang over the egg-boxes—at a ruinous cost in eggs—and scrambled away.

"Pelt them!" roared Blake.

"Go it!"

"Pile in!"

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

Eggs, most of them sent with deadly aim, followed the Grammarians down the street. The Saints rushed after them pelting.

Squelch! Squelch! Squelch!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Monk turned round and shook his fist furiously.

"We'll come back with a crowd!" he roared. "We'll squash you! We'll pulverise you! We'll—— Ow! Ow! Groo!"

Three or four eggs caught Frank in the mouth, and he ceased abruptly, and ran on. More eggs broke on the back of his head. He disappeared round a turning with Gordon Gay. The chums of St. Jim's were left yelling with laughter.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry, wiping his eyes with an eggy hand, and thereby certainly not improving the appearance of his face. "My hat! Ha, ha, ha! I think it was worth the price in eggs. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Gwoo! Yawooh!"

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

"Yow! Ow! Look at me!" roared the swell of St. Jim's. "Look at my face! Ow! I'm smothered! Ow! Yah! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors gathered round D'Arcy, roaring. As it happened, the Grammarians' shots had mostly gone at random, and D'Arcy was the only one of the Saints who had been hit.

But D'Arcy's state was certainly deplorable.

He was reeking with eggs—and not of the freshest variety, either. He scraped at his face, and gasped, and sniffed, and snorted. The juniors laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"You uttah asses!' shouted D'Arcy. "I uttahly fail to see any cause of mewwiment. I wegard this as wotten! Those Gwammah cads are disgustin' wottahs!"

"How are they?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Look at the way they've tweated me!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"But you had just biffed Monk in the eye with an egg," said Figgins.

"That is quite anothah mattah, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to go and get cleaned up somewhah," said D'Arcy. "I am in a most disgustin' state. It's wotten."

"Some of the eggs are, I think," said Blake, sniffing. "Don't come too near me, Gussy, please, I'm rather particular about scents."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy glared at the juniors through a film of egg, and tramped off in high dudgeon. Mr. Sands came forward in a state of great agitation.

"Who's going to pay for my heggs?" he demanded. "There's thirty shillings' worth busted hover your little games. Who's going to pay for them, I'd like to know?"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry, "we'll settle for the lot—though really you ought to charge them to Frank Monk and Gay—they've had them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Sands smiled. He could afford to smile when he was assured that the eggs would be paid for. As a matter of fact, he was not likely to lose on the transaction if he charged thirty shillings for the eggs that had been broken.

"Werry well, young gents," he said, quite amiably. "Shall I make out the bill?"

"Yes, and send it up to the school to me," said Tom Merry. "I'll pay this afternoon—we're in funds to-day, Mr. Sands."

"Werry well, sir."

And the juniors, quite satisfied with the way they had got rid of the Grammarians, expensive as it was, walked on to their next place of business. What was thirty shillings' worth of eggs to a party of fellows who had just returned from the South Seas with a treasure?

"Those bounders will be back with a crowd soon, as Monkey said," Tom Merry remarked. "We shall have to buck up and get through before they come."

"Yes, rather!"

And the juniors hurried into the shop of Mr. Wragge, the draper. Mr. Wragge's shop was gaily decorated with Coronation bunting, and he had a placard in his window that announced a "cheap line" of such goods within. And that "cheap line" Tom Merry meant to buy up from start to finish.

CHAPTER 6.

Many Purchases.

MR. WRAGGE knew the juniors well, and he came forward smiling to serve them. He opened his eyes wide when Tom Merry explained what he wanted.

"All the flags, all the bunting, all the decorations I've got," Mr. Wragge gasped; "but that will come to about twenty pound, young gents."

"Twenty pounds?" asked Tom Merry, in a business-like tone.

"Yes, Master Merry."

Tom Merry made a note in his pocket-book.

"Very well, that will cover the lot?"

"Yes, I suppose so, but——"

"Send the lot up to St. Jim's, then."

"Eh?"

"Send the lot up. We'll pay on delivery. You can send the exact bill with the goods; payment on delivery."

"But——"

"And mind, your whole stock belongs to us, and you're not to sell a rag or a flag to anybody else to-day."

Mr. Wragge looked puzzled.

"Certainly not, Master Merry, if you buy up my whole stock of decorations," he said. "But—but is it a joke?"

"Yes, it's a sort of joke," said Tom Merry, laughing; "but not on you, Mr. Wragge. We'll pay for the goods in cash, honour bright."

"I know I can trust you, Master Merry."

"When can we have the things?"

"By one o'clock, sir."

"Good enough. Don't forget to send the bill."

Mr. Wragge smiled. He was not likely, really, to forget that little item.

"Very well, Master Merry."

"If any chaps from the Grammar School come along for decorations and things, you've sold out, and you can't let them have anything," Tom Merry said impressively.

The genial draper laughed. He knew of the warfare between the two schools, and he understood, now.

"Certainly, Master Merry. I can't sell my stock twice over," he said. "I'll remember. It's all yours, and it goes up to the school this afternoon."

"Thank you, Mr. Wragge!"

The juniors walked out of the shop. Outside, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy met them. His face was clean, now, but there were traces of egg all over his clothes. D'Arcy's face was red with rubbing, and redder with indignation.

"Well, I must say you look a little cleaner," said Blake, with a critical look at the swell of the Fourth.

"I have had a wash at the Red Lion," said D'Arcy. "The washin' accommodation is vewy wotten, and they could not let me have any scented soap. But I suppose a fellow must be pwepared to wuff it in the countwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where next?" asked Digby.

"Mr. Bunn's," said Tom Merry.

They walked into Mr. Bunn's shop. Mr. Bunn was a gentleman who supplied picnics, and catered for weddings and funerals, and other exhilarating entertainments. Mr. Bunn was an old acquaintance of the juniors of St. Jim's, who often patronised his establishment, and he greeted them with much warmth.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bunn!" said Tom Merry, pleasantly. "You cater for feeds, and things, don't you?"

Mr. Bunn smiled.

"Yes, Master Merry," he said. "If you were thinking of getting married——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"Well, I'm not!" he said. "I want——"

"Relation died, perhaps," said Mr. Bunn, sympathetically. "You want a nice little spread for a funeral? Are you burying him with ham?"

"Groo! It's not a funeral!"

"Christening, perhaps. One of you young gents has got a little brother or a little sister, and you want——"

"Rats!"

Mr. Bunn rubbed his hands.

"Is it a picnic, then?" he asked.

"No."

"A dance, perhaps."

"Wathah not!"

"Ahem!"

Mr. Bunn was evidently at a loss. If it was not a birth, a marriage, a funeral, a picnic, or a dance, he did not see what the juniors required his services for.

"We're standing a Coronation feed," said Tom Merry, in explanation.

"H'm! We make a special line of Coronation feeds," said Mr. Bunn, courteously.

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's got to be a big one," he said. "The fact is, we want to buy up your whole stock of catering—all you've got in the eating and drinking line."

Mr. Bunn gasped.

"But—but that would cost you about thirty pounds!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry put the figure down in his book.

"Very well, Mr. Bunn. Thirty pounds?"

"About that. But——"

"Send the lot up to the school," said Tom Merry. "I'll pay for the things on delivery. Put the bill along with them, and tell the carrier to wait."

"Very well, Master Merry."

And the juniors left the shop, leaving Mr. Bunn in a dazed state.

"Old Popper's next, for the fireworks," said Tom Merry. "We've got a good many coming from Mother Murphy's——"

"But we've got to clear out all Rylcombe."

"True."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Popper had in a large supply of fireworks. Rumours of intended celebrations at St. Jim's and the Grammar School had reached his ears, and he had laid in a stock as if for the fifth of November. He grinned a cheerful and welcoming grin as the juniors crowded into his little shop.

"Fireworks, young gents?" he asked.

"Yes, please."

"Crackers——"

"Yes."

"Roman candles——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Squibs——"

"You bet!"

"Anything else?"

"Yes. Everything you've got."

"Eh?"

"We want the whole stock. Send it all up to the school this afternoon, and we'll pay on delivery," said Tom Merry. "My word's all right—eh?"

"As good as gold, Master Merry," said Mr. Popper, with a beaming smile. "I'll send the bill, and tell my boy to wait."

"That's right. How much?"

"It will be a matter of fifteen pounds or so, Master Merry."

"Good!"

"That ain't too much?"

"No. We want the whole lot. And mind, you're not to sell any of our fireworks to anybody else!"

Mr. Popper hesitated.

"I was rather expecting some of the young gents from the Grammar School to come in for some of 'em," he remarked.

"That's just what we're going to stop," said Tom Merry. "We're going to buy up the lot. You're not to sell so much as a single cracker to the Grammar School."

"B-b-but——"

"Mind, all your stock belongs to us, now, and we don't allow so much as a squib to go out of the family!" said Monty Lowther. "We can pay for the lot quite easily. We've got two hundred quids up at the school."

"Soveweigns, deah boy!"

"Quids!"

"Soveweigns!"

"Quids!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass——"

"That's all," said Tom Merry. "Come on, you fellows! We'd better buck up, or Monkey and the other monkeys will be round before we've finished."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry & Co. went on their way rejoicing.

CHAPTER 7.

Something Like a Fight!

"BAI Jove! Look out! Gwammah cads!"

Tom Merry & Co. had just come out of their eighth establishment. Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Sands, Mr. Wragge, Mr. Bunn, and Mr. Popper had been visited and dealt with as we have described. After them came Mr. Brick, the baker and confectioner; Mr. Knowles, of the fancy shop; and Mr. Speckles, the greengrocer. They had been dealt with quite easily and satisfactorily. The story of the sudden and surprising wealth of the St. Jim's juniors was all through the village by this time, and nobody had any hesitation in letting anything go up to the school on trust. Besides, Tom Merry's word was known to be as good as gold. Whole stocks had been bought up, and delivery had been promised for noon or soon after. And the juniors chuckled when they thought of the looks of the fellows at St. Jim's when the consignments began to arrive. As for Taggles, the porter, he was certain to be in a flaming rage all the afternoon. And as for the Grammarians, Tom Merry & Co. chuckled and chuckled at the thought of them.

The "corner" was complete.

Everything available in Rylcombe in the way of tuck, of Coronation decorations, and so forth, had been bought up.

Little supplies at little shops the juniors had bought up for cash. Big supplies at the biggest shops they had ordered from end to end, to be paid for on delivery. Rylcombe was cleared out. It was close upon dinner-time, now, and as the celebration was to be in the afternoon, it was time to be getting back to St. Jim's. But Tom Merry & Co. did not expect that they would get back without a brush with the Grammarians, and they were right.

Frank Monk & Co. did not yet know the trick that had been played. They were going to stroll down in a leisurely way for their shopping, and did not dream that everything had been bought up over their heads—yet. When they discovered it—the St. Jim's juniors simply yelled at the prospect.

The last visit had been made, the last bargain had been struck, and the corner was complete; and then, as Tom Merry & Co. came out of Mr. Speckles's greengrocery shop, the Grammarians came in sight, and Arthur Augustus gave the alarm.

Frank Monk had said that he would return with a crowd—and he had!

It was a crowd—or rather, a horde—of fellows, in mortar-board caps, that came pouring along the old High Street of Rylcombe. They had evidently been searching up and down for Tom Merry & Co., and they came upon the Saints just as they came out of the greengrocer's shop.

Tom Merry & Co. halted. There were a dozen of them, and all of them were fighting men of renown in their Forms at St. Jim's But the name of the Grammarians was legion. Frank Monk and Gordon Gay were at the head of them, and there were Harry and Jack Wootton, and Lane and Carboy, and Tadpole, and Carpenter, and at least two dozen more. The odds were very great.

The Grammarians gave a whoop of triumph at the sight of the St. Jim's caps.

"Here they are!"

"St. Jim's cads!"

"Go for 'em!"

And the Grammar School came on with a rush.

"Bai Jove! We're howwibly outnumbahed, deah boys," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pewwaps a mastahly wetweat would be the pwopah capah."

"Masterly or not, we'd better retreat," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We can't fight four to one. March!"

The juniors retreated in the direction of St. Jim's. Their business in Rylcombe was done, and they were quite willing to yield the ground to their rivals of the Grammar School.

But Frank Monk & Co. were not disposed to allow them to escape so easily. The Grammarians came on with a rush.

The Saints would not actually run. And if they had run, it would have been of little use, for the Grammar School fellows could probably have run just as fast. And as Blake said, if a fellow was to be punched, it was better to be punched on the face than on the back. The juniors backed away towards the school in good order, keeping close together, and facing the enemy. The Grammarians came on, rushing, and hurled themselves upon the square.

The square did not last long after that. It was broken up at once, and in a few seconds a terrific battle was being waged, in the wildest confusion. Fellows rushed at one another, hitting out, and closing and rolling on the ground, and scrambling and falling over one another.

It was such a wild and whirling fight as the quiet shades of Rylcombe Lane had seldom seen before.

"Come on, deah boys!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, waving his hand. "Follow me, deah boys! Pitch into the wottahs like anythin'!"

With his eyeglass floating at the end of its cord, and his silk hat on the back of his head, D'Arcy rushed into the fray.

Biff, biff, biff!

Arthur Augustus was a terrible man of war when his aristocratic blood was up. Frank Monk took Gussy's left in the eye, and Gordon Gay received his right on the nose. Then Lane caught the left again, and Carboy an upper-cut. Four juniors sprawled on the ground, but unfortunately one of them caught the leg of Arthur Augustus, and pulled him over, too.

"Ow!" gasped D'Arcy, as he staggered. "Yow! Leggo, you wottah!"

Bump!

He dropped on Gordon Gay, knocking all the breath out

of the Australian Grammarian. Gordon Gay gave a terrific grunt.

"Gro-o-o-oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

Three or four Grammarians seized upon Arthur Augustus, and rolled him over in the dust. They seemed to take a sort of fiendish delight in rubbing his beautiful clothes into dust and puddles. He struggled and yelled, and shouted for rescue, but the other Saints were all attacked by heavy odds, and far too busy defending themselves to think of Arthur Augustus.

"Ow! You wottahs! Welease me at once! Wescue! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Roll him over!"

"Biff him!"

"Sit on his hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Squelch!

It was a mournful sound as a Grammar youth sat on D'Arcy's silk hat. That topper was not likely to be of much use again—at least, as a topper. It looked something like an opera-hat closed, now; but it was not likely to look like one when it was opened again.

D'Arcy gasped.

"Oh! You uttah wottahs! Ah! Ow! My hat! Bai Jove! Yawooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sock it to them!" shouted Tom Merry. "Buck up, St. Jim's!"

"Hurray!"

"Buck up, Grammar School!"

"Go it!"

"Pile in!"

Away up the road the Saints went, driven by numbers. They did their best to keep together, but the road was dotted with Saints in the grasp of Grammarians, who bumped them in the dust with great energy.

Within sight of the old tower of St. Jim's the Grammarians kept at it, and Tom Merry & Co. were quite fagged out by that time, and bumped and bumped till they seemed all aching bones and dust. Still, they were putting up a fight, and the row in the lane had attracted attention from the school now, and help was coming.

Pratt, of the New House, lounging at the school gates, was the first to see the row, and he yelled an alarm into the quad.

"Grammar cads! Rescue!"

Then Pratt started down the road.

In about five seconds there was a crowd after Pratt. Kerruish, of the Fourth, and Hancock and Macdonald and Gore and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn and Jameson and Gibson, of the Third, and French and Jimson and other fellows came dashing out, and more and more and more followed.

Then it was the Grammarians' turn to retreat.

Frank Monk rapped out a brief order:

"Buzz off!"

And the Grammarians "buzzed."

Down the road they went, with yells of laughter and defiance, leaving Tom Merry & Co. dusty and done in the lane.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, staggering out of a mass of fern in a dry ditch. "Bai Jove! I feel howwid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Merry gasped. "You look horrid, too!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I can't look much howwidah than you do!"

"I shouldn't wonder. Ow! My nose!"

"Oh! My eye!"

"Groo! M-m-my mouth! Oh!"

"Afther thim!" roared Reilly, of the Fourth, dashing up. "Afther the heathens! We'll wipe up the ground with thim intirely!"

And he dashed on in pursuit, with a dozen others. But Frank Monk & Co. were going fast now, and the pursuit was dropped before the village was reached. There were crowds more of Grammarians there now, ready to take part in the fray. And Tom Merry & Co. were quite spent. Even Figgins said that he hadn't another punch left in him.

"My only hat!" Monty Lowther exclaimed, looking round at the dilapidated crowd. "I must say we look pretty! I've got a black eye for the Coronation, at all events!"

"I don't believe my nose will ever go straight again!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind; we've done the Grammarians!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather! Hurray!"

"Huwway, deah boys!"

"Done the Grammarians!" repeated Clifton Dane.

"Well, if you say you've done them, I suppose you have; but I must say that it looks remarkably as if they've done you!"

"Weally, Dane——"

"But we've done them, all the same," said Tom Merry. "We've cleared Rylcombe out of supplies for the Coronation. Frank Monk & Co. are going to celebrate, and they won't be able to get a rag of bunting, or a penny flag, or a farthing dip, or any tuck of any sort. What do you think of that?"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"It must have cost a jolly lot!" said Bernard Glyn.

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's cost a hundred and fifty pounds!"

"A hundred and fifty pounds!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was the son of a millionaire, and used to plenty of money; but a sum like that took even his breath away.

"Yes. We're using up the gold we brought home from the South Seas to celebrate the Coronation," Tom Merry explained. "There will be nearly fifty pounds left still for anything more that we need."

"By Jove!"

"We shall have a jollification here such as St. Jim's has never seen," said Manners. "I'm going to write up a description of it for the 'Weekly,' and put in a picture of Gussy coronating!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Seems to me that I want a wash," said Kerr. "Let's get in!"

"Good egg!"

And they got in. They were indeed very much in need of a wash and a change after that desperate battle. But for all the damage to clothing and to features, for swollen noses and darkened eyes, they had the great consolation—they had utterly and thoroughly "done" the Grammarians.

CHAPTER 8.

Cash on Delivery.

TOM MERRY threw himself upon the armchair in his study, and laughed. There was a bluish circle round one of Tom Merry's eyes, and there was a rather rich shade of pink on his nose. He had an ache in his jaw, and another ache in his elbow, and a third ache in one leg. Such a "scrap" as that with the Grammarians could not be got through scatheless. But Tom Merry did not care. He was feeling in very high feather just now.

The juniors had cleaned up in time for dinner, and now, after dinner, they were waiting for the consignments to arrive from Rylcombe. Tom Merry laughed; he could not help it. The idea of all the tuck and all the Coronation decorations in the village being delivered in vast quantities at St. Jim's was too comic.

"I wonder whether the Grammarians have started shopping yet?" he said.

Monty Lowther grinned.

"I don't suppose they'll be in a hurry," he said. "They'll reckon they're holding the village now, and that we sha'n't show up there again."

"They can hold it," grinned Manners. "They're welcome. Ha, ha, ha!"

Toby, the School House page, put his fat and grinning face in at the door.

"Master Merry, if you please——"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"The carrier 'ave brought some boxes from Mrs. Murphy's, sir," said Toby. "Which Mr. Taggles wants to know where they're to go, sir, as they can't come hup to the study?"

"In the Form-room, of course."

"Werry good, sir!"

And Toby vanished.

"I've asked Mr. Linton's permission to have them in the Form-room," Tom Merry explained. "As there's no lessons to-day, that will be all right. Mrs. Murphy's lot has come first. We'd better go down and see them in."

"Yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three went downstairs. A good crowd of juniors had gathered to watch the arrival of the consignment from Mrs. Murphy's. Tuck and fireworks and all sorts and conditions of things had arrived in boxes, baskets, parcels, and packages. Mr. Craggs, the carrier, was bringing them in with the help of Taggles, the porter. Taggles wore a Jovelike frown.

He stopped under a big box outside the Form-room door, and leaned it against the wall to rest, and blinked at the chums of the Shell.

"Which it's a 'ot day, Master Merry!" said Taggles.

"It often is in June," said Monty Lowther blandly. "Sno' good expecting snow, you know!"

It took nearly a minute for that little joke to dawn upon Taggles. Then he smiled in a rather weak way.

"Yes, Master Lowther; you will 'ave your little joke, sir! It's 'ot, and these 'ere things is 'eavy!"

"How singular!" said Manners.

He was referring to Taggles's verb, but the porter was quite oblivious of the irony of his remark.

"Makes a man thirsty!" said Taggles.

"Shall I fetch you some nice, clear, cool water from the tap, Taggles?" asked Levison, of the Fourth, who was among the lookers-on.

Taggles gave Levison one look, and shouldered the box, and carried it in.

By the time the whole consignment had been delivered there was quite a stack in the middle of the Form-room.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "That looks wippin', you know!"

"Yes, rather!"

The carrier, wiping his perspiring brow with a red handkerchief, presented a bill to Tom Merry for payment.

"Which I'm to take the money for Mrs. Murphy, Master Merry, sir!" he said. "Thirty-eight pounds seventeen shillings and threepence halfpenny, sir!"

"It's grown a bit since we saw Mrs. Murphy," Kerr remarked. "I suppose it's all right? You've got the tin, Tom Merry?"

"Good! I'll fetch the money down. You can receipt the bill, Mr. Craggs!"

"Yes, sir."

The carrier wetted his stump of a pencil, and scratched his name on the bill. Tom Merry went up to the study for the money.

Tom Merry felt in his pocket for the key of the cupboard in the study wall, and unlocked it.

The box lay inside, just where he had left it.

Tom Merry picked it up, and carried it downstairs under his arm. Outside the Form-room, in the wide, flagged passage, a crowd of fellows waited round the carrier. Mr. Craggs had the receipted bill in his hand.

There was a general movement of interest as Tom Merry appeared with the little box under his arm. It was not often that the juniors had a chance of seeing thirty-nine sovereigns counted out of a box containing two hundred of them.

The juniors crowded round to look.

"Pway don't cwush, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a tone of remonstrance. "You are wumplin' my jacket, weally, Weilly!"

"Faith, and I was quite aware of that, Gussy darling."

"Weally, Weilly——"

"Order!" said Monty Lowther. "Count out the quids, Tommy."

"Soveweigns, deah boy."

"Quids!"

"Soveweigns——"

"Quids——"

"Hallo! Look here!" shouted Tom Merry. "What does this mean?"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Bai Jove!"

Amazed looks were bent upon the box. Tom Merry had unlocked it and opened it, and instead of the rolls of packed sovereigns inside, he revealed a closely-packed little heap of pebbles. The gold had been taken out, and the pebbles, evidently, had been crammed in to give the box the same weight as before, so that the abstraction of the money would not be discovered until the box was opened.

There was not a single gold coin, or a coin of any sort, in the box. But on the inside of the lid, in ink with a rough brush, had been scrawled the word:

"Rats!"

That was all.

"Rats!" repeated Tom Merry dazedly. "But where's the money?"

"Where are the quids?"

"The soveweigns, deah boy——"

Tom Merry's brow grew dark.

"I suppose this is a rotten jape!" he exclaimed. "Somebody has taken out the sovereigns and put in these stones instead, for a silly lark. The chap who has taken the money had better own up, and bring it back."

Silence.

"Taking money for a lark is next door to stealing, and likely enough to be taken for stealing," said Tom Merry. "One can't help suspecting that if the rotter isn't found out, he might keep the money. Who has taken this?"

"Was there ever any there?" asked Mellish, of the Fourth, with a sneer.

Tom Merry started and looked at him.

"There were two hundred sovereigns in this box," he said.

"I never saw them."

"Neither did I," said Crooke, of the Shell, with a sneering laugh. "I remember saying to Mellish, too, that I believed it was all Shell swank about the treasure."

"Yes, rather!" said Levison.

Tom Merry turned on him in a flash.

"Why, you saw the money!" he exclaimed. "You came into our study while we had the box open on the table, and you saw the gold in it."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I saw something," he replied. "You wouldn't let me touch it, I remember that, and you chucked me out of the study before I could get near it. I've used gilded farthings myself, in conjuring tricks, and I dare say you know where to get them."

"You—you hound!"

Tom Merry made a step towards the cad of the Fourth.

Levison backed away. He did not intend to enter into conflict with the captain of the Shell; and he had said enough.

"Well, have it your way," he said. "If they were real sovereigns, I don't see where they've got to. Why don't you own up that you were japing us about the treasure, and that you brought back nothing at all."

"Weally, Levison——"

"We had two hundred quids," said Monty Lowther.

"Soveweigns, deah boy."

"And somebody's taken them," said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "I'm sure it's only a jape—a silly, rotten jape! But we can't pay for these things till we find them. Craggs, you'd better keep that bill. Tell Mrs. Murphy I've lost the money, and will send it to her the moment I find it."

Mr. Craggs hesitated

"Which Mrs. Murphy told me I was to take the money," he said slowly.

"You see it's lost."

"Yes, but——"

"You can take the stuff back again if you like," said Tom Merry, looking very worried. "I know I've no right to keep it unless I can pay for it. But you know me well enough, I should think, to know that that's all right."

"Yes, Master Merry; I'll leave it, and I'll tell Mrs. Murphy you're sending the money on," said the carrier.

"That's right."

And Mr. Craggs departed. Tom Merry was left looking at the pebbles packed in the little box, and the word scrawled on the lid.

"Rats!"

It was the only message left by the raider who had taken the two hundred sovereigns. Where was the money? Would the juniors ever see it again? Tom Merry thought of the consignments of goods that were arriving at St. Jim's that afternoon, and he wore a decidedly worried look. What was to be done if the money did not turn up?

CHAPTER 9.

Sold Out.

FRANK MONK strolled down the High Street of Rylcombe with his hands in his trousers-pockets, and his mortar-board at a rakish angle on the side of his head. Frank Monk had a black eye, but that was nothing to him. Gordon Gay, who strolled by his side, had a swollen nose, but he cared nothing. Lane and Carboy both showed signs of conflict. But they were in a jubilant mood.

"Licked!" said Frank Monk.

And Lane and Carboy chortled:

"Licked hollow!"

"Beaten to the wide," said Gordon Gay. "Biffed, beaten, done in, and done for! Squashed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rather think we've proved that the Grammar School is top dog this time," grinned Frank Monk.

"What-ho!"

"You bet!"

"The giddy Saints will have to hide their diminished heads," grinned Lane. "We've beaten them out of their giddy boots. And now——"

"Now for the celebration," said Monk. "My idea is to process up and down Rylcombe, and decorate the school, and make things hum generally, and finish up with a record feed."

"Good idea!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're in funds," said Frank. "We've raised twenty pounds by the Coronation subscription, and we ought to be able to do a lot of mafficking on that."

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, here's Mother Murphy's—we'll give her a line," said Frank. "She's a good old soul, and always gives you value for the money."

And the four Grammarians walked into Mrs. Murphy's little shop. The good dame looked a little self-conscious as she greeted them. She guessed what they had come for, and she wondered how they would take what she had to tell them.

"Good-day, Mrs. Murphy!" said Frank genially. "What have you got for us to-day?"

"Ahem, Master Monk——"

"We want tuck by the yard, and ginger-pop by the gallon, and flags and rags by the mile," said Carboy.

"Yes, rather!"

"Trot them out, Mrs. Murphy!"

"Ahem!"

"Twelve dozen jam-tarts," said Gordon Gay.

"Six dozen of ginger-beer——"

"Three dozen of lemonade——"

"A whole cake—one currant, one seed," said Lane; "and I think we'd better have a whole box of biscuits."

"Oh, certainly; yes!"

"And yards of bunting," said Monk. "We want to rig up all the Form-rooms in giddy colours."

"Excuse me, young gentlemen——"

"Make out a list, Monkey," said Gordon Gay. "We'll blow a fiver here, and then march on to the other places."

"Good egg!"

"Excuse me——" murmured Mrs. Murphy.

"Not at all; we sha'n't want any change from the fiver," said Monk. "Can you send the things up to the school in an hour?"

"You see——"

"Why, what's the matter, Mrs. Murphy?" asked Monk, in surprise. "You're not ill, are you?"

"Oh, no, Master Monk!"

"What's the trouble, then?"

"Nothing, Master Monk; only——"

"Well, out with it, you know."

"I—I can't sell you anything to-day. I'm so sorry."

"What!" roared the Grammarians.

"I—I haven't any stock left," faltered Mrs. Murphy.

"Haven't any stock."

"What!"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"What do you call this?"

"It's—it's all sold, young gentlemen. The young gentlemen from St. Jim's have bought it all up," said Mrs. Murphy.

"What! My hat!"

"Draw it mild!"

"They have really, Master Gay. They have lots of money, owing to finding Spanish treasures and things in the Australian bush, or something," said Mrs. Murphy, "and they've bought up my whole stock."

Frank Monk whistled.

"Well, they're doing things in style, and no mistake," he said.

"What-ho!" said Gordon Gay. "Fancy buying out a whole shop—the bounders! Well, there are other shops in Rylcombe."

"Yes, rather! Good-day, Mrs. Murphy!"

"Good-day, young gentlemen! I'm so sorry."

"Not at all; it's all right."

The Grammarians quitted the shop. Monk and his friends looked amazed; Gordon Gay extremely thoughtful. The young Australian was very keen, and he smelt a rat.

"We'll get along to Mr. Bunn's," said Frank. "He can do us down quite as well as Mrs. Murphy could, and in fact better; only I wanted to stick to the old firm."

"Good!" said Gordon Gay.

He spoke in such a peculiar tone that the others stopped and stared at him.

"What's the matter?" asked Lane.

"Oh, nothing!"

"You've got something on your mind. What is it?"

"Let's go and see Bunn," said the Cornstalk evasively.

"Come on, then!"

The Grammarian juniors walked into Mr. Bunn's elegant establishment. Mr. Bunn greeted them with an expansive smile.

"Glad to see you, young gentlemen. What a fine day for the Coronation!"

"Yes—and for a jollification, too," said Frank Monk. "We're going to put you on your mettle as a caterer, Mr. Bunn."

"Ahem!"

"We want ten pounds' worth of tuck," said Lane; "and we want it delivered at the school in an hour or less."

"We'll select the stuff now——"

"Ahem!"

"What on earth are you a-hemming about?" demanded Frank. "I suppose we can have the tuck, can't we?"

"I'm sorry, young gents——"

"Eh?"

"I'm afraid I can't supply you with anything to-day."

"What?" roared Monk.

"Why?" shrieked Carboy.

"I'm sold out."

"Sold out?"

"Yes, young gents. I'm sorry, but Master Merry of St. Jim's has bought up all my stock, and I haven't anything left till to-morrow."

The Grammarians stared at him blankly. Gordon Gay burst into a yell.

"I knew it! They're all sold out—and we're sold, too! It's a giddy corner!"

CHAPTER 10.

Done Brown!

"A—A—A CORNER!"

"Yes, a giddy corner!"

"What are you getting at?" demanded Frank Monk warmly. "What the dickens do you mean by a corner?"

"I mean what I say—a corner. Tom Merry & Co. have frozen us out."

"Frozen us out?"

"That's it! They've cornered all the stuff in the giddy town!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "They've cornered it, I tell you. Not a thing for us—tuck and decoration, bunting and buns—it's all the same—cornered, I tell you!"

"Oh, rats!" said Frank desperately. "There are other shops in Rylcombe——"

"You'll find it the same there."

"Oh, bosh!"

"Well, we shall see."

"You blessed Jonah, cheese it!" exclaimed Lane. "As for you, Bunn, you—you—you're a stale Bunn, a beastly hard old Bunn—and I wouldn't give twopence for you!"

And the Grammarians marched out of the shop, leaving Mr. Bunn smiling. He was sorry to displease customers certainly; but he had had a regular "shipping order" from Tom Merry & Co., and he was greatly elated by it—and business was business.

Frank Monk & Co. looked excited and exasperated as they turned into the street again. The Grammarians refused to believe Gordon Gay's theory of a corner, but in their hearts they felt that the Cornstalk was right.

And if Tom Merry & Co. had cornered all the supplies, what was to become of the Grammar School celebration? Already the time fixed for starting was close at hand.

"Let's go to the other shops!" exclaimed Lane.

"Yes, come on! Buck up!"

They tramped down to Mr. Wragge's. If they could not get tuck, they could get Coronation flags and banners and bunting there.

Mr. Wragge met them with a deprecating smile. He knew what they had come for.

"Can I show you something, young gents?" asked Mr. Wragge very politely. "Something new and nice in the way of handkerchiefs?"

"No, thanks!"

"Some really nice neckties——"

"Blow the neckties!"

"Fancy waistcoats at a low price," insinuated Mr. Wragge—"really handsome Coronation waistcoats——"

"Oh, rats!" said Frank Monk irritably. "We don't want any blessed handkerchiefs, or socks, or waistcoats—or even umbrellas. What we've come for is Coronation stuff—flags and rags and streamers."

"Ahem——"

"We want yards and yards of them——"

"Ahem!"

"Blessed if he hasn't caught Bunn's complaint, and started a-hemming!" Frank exclaimed, in exasperation. "Look here, Mr. Wragge——"

"Ahem!"

"Speak English, can't you!" howled Monk. "Have you got the stuff, or haven't you got the stuff?"

"I'm sorry, young gents——"

"Have you got the stuff?"

"I'm sold out."

"Sold out! Sold out! Rats! Bosh! Piffle!"

Mr. Wragge smiled softly and insinuatingly.

"I'm very sorry, young gents—such a rush of custom, owing to the Coronation, you see. Under the circumstances ——"

"Rats!" roared Gordon Gay. "You've only had one rush of custom—and that's from Tom Merry at St. Jim's!"

"Ahem——"

"Own up, Wragge! Isn't it?"

"You see, young gents——"

"My hat! He can't talk English, I suppose. Have you, or have you not, sold out your stock to Tom Merry of St. Jim's?" yelled Gordon Gay.

"Well, not to put too fine a point on it, I have, sir," said Mr. Wragge. "I'm extremely sorry to disappoint you, young gents; but business is business, and I couldn't refuse a really handsome wholesale order—at retail prices, too."

"Oh, rot!"

"You've got nothing left?"

"Not in that line, young gents—not a rag. But I can offer you a specially cheap line in silk handkerchiefs——"

"B-r-r-r-r!"

"Or what about this special line in umbrellas?" suggested Mr. Wragge. "A really handsome and cheap lot, and I'm able to sell them under cost, because I got the lot cheap from the lost property office. Silk umbrellas——"

"Silk rats!" said Monk. "Come on, you fellows! No good stopping here!"

"Will you look at these fancy waistcoats?" urged Mr. Wragge. "I like to please my customers. Handsome Coronation waistcoats, portraits of King George and Queen Mary on alternative buttons——"

But the Grammarians were not listening. They were tramping out of the shop in a state of great indignation.

"We shall find all the others just the same," said Gordon Gay, in a tone of conviction.

"Oh, rats! Do stop croaking!"

"I'm not croaking—it's the fact."

"Oh, hang the facts!"

"What I mean is——"

"Blow what you mean!"

"But I think——"

"Blow what you think!"

Frank was evidently not in a reasonable temper. The juniors tramped down to Mr. Popper's.

Mr. Popper put on a broad smile to greet them. He had an inkling of what the Saints had done to the Grammarians, and why they had done it, and Mr. Popper had a sense of humour, especially when he did a good stroke of business through the little joke.

"Good-afternoon, young gents!" said Mr. Popper.

"Look here, Mr. Popper," began Frank Monk heatedly, "we want some fireworks."

"Crackers and squibs and Roman candles and all sorts," said Lane.

"I am very sorry, young gents——"

"Nothing to be sorry about!" said Monk warmly. "No need to be sorry at getting a good order, I suppose?"

"You see——"

"We want about five pounds' worth——"

"You see——"

"Look here, hand out the fireworks——"

"I'm very sorry, young gents, but I'm sold out."

"You're jolly well not sold out!" roared Frank Monk. "Can't I see your blessed stock on your blessed shelves at this blessed minute?"

"All sold, young gents."

"Bosh!"

"Sold right out! Such a rush these Coronation times——"

"Rats! Look here——"

"Not a Roman candle left," said Mr. Popper blandly. "Not a squib—not so much as a cracker. Such a rush——"

"Piffle!" shrieked Carboy. "You mean, you've sold the lot over our heads to the young rotters from St. Jim's!"

"I've certainly had a really good order from Master Merry and some of his friends——"

"You ain't delivered the goods yet?"

"Ahem! Not yet!"

"Then you can't deliver 'em," said Monk. "You're jolly well going to sell them to us."

"Yes, rather!"

Mr. Popper shook his head.

"Can't be done, young gents. I've sold out my entire stock, and I can't sell goods twice over. Impossible! I'm sorry——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

And, with that disrespectful reply, the Grammarians tramped out. They left Mr. Popper smiling more broadly than ever.

"Try Brick's," said Lane.

"It will be the same thing," said Gordon Gay.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I'll shut up if you like; but I tell you it will be the same thing."

"Well, let it be the same thing, if it must—but, at all events, shut up, for goodness' sake!"

Frank was growing cross.

At Mr. Brick's they met with the reply they were growing accustomed to now. Mr. Brick was sorry—very sorry indeed—but he was sold out.

Mr. Speckles, the greengrocer, had only the same reply to make—sold out!

Sold out! Even Mr. Sands, the grocer, was sold out of all the things that the Grammar School juniors wanted to buy!

Sold out!

The Grammarians halted in the street at last, furious.

"Sold out!" said Gordon Gay. "I told you so!"

"Shut up!" shrieked Lane.

"Well, I did tell you so——"

"Cheese it!"

"I said——"

"Ring off!"

"What are we going to do now?" asked Carboy.

"Bump that silly ass of a Gay for his blessed croaking!" said Lane.

"Good egg!"

Gordon Gay backed away in alarm.

"Here, hold on—I mean, leggo! Yah! Oh!"

But the wrathful Grammarians collared the Wallaby and bumped him—and bumped him hard. They were in such an exasperated state that it was really necessary for them to bump somebody to let steam off, and Gay had worried them almost into hysterics with his Cassandra-like prophecies of evil. They bumped him—and bumped him again—and yet again.

They left him sitting in the dust, and gasping.

"There!" panted Frank Monk. "I feel better now."

"So do I," grinned Lane. "But what are we going to do?"

Monk gave a snort.

"We're going to do the Saints somehow! They've done us, and we're going to do them! We'll raise all the Grammar School, and go for them at St. Jim's, in their own blessed quad., if we can't think of anything better."

And the Grammarians said together:

"Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 11.

At a Standstill!

TOM MERRY stood with the box of pebbles in his hands after the carrier had gone. He hardly knew what to do.

And the fellows stood round him, looking at the box, too, with very peculiar expressions upon their faces.

The vanishing of the sovereigns from the box was very mysterious, to say the least of it, and there was only too much probability, to many minds, in the insinuations of Levison and Mellish and Crooke and their friends.

Had the sovereigns ever been there?

Only the chums of St. Jim's had seen them, with the exception of Levison; and Levison, who was an eyewitness, had declared his belief that the gold in the box was "faked."

Tom Merry's cheeks burned as he read the expressions in the juniors' faces.

He closed the box, his lips setting hard.

"If the fellow who cleared out these sovereigns is here, I warn him that he'd better own up," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was no reply. Some of the fellows grinned, others winked. Some of them looked grave and concerned.

"I don't believe whoever it was meant to steal them," said Tom Merry quietly; "but if they are not returned at once, I shall look upon the fellow as a thief."

"The cad had better own up," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Still no one spoke.

Kildare, of the Sixth, came along and stopped. There was something in the looks of the crowd of juniors that caught his attention.

"Anything wrong?" asked the St. Jim's captain.

"Yes, rather," said Blake.

"What is it?"

"Two hundred pounds lost."

Kildare almost jumped.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"Two hundred quids taken away," said Monty Lowther.

"Soveweigns, deah boy!"

Kildare glanced at the box.

"Explain this, Merry," he said.

"There isn't much to explain," said Tom Merry. "I had two hundred sovereigns in this box—the money we obtained

by selling the Spanish coins we brought home from the South Seas. Somebody has taken it away, I suppose, for a lark."

Kildare's brow grew very stern.

"I don't like that sort of lark," he said. "Taking a fellow's money is not a lark. You are sure the money was there, Merry?"

"Quite certain."

"Where did you put the box?"

"In the cupboard in my study."

"Did you lock the cupboard?"

"Yes."

"It was broken into?"

"No," said Tom Merry, with a troubled look. "It was locked when I went back to it just now to get the money."

"Then the thief must have had a key to it?"

"I suppose so."

"Did you know there was another key to the cupboard?"

"I wasn't aware of it. But it is not an uncommon sort of lock. There may be two or three like it in the School House."

"H'm! Was the money in that box?"

"Yes."

"Locked?"

"Yes."

"Did you leave the key in the box?"

"No."

"Then it must have been broken open?"

"No. I found it locked just as I had left it."

"Then the thief must have found a key to the box, as well as a key to the cupboard," said the St. Jim's captain, looking hard at the captain of the Shell.

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"Is that a common lock, too?"

"It's not an uncommon one."

"That box has only arrived at St. Jim's to-day, I understand?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"Then it is hardly likely that any fellow here would have a key to fit it," the St. Jim's captain said dryly.

"N-n-o."

"The lock must have been picked," said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It is very curious," said Kildare. "You are quite sure—quite sure that the money was in the box, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"You have not been japing the fellows, I mean, by pretending that you brought money home from the South Seas?"

Tom Merry flushed scarlet.

"I hope you don't think that I would tell lies, Kildare?" he exclaimed.

"I don't think you would, Merry, but—well, it's very curious. I can't think the money has been stolen, at all events. I should advise you to look for it. You may have locked it up somewhere and forgotten it, or it may be a jape of one of your own friends."

And Kildare walked away.

There were open sneers on a good many faces now. Levison burst into a chuckle.

"Anybody seen quids lying about in hundreds?" he asked.

The juniors laughed.

Tom Merry turned away. He took the box back to his study, the crimson flush still in his cheeks. He could see that very many of the fellows doubted whether the two hundred pounds had ever had any real existence at all; and certainly it did look very curious that the sovereigns, twice looked up, should have been abstracted without a trace of the thief being left.

Tom Merry's chums followed him. A very thoughtful and worried party gathered in the study in the Shell passage. The juniors were decidedly worried; they did not in the least know what to do.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, "it's wotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Horribly awkward."

Tom Merry's brows knitted in a deep frown.

"It's a rotten jape, and it's the kind of jape no decent fellow would play!" he exclaimed. "It's done by Levison or Mellish, or one of that lot."

Jack Blake nodded thoughtfully.

"I rather think so," he said. "But what have they done with the tin?"

"I hardly think they'd spend it."

"No; it's hidden, to put us into an awkward fix with the tradespeople we've ordered the things of," said Tom Merry. "My hat, what do you want, Toby?"

The School House page put his grinning face in at the study door.

"Goods arrived from Mr. Popper's, sir, and, please, the carman is waiting for the money. Things 'ave been put in the Form-room, sir."

Tom Merry looked harassed.

"Tell the carman we'll send the money, Toby."

"Yessir."

"Give him this shillin', too," said D'Arcy.

"Yessir."

Toby vanished, and the juniors exchanged glances almost of consternation. The goods were arriving now, thick and fast, and the money was gone!

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

Then there was silence.

It was broken soon by the return of Toby, the page. He was grinning more widely than before.

"If you please, sir——"

"Well, has the carman gone?" demanded Figgins.

"Oh, yes, sir; it isn't that. It's——"

"What is it, then?"

"Goods from Mr. Bunn, and the carman's waiting for the money, sir, if you please," said Toby.

Tom Merry groaned.

"Tell him we'll send it on."

"Yes, sir."

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 12.

Not a Fiver!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at one another in dismay.

What was to be done?

They discussed the matter, but endless discussion could not restore the lost two hundred pounds. Where was the money? They did not believe that it was stolen; it was merely hidden away by an ill-natured practical joker. But where? If they could not find it, how were they to pay for the goods they had ordered upon so reckless a scale—goods to the value of a hundred and fifty pounds!

It was very well to tell the carmen to tell the various dealers that the money would be sent. So it would be, if they could find it. But if they could not find it, they could not send it, and then there would be trouble.

Shopkeepers who had had their whole stock bought up, and had thereby been prevented from selling to other customers, were not likely to give unlimited credit for such large sums. And out of their limited pocket-money, the juniors had, of course, not the slightest hope or chance of ever being able to pay such bills. It was the South Sea treasure that was to have been expended that way. If the money was not found——

Visions of an army of indignant and exasperated tradespeople invading St. Jim's in search of payment came before the minds of the juniors.

What was to be done?

Even if they sent the goods back, they could not be returned in time for sale that day? The tradespeople would certainly refuse to take them back. They would want their money? And where was their money?

"I suppose you chaps can't raise very much among you?" asked Tom Merry, at last desperately.

"Bai Jove!"

"A few quids, perhaps," said Lowther.

"Soveweigns, deah boy!"

"Oh, ring off!"

"We might give them something on account," said Fatty Wynn hopefully. "Suppose we go and sample some of the tuck, and think it over."

"Fathead!"

"Look here——"

"Chump!"

"Well, I know I always think things over better when I'm having something to eat," said Fatty Wynn; "and, as a matter of fact, I'm getting hungry. I always get a specially good appetite in this June weather."

"Oh, blow your appetite!"

"We'll raise as much tin as we can, and see what we can give them on account," said Tom Merry. "Just a pound or two would be something; it would break our duck."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes."

"Bai Jove, I wemembah, now, I believe I have a fivah!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I'll go and look for it, deah boys. I had forgotten it."

The juniors grinned. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the only fellow at St. Jim's who was likely to forget whether he had a fiver or not.

The swell of St. Jim's left the study, and Tom Merry & Co. remained discussing the problem. It was, as Blake said, worse than Euclid, for there was no way out of it. What was to be done?

Toby looked in.

"Goods from Mr. Brick, sir."

The juniors groaned.

"And, please, sir, Mr. Brick's man is waiting for the money."

"Tell him to shove the things in the Form-room," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, sir."

"And tell him we'll send the money on."

"Yessir."

"I'm getting fed-up," said Blake. "When we find the chap who abstracted the cash, I vote that we rag him into little chips."

"Yes, rather!"

"We could send Brick Gussy's fiver on account, if the champion ass has found it!" said Monty Lowther. "Fancy a chap mislaying fivers."

"Oh, it's just like Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy (as depicted by Manners!) looking for his fiver.

"Let's go and look for him."

The juniors went to look for the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as a matter of fact, was very busy. He had looked through his desk and several drawers, and had not found the fiver. The elegant junior was a little absent-minded in money matters, and he could not remember where that fiver had gone.

"The question is, what clothes was I wearin' at the time?" he murmured, as he stood in Study No. 6, thinking it out. "I suppose I put it in a pocket. But what clothes were they? Was I wearin' my Etons, or a lounge jacket, or a Norfolk, or the velvet coat, or the grey, or the blue? It's weally quite a bothah!"

It really was.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy suddenly. "I wemembah now. I was wearin' these vewy things! I wemembah a speck of dust on the twousahs!"

And the swell of St. Jim's went methodically through his pockets for the fiver.

He turned out one pocket after another in search of the elusive banknote, and his face grew longer and more dismayed, for the fiver was not to be found.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy exclaimed at last. "Bai Jove! Where is that wotten fivah? Bai Jove! I weally twust I haven't lost it!"

He went through his pockets again, even pulling out the lining to make sure.

But the fiver was not to be found.

"Bai Jove! It's wotten!"

Blake looked in at the door, with the other fellows behind him.

"Gussy, you ass——"

Arthur Augustus turned round.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Have you found the giddy fiver?"

"It's a most extwaordinawy thing," said Arthur Augustus, "I haven't! I wemembah distinctly that I put it in one of the pockets of the clothes I am wearin' at the pwesent moment, and it is not here now."

"You careless ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"It's in some other pocket," said Tom Merry. "But it would take too many days, I suppose, to go through all your wardrobe?"

"Sure you haven't spent it?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You may have paid some old bill with it."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I can't wemembah doin' so," he said. "And I don't wemembah havin' bought anythin' new lately. Of course, a chap sometimes does a little shoppin', in ties and things, and it wuns into pounds, and he doesn't notice it. But——"

"How many silk toppers have you bought since we came back from the South Seas?" demanded Monty Lowther. "My aunt! There's a new bandbox standing there now."

D'Arcy glanced at the bandbox on the floor. He had not noticed it before, in his preoccupation in the search for the fiver.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Have you been bluing it on hats?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! I wemembah now ordewin' a new toppah fwom my hattah, and payin' his account. It was a vewy thoughtless thing to do, I admit. A chap can be fah too hasty in payin' his accounts!"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

"You fathead!"

"You frabjous ass!"

"Weally, deah boys, I suppose a chap must have a hat or two," said D'Arcy. "Undah the circs., you see, I considah——"

"Ass!" roared the juniors in chorus.

And Jack Blake in his wrath gave the bandbox a kick that carried it across the study.

D'Arcy uttered a horrified exclamation, and chased after it, and the juniors tramped out of the study in great wrath. Manners was grinning.

"No good growling," he said. "It's Gussy all over! I'll do a picture of him for the 'Weekly,' searching for that fiver with the blessed bandbox under his eyes all the time. It will be funny."

And Manners did, and the picture duly appeared in the pages of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

But for the present the juniors were thinking not of college papers, but of paying their bills.

Toby brought the news that Mr. Brick's man had left the goods, and gone to report to his master that payment

"GEM" FREE HAMPER WINNERS.

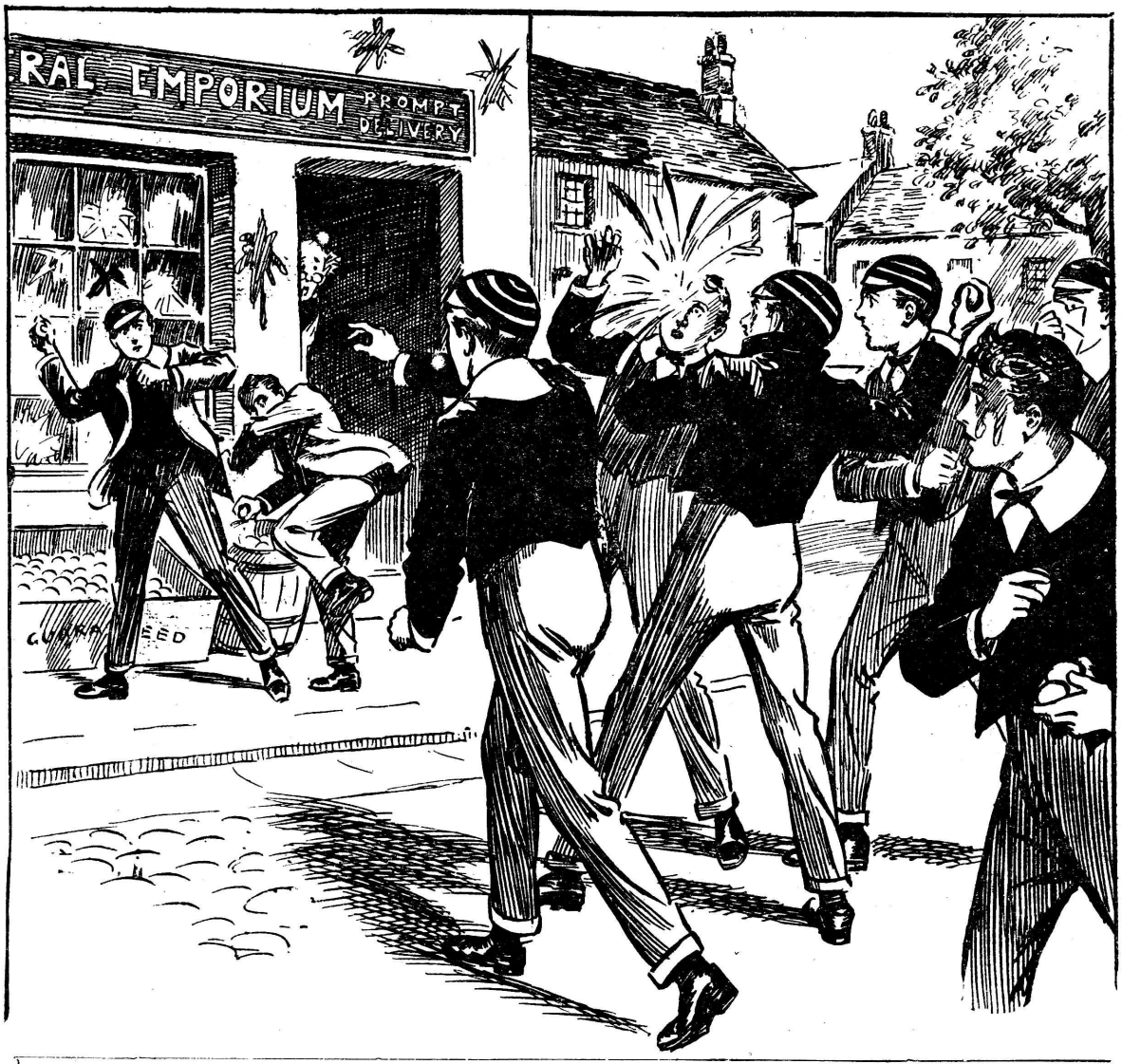
The boys marked with a X on the photographs published on the back page of No. 170 of the "GEM" Library, having sent in their applications, have duly received the "GEM" Free Hampers. The names and addresses of the lucky winners who attend Leicester Road Council School, Salford, and Trafford Road Council School, Salford, are as follows:

LEICESTER ROAD COUNCIL SCHOOL.

MASTER B. CLEGG, 65, Weatherell Street, Higher Broughton, Manchester.
MASTER G. BALMFORTH, 54, Wellington Street, E., Higher Broughton, Manchester.
MASTER O. HALL, 39, Wellington Street, E., Higher Broughton, Manchester.

TRAFFORD ROAD COUNCIL SCHOOL.

MASTER R. LAMB, 74, Elizabeth Street, Salford, Manchester.
MASTER J. MARSHALL, 24, Tyler Street, Salford, Manchester.
MASTER C. J. MOORE, 101, Hodge Lane, Salford, Manchester.



"Pelt them!" roared Blake, and Tom Merry & Co. pelted away wildly. Biff! Splash! Eggs spattered upon the shop-front round the two Grammarians, and they spattered upon the Grammarians themselves. (See page 6.)

would be forwarded; and he brought the news, at the same time, that the goods from the fancy shop in Rylcombe had arrived, and that the carman had presented a little bill.

"My hat!" said Blake. "What's to be done?"

Monty Lowther gave an involuntary chuckle.

"It looks to me as if the shopkeepers will be done,"

"Oh, don't be funny, Lowther!"

"Tell him we'll send the money on, Toby," said Tom Merry, looking terribly worried.

"Yes, sir."

Ten minutes later Toby reappeared. His face was wreathed in smiles, and no wonder. He bore a message that Mr. Speckles's cart had delivered a consignment of goods, and Mr. Speckles himself was waiting for the money. The same message was sent to Mr. Speckles as to the others, and the greengrocer departed, whether with a good grace or not the juniors did not know.

CHAPTER 13.
Canny.

KERR had not taken a very decided part in the discussion of ways and means; he had fallen silent, sitting in a chair in a corner, and thinking. That was Kerr's way, when there was anything to be thought out. The keen Scottish junior was generally capable of thinking a way out of any difficulty. When he broke silence at last, he had something to say, as he usually had.

"Look here, you chaps, we've got to find the money!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Has it taken you an hour to think that out?" asked Tom Merry sarcastically. "I could have told you that at the start!"

"Oh, let Kerr alone!" said Figgins. "Kerr's got a brain on him! I shouldn't wonder if he's thought out the whole thing while we've been jawing."

"What a horrid expwession, Figgins! Talkin' is a bettah word!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Monty Lowther. "Let's hear what Kerr has to say. If he has thought of a way of recovering the quids——"

"Soveweigns!"

"Rats!"

"Go on, Kerr!" said Tom Merry. "Do leave off talking, you chaps!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Well, my idea is, that the money's got to be found, and so we've got to find the chap that took it," said Kerr. "Now, it's one of the rotters in the school that's played such a beastly trick on us!"

"Yes, rather!" said Kangaroo. "And I think it's most likely Mellish. He's cad enough for anything, even to keep the money, if he thought it safe!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kerr shook his head.

"I don't think it's Mellish," he said. "He's cad enough, but he's not plucky enough; he wouldn't dare to make us so wild with him. He knows that the facts might come out, and that if he'd done it, we should rag him baldheaded. He generally keeps out of that if he can. I was thinking of Levison."

"Levison!"

"Quite likely!"

"He's the only chap who's seen the money as well as ourselves," said Kerr. "You remember he came pokin' into the study while we were looking at it. Then there was a row, and he was hoofed out; and Levison is a spiteful beast! He would bear malice for a hundred years, if he lived so long."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's right enough, Kerr. I had thought of Levison myself, already. But I don't see how we're to bring it home to him. He's an awful liar, and we can't get him to tell the truth, especially as he may be innocent all the time."

"That's it!" said Kerr. "We want some proof; and as soon as we're morally sure that he's hidden the money, we shall be justified in ragging him till he tells us where it is."

"Oh, yes, rather! Once we know that he did it we'll snatch him baldheaded, but we'll make him tell. Only we don't want to start ragging a chap who may not, after all, know anything about the matter."

"We've got to get proof, or, at least, a strong suspicion," said Blake.

"Yes. Well," said Kerr slowly, "the chap had a key to this cupboard, or else he picked the lock. He had a key to the money-box, or else he picked that lock, too. You chaps know about Levison being a clever conjurer—there's no denying that the rotter is clever. He's given us exhibitions of his conjuring, and, among other things, he's shown us sleight of hand, and picking locks. You remember he said some time ago that there wasn't a lock in the school he couldn't pick if he chose? He had a peculiar gift for that sort of thing."

Tom Merry started.

"I remember!"

"Picking locks is not a difficult business, but it's not one generally known to chaps at school," said Kerr. "Levison knows how to do it, and I'll guarantee not another chap in the School House does. Now, Levison had seen the money here, Levison had got his back up against us, and Levison is the only chap we know who could get through the locks. I think that's a pretty good case against Levison."

"Jollay good!"

"It's more than suspicion," said Tom Merry; "it's evidence strong enough for Levison to be arrested upon suspicion for, if this were a police case. I rather think we'd better interview Levison."

"And if he won't tell——"

"Bump him!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's pretty clear that it was Levison," said Monty Lowther, "and we'll bump him till he tells us what he's done with the quids."

"Soveweigns, deah boy!"

Kerr rose to his feet.

"Let's go and look for Levison, and have it out, anyway," he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Toby, the page, met the juniors in the passage. Toby's face wore a broad grin, which alarmed the juniors at once. Herries inserted his knuckles into Toby's collar, and shook him, and the page ceased to grin.

"Ow, ow! Groo!"

"Now, what's the row?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mrs. Murphy to see you, sir," gasped Toby.

Tom Merry groaned.

"Mother Murphy!"

"Yes, Master Merry."

"Tell her I'm engaged!"

"Or married, if you like!" said Lowther.

"Yes, sir."

"She won't go!" said Lowther. "Her bill comes to thirty-five quid!"

"Soveweigns!"

"Quids; and she'll think we've been japing her," said Lowther. "I'll bet Gussy's latest topper that she doesn't go without the money!"

Tom Merry made a hopeless gesture. He was rather of that opinion himself. He waited anxiously for the return of Toby. The School House page came up again with the grin on his fat face, and keeping at a safe distance from Herries.

"If you please, Master Merry, Mrs. Murphy says that she wants to see you very particularly. She's come for the account, to save you the trouble of sending it!"

"Oh dear! Tell her I don't mind the trouble in the least."

"Wathah not. We would do more than that to oblige a lady!"

Toby hurried off. He came back in about a minute. The expression of his face was proof enough that the good dame had not taken her departure.

"Well, Toby?" growled Blake.

"Mrs. Murphy says she won't go without seeing Master Merry, sir."

"Tell her——"

"She says she'll go to the 'Ead if you don't see her, sir."

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

"This is getting serious," said Digby. "What on earth is to be done? I suppose we can't call in Taggles to chuck a lady out?"

"Weally, Dig——"

"Show her into my study, Toby," said Tom Merry desperately. "Tell her we're looking for the money now, and ask her to kindly wait."

"Yessir."

The juniors hurried out of the Shell passage. They did not wish to meet Mrs. Murphy en route to the study. From a side passage they saw the stout dame pass, with a shawl on her shoulders, and her best bonnet on, and a decidedly warlike and determined expression upon her usually placid face. Whoever might be "done" in these peculiar transactions, it certainly would not be Elizabeth Murphy, or there would be trouble.

Toby marched the good lady into Tom Merry's study, and soothed her with soft words, while the chums of St. Jim's looked for Levison. The cad of the Fourth was not in his study, neither was he in the common-room. On that June afternoon nobody was likely to be indoors if he could help it. The chums looked for him in the quadrangle, but he was not to be seen.

"The cad!" muttered Blake. "He's got out of the way on purpose. He knows we should tumble, sooner or later."

"Yaas, wathah!"

After a long tramp round, the juniors returned angrily and savagely to the School House. Levison had not been seen. Toby met them at the door.

"If you please, Master Merry——"

"Well, what is it?" asked Tom Merry, almost snappily—a very unusual thing for him.

"Mr. Brick has called to see you, sir—the confectioner, sir."

"Tell him——"

"He says he can't leave without seeing you, sir."

"Oh, show him into the study!"

"I have done, sir."

"Well, leave him there, then," said Tom Merry. "And if anybody else comes, show him into the study, and come and tell us."

"Yessir."

"This reminds me of the time when Gussy was passing bad cheques, and the tradesmen got alarmed," growled Blake.

"Blake, you uttah ass, how can you say I evah passed bad cheques!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah fathead! The cheques were all wight. They were drawn in the cheque-book my governah gave me. The cheques were in perfect ordah."

"There wasn't any money to meet them, though."

"That was not my fault. That was owin' to my governah havin' placed an insufficient sum to my cwedit at the bank. The cheques were all wight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Well, I know the tradesmen got waxy over the cheques, right as they were, when they couldn't get any money for them at the bank," said Tom Merry. "And blessed if this isn't like it, only this is worse. Lord Eastwood came down and rescued you, but it looks to me as if we're completely done, unless we find the two hundred pounds."

"We've got to find Levison first. His keeping out of the way like this makes it pretty certain against him," said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo! Here comes Bunn in at the gate!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Cut!"

The juniors melted away. They did not want to interview Mr. Bunn personally just then. The stout, catering gentleman marched on to the House with a red and determined face, and was doubtless shown into Tom Merry's study, for he did not reappear. Tom Merry & Co. looked for Levison again.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 176.

CHAPTER 14.
Levison Knows.

MELLISH, of the Fourth, had been watching the chums with a peculiar expression upon his face. That the sneak of the School House rejoiced in their discomfiture was no secret. The chums hardly noticed him, till Kerr, as if struck by a sudden thought, turned round to him, and caught him quickly by the collar. Mellish wriggled in the grasp of the Scottish junior.

"Leggo!" he shouted. "Hands off, you rotter!"

"I want to speak to you, and I don't want you to bunk," said Kerr.

"We'll see to that," said Figgins.

Kerr released the sneak of St. Jim's. The juniors were crowded round him, now, and there was no chance for Mellish to escape. He was looking very much alarmed.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "What's the row? I haven't done anything, and I don't know anything about your blessed moneybox!"

"Where is Levison?"

"Levison! I don't know."

"I expect you do know," said Kerr. "I believe you know the trick he has played us. He would be bound to tell somebody, to have somebody to chuckle over it with him, and you're the sort of worm he would confide in."

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agwee with my fwiend Kerr, there."

"Look here——" began Mellish, blusteringly.

"Listen to me! If you like to tell us where to find Levison, you're all right," said Kerr, "and you shall join us in the feed—and it will be a record feed at St. Jim's, I can tell you!"

"Of course, I don't want to be unfriendly," said Mellish, with a glimmer in his cold eyes. "I'd willingly do anything I could——"

"If you don't tell us where Levison is, we shall take it for granted that you want to back him up against us, and we shall give you the frog's march round the quad," said Kerr.

"Hear, hear!"

Mellish smiled a sickly smile.

"I don't know that I really know where Levison is," he remarked; "but I have an idea that he intended to read a novel in the library."

Kerr grinned. He thought it was very probable. The school library was certainly the last place where they would have thought of looking for Levison; and if the cad of the Fourth wanted to keep out of the way of a possible search, it was an excellent hiding-place to choose.

"That sounds likely," said Kerr. "We'll go and see. You can stroll along with us, Mellish, old chap, in case your information shouldn't prove to be quite correct."

Mellish gave another sickly grin. But he knew that it was useless to raise objections. Kerr had linked arms with him, and certainly did not mean to let go.

The crowd of juniors hurried off to look for Levison in the library. Herries uttered a sudden exclamation:

"There's Popper!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Popper was seen striding towards the House with a very red face. He caught sight of the juniors, and called out to them; but they did not seem to hear. They disappeared from Mr. Popper's gaze like a beautiful dream, and the merchant stalked on wrathfully to the House, where he was shown into Tom Merry's study by the grinning Toby, and where he found congenial company on the same errand.

"That's four of them!" groaned Tom Merry. "There are three more to come. This is getting rather too thick!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They'll be raising the blessed roof, if we don't go in and see them soon," said Monty Lowther. "And when the Head discovers that we've ordered a hundred and fifty quids' worth of stuff——"

"Soveweigns' worth, deah boy!"

"Quids' worth of stuff, and haven't the cash to settle, he will be ratty. We shall get it in the neck, and no mistake!"

"Oh, let's look for Levison! There's a chance yet!"

Tom Merry opened the big, heavy door of the school library. The door swung open quietly, almost without a sound. In the long, lofty room, lighted by stained-glass windows, there reigned a gentle calm. In one of the deep chairs a junior was seated, with his feet on another chair, and a book in his hand. It was a worthless, sixpenny detective novel that Levison was reading, and he was so absorbed in it that he did not see or hear Tom Merry & Co. enter the library.

Mellish slipped quietly out. He did not want to see Levison. Tom Merry closed the door behind him, and the juniors crossed over towards the cad of the Fourth.

Then Levison saw them, and he laid down his book and rose to his feet in alarm. The looks of the juniors showed that they meant business—and business not of a friendly nature.

"So we've found you!" said Lowther.

Levison looked at him with steely eyes.

"I haven't been hiding, if that's what you mean," he said. "I came here quietly to read my book."

"Whether you were hiding or not, we've found you," said Kerr; "and in a really suitable place—you couldn't have chosen it better. The House is empty. Nobody's likely to come to the library, and you can be ragged bald-headed quite easily."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison backed away.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

"We want the two hundred quids——"

"Soveweigns!"

"We want what you've taken, Levison," said Tom Merry. "Hand it over, or tell us where it is, and you can go."

"He ought to be wagged, Tom Mewwy! Undah the circs., I must certainly wemark that the uttah wottah ought to be wagged!"

"Will you tell us where it is, Levison?"

"How should I know!"

"Will you tell us where it is?" repeated Tom Merry.

"I refuse to admit that I know anything about it," said Levison. "As a matter of fact, I don't believe in the existence of the money at all. My belief is that it was faked."

Tom Merry looked at him sternly.

"Your belief is nothing of the sort," he said. "You know perfectly well that the two hundred sovereigns you saw in my study this morning are real ones; and you know, too, that you have played this rotten trick on us in revenge for chucking you out this morning, which was all your own fault."

"Yaas, wathah! I should nevah have given you that fearful thwashin', deah boy, if you had not been an awful wottah, you know."

The juniors could not help grinning. D'Arcy had evidently forgotten the points in the conflict that had gone against him. The final victory had been with him, and that was enough for the swell of St. Jim's to remember.

Levison sneered.

"I suppose you've picked on me because there's been bad blood between us," he said, "and you've come to rag me—twelve to one! I must say it's very brave of you—just what I should have expected, in fact!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's not a question of courage," said Tom Merry. "Any fellow here is ready to fight you on fair terms, if that is what you want. But at present we're concerned with getting back what you have stolen, and we're going to bump the truth out of you. We feel certain that you emptied the box of the money.'

"What proof have you?"

"You're the only chap we know in St. Jim's who's handy in picking locks," said Tom Merry. "It was Kerr thought of it. You gave a show, once, in the Form-room, and picking locks was part of it."

Levison changed colour a little.

"We feel so sure about it, that we're going to rag you if you don't own up," said Figgins. "That's flat. If we happen to have made a mistake, it's really your own fault, because if you weren't this kind of cad we shouldn't suspect you at all."

"Yaas, bai Jove! I wegard that as vewy well put. Figgay, deah boy!"

Levison cast a glance towards the door.

"No, you don't," said Tom Merry.

The juniors collared the cad of the Fourth in a moment. Levison struggled; but the futility of it struck him at once, and he ceased to resist. He looked round at the angry faces of the juniors with a cold and bitter expression.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"We are going to bump you till you confess what you've done with the money."

"Then go ahead," said Levison, setting his teeth. "I've got nothing to say."

"We'll take you at your word! Bump him!"

Levison was swung off his feet.

Bump!

Bump!

The cad of the Fourth had set his teeth hard. He did not mean to surrender; he did not mean to let a cry escape him. But the punishment was too severe. His resolution melted away. He gasped, and shouted for help.

Bump!

Bump!

The juniors bumped him with steady persistence. At the fifth bump Levison yelled out desperately:

"Hold on! I'll give in!"

"You'll tell us where the money is?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yes."

Kerr grinned.

"What did I tell you?" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! We must admit, deah boys, that Kerr weally found this out," said D'Arcy. "It is vewy singulah that I did not think of it myself; but it is the fact."

"Go hon!"

Levison was allowed to rise. His face was white with pain and rage, and his eyes glittered like diamonds. His hands were clenched hard.

"Where is the money?" asked Tom Merry.

"In your study," said Levison sullenly. "It was only a lark; I never took it out of the study at all."

"In my study!" Tom Merry exclaimed, in amazement.

"Yes."

"Where?" demanded Tom Merry suspiciously.

"In a bag—in the chimney. Put your hand up the chimney on the right, and feel round, and you'll find it there," said Levison.

"Bai Jove!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "If that's the truth, you're let off—but you can come with us to the study."

"Look here, I won't—I——"

"You will. Will you walk, or be carried?"

Levison decided to walk.

CHAPTER 15.
All Serene.

"WHERE is Tom Merry?"

"I want to see Master Merry."

"I demand to see Tom Merry!"

"I order you——"

"I insist——"

"Yessir," said Toby cheerfully. "Yessir. Quite so, sir! This is Master Merry's study, sir. 'Ere you are, sir. Standin' room only, sir!"

The last of Tom Merry's creditors had arrived. It was Mr. Speckles, the greengrocer. Mr. Speckles, like most greengrocers, was a very good-natured man; but he was excited now. He could not possibly afford to lose what he had sent to St. Jim's—and even if the goods were returned, he had lost a day's sale—and that day Coronation Day, when he had been expecting, and was entitled, to reap a large profit. Mr. Speckles was an excited as the rest, and the rest were certainly excited.

Mrs. Murphy and the six gentlemen in the study represented debts amounting to a hundred and fifty pounds; and when they compared notes, and found what a huge sum was involved, their hopes of payment sank down to zero.

When Toby showed in Mr. Speckles, a storm burst upon him. The visitors were getting wildly impatient.

"Where is Master Merry!"

"I insist upon seeing him at once."

"Suttingly, genelmen," said Toby. "I'm goin' to see Master Merry at once, sir, and tell 'im you've come, sir. Just you wait a minnit, sir."

"I tell you——"

"I say——"

"I think——"

"It is wicked—monstrous!"

"Scandalous!"

"Shocking!"

"Criminal!"

"But I will be paid, sir."

"And I, sir—I shall be paid."

"As for me, I shall decline even to take the goods back. Light pastry has its value impaired by time, and——"

"Certainly! As for my cakes——"

"And my fireworks——"

"It is too late now to sell them for Coronation festivities ——"

"Naturally!"

"I shall insist upon full payment, and carry the matter before the courts if necessary."

"I shall do the same."

"It is scandalous!"

"Shocking!"

"Infamous!"

And the chorus began again. Mrs. Murphy was sitting in the armchair, and the gentlemen were walking about the room, excited and gesticulating.

The door opened, and Tom Merry came in. The juniors were crowding behind him, but there was really no room for them to come into the study.

The sight of the hero of the Shell evoked a fresh storm. Mr. Sands shook a fist at him, and Mr. Speckles shouted, and Mr. Bunn yelled, and Mr. Brick roared. It was really surprising that six middle-aged gentlemen could produce so much noise.

"Good-afternoon!" said Tom Merry.

But his voice was drowned in the storm.

"Pay up!"

"There is your bill, sir."

"Pay, pay, pay!"

"If this is a joke, sir—a jape on us——"

"I will have the law!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"Will you let me speak?" he exclaimed.

"What have you to say?" demanded Mr. Bunn.

"Let Master Merry speak," said Mrs. Murphy. "I'm sure Master Tom isn't the boy to deal dishonestly with a poor widow."

"I hope I'm not," said Tom Merry, flushing. "If you'll be patient, I'll square you all. We had the money here—two hundred pounds in a box—and a rotten cad hid it for a rotten joke."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Brick.

"Hum!" said Mr. Bunn.

"Have you found it?" asked Mr. Sands sceptically.

"I hope to find it."

"That won't do—you've got to pay——"

"Pay up!"

"Pay the bills!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry. "Can't you give a chap a chance? I believe the money is in this study."

"Oh!"

"Wait a minute."

Tom Merry crossed to the grate, and knelt down, and groped up the chimney as Levison had directed him. There had not been a fire in the study for many days. Arthur Augustus watched him anxiously.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, hadn't you bettah put an old glove on?" he exclaimed. "You will make your hands howwibly dirtay."

"Never mind that, if he finds the quids," said Lowther.

"Soveweigns——"

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation. His hand had come into contact with a linen bag, thrust into an aperture in the brickwork. He brought it down, with a little shower of soot. His hand was, as D'Arcy had feared, decidedly sooty;

but Tom Merry did not mind. The bag was heavy with something that clinked musically.

Tom Merry opened it upon the table.

A golden cascade of sovereigns rushed out.

There was a general exclamation from the creditors. Their anger vanished in a moment at the sight of the gold. There was enough there to settle all their claims, with fifty pounds to spare. It was curious to watch how apologetic smiles took the place of angry frowns, as the golden coins poured out of the bag.

"Found!"

"Two hundred quid, by Jove!"

"Two hundwed soveweigns——"

"Hurrah!"

"Kick that cad out!" said Figgins, with a nod towards Levison.

And Levison was kicked down the passage.

Tom Merry turned to the anxious creditors with a smile upon his face. They were not anxious about their money now; but they were anxious to assure Tom Merry that they had never, really, had the slightest doubt of his ability and his intention to pay.

"Bills, please!" said Tom Merry.

"I really don't know that it matters," said Mr. Bunn. "But if you prefer to settle now, of course——"

He produced his bill.

"Hand them out!" said Tom Merry. "Here's a pen and ink—receipt the lot."

"Very good!"

"If you insist——"

"Thank you!"

"Thank you very much!"

"I'm sure, Master Merry, that I shall be always very pleased to serve you, to any amount, and to allow credit——"

"I knew Master Tom was all right," said Mrs. Murphy. "Faith, and I know he could be trusted with untold gold. But thirty-five pounds is a great deal to a poor widow——"

"Of course it is," said Tom Merry, kissing the widow on her plump cheek. "But it's all right now."

"La, Master Tom, what a boy you are!"

And Mrs. Murphy and the commercial fraternity of Rylcombe departed, very well pleased with Tom Merry and with themselves. And the juniors breathed freely.

"My hat!" said Blake. "We're well out of that."

"Bai Jove; yaas!"

"Made me beastly anxious while it lasted," said Digby.

"It's made me hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "Worry of any sort always makes me hungry; and I have a pretty keen appetite, anyway, at this time of the year. I think——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think perhaps I'd better have a snack."

And he had one—quite a large one. In fact, although Fatty Wynn called it a snack, it was very probable that anybody else would have called it a square meal.

CHAPTER 16.
A Great Day.

"COME on!"

"You bet!"

"What-ho!"

"Here we are!"

The Grammarians had arrived.

The gates of St. Jim's were wide open, and within there was a busy scene. The Grammar School fellows looked in, unnoticed for the moment by the Saints.

The old quadrangle was gay with bunting.

Streamers ran from all the trees, the old elms blazed with colour, and Chinese lanterns were stuck up in all available places ready for lighting.

The grey old walls shone with decorations, and there was a bonfire piled up in the place where the Fifth of November bonfires usually burned, all ready for lighting when evening should descend.

It was getting towards evening now, and the juniors were very busy.

The goods having been paid for, Tom Merry & Co. were able to use them with a clear conscience, and they had placed the supplies at the disposal of the whole school for the purpose of celebrating the Coronation.

The whole school had entered into the spirit of the thing most joyously.

Seniors and juniors had joined to make a celebration worthy of the epoch—to show their loyalty, in a boisterous and noisy form, to His Gracious Majesty King George the Fifth of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales and the Dominions Over-seas.

The Grammarians looked in, and snorted.

This was their celebration, as a matter of fact, bought up over their heads, and they were wrathful.

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay. "They're going it, and no mistake!"

"We're going it, too," said Frank Monk. "We'll muck it all up."

"Hurrah!"

"We'll squash them, and bash them, and pulverise them!" said Lane. "We'll teach 'em to make a corner in Coronations—or, rather, we'll teach 'em not to!"

"Come in!"

"You bet!"

The Grammarians marched in. It was certainly a risky business invading the enemy's territory in this way, but the Grammarians were desperate. They had been done—foiled, diddled, dished, and done, as Gordon Gay elegantly expressed it. And what they wanted, like the black-moustached villain in a melodrama, was r-r-revenge!

Not that they were really revengeful. They wanted to get their own back, that was all. Their celebration had been "mucked up," and they were going to muck up that of their rivals, that was all.

If there was a terrific combat it did not matter; if they were licked and booted out that really did not matter either so long as they utterly, thoroughly, and completely mucked up the celebration at St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!"

It was a sudden exclamation as an elegant figure stood before the invading Grammarians. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and looked at the invaders. Then he swept off his silk hat and bowed as only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could bow.

"Welcome, deah boys!"

The Grammarians stared.

In their surprise they refrained from massacring Arthur Augustus on the spot.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Welcome, deah boys!" said the swell of St. Jim's with another bow. "So glad to see you!"

"Oh! What?"

"I twust you are feelin' well, Monk?"

"Eh?"

"You are just in time," went on D'Arcy, apparently quite unconscious of the very peculiar looks of the Grammar School fellows. "Just in time, my deah fellows. Welcome, in the name of His Majesty King George!"

"Eh?"

"We want you to join in the celebwations and in the feed," said D'Arcy gracefully. "On an occasion like this we wegard it as a good wheeze to buwy the hatchet, you know. We want you all to join us in the festivities. All are welcome—the more the mewwiah. Come in, please!"

"Oh!"

"So jolly glad to see you! Bygones are to be bygones—all wows are off on the occasion of the celebwation of the gweat cowonation of our wespected King," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you agwee with me, gentlemen?"

The Grammarians looked at one another, and they looked at Arthur Augustus. For the moment they were nonplussed.

"Well, my hat!" said Frank, at last.

"My only chapeau!" ejaculated Gordon Gay.

"I twust all ill-feelin' will be buwied on this auspicious occasion," said D'Arcy. "All my fwiends join me in that expwession of opinion."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry, hurrying up. The St. Jim's juniors were gathering round, ready for either peace or war, not really very much caring which it was.

"Come in, Gay! This way, Monkey! We're going to celebrate, and you chaps are going to celebrate with us."

"Ahem——"

"You see——"

"Walk in, gentlemen!" said D'Arcy. "Fatty Wynn is lookin' aftah the feed, and it is goin' to be simply stunnin'!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here!" said Frank Monk. "We came over here to paralyse you—to knock you into a cocked hat—to wreck St. Jim's, in fact, and give you the giddy kybosh!"

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let's leave the giddy kybosh for another occasion," he suggested. "We'll all join to-day in celebrating the Coronation."

"Well, I guess it's not a bad idea," Gordon Gay remarked thoughtfully. "What do you chaps say?"

"Oh, all right!" said Monk. "We've been done!"

"Yaas, wathah! You have, haven't you?" said D'Arcy.

"We were going to squash the lot of you," said Frank.

"Well, you can consider yourselves kyboshed, and we'll call it a truce," said Figgins.

The Grammarians could not help laughing.

"All serene, then!" said Gordon Gay.

"Yeas, wathah!"

"Walk in! This way for the Coronation celebrations!"

"Hurrah!"

And so peace reigned between the rival juniors. After all, peace was better than war on such an occasion—all the fellows felt that. It was better to celebrate his Majesty's Coronation in hearty goodwill and good-fellowship than to punch one another's heads over it.

Peace having been established, the Grammarians entered into the spirit of the thing, and fraternised in the most cheerful way with the Saints.

In the sunny June afternoon a huge open-air feed had been prepared—a picnic that was large enough for hundreds. There was certainly no lack of supplies of any sort. Fatty Wynn presided over the arrangements, and he was beaming.

Fatty Wynn was in his element.

Wherever there were plentiful supplies of tuck, Fatty Wynn could be happy, and certainly the genial Fourth-Former had never, even in his dreams, found himself in the midst of such magnificent preparations.

Fatty Wynn welcomed the Grammarians in the most genial manner. He was only too happy to share his enjoyment with any number of people.

"It will be a ripping spread," he confided to Gordon Gay. "The whole thing is going to be ripping, but I must say I think that Tom Merry is devoting too much time to the preliminaries."

Gordon Gay grinned.

"What are the preliminaries?" he asked.

"Oh, fireworks, and processing, and things," said Fatty Wynn indifferently. "What I want to know is, how can a chap show his loyalty better than by having a jolly good feed?"

"How, indeed?" said Monk, laughing.

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"Well, you can snigger if you like," he said, "but that's my idea. My idea of a celebration is a jolly good spread, and I don't care who knows it. I say, it's to be a feed in the open air—al fresco, you know—and the Head himself has promised to give us a look in."

"Really!"

"Yes; and Cousin Ethel's coming."

"Hear, hear!" said the Grammarians heartily.

Frank Monk came upon Figgins a few minutes later looking extremely thoughtful. He slapped him on the back, and Figgins started.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated.

"Thinking out some splendid scheme in fireworks?" asked Frank.

"Fireworks?"

"Or a new design in table decorations?"

"Table decorations?"

"Or a new line in streamers?"

"Streamers?"

"Blessed if he isn't a giddy parrot!" said Gordon Gay, shaking Figgins by the shoulders. "What's the matter with you, Figgy?"

"Matter?"

"My hat!"

"Cousin Ethel's coming," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins glared

"What are you sniggering at?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins marched off with a snort. The Grammarians grinned as they saw him take up his stand at the gates. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ambled down in that direction, too.

He adjusted his eyeglass with great care, and bestowed a look upon Figgins that seemed really to penetrate right through the New House junior. Figgins turned red.

"Hallo, Gussy!" he said.

"Oh! Hallo!"

"I think Tom Merry wants you to help getting the fireworks ready," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"And there's the bunting to be shoved on the School House windows yet——"

"I am waitin' here for my cousin," said D'Arcy stiffly.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Ethel is your cousin, isn't she?" said Figgins feebly.

"I twust you have not quite forgotten that important fact," said Arthur Augustus crushingly. "I am quite able to wait alone, as a mattah of fact."

"You see——"

"Ethel is my cousin, you see——"

"Well, you know——"

"Tom Mewwy needs assistance with the fireworks——"

"Oh, he can manage them—and Lowther is helping him a lot, too."

"Then there's the buntin' on the School House windows——"

"Oh, blow the School House!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Jolly fine weather for a Coronation, ain't it?" said Figgins affably. "Don't let me keep you here, Gussy."

"Eh? You're not keepin' me here, you ass!"

"Oh!" said Figgins, with a sickly smile. "I—I thought perhaps I was, you know. No harm."

"I weally think——"

"Lucky it kept fine."

"I considah——"

"The fireworks will be ripping. There's 'God Save the King' in big letters on the sky, you know, when the big one goes off——"

"Figgins——"

"And Fatty's quite enthusiastic about the spread," said Figgins desperately. "Are you getting hungry, Gussy? You could go and have a snack. Fatty Wynn would be only too glad to get you a really nice snack."

"Figgins——"

"There she is!" roared Figgins.

The station hack drove up, and the next moment Figgins was helping Cousin Ethel to alight, and D'Arcy was raising his silk hat. The arrival of Cousin Ethel was the signal for the celebrations to begin.

Needless to describe the celebrations. The fireworks were a wonderful success, the bonfire blazed high and bright, the procession in the quad. was splendid, and caused endless cheering and laughter and fun. D'Arcy made a speech, which was cheered so loudly that nobody heard a word of it, and D'Arcy never knew whether that cheering was a "rag" or not

And then the spread!

Fatty Wynn, who certainly was an authority on the subject, declared that there never had been a feed like that at St. Jim's, and never would be again. And amid general joy and good-humour Saints and Grammarians alike celebrated Coronation Day at St. Jim's.

THE END.

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Serial 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.]

AN AMAZING TALE OF MODERN ADVENTURE.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON.

By ROBERT W. COMRADE.

"Thank Heaven I am free!" exclaimed the disguised Kingston, as the lid of the big packing-case was lifted. "The journey has been terrible—terrible!" (*See page 23.*)

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 is away in the European State of Balataria, when he receives an urgent telegram from Carson Gray, summoning him back to England in haste. On arriving in London he learns that the Crown Jewels have been stolen from the Tower, and guesses it to be the work of the Brotherhood. He hears from Crawford that Sir Henry Kenning, Lieutenant of the Tower, and who is suspected of the theft, has been kidnapped and taken to a lonely house on Putney Heath, whence he is removed to Norfolk. Kingston disguises himself as, and takes the place of, Sir Henry Kenning, and instructs him as to his plan of campaign.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Prisoner on the Wherry.

"Please remember all I have said, Sir Henry," whispered Kingston finally, "and remain in obscurity until you hear from me. If I do not call personally, I shall write and sign myself 'F. K.' That is all. I trust you," he added to Gray, "to escort Sir Henry to a safe establishment."

Carson Gray smiled.

"I think I am capable of attending to such a slight task as—— By Jove, the very idea!"

"What's that?"

"Why should I not take Sir Henry to that boarding establishment in Great Portland Street? Carson Gray, the detective, lives in the same house."

Kingston understood immediately. Gray was disguised, and Sir Henry had not the slightest suspicion who he was, so he could take the baronet to Mrs. Webster's establishment, secure rooms for him, depart, and then come back in his own identity. He would then have Sir Henry under his own eye, and would be on the spot should any unforeseen occurrence take place. It was a good idea.

"I do not think you could find a better place," exclaimed Kingston, with a meaning look. "Take Sir Henry to the place in Great Portland Street, and your work is done. The rest you can leave to me. There is no need for me to add that I shall do my very utmost to attain the end we all desire. I will now bid you good-night, Sir Henry."

He shook hands heartily.

"Good-night, my unknown friend," replied the baronet fervently. "I will not waste words by thanking you now, but should there come a day when I am put into possession of your identity, I will do everything in my power to express my gratitude. Good-bye, or, I hope, au revoir!"

Two minutes later Frank Kingston was left alone. Gray had taken the electric lamp, and everything in the cellar was exactly the same as before, with the exception of one great thing. The prisoner had been exchanged. Previously there had been lying on the bed an aged baronet totally unable to cope with his assailants, but now, in his place, was a man equal to ten commonplace individuals.

He heard the bolts slipped gently into their places, and his keen hearing detected the sounds of Carson Gray and his charge making their way towards the coal shoot. After that

all was silence, and Kingston, quite as calm as ever, laid himself on the bed and straightway fell into a sound slumber.

He remained in this blissful condition until seven o'clock the next morning, then he was awakened by the sudden drawing of the bolts on the other side of the door. In a moment he was in full possession of his senses, being, unlike ordinary men, unaffected by sleep. Nevertheless, when one of the common-members entered with a tray he blinked sleepily, and rubbed his eyes.

"Now, then, mister, put this down yer neck as fast as yer like," said the common-member roughly. "It's past seven a'ready, an' the van starts in 'arf an hour You'd best git dressed as soon as you've finished yer brekfust."

Kingston looked up at the man in the flickering light of the candle, which was stuck to a part of the tray.

"I do not understand," he exclaimed, in Sir Henry Kenning's gentle voice. "You speak as though I were going on a journey. What does it mean?"

"You'll find out soon enough. Eat yer brekfust an' be satisfied wi' that for the present."

The common-member grinned sneeringly, and left the cellar. He would have been surprised had he seen the change of expression on the prisoner's countenance as the bolts were shot. Kingston proceeded to dress himself, wearing, meanwhile, a confident smile.

"I think I can consider myself fairly safe after that," he thought. "The men have not the slightest suspicion that anything has occurred, and I shall have to compliment Crawford when I next see him for having attended to his part of the business so thoroughly. By jingo, my life seems to be made up principally by impersonating other people! Frank Kingston himself is a person London sees very little of nowadays."

He laughed silently, and set to work with a hearty appetite on the hot eggs and bacon which had been brought. They were well cooked, and quite appetising, for the Chief had given instructions that the prisoner was to be shown every consideration.

"I am afraid to-day will be rather a blank one," mused Kingston, after a while. "The prospect is not a very pleasant one, at all events. I only hope the day is not a hot one, for if it is I shall be three-parts stifled by the time I arrive at my destination. But, still, I daresay I shall survive."

Kingston was a man who always looked on the brightest side of things, who always made the best of any difficulty and hardship. Half an hour afterwards the man who had brought his breakfast reappeared, this time accompanied by his companion.

"You've done as I said, I see, guv'nor. We're goin' to take you away now, an' if you give us yer word yer won't kick or struggle we won't bind yer up."

"You have my word," returned Kingston coldly. "I do not know what your intentions are, but now that matters have gone so far I scarcely care what happens."

Each man grasped one of Kingston's arms and led him out into the dark passage. Up the stairs they went, and came to a halt finally in the kitchen. In the centre of the floor stood a huge wooden case, with the lid standing by its side. On the latter, written in large black letters, were the words: "Glass—with care. This side up." Kingston looked at it with an indifferent expression on his features.

"Have you got the stuff handy, Bob?" asked one of the men.

"Yes, it's on the dresser over there."

"Then fetch it quick."

The man addressed left Kingston's side, and crossing to the dresser picked up a large cloth pad. Kingston saw what it was immediately, and started back in affected amazement.

"Chloroform!" he gasped. "Good heavens, you do not mean to——"

Before he could say anything further the pad was thrust over his mouth and nostrils, and, struggling convulsively, he felt his senses reeling. Of course, he knew that he was going to be subjected to this treatment, but it had not worried him in the least. It was necessary, however, to keep up appearances.

"He's gone!" declared the common-member referred to as Bob. "Shove him in the box, quick, an' we'll put the lid on. Claydon'll be 'ere soon to see that everythin's bein' attended to proper."

They lifted up Kingston's inanimate form—he was really insensible—and placed him within the large case. It was padded considerably, for the journey was to be a long and tedious one, with no chance of the prisoner gaining a moment's exercise. Several cunningly-concealed breathing-holes had been made, and these, though they served their purpose very effectively, could not be seen from the outside. The lid was fastened on by several huge bolts, and the case stood ready for departure. It was not so exceedingly large, and certainly looked precisely what it purported to be.

The time was barely eight, but at ten minutes past the Hon. Percy Claydon, disguised as before, put in an appearance. He came straight into the kitchen, and glanced at the box comprehensively.

"Is he inside?" he queried.

"Yes, sir. We put 'im in a quarter of an hour ago."

"Good!"

"He was quiet as a lamb, sir—a lot different to what 'e was yesterday, when 'e carried on so much."

"He realises how futile it is to fight against overwhelming odds," chuckled the Hon. Percy. "He was quite insensible before you put him in, of course?"

"Oh, yes, sir—quite."

"Well, the van will be here in about twenty minutes. Make no fuss, and help to carry the cases down as though you were doing it every day. You understand?"

Claydon's words proved to be correct, for barely fifteen minutes had passed before a large motor-lorry drew up in front of the house. It was a smart-looking vehicle, one of the very latest pattern, capable of attaining a good speed. Without delay the two wooden cases—one containing "Sir Henry Kenning" and the other the Crown Jewels—were stowed aboard.

Claydon said a few words to the driver, and the latter, having made everything secure, started up his engine and commenced the long journey.

"Well," muttered the Hon. Percy, as he watched the lorry making its way across the heath, "I'm jolly glad the things are away from this house. It was a bit risky keeping them here, and on that wherry at Wroxham they'll be where no man on earth, outside the Brotherhood, will be able to lay hands on them."

But there Claydon was very much mistaken indeed. He did not know that he was even at that moment gazing at the vehicle which was carrying to Wroxham the one individual who could cope with the all-powerful Brotherhood single-handed.

The Hon. Percy, having seen that everything was in order, set off to the City again, and some time that morning called upon Mount-Fannell and assured him that everything was going well. In consequence, both of them were feeling highly elated, more especially as the police were just as far from finding the jewels as ever. What a shock the Chief would have received had he known the exact truth!

Kingston recovered his senses an hour after starting, and sat in the box in the most profound darkness listening to the steady throb of the motor. Had he shouted at the top of his voice he could not possibly have made himself heard.

"The best thing I can do," he told himself complacently, "is to go off to sleep. The ride otherwise will prove tedious in the extreme."

He calculated exactly how long the journey would take, and made up his mind to awaken at about the time Wroxham was reached. In any case, he would awaken when the motor came to a standstill.

So this very singular man calmly settled himself and went off into a sound slumber, nor did he open his eyes again until the lorry stopped at one of the towns on the route for a fresh supply of petrol. No time was wasted, and within five minutes the vehicle was continuing its journey. There were two men aboard now, one having been picked up soon after the start.

When at last Wroxham Broad was reached it was getting on for eight o'clock.

The sun had sunk in the west, and the sky was now cloudless. Kingston, of course, could see nothing of this, and those outside were rapidly attending to their work. The road which had led them to their destination had been for the last mile or so merely a narrow track, which ran between high hedges. Just at that part there were no houses whatever, and the wherry, a very old, dilapidated-looking affair, lay in the water absolutely alone. That part of the broad was quite secluded, and even if the lorry had been seen nothing would have been thought of it. It was the summer season, and during that part of the year there were many London visitors in the surrounding district, and motor vehicles of all kinds were constantly passing to and fro.

Almost as soon as the heavy van came to a standstill a most peculiar-looking individual made his appearance on the deck of the wherry. This was Nicholas Barton, more generally known among the common-members as "Old Nick," a name which was very appropriate indeed.

His back, although not hunched, was extremely rounded, and his legs were altogether out of proportion to his body, being but little over half their normal length. To add to the strangeness of his appearance, his face was one mass of huge wrinkles, although a greater part of these could not be seen owing to the straggling whiskers and matted hair. Altogether, Old Nick was a very unprepossessing-looking character.

"Oh, so you've come!" he exclaimed, in a voice which

sounded more like a croak than anything else. "You've brought the prisoner, eh? Darn my skin, I'd got it fixed in me mind that it was all a bit o' bluff!"

"Shut up!" commanded one of the men quickly. "What d'y'r mean by shouting about the place like that, you old idiot? If you want to talk, wait till we git aboard!"

The keeper of the wherry chuckled.

"Don't you worry—don't you worry!" he croaked. "There ain't nobody nearer'n two mile. But p'r'aps you want a hand wi' the box, eh? I'll help yer."

"Come on, then, an' don't talk so much," replied one of the men with a quick look round. "Me an' my mate want to git back as quick as we can. You've got your instructions, I suppose?" he added, as the quaint-looking old man joined them at the back of the lorry.

"Oh, yes, I've got my instructions. I shall carry 'em out, right to the very finish, so you needn't put yourselves out. But, hallo! There's two boxes there! You ain't got two of 'em, 'ave yer?"

The men laughed.

"No," said the driver, "there's only one prisoner for you to look after. The other box is full o' papers an' things belongin' to the Brotherhood. Their quarters in the Hammersmith district seem to be attractin' a little attention, so the Chief thought it best to clear everythin' out an' put 'em by for a bit."

"I see. We don't want the police messin' around, do we?"

Old Nick accepted the statement without question, although it was, of course, nothing but a lie. Barton, although cunning to a degree, had very little brains, and could hardly see an inch beyond his nose. All he lived for was money and rum. The former he loved to hoard up, and the latter he could drink by the pint. Years before he had been a sailor, and for this reason chose to spend the remainder of his days on the water, even though it were only aboard a wherry.

He was possessed of quite remarkable strength, and surprised the two men when he lifted the case containing Kingston from the floor of the van and carried it on his back across the rough gangway to the deck of the wherry.

"The old fool'll never guess what's in this case," murmured the driver, as he and his companion carried the smaller box up the slope to the water's edge. "He's got 'is eyes open right enough, but 'e's got no sense to 'elp 'em."

"Not a bit, mate!"

They crossed the gangway with their burden, and placed it alongside the other. Old Nick was looking at them curiously.

"When are you goin' to take 'im out?" he asked abruptly.

"Now," replied one of the men; "only we can't do it on deck 'ere. I s'pose you've got that hold prepared, as you was told?"

"Yes; an' darn my skin if it wasn't a job! I'm hanged if I can see why the Chief should 'ave insisted on the place bein' comfortable. If it 'ad bin me, I should 'ave shoved 'im in irons an' chucked 'im down the 'old just as it was, without no preparin' an' cleanin' out!"

"You forgit that your visitor is a big pot," grinned one of the men. "Now, then, let's 'ave no more foolin' about. Catch 'old of the other side, Jack, an' we'll soon be off."

The two common-members grasped the wooden case containing Frank Kingston, and at the expiration of three minutes it was resting on the floor of the aft hold, which had been made to resemble a cabin to some extent. A spanner and screw-driver were produced from the motor-driver's pocket, and the large bolts were very quickly withdrawn.

"Thank Heaven, I am free!" muttered Kingston, as the lid of the case was lifted. He looked absolutely exhausted, while, as a matter of fact, he was feeling quite fit. "This journey has been terrible—terrible!"

"That's all right, guv'nor!" said the driver. "You've got to the end now, an' can 'ave as much rest as you blessed-well like. 'Ere, Jack, lend a 'and with this box; we'll soon 'ave it on deck."

The man was as good as his word, for at the expiration of a few minutes the cabin was clear, and the prisoner sat on one of the chairs, looking with a curious expression at the door through which, a second before, the three men had passed.

A prisoner!

The heavy bolts had been shot, so that escape was impossible. But although Kingston was a prisoner, he was not the right one, and the Brotherhood were destined to receive something of a surprise within the next few days.

Frank Kingston was not the man to let grass grow under his feet.

The Demand for One Million Pounds.

The hold, which had now been converted into some semblance of a cabin, was a fairly comfortable apartment. The floor had been thoroughly cleaned and carpeted, and the wooden sides scrubbed until they were fairly clean. In addition, a couple of square holes had been made to admit the light, both of them being covered with glass. They were, of course, altogether too small for a man, or even a boy, to pass through.

Kingston sat in the easy chair which had been provided and surveyed his surroundings. The table was an ordinary deal one, but its bareness was hidden by a plush tablecloth.

"Well," the prisoner told himself, "I hardly expected to find my quarters so comfortable as this. True, it is not luxurious, but, on the other hand, it is not nearly so bare as I anticipated. The Chief evidently does not wish Sir Henry Kenning to suffer any discomfort."

He could hear the voices of the two men and the keeper of the wherry on the deck above, and wondered how long it would be before the motor lorry took its departure; but he did not have to wonder long, for very shortly afterwards the sound of the engine reached his ears as the driver started it up. Old Nick had evidently gone ashore, for everything was silent aboard the wherry.

As soon as the sounds of the motor had disappeared, however, Kingston's keen hearing plainly distinguished the sounds of the curious old dwarf as he crossed the gangway muttering to himself, and now and again chuckling. Old Nick was feeling very pleased with himself, for although he had extra work to do, he was being exceedingly well paid for his trouble.

Curiously enough, almost at the same moment as Old Nick was crossing the gangway Lord Mount-Fannell rose from his seat in the Council Chamber under the mansion in Grosvenor Square and addressed a meeting of the Council. The Chief was still looking very good-humoured, and he smiled genially round the assembled company.

"As you are aware, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "our plans in connection with the Crown Jewels have met with nothing but success. We have the Regalia in our possession, and there is practically no shadow of doubt that we shall be able to secure the million pounds we demand. The Cabinet is in a terrible state, to mention nothing about the Chief of Police. They are at their wits' end, and when they get our letter they will be absolutely eager to comply with our demands."

"By Jove," laughed Sir Reginald Newman, the aviator, "you seem to be aiming higher than ever, Chief! It will indeed be a magnificent coup if you bring this off successfully."

"I am quite confident," returned Mount-Fannell complacently. "This morning the jewels were safely sent away to the wherry at Wroxham, and with them went Sir Henry Kenning. The newspapers, police, and public are still quite convinced that he is the culprit."

"But how do you mean to secure the ransom?" inquired the Army officer. "You will have to go with extreme caution, or you will give the whole game away."

"I don't think I shall do that," laughed the Chief. "The money is as good as ours, for it is absolutely imperative that the Crown Jewels should be returned in time for the Coronation. The newspapers are all beginning to get sarcastic, and public opinion is going very much against the police, who have so far been unable to find the slightest clue. The jewels themselves will remain at Wroxham until we have secured the money. Then, and only then, shall we return them."

"You mean to do so, then?" laughed Newman. "You do not intend to gain the million pounds and then demand a second ransom?"

"No, that would be altogether too risky. If we get the million I shall be thoroughly satisfied, and shall return the Regalia without delay. To dilly-dally about would be to simply court disaster."

"But the police, or whoever is responsible, would know what a frail position they were in, and might refuse to part with the money until they had the jewels in their hands—or, at least, half of them."

"I thought of that myself," replied the Chief, "but that is a risk they must take. After they have received our communication I do not think they will delay a minute. Had this affair occurred a year or two back they would have been in no hurry, but just now, when the Coronation is imminent, it is vital that the Crown Jewels should be returned before it is too late. To postpone the Coronation would cost, if anything, more than the amount we are demanding."

"Of course, in stealing the jewels just now we have obtained a splendid advantage."

"Quite so. Now the way I shall proceed to business is very simple, and, I think, it cannot fail to have the desired

result. To-day is Wednesday, and to-morrow morning the Prime Minister will receive a letter, and unless I am greatly mistaken the million pounds will be in our hands late on Friday night."

"In gold?"

"Sovereigns," replied the Chief, puffing at his cigar easily. "That is the simplest and safest way. This is the letter I intend sending. Needless to say, it purports to come from Sir Henry Kenning, who is popularly believed to be the prime mover in the affair."

Lord Mount-Fannell drew from his pocket an envelope and unfolded a single sheet of quarto-sized paper. The communication was typewritten, so there could be no possibility of its authorship being traced.

"If you will listen, gentlemen, I will read it aloud to you," declared the Chief. "It is addressed to the Prime Minister in person, and runs like this:

"'Sir,—The Crown Jewels are in my possession, and quite out of reach—like myself—of all the police in the kingdom. I am quite aware of the fact that it is imperative they should be in the hands of the State in time for the Coronation. But as I took considerable trouble to procure them, I demand the ransom of £1,000,000 for their safe return. My requirements are these: that the sum mentioned should be packed aboard a large motor-lorry in gold—sovereigns—and that the lorry should go, driven by only one man, to a certain spot on Wimbledon Common. At that spot, at twelve midnight precisely on Friday, my own lorry will be waiting, and the gold must be transferred from one vehicle to the other. If you do this, the Crown Jewels will be in your hands not later than ten o'clock on Saturday morning. Please remember that it will not be the slightest use having my own motor van followed or watched in any way. I shall have spies on the look-out, and should you instruct the police to act in this manner, the gold will never be delivered at its destination, nor will the Crown Jewels ever be returned. For should there be any trickery over this business, I shall relinquish the idea, unset the jewels, have the stones re-cut, and melt their settings down. In this manner I should reap a larger harvest, but the country will be deprived for ever of its most-treasured heirlooms. The men in charge of the motor-van will know nothing, for the vehicle will be simply a hired one. Enclosed you will find a rough plan showing exactly where the lorry will be waiting.

"'HENRY KENNING,

"'Lieutenant of the Tower."

"Well, gentlemen," exclaimed Mount-Fannell, looking up, "have you any faults to find with that? Personally, I think it explains all that is necessary."

There was a short silence, then several of the Councillors commenced talking at once, but all were of the opinion that the letter expressed everything that was necessary.

"The real question is, however," said Milverton, "whether the Prime Minister will follow the instructions. A million pounds is a large sum of money, and even the Government would hesitate before parting with it."

"They will not hesitate long!" declared the Chief. "I am as certain as I am standing here that there will be no hitch. Think of the utterly helpless position the enemy is in. They have no choice in the matter. The jewels must be recovered, and when they see a chance like this before them they will undoubtedly grasp it with both hands."

"There is no possibility of the police tracing the jewels to their hiding-place?"

"Not the slightest. They are perfectly secure at Wroxham Broad—as secure as is Sir Henry Kenning."

"This letter will be the finishing touch—eh?" laughed the Hon. Percy Claydon. "When the Prime Minister receives that, Sir Henry's guilt will look overwhelming. By Jove, it was a good idea of yours, Chief, to keep the baronet helpless, and use his name throughout this affair."

"Yes; it has served its purpose very well indeed, for the police are completely on the wrong track. Now, let me see, it is about time, I should say, that the motor arrived at Wroxham. Of course, there was no possibility of anything going wrong?"

"Not the slightest," replied Claydon confidently. "I saw the two cases packed aboard myself, and that was everything. Nothing could occur at the other end."

"Nevertheless, it will be safest for you to find out," said his lordship, after a moment's thought. "It would be advisable for you, Claydon, to dress yourself up as a holiday-maker, and take a run down to Wroxham first thing to-morrow. Of course, you needn't remain there more than a few minutes, but that will be time enough to ascertain if the Crown Jewels and the prisoner are secure."

"Right," replied the Hon. Percy. "It doesn't matter a jot to me where I go so long as it's on business. I've taken nominal charge of this affair, and it's only right that I should see it through. I'll journey down by the first early morning train."

"Good. This letter to the Prime Minister had better be posted, I should say, somewhere in the City. It will reach him first thing to-morrow morning, and will, I dare say, cause him to have a rather uncomfortable breakfast. What, are you going, Claydon?"

The Hon. Percy yawned.

"I think so," he replied. "There's nothing further to interest me to-night, is there? I've got my instructions, so now I'm going to clear out and get to bed. I'll post that letter, if you like."

The Chief placed it in the envelope and carefully sealed it.

"Don't leave it in your pocket and forget it," he smiled as he handed it over. "There's a very great deal depends on that."

And Lord Mount-Fannell was right—a very great deal did depend on it. The Chief was not aware that in sending the communication to the Prime Minister he was practically placing his plans into the hands of the Brotherhood's greatest enemy—Frank Kingston.

Frank Kingston Enjoys Himself.

Old Nick stowed his claspknife away thoughtfully.

"The ole cove ain't 'arf so much trouble as I thought 'e'd be," he muttered as he plugged the tobacco into his pipe. He had just been cutting up a pouchful from a long black stick, which looked more like rotten wood than tobacco. "Darn my skin, this 'ere job's turnin' out to be as simple as kissin' yer 'and. The only trouble is I 'ave to look after 'im as though he was a blessed lord!"

He rose, swept the tobacco chips to the floor with one horny hand, and then emerged on deck. The time was just about eight-thirty, and the prisoner at that moment was in the act of eating his breakfast. The sun shone down brilliantly, and the water looked delightfully cool and refreshing.

Not a soul could be seen anywhere with the exception of a shepherd who was tending a flock of sheep on a far-off hill. He was a mere speck in the distance, and Old Nick had seen him there every morning, month in and month out. But close round about the countryside was bare of human beings and human habitation. It was very rare, indeed, that anybody visited that part of the broad—at least, by land. Sometimes a boat would make its appearance, but these never came near to the wherry, owing to the fact that it was situated in a kind of backwater.

As Old Nick had remarked to himself, the prisoner was causing very little trouble. He appeared very sullen, and made no remark at all unless he was addressed. But as soon as Barton had turned his back and locked the door behind him, a change would take place in "Sir Henry Kenning's" expression. In place of the sullen look, a quiet smile would come—a smile which was in every way confident. For although Kingston was in an apparently helpless condition, he knew exactly what he was about—was, in fact, waiting.

He was certain in his own mind that somebody—either Claydon or one of his confidants—would pay a visit to the wherry that morning to see that everything was in order, and to give Barton his instructions. Until that visit had been paid, Kingston could do nothing.

So, having finished his breakfast, he calmly settled himself to read a novel which he had found in a little bookshelf. It was stiflingly hot in the cabin, but he never seemed to notice the uncomfortable temperature. When Old Nick came to clear the breakfast things away he asked to be allowed to go on deck.

The dwarf grinned.

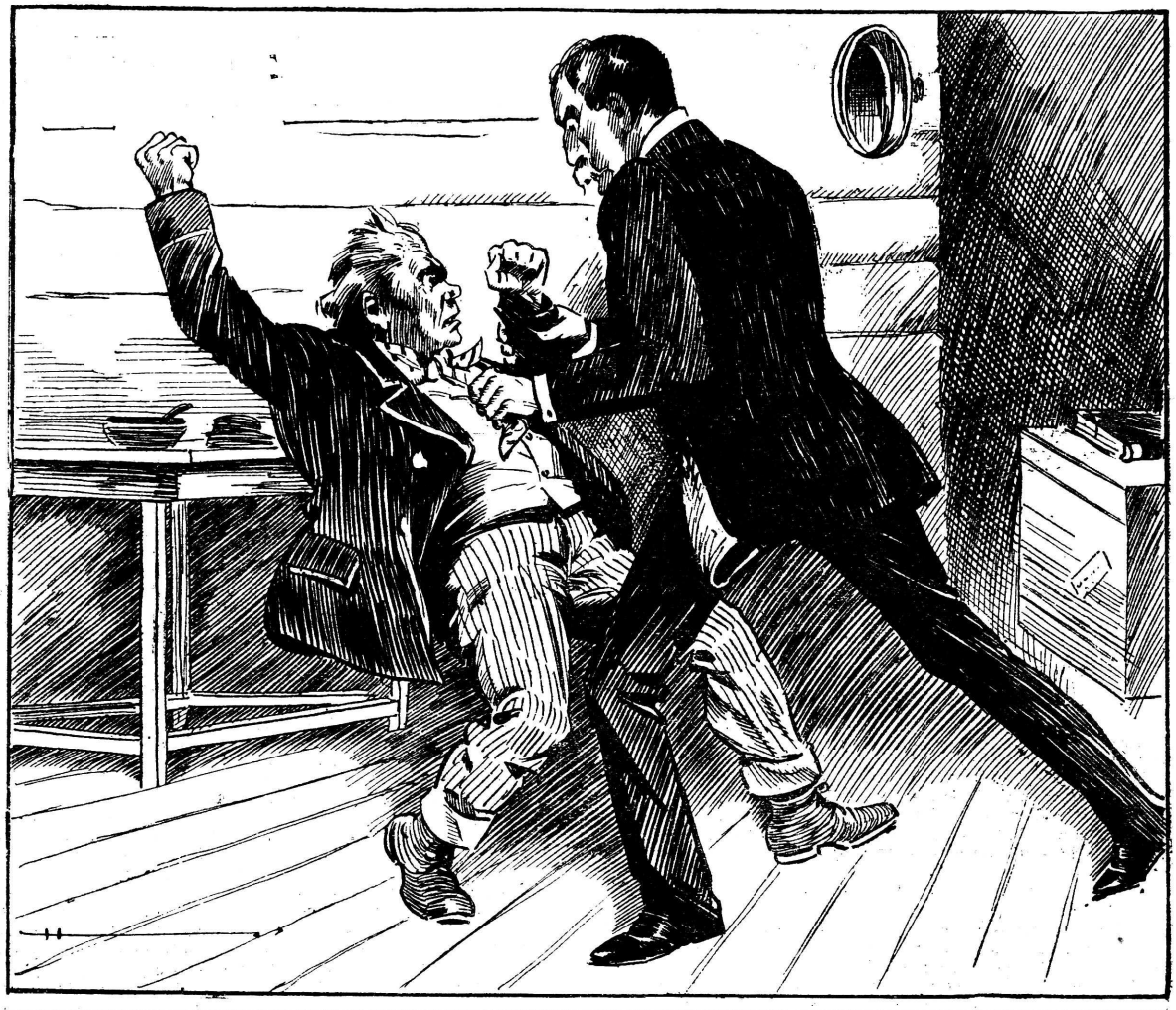
"Go on deck?" he repeated. "Wot d'yer take me for—eh? Do yer think I'm goin' to 'ave you make a run for it, or somethink like that? No fear, my beauty! You're a-goin' to stop in this 'ere 'old as long as you're under my charge, anyways!"

"The heat is terrible!" protested Kingston, pretending to wipe the perspiration from his brow. He did not really want to go on deck—for he knew that would be out of the question—but he liked "japing" his old, half-witted gaoler.

"It don't matter about 'eat!" growled Old Nick. "You've got to stay in 'ere, so don't make any fuss. Darn my skin, this 'eat ain't nothink to what it'll be later on!"

Barton looked down on the shrinking form of the prisoner, and sniffed contemptuously. He could see—or thought he could see—that he himself was equal to grapple with three Sir Henry's. Certainly, Kingston's attitude, and tremulous mode of speech, heightened this impression.

And that was just what Kingston required. He wanted Old Nick to look upon him as a child—as a person who had not an ounce of pluck in his composition, and who would knuckle under at the slightest blow. In this way, when the critical moment arrived, he would take the old scoundrel completely off his guard.



In a frenzied outburst of rage and terror, the dwarf hurled himself upon Kingston.
(*See page 27.*)

As soon as Barton had again taken his departure, he quietly continued reading his novel, and was not the least surprised when, about an hour later, he distinctly heard the sound of the Hon. Percy Claydon's voice.

"I thought perhaps he would come himself," mused Kingston. "Well, I wonder what he's got to say for himself? I'm afraid I'm too far away here to overhear anything. At least, there can be no harm in listening."

He left his seat, and placed his ear against one of the cracks in the huge, thick door. His hearing was little short of remarkable. No person who had lived among civilisation all his life could possibly have acquired such acute ears. But with Kingston it was different. He had been on the Iron Island for eight years absolutely alone, more often than not surrounded by the most profound silence. This had had the effect of making his hearing become quite abnormal.

For a second he stood there, and could only distinguish the sound of mumbling conversation. Then a few words which Claydon uttered faintly reached him.

"Everything's straightforward now," the Hon. Percy was saying. "The prisoner's got to be kept here for a week or more yet, but that box of papers that you've got in the hold has to go back to London."

Old Nick said something, but Kingston could not distinguish it.

"Never you mind what for," went on Claydon. "The papers are private ones, and will be called for probably by myself, late on Friday night. Until then, go on just as you're doing now. I don't suppose you'll see any of us before to-morrow night—that's Friday."

Again Kingston was unable to hear what Old Nick said, for the dwarf spoke in a lower tone altogether than his superior. In this way Kingston only heard half the conversation, but he smiled quite contentedly. The little information he had just heard would come in useful.

Suddenly Claydon spoke again.

"Yes," he said, evidently answering a question, "I'm going to see him now. You'd better stop on deck."

Kingston quietly stepped back to his chair, picked the book up, and affected to become lost in its pages. A moment later the bolts were drawn, and the Hon. Percy Claydon, suave and smiling, stood before him.

"Good-morning, Sir Henry," he said blandly. "I am sorry you should be in this unfortunate position, but, you see, it was quite imperative that it should be so. You do not seem pleased to see me."

Kingston looked up at him with eyes that were burning with anger.

"What have you come here for?" he cried. "To taunt me—to torment and persecute me further! By heavens, you shall pay for this——"

"Steady, steady," laughed Claydon, "there's not the least necessity to get wild. Your troubles will soon be at an end, Sir Henry. The Crown Jewels are to be returned to their rightful place on Saturday morning, so you yourself will soon be set at liberty."

"Ah," exclaimed the other, gazing at the disguised Claydon with furious eyes, "then I shall have my revenge! I'll set the police of the whole kingdom on your track, and have you hounded down and thrown into prison!"

The Hon. Percy blew a puff of smoke into Kingston's face, and flicked the ash from his cigarette.

"I am afraid you are getting a little bit too excited, Sir Henry," he smiled. "I dare say the stress of the last few

hours have been telling on you, so I will leave you in peace. Good-day!"

He opened the door and passed out, still smiling in that same bland fashion. On his companion's face the look of intense fury and hatred gradually changed to one of genuine amusement. Frank Kingston quietly slapped his thigh.

"By Jove," he told himself, "I'm enjoying this little episode very well indeed! Claydon's coming this morning has been highly instructive. He's put me in possession of everything I want to know!"

Considering what Kingston had overheard, this did not seem much; but he had been thinking deeply, and had drawn his own conclusions—conclusions that were correct in almost every detail.

The Coming of Carson Gray.

Taken by themselves, the words Frank Kingston had overheard a few moments before signified nothing; but when looked at in conjunction with what the Hon. Percy Claydon had said to Kingston, they meant quite a lot.

At least, Kingston thought so.

He had put two and two together after a very little thinking, and was practically convinced that he was not far wrong in his surmises. As soon as Claydon had passed through the door, Kingston seated himself in the easy-chair and looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"Claydon, himself, is coming for the jewels late to-morrow night," he mused. "I heard that plainly enough. And on Saturday morning they are to be returned to the Tower—or, at least, to somebody responsible. Now, that proves very conclusively that the Chief has made arrangements for the ransom—for, of course, that was the object of the robbery—to be paid over to-morrow night. How much the ransom is for, or how it is to be paid, I do not know. That is immaterial, however, at this juncture. What I do know, is that the ransom is to be paid between now and Saturday morning. Otherwise, the Crown Jewels would not be returned."

He stroked his false moustache thoughtfully.

"There are several ways in which the trick could be done, and Mount-Fannell would be certain to choose a safe one. What I have to do now, is to be in London to-morrow. The instructions I gave Gray were exactly right. The wherry is to be left in Barton's charge—without any members of the Brotherhood coming near—both to-day and to-morrow. Good! That leaves the path absolutely clear for my work."

He could still hear the sounds of the Hon. Percy and Old Nick talking on deck, but half an hour later it was evident the Inner Councillor had taken his departure. Had Kingston liked, he could easily have burst the door down, overpowered the dwarf, and walked off a free man. But that was not his policy. He had other plans to work out. And, according to what he could see, they would do so without the slightest hitch.

Kingston's plans always acted in this manner.

"Well," he told himself complacently, "there's nothing to bother about until to-night. Before then I shall just have time to finish this novel—it's really ripping!"

With that he settled himself in the easy-chair and proceeded to get interested in his book. For the time being all thoughts of his work had vanished. Until ten o'clock there was nothing to disturb him, so he calmly determined to enjoy his novel. The heat was considerable, but such a trifle as that never inconvenienced him.

At one-thirty Old Nick appeared with his dinner—a dinner which, although prepared with first-class materials, was ruined by bad cooking. Kingston was ready for it, however, and being not in the least particular, enjoyed it thoroughly. Whenever the old dwarf appeared, Kingston's manner underwent an entire change, and he became the nervous, terror-stricken old gentleman he affected to be.

And so, in this quiet and uninteresting manner, the rest of the day passed.

The evening came on, and Kingston was glad that the month was June. For he was not allowed a lamp, and there was sufficient light up till nine o'clock and past to enable him to read. At last, just when the darkness had nearly set in, he laid the novel down, finished.

"By Jove," he told himself, "I don't think I've read a better story than that! I have something to thank Lord Mount-Fannell for, at all events. My amiable keeper will be in before long, I dare say, with supper."

He was right, for barely five minutes had elapsed before Old Nick appeared with the tray.

"'Ere yer are!" he growled. "Get through it quick, 'cos it's late! You can't 'ave the candle for more than ten minutes, 'cos I want to git to bed meself!"

Kingston did not answer, and Old Nick, a sneering smile on his hairy and wizened face, passed through the open doorway and closed it after him. This was the first time Kingston had been allowed to eat his supper by candlelight, and as it was half an hour late, Kingston surmised—correctly—that Barton had been indulging in a drop too much rum, and had not noticed the time.

He returned again within ten minutes, and found that Kingston had finished.

"Now," he said, "you can git into bed as soon as yer blessed well like. An' don't forget I shall be in the next cabin, so if you make any noise in the night——"

"I sha'n't make any noise," replied Kingston tremulously. "But how long am I going to be kept here? How much longer have I to endure this insufferable indignity? By Heaven, my blood boils when I think of the outrageousness of it all!"

Old Nick grinned.

"It don't matter tuppence to me 'ow much yer blood boils," he replied, standing with his legs set apart, his hands on his hips, gazing sneeringly at this seemingly cringing form before him. "Wot more d'ye want? Ain't this 'ere place comfortable enough? Darn my skin, if you arst me, you're 'aving it a sight too easy!"

"Up to the present, Barton, I think it is you who has been having the easy time," returned Kingston quietly, rising deliberately to his feet and closing the door. He stood there with his back towards it, facing Old Nick, who looked at him in some surprise.

"Wot d'ye think you're doin'?" he demanded, his beady eyes becoming angry. "Git away from that darned door——"

"Now, look here, Barton, I've had quite enough of you!" replied the prisoner, in a tone that made Barton feel uncomfortable in spite of himself. "As I said just now, you've been having an easy time. Now, however, I am of the opinion that the positions are going to be reversed."

In the light of the flickering candle it seemed as though Kingston's form had become taller, and more powerful, and that his face had lost its frightened expression, and now wore a slight smile of amusement. Old Nick's eyes were not so good as they used to be, however, and he failed to notice these little details. Suddenly he burst into a loud guffaw of genuine amusement.

"Well, he cried, "if this don't take the cake! Wot d'ye think you're playin' at, mister? Shift away from that door, or I'll jolly soon show you that it ain't no good playin' tricks wi' me. I ain't the kind o' man to take sauce!"

"In plain language, Barton," replied Kingston quietly, "you are something of a bully. You do not seem to realise that I have been playing with you up till the present moment, that I have affected to be more or less frightened. That's all changed now, and within five minutes I shall be out on deck."

Old Nick stared for a moment, then swore furiously.

"Why," he cried, starting forward, "you don't know wot you're sayin', you old fool! Stand out o' the way, there, or, darn my skin, I'll knock yer down afore yer know wot's 'it yer!"

"I think not! Keep your hands off me, you scoundrel! Dear me, you appear to be possessed of quite an amount of strength!"

As Kingston spoke, Old Nick had lurched up to him and grabbed him by the shoulders, evidently under the impression that he had an easy task before him. Kingston allowed the dwarf to drag him down a few inches, then he straightened himself up suddenly, caught Nicholas Barton by the two arms, and pushed him bodily across the cabin, where his head came into somewhat violent contact with the woodwork.

"You are a little too impetuous, my friend, and I want you to realise that you are quite helpless in my hands. It's not the slightest use you struggling, so you needn't exert yourself. It may interest you to know that I am simply doing this for my own pleasure, just to convince you that I am not quite such a fool as I look."

The confident expression in Barton's eyes had now given place to one of amazement and fright. He could feel the tremendous power behind his antagonist's wrists as he held the dwarf's shoulders. Old Nick realised, with a shock, that he was unable to overpower his opponent. So he started swearing with unnecessary violence, struggling at the same time to get free.

"Silence!" ordered Kingston sharply. "Now, Barton, it is my intention to leave this vessel to-night. No member of the Brotherhood is coming near the ship until to-morrow evening, so I shall have ample time in which to perform my work."

"Oh, will yer?" snarled the other viciously. "You're reckoning without me, Sir Henry What-ever-yer-name-is! I shall jolly soon let 'em know what's 'appened!"

"You will do nothing of the sort, my friend. I know exactly what I am about, so you needn't trouble yourself

and waste breath. And I may as well point out that I am not the man you take me for. My name doesn't signify, but it is not Sir Henry Kenning. That you will have readily understood by this little exhibition of strength of mine."

"Who are yer," asked Old Nick hoarsely, "an' what do yer know about the Brotherhood? Where's the real Sir Henry, an'——"

Kingston laughed.

"If you think I am going to answer those questions, you are greately mistaken. Having remained on this wherry as long as I find necessary, I am now going to take my leave; and you, Barton, will be left in such a position that it will be impossible for you to communicate with the Brotherhood in any way whatever."

In the flickering candle-light Frank Kingston plainly saw the dwarf's wrinkled skin become paler.

"Wot d'yer mean?" demanded Barton hoarsely. "You ain't goin' to do me in? Don't say that, guv'nor!" he added, in a whining voice, now thoroughly overcome with terror, for Kingston's grip still held him fast as a vice. "I'll split on 'em an' tell yer all I know——"

"I know more than that already," replied Kingston disgustedly. "You're a coward, man, and I don't intend to show you a moment's consideration. But I am not going to kill you—that is not quite in my line, although it may be in yours."

Suddenly Kingston stepped back, and Nicholas Barton stood against the wall in a half-crouching position, breathing hard, his hands twitching, his eyes distended, gazing at the man before him. He was so frightened that he could not even spring into action. Quite coolly Kingston felt in an inner pocket and produced a little red-leather case. Out of this he chose a very tiny steel instrument, hardly any larger than a needle.

The reader will readily understand how this came to be in his possession. He wore Sir Henry's clothing, and as the baronet's pockets had been completely emptied before the substitution, the common-members at the Putney house did not, of course, search him a second time. So, when Kingston changed places with Sir Henry, he placed in his pocket that very useful little case, containing some of the most valuable drugs and instruments of Professor Polgrave's.

"Wot's that?" demanded old Nick, in a scarcely audible whisper.

Kingston held the finely-pointed instrument in his hand.

"That," he replied coolly, "is a little article—quite harmless—which is going to put you to sleep for the period of twenty-four hours. When you are unconscious, I shall place you in my own bed, and make you quite comfortable."

Nicholas Barton's eyes bulged from his head still more. Then, in a last frenzied outburst of rage and terror, he flung himself forward at Kingston. He was no light weight, and his companion nimbly stepped aside. With a crash the dwarf hit the woodwork behind the spot where Kingston had been standing, and then spun round.

But before he could again charge, Kingston gently plunged the point of the little needle into the fleshy part of his wrist. Old Nick realised what had happened, and stood still for a moment, gazing at the almost invisible puncture. Then, without a cry, he sank to the floor and lay motionless at Kingston's feet.

"Well, my friend," murmured the latter coolly, "you will not cause further trouble to-night. By Jove," he added smilingly to himself, "if I were not quite certain of this stuff, I could almost believe I had killed him. But to-morrow at midnight Mr. Barton will be very much in evidence, not the least bit worse for his enforced rest—in fact, rather the better for it."

He lifted the huddled form on to the bed, and then covered it over with the blankets. Should anybody, by any unlooked-for chance, enter the cabin during the following day they would find what was to all appearances a dead body, for the drug with which the needle had been impregnated was the same as that which had been used on Carson Gray on that memorable occasion a month or so back at Great Portland Street.

Kingston was thinking of Gray at that moment.

"Let me see," he thought. "The time should be getting on for ten. I told Gray to be here a few minutes after that hour, and I don't suppose he'll disappoint me. It was a good thing I had those few private words with him."

He picked up the candle, took a last look round, then passed through the doorway. He pulled the door to, and carefully shot the bolts into position. After that he made his way on deck, and found the night to be a perfect one. It was now quite dark, but the stars were all out, and only a few streaky clouds marred the beauty of the June sky.

On deck he found a lantern. To the burner of this he applied a light, and then made a tour of investigation round the wherry. Old Nick's quarters were grimy in the extreme, the air in his cabin smelling very strongly of stale tobacco and rum. But it was in the cabin adjoining this that he found the box containing the Crown Jewels. He smiled as he gazed down upon it.

"And it was brought here for safety," he murmured, with a chuckle. "Great Scott, I wonder what the Chief would say if he knew what was really happening. It was the biggest mistake he ever made when he sent the two cases here. Still, I can't see that it makes any difference, for I'd made up my mind to gain possession of it in any case."

He ascended once more to the deck, and, finding a comfortable seat there, sat down and awaited the coming of Carson Gray.

He enjoyed that quiet rest there, and forgot for the time being everything but his surroundings. The night was extremely still, the water around him with not a ripple on its surface, clearly reflecting the light of the thousands of stars. Now and again on the quiet air the far distant bark of a dog could be heard, while nearer still the croaking of frogs and the occasional flutter of a water-fowl.

Kingston spent a really rapturous ten minutes when a nightingale settled in a neighbouring tree, and sang its delightful song, as it seemed, for his especial benefit. Then, in the midst of this enjoyment, a sound struck Kingston's ears very different from those he had just been listening to—a sound very harsh in comparison, but nevertheless welcome.

It was the steady beat of a petrol engine.

"Excellent!" murmured Kingston to himself. "Gray has come down on his motor-car as I suggested. By the sound of it I should say he is still a mile away, but he ought to be here in three minutes. Ah, there are his lights!"

For a second, as the motor-car reached the top of a slight incline, its two brilliant points of light were plainly visible to Kingston. The car was proceeding slowly, for it was evident that the driver was unaccustomed to the road, which was, as before stated, little more than a track.

A couple of minutes later the car came to a standstill in full view of Kingston, and he watched without saying a word, or moving from his position as the driver clambered down from his seat. He stood for a moment looking about him, for the silence, after the noise of his motor, was a little strange. Clearly he was puzzled. The lights of the automobile were gleaming straight at the wherry as it lay there in the shallow water, dark and apparently deserted. Kingston had put his lantern out, and was just outside the

radius of the head-lamps. He smiled as he saw the new-comer's bewilderment. The next moment the man on the bank had stepped in front of one of the lights, and his profile was for a second very distinct. Kingston had made no movement because, owing to his innate cautiousness, he had had some suspicion that the car might possibly have belonged to the Hon. Percy Claydon. But he was wrong.

The man on the bank was Carson Gray, Detective.

The Crown Jewels Pass Into Safe Hands.

Kingston still remained silent, waiting to see what Carson Gray would do. The detective had, of course, expected to find Kingston on the bank awaiting him. This strange silence worried him above a little.

"Can anything have gone wrong?" he asked himself. "The place seems absolutely deserted, yet Kingston told me to be here at about ten. And I am positive this is the spot. I've never known him to fail yet, but it looks very much as though something has miscarried."

Carson Gray moved still nearer the wherry, then stopped and listened.

"Is there anybody there?" he said, in a low voice.

"Certainly!" replied Frank Kingston, in his usual languid tones. "I have been watching you with great interest, my dear Gray, and must compliment you on the cautious manner in which you have acted. I may add that I am quite alone."

The detective uttered a sigh of relief, then laughed.

"You scoundrel!" he exclaimed, stepping forward as Kingston crossed the gangway to the bank. "You have given me quite a start, Kingston. I declare, I thought for the moment that your plans had miscarried. And you were heartless enough to sit there and watch me in my perplexity without saying a word."

"Let me make my excuses, Gray," replied Kingston, shaking the new-comer's hand with great heartiness. "I was not certain it was you, so I waited until I could be sure. Gad, but you couldn't have arrived at a better moment, although, let me tell you, your car was rude enough to interrupt a nightingale right in the middle of its best song."

"Can you ever be serious, Kingston?" smiled the famous detective. "I have been worrying about you ever since you left London, and here I find you talking about nightingales instead of the Crown Jewels!"

"We must have a little pleasure, Gray. 'All work and no play.' You know the old proverb. Well, since you seem anxious, I have settled with Mr. Nicholas Barton, my amiable keeper, and now have the vessel to myself. The Regalia is still packed in the case in one of the cabins below."

"Then they are ours?"

"Hardly that," laughed Kingston, with a twinkle. "We can, nevertheless, take charge of them for a few hours. They will be safer in our hands than the Brotherhood's."

"How did you do it?" asked the other interestedly. "I'm simply dying to know exactly what has happened to you in this forsaken spot."

"I'll tell you everything as we travel to London, my dear fellow. For the present we had better fetch the box up, and make off with our booty as soon as possible. There's a lot of work to do to-morrow."

"I'll ask no more questions then. You seem to be taking things easily, as though there was heaps of time on our hands. You've got the Regalia, though, and that's the main thing."

"By Saturday they will be in their accustomed place," said Kingston easily. "And Sir Henry Kenning's name will be cleared in every respect. I suppose he is getting it pretty hot by the papers, eh?"

"Rather!" replied Carson Gray. "The whole Press and public are maligning him dreadfully, poor old chap. His son, who is an undergrad at Oxford, is nearly off his head about the thing. I tell you, Kingston, there hasn't been such a scoop for the newspapers for months. London has gone mad over it, and everybody is asking everybody else where the Crown Jewels are. It's become a catch-phrase already."

"We'll soon alter that. Now, if you'll follow me," said the Avenger, lighting the lantern again, "I'll lead the way to the cabin. By jingo, you wouldn't think this old hulk held about the most valuable articles in the whole of the kingdom!"

They passed down the steep stairs to the cabin, and without further ado lifted the box from the floor, and carried it out into the open. It was of considerable weight, but Kingston took the greater portion of this on himself. A few moments later the Crown Jewels reposed on the floor in the back part of the motor-car. It was a landaulette, and completely covered in from prying eyes.

"That's all, unless you'd like to see the dwarf!" exclaimed Kingston. "I give you my word he is by no means handsome."

"I suppose he's safe enough?"

"Absolutely."

"Then we'll get off without any further delay," replied Carson Gray.

He started up his engine, and hopped into the driver's seat, Kingston taking the place by his side, having donned a thick motoring coat, brought by Gray for his benefit, for although it was June, night riding on a car was not a very warm business.

Gray had some little difficulty in turning the vehicle, but at last it was done, and with a final look at the old hulk by the waterside, they commenced their journey to London. After about twenty minutes run the main road was struck, and Gray felt decidedly more comfortable.

"I feel more at home," he remarked, as they proceeded at a smart, even pace. "Now, then, let's hear your yarn, if you don't mind."

"There's really scarcely anything to tell you, Gray. Most of my time on the wherry was spent locked up in the aft hold, reading a most interesting novel. When I arrived I was bundled in and handed over to the tender mercies of Nicholas Barton. Of course, I affected to be overcome with agitation and anger, and Old Nick, as the dwarf is generally called, looked upon me with downright contempt. This was what I wanted, for he treated me as though I were a child. Well, nothing whatever happened until this morning, when the Hon. Percy Claydon arrived. I managed to overhear a few words of his conversation with Barton."

"And what did he say?" inquired Gray.

"All I heard was that the Crown Jewels were to be called for late to-morrow—Friday night. That was all I heard, and a few minutes later Claydon himself informed me that I needn't worry as the jewels were to be returned on Saturday morning."

"Well?"

"That's all. You know as much now, Gray, as I do myself."

"It doesn't seem much," said Carson Gray, rather disappointedly. "What's this work you're talking about to-morrow?"

"Why, can't you guess? Just look here. The Regalia is to be returned on Saturday morning. Doesn't that prove that the Brotherhood are expecting to receive the ransom money some time to-morrow night? Claydon would not have said that otherwise, for the jewels will not be returned until the money is in the hands of the Brotherhood. Therefore, it is to be handed over before Saturday morning—if we don't prevent it!"

(Another thrilling instalment of this amazing serial story next Thursday.)

Printed and published weekly by the Proprietors, 23, Bouverie Street, London, England. Agents for Australia: Gordon & Gotch, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z.; South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg Canada: The Imperial News Co., Ltd., Toronto. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, June 24th, 1911.