

**SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY INSIDE!**

The

**GEM** 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>D</sup>

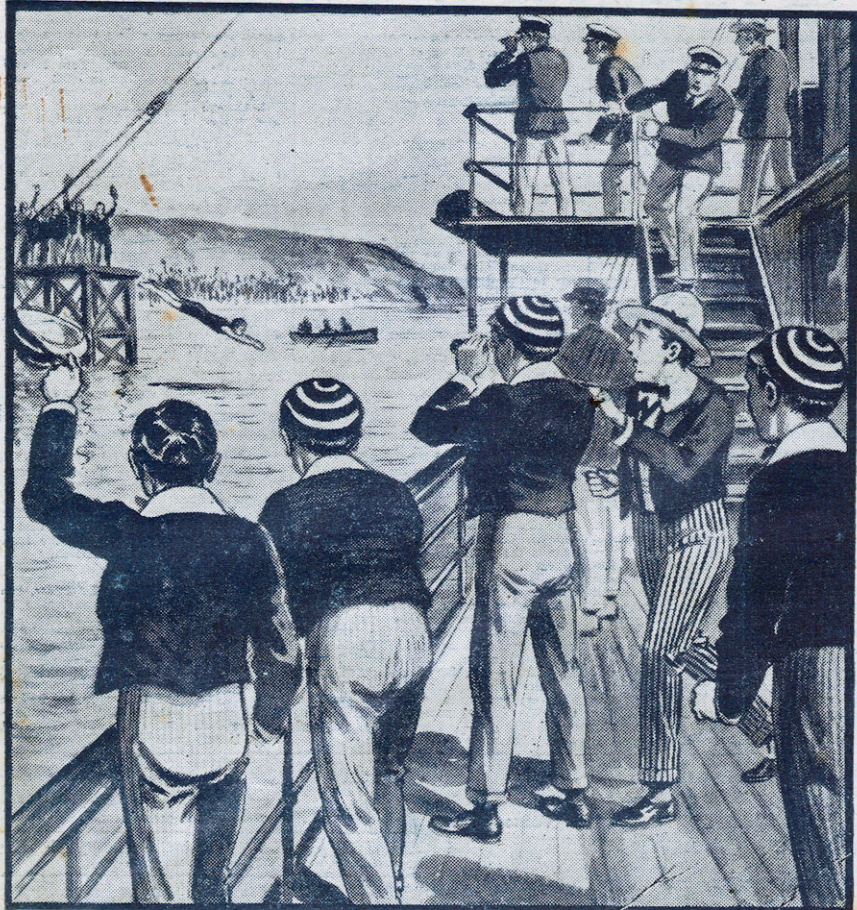
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Vol. XX.

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20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

August 6th, 1921.



**TOM MERRY'S ATTEMPT TO SWIM THE CHANNEL!**

*(An incident from the grand long complete story of the Boys of St. Jim's.)*

# EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

I think you will all agree with me that this week's story of St. Jim's is one of the finest which has yet appeared. The excellent story of Tom Merry's gallant attempt to swim the Channel brings out the extraordinary character of Ralph Reckness Cardew very vividly, and the result will no doubt be that he will add to his already big circle of admirers.

Next week there will be another of these magnificent yarns in the good old "Gem," and I am sure all my friends will find it as interesting as the one appearing in our pages this week. I have got some more splendid news for you. In our next issue the first number of the "St. Jim's News," edited by Tom Merry, will appear. This will contain many interesting items of news contributed by the

boys of St. Jim's, and it is certain to be popular. A large number of my readers have asked me to reserve a small space in the "Gem" for a feature of this sort, and they will no doubt look forward to it with eagerness. Altogether our next number will be a splendid one in every way, and readers should secure a copy early. Tell all your chums about the "St. Jim's News."

YOUR EDITOR.

## ANSWERS TO READERS.

To M. L. B., Sherwood Rise, Nottingham.  
From Tom Merry, No. 10, Shell Passage, St. James' College, Ryeombe, Sussex.

"Dear Miss Marjorie,—I heartily reciprocate your kind wishes, and send you and your chum my best wishes. Now I must answer your questions. First, my faults are many, and I am afraid I can't really tell you which is my worst. Perhaps some other boy would be able to reel them off by the dozen.

"Second, I want to be quite a hundred different things when I grow up, and cannot possibly make up my mind yet. One of my greatest ambitions is to edit my famous "Weekly." I will give you my regards to my chums; and say good-bye until you read about me in next week's story.—I am, yours sincerely, "Tom Merry."

To G. F. G., The Oldness Protectorate, Knala Lurigar, F.M.S. From Tom Merry.

"My Dear Chum,—I feel very pleased to receive a letter from a fellow-schoolboy in so far-off a country.

"Yes, I have kicked Bob Cherry, of Greyfriars, once. All I can tell you about Monty Lowther and Harry Manners at the moment

is that they are sitting at the tea-table in No. 10, wolfing down bread-and-butter and dressed card, and from the speed with which it is disappearing they are evidently enjoying it. I thank you again for your welcome note, and with all best wishes.—I remain, yours for ever, "Tom Merry."

"THE BLACK SECRET" (Kingston).—Philip Lovell is the captain of the Fifth Form. Gordon Gay, Harry, and Frank Woolton are "The Three Wallabies." The worst rotters in the Fourth Form at Ryeombe are Larking, Snipe, and Carpenter. Algeron Lacy, formerly of Wodehouse, is a swanking, conceited person. I can assure you that Gordon Gay doesn't give half the care or attention to the doings of the "bad boys" in his form that Tom Merry or Wharton would do to theirs. Gordon Gay says his motto is: "Be care-free, happy-go-lucky, and live and let live!"

"A Keen Girl Gemite" (Swansea).—You will find a good deal of information

about the characters given in "Answers to Readers" every week. Tom Merry first appeared in the GEM in 1907. Jack Blake appeared in stories a year before that, though that was in another paper. How is Gerald Cutts? As usual, I believe—that is to say, extremely unpleasant! The Shell Form is above the Fourth. The Shell passage has eleven stories in it. The Fourth Form has none. I will think over your idea of publishing a diagram showing the occupants of each study. You add you are another "Cardewite." There are literally hosts of them, it seems. I am glad to hear you think the portrait of Leslie Owen is the best one which has appeared. He looked a very handsome boy, didn't he?

"Youthful Pith" (Owentry).—Yes, old chum, the Third Form has its own footer and cricket eleven. You don't like Cardew the least bit? Well, he has many thousands of admirers.

## CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

Aubrey Racko, the black sheep of the Shell, is always in hot water. I am glad to state that he has at last received his just deserts. He recently came up against young Frank Levison, and found this little 'un one too many for him.

William George Bunter, a great frequenter of the tuckshop, has again been informed by the wary Mrs. Mimble that she will not allow him to have goods on tick. The Owl of the Remove suggested the "slate method," but the good old dame is too wide awake for such "sleights," thank goodness!

Walter Adolphus D'Arcy has scored a big success by winning the Junior Lawn Tennis Tournament. It was something of a "fore-lawn" hope for the other entrants with the smart Wally competing.

I was pleased to hear on inquiry that Tom Merry is recovering from a slight illness which kept him in bed last week, although he is not well enough yet to leave the sanatorium. He will be well enough, however, to edit next week's issue of the "St. Jim's News." So look out for it.

A cricket match between the New House of St. Jim's and the School House resulted in a victory for the latter by three runs, after having been behind on the first innings. Tom Merry, Talbot, and Monty Lowther won chief honours for the winning side, whilst George Figgins, it must be said, tried hard for the New House, having carried his bat in the first innings for the splendid total of 78 runs not out.

I gather that Alonzo Todd is going great guns in the boxing world, due to the splendid coaching Harry Wharton is giving him. The last victim of the duffer of Greyfriars was Percy Bolsower, who is only just able to sit up and take food with the aid of a little persuasion.

So Jack Drake, late of Greyfriars, has accepted the offer of Ferrers Locke to become this great detective's assistant. I have every hope of this smart and plucky lad proving his worth. Drake is no "duck," you take my word.

So Ralph Reckness Cardew has an invitation to be the guest of Lord Eilburn for the first week of August. Strange, but I almost guessed this was coming.

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A Grand, Long Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, telling of Tom Merry's Attempt to Swim the Channel.  
By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.  
Rough on Tom Merry.

"CARDEW!" Tom Merry shouted angrily. For once Tom Merry's good-natured face was distinctly cross in expression. He shouted across the quadrangle, and his voice could be heard from the School House to the New House of St. Jim's.

Certainly Cardew must have heard it. But he did not heed it. Cardew was lounging away towards the gates as Tom Merry shouted, and he went on his way regardless.

"Cardew!" roared Tom. The dandy of the Fourth, still without looking round, disappeared through the gateway.

"The cheeky ass! By Jove, I'll—"  
Manners and Lowther chuckled. They seemed rather entertained by their chum's wrath.

"Let him rip, old chap!" said Lowther. "He only wants to cut swimming—"

"Blessed slacker!" grunted Manners. "He's jolly well not going to cut ducker!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "I've had the tip from Kildare to round them all up, and Cardew knows it jolly well! I'm going after him."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Lowther. "Bring him back by his hairy ears."

"I shall—if he won't walk back!" said Tom Merry grimly. And Tom cut off to the gates at top speed.

"Baj Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was with the group of juniors outside the School House. "I regard this as wathah-wotten of Cardew. Poor old Tom Mewwy has had trouble enough wounding' up the slackahs already. You ought to have kept an eye on Cardew, Levison."

Levison shrugged his shoulders. Keeping an eye on Ralph Reckness Cardew, and bringing him up in the way he should go, was not an easy task for anybody.

"And you, too, Clive, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Too much of a handful for me!" growled Clive.

"Tommy will yank him back," said Monty Lowther. "Yaas, wathah!"

Levison and Clive looked doubtful. If Cardew had determined to "cut" ducker that sunny afternoon, they did not think it likely that he would be rounded up, to join the swimmers—even though the order had gone forth from Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, that nobody was to be missing.

Tom Merry ran down to the gates and out into the road, and looked round for Cardew. That negligent youth had dropped his easy saunter, and was walking quite quickly in the direction of the village. He was already at a good distance from the gates. Tom Merry put his hands to his mouth, and bawled:

"Cardew!"  
The Fourth-Former did not look round. Apparently he chose to be deaf that afternoon.

"My hat!" muttered Tom. He did not shout again, but broke into a rapid run in pursuit of the dandy of the Fourth. Cardew did not turn until the pursuing footfalls were close behind. Then he turned suddenly, just as Tom's hand was outstretched to drop heavily on his shoulder. He backed quickly, and Tom's hand dropped into space, and the captain of the Shell nearly pitched over.

"Hallo!" said Cardew coolly.

Tom recovered himself, and his eyes gleamed at the cool, careless face of the Fourth-Former.

"You heard me shouting to you!" he exclaimed angrily. Cardew nodded assent.

"I'm not deaf!" he remarked.

"Why didn't you come back, then?"

"I'm goin' for a stroll," explained Cardew.

"You're jolly well not going for a stroll!" exclaimed Tom. "You know it's ducker this afternoon, and Kildare's in charge. Every fellow's got to turn up for swimming practice, and you know it."

"I know it."

"Kildare's given me the job of rounding up the slackers, and—"

"One of the heavy responsibilities of your distinguished position in the school, dear man!" said Cardew gravely. "Must be no end of a worry bein' junior captain. I'm rather glad the fellows never wanted to elect me to the onerous job."

"Well, come back!" said Tom impatiently. Cardew shook his head.

"Sorry!" he remarked. "I think I mentioned that I was goin' for a stroll. On any other occasion, the attraction of your company would be too much for me. But this afternoon I'm resistin' it!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass! You've got to turn up for ducker with the rest. You know Kildare will miss you, and he'll be waxy!"

"Let him wax!" said Cardew carelessly.

Tom set his lips.

"You've got to come back, Cardew. Kildare's specially keen on ducker now; you know the new swimming coach is coming, and Kildare wants the fellows to make a good show when Captain Corkran sees them."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"You can swim, too!" growled Tom. "It isn't as if you were a dud like Trimble or Racker or Crooke. Why don't you want to swim this afternoon?"

"I just don't want to," yawned Cardew. "The strenuous life never did appeal to me. Kildare's a bit too strenuous for my taste. Just because he wants to buck us up, I'm goin' to take a stroll."

"Well, you're not!" said Tom curtly. "It's my duty to see that you turn up with the rest. Come on!"

"Can't be did!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. He was a patient fellow, but Cardew had often tried his patience; and never so sorely as now. He pushed back his cuffs.

"Will you walk, or will you be yanked along?" he asked. "That's your choice."

"What a choice!" yawned Cardew. "There seems no escape from the strenuous life, in one way or another."

"Well, are you coming?" snapped Tom.

"No, I'm not comin'!"

Tom Merry said no more; he was quite at the end of his patience. He made a jump at the Fourth-Former, and grasped him.

Cardew's careless manner dropped from him like a cloak. He closed with the Shell fellow, and returned grip for grip. Slacker as he certainly was at times, Cardew could put forth energy when he liked; and he liked now.

The two juniors gripped and struggled. But Tom Merry was the stronger of the two, and Cardew found himself swept sheer off his feet.

"Now will you come?" panted Tom.  
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 704

"No!" said Cardew, between his teeth. "I won't come, and you sha'n't make me. Hang you!"

Without answering, Tom Merry gripped him harder, and started back towards St. Jim's. But Cardew's feet reached the ground again, and he gripped and struggled, and the tussle recommenced. And suddenly—Tom hardly knew how—the Shell fellow found his leg hooked from under him, and he came to the ground with a heavy crash.

The road was hard—and Tom Merry struck it hard! His grasp on Cardew loosened, and he lay, almost dazed, for a moment or two.

With a spring, Cardew cleared the low fence by the lane, and disappeared into the wood.

Tom scrambled up breathlessly. His face was crimson with wrath and chagrin.

"Cardew! You cad!" he panted. A laugh came back from the wood, but Cardew had vanished among the trees. Tom Merry ran to the fence, and then stopped. He was due at the school—it was just on time for ducker. And a chase among the trees was likely to take up plenty of time.

Tom Merry realised that he was "done." Cardew could have dodged him for an hour in the wood, if he had chosen—and it was pretty certain that he would choose! With feelings that were almost too deep for words, Tom Merry turned and tramped back to the school, leaving Ralph Reckness Cardew to his own devices for the afternoon.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Wrath to Come.

"**B**AI Jove! Where's Cardew?"

Arthur Augustus asked that question as Tom Merry, with a very flushed face, joined the crowd of juniors in the quadrangle.

"Haven't you brought him back?" asked Jack Blake. "Can't you see I haven't?" demanded Tom Merry, rather gruffly.

The question was, indeed, rather superfluous. Blake grinned.

"Wouldn't he come?" he asked. "If he would have come here he'd be here, I suppose!" "Keep its ickle temper!" admonished Blake. "Don't get waxy, old scout!"

"Yaas, wathah! There is nothin' to get excited about, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his most fatherly manner. "Pway, wetaim your calmness, deah old bean!"

"Ass!"  
"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"  
"How did you get your bags so dusty?" asked Digby, with a grin. "Been scrapping with Cardew?"  
"You didn't let him down you?" exclaimed Herries, in great astonishment.

"Oh Tommy!" murmured Lowther. Tom Merry's face was crimson. He was more than a match for Cardew, and it was not pleasant to have been "downed" by the slim and elegant dandy of the Fourth. The remarks he was receiving on the subject were still less pleasant.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought Cardew was so heffy!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "Did he weally down you, deah boy?"

"Cheeky ass!" said Manners. "He will get into a row with Kildare!"

"He will get into a row with me!" said Tom Merry savagely. "I'll make him sit up when he does come in!"

"I say!" chimed in Baggy Trimble. "If Cardew's going to cut ducker, I don't see why I shouldn't! Fair play, you know!"

"Yes, rather!" said Crooke of the Shell. "I'm not gone on the silly rot, I know that!"

"You wouldn't be!" snapped Tom.

"Well, we're going to cut it, if Cardew does!" snapped Racke. "Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"You can argue that out with Kildare," said Tom Merry grimly. "Here he comes!"

The captain of St. Jim's came out of the School House. Kildare's keen blue eyes roved over the numerous crowd. Keen as his eyes were, however, he was not likely to observe the fact that one junior was missing out of such a crowd. He turned to Tom Merry, whose duty it was as junior captain to see that all were there.

"All here, Merry?" he asked.

Tom hesitated.

"Well," said Kildare sharply, "you know you had to get all the juniors! No slacking this afternoon. Who's missing?"

"Cardew of the Fourth!" said Tom reluctantly.

He was prepared to deal with the slacker himself when the time came, but he did not want to report him to the captain of the school. But there was no help for it.

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"Cardew!" repeated Kildare. "Didn't he know that ducker was fixed for this afternoon?"

"I—I suppose so!"

"You mean he's cut it?"

"Ye-es!"

"Very well," said Kildare, setting his lips grimly. "I'll deal with Master Cardew myself presently! Nobody else missing? Then get a move on!"

"I say, Kildare," piped Baggy Trimble, "I—I don't feel up to ducker this afternoon, please."

"Why not?"

"I—I've got a pain——"

"I'll give you another!" said Kildare genially. And he took Baggy's fat ear between a finger and thumb. There was an agonised yelp from Trimble.

"Yoooop!"

"Pain gone?" asked Kildare.

"Ow-ow-ow! Yow! No!" yelled Trimble.

"I'll try the other ear, then!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Pain gone now?"

"Yow-ow! Yes! Oh! Yes! Leggo!"

"Get a move on, then!" said the captain of St. Jim's. Baggy Trimble rubbed his fat ears as he moved off with the crowd. And Racke, and Crooke, and Mellish, and two or three other slackers, who had been thinking out excuses for cutting ducker, decided that they wouldn't try it on after all.

Kildare's way with slackers was a little too short and sharp to suit their taste. Not that there was anything in ducker for a fellow to want to cut it, unless he was a hopeless slacker. The Rhyl flowed and murmured gently between green banks in the summer sunshine, and the shining waters seemed to call to the swimmers. Most of the fellows thoroughly enjoyed it, and it did the others good, though against their inclinations. Racke & Co. would have preferred cigarettes and a game of banker in a study, but there was no doubt whatever that ducker was much better for them. Trimble, indeed, would have cut tubber as well as ducker, if he could—it was on record that Baggy had been seized by his form-fellows in the dormitory and forcibly washed as a warning to him.

Tom Merry was still frowning when the juniors came down the green bank of the river.

His unexpected defeat at Cardew's hands rankled, and he had quite made up his mind that when the slacker turned up at the school again there was going to be trouble for him. Levison and Clive read the expression in the junior captain's face; but they had nothing to say for their chum. There was nothing to be said, in fact; though they were troubled. Study No. 9 made many allowances for the erratic Cardew; but they could not expect Tom Merry to make the same allowances. And his look indicated that he didn't intend to.

But Tom's sunny face cleared when he found himself in the water.

He was a good swimmer, and he enjoyed the sport; though he gave up a great deal of his time to coaching those less skilled, and helping timid fags who were afraid of the water. The slackers in the crowd looked on Kildare as a "beast" for keeping them at it; but, as a matter of fact, the captain of the school was giving up most of his afternoon to the arrival, and it was not an easy one.

The expected arrival of Captain Corkan, the swimming coach, naturally made the captain of St. Jim's keen to put the juniors through their paces a little. Captain Corkan was a swimmer of fame; and most of the fellows knew that he had made a gallant attempt to swim the Channel and had only just failed. It was an honour to the school to "bag" the gallant captain as a coach, and most of the juniors were alive to the honour, and they wanted to show up as well as possible when the great man's eye fell upon them. And he was expected to arrive at the school that afternoon.

Kildare was fairly satisfied with his flock, though some of the slackers kept him busy. Trimble had to be dropped into the water, and after that he was found hanging on to the punt, which was kept in readiness in case of accidents, and Tom Merry & Co. yanked him off. But after that the Terrible Three held Baggy while he swam a few strokes, and did not duck his head under water as they were strongly tempted to do. Racke and Crooke crept gingerly in at the latest possible moment, and scuttled out again at the earliest possible moment. Tom Merry, at all events, thoroughly enjoyed the water, and when he came out the frowns had quite departed from his good-natured face.

Levison came over to him while he was towelling.

"Topping, isn't it?" Levison remarked.

"You bet!" said Tom cheerily.

"Captain Corkan ought to be pleased with some of us when he comes!"



"I hope so," said Tom, with a smile. "We won't spring Trimble on him at first, if we can help it." Levison laughed.

"By the way, about Cardew—" he murmured. Tom Merry's brow knitted at once.

"He'll get into a row with the prefects," said Levison. "No need for you to get your rag out, you know!"

Tom Merry went on toweling, and did not answer. "What's the good of rowing?" went on Levison. "Leave him to Kildare."

"Sorry, old fellow," said Tom politely. "I'm going to punch his nose when he comes in! Don't worry. It will do him good. Dash it all, Levison, I don't want to swank, but junior captain is junior captain, I suppose. I've simply got to punch him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "In Tom Mewwy's place, Levison, I should feel bound to give Cardew a fearful thrashing!"

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Levison crossly.

"Weally, Levison—" said Levison unessily.

"Wats!" said D'Arcy emphatically. "Cardew is a distant velation of mine, and I am bound to take some interest in him; and I trust you will punch his nose vevy hard, Tom Mewwy!"

"I will!" said Tom.

"That's wight!"

And Ernest Levison gave it up.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### At the Risk of His Life.

**Y**AW-AW-AWWW!" It was a deep, prolonged yawn, and it emanated from Ralph Reckness Cardew. A mile or more down the Rhyl from the bathing-pool, Cardew stretched lazily on the grassy bank, idly staring at the river and at the woods beyond.

Cardew was bored that afternoon—so bored that he almost regretted refusing to join the swimmers. But not quite! The fact that that afternoon was being strictly ordered to turn up for ducker that afternoon was a sufficient reason for Cardew to feel pleased that he had cut it.

But he was suffering from boredom—as he frequently did. His chums were at ducker, so their company was not available; and even a "little game" with Racke & Co., the black sheep of St. Jim's, was out of the question, as they, too, had been shepherded off to the bathing-pool. Cardew was thrown entirely on his own company—and he had often complained that he was as terribly bored with himself as with everybody else.

He had not even brought a book with him—he found books a bore. He fumbled in his pockets, hoping to find a cigarette there—but there was no cigarette. Even the consolation of a smoke was denied him. So he lay in the grass on the sloping bank, his hands behind his head, stared at the shining river, and yawned.

Down the bank the water swirled and rushed, by the reeds that swayed and rustled in the current. That sloping bank overlooked a narrowing reach of the river, where the current was hard and fast, and Cardew knew that just off the reeds it was deep, with a sudden depth. The slope he lay on was abrupt. A careless roll on the grass, and he might have pitched down into the water—into seven feet of rushing water that few swimmers would willingly have tackled. He did not even think of it as he lay on the slope, his hands behind his head, the picture of careless laziness. On the path on the opposite bank a dog came into sight. Cardew watched the animal lazily as it frisked on the path and scuttled among the reeds there—it was a little Aberdeen terrier, chasing a stone. Cardew's handsome, lazy face broke into a smile as he watched the dog across the river. Cardew had good qualities as well as bad ones, and among his good qualities was a love of dogs. The Aberdeen was enjoying himself with the rolling stone and suddenly the stone rolled down into the water. Like a shot the terrier was after it, and there was a plunge and a splash.

"Little duffer!" murmured Cardew.

He watched the terrier reappear on the rippling surface—well out from the bank. A swirl of the current had carried it right out into the river, and it was swimming and struggling back towards the bank. Cardew sat up in the grass. He realised, as he watched, that the little animal was making no headway. The current was too strong for it, and instead of gaining on the bank, the swirling current swept it farther out into the river.

"Bother it!" grunted Cardew. He was standing up now, and he threw his straw hat on the bank.

He watched the dog. Where the Dickens was the animal's master? he wondered. If the little brute fell into danger, it was for his master to help him out. Doubtless there was someone on the path beyond the trees; but if the dog's master was there, he was unaware of the Aberdeen's peril, for he did not appear beyond the trees.

Cardew threw off his jacket. The terrier was fighting bravely for his life, but he had no chance whatever of reaching the bank, Cardew could see that. He was as near now to Cardew's bank as to the other. All his struggles barely sufficed to hold him against the current, and in a few minutes more it was certain that he would be swept helplessly away down the middle of the river—to death. If it had been a drowning child, the anxiety on Cardew's face could scarcely have been keener.

"Hang it!" he muttered crossly.

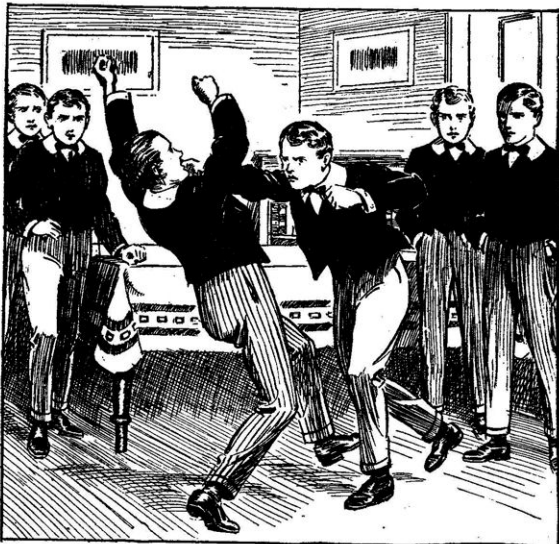
He kicked off his shoes.

There was no help for it—he had to go in, or see the dog drown under his eyes. He hated the exertion—he hated spoiling his clothes with the water. There was a "row" awaiting him at St. Jim's because he had refused to join up for ducker, and here he was going into the river for a stranger's dog. More fool he—that was the thought in his mind as he ran down the steep bank.

As for danger, the fact that the water was deadly deep and swift, that did not seem to cross his mind at all.

He threw his hands together and dived.

He struck out as he came to the surface, staring round for the terrier. Something almost living seemed to be plucking at him and pulling him. It was the current, and he realised that it was stronger than he had guessed. But the struggling dog was at hand, and as Cardew sighted it the struggles ceased suddenly and the little black head vanished under the surface. It came up a moment later with Cardew's grasp on the collar.



Cardew's rage lent him a fictitious strength, and he rushed savagely at the captain of the Shell. Levison and Olive jumped up and dragged the table out of the way. Manners and Lowther stood back against the closed door. Cardew's fierce blows failed to get through Tom Merry's guard, and again and again the Shell fellow's fists came at him.

Two little bright eyes blinked at Cardew from the shaggy head. The terrier, though exhausted, swam again, with Cardew's supporting hand on the collar.

Cardew held him and swam, and looked round him. The banks seemed very far off, and the trees and bushes seemed gliding away fast—the current was racing on with him.

He set his teeth. He knew perfectly well that he was in danger—that even if he abandoned the dog, it was a question whether he would fight his way out of the river alive. And he never even thought of abandoning the dog.

Burdened with the animal, he was handicapped heavily, but he swam coolly, methodically.

Once his head went under and the river flowed over him, but he came up again, the exhausted terrier still in his grasp.

He was fighting his way to the shore, and once it seemed to him that he almost gained it. But the water, rushing and whirling between narrowing banks, was full of swirling currents, and even as the green bank gleamed near, he was plucked away again and swept out.

Cardew's teeth were hard set now, his face set, too, but he was still fighting indomitably. The wings of the Angel of Death rustled over him, and he knew it, and it did not shake a nerve in him. And still he held the helpless terrier.

Plunge again, and he felt himself sinking into illimitable depths—into deadly darkness. He struggled furiously, and his head came up. He gasped and panted for air. Over the head a pitiless sun blazed on him, but the shining river, his inaccessible green banks, danced before his dazed vision—his strength was going, and his senses, too. Like one in a dream, he knew that it was the end that was coming—that that dazed vision of green banks and the old quadrangle, the grey old buildings of St. Jim's; that his chums, Clive and Levison, would never see him again till he was carried in, cold and stark. It passed like a dim vision through his whirling brain. There was a plunge in the water—splash, and splash again! He heard it without understanding. He was going—sinking—sinking.

Something grasped him, and his face was in the sunlight again—his mouth received the fresh, pure air. He was dimly conscious of a hard grasp—of motion—but he was too far gone now to realise his surroundings. Dimly he felt something under his feet—solid. He fell, and lay in rich, sweet grass, panting, and panting. A voice spoke, but he did not understand. He was conscious now only of a desire for air—more and more air—to ease his throttled lungs, and he panted and panted.

Then, like a veil drawn aside, the dimness cleared, and he stared around him with wild, startled eyes. The dog lay panting in the grass. A broad-shouldered, sun-tanned man was bending over the junior.

"Oh, murmured Cardew. "Hallo! What—"

He tried to sit up, and sank back again.

"Lie still, my boy!" came a deep voice.

"But—but what—Who—"

"Lie still; rest for a bit!"

Cardew rested in the grass, trying to pull himself together.

#### CHAPTER 4. Trouble to Come.

**R**ALPH RECKNESS CARDEW had been very near to death, and he knew it. But as his brain cleared and he felt his strength returning, he sat up in the grass, and there was the ghost of his old mocking smile upon his handsome face. He stared at the burly, tanned stranger, and saw that the man was dripping with water.

"Did you pull me out?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Many thanks!" Cardew glanced round. "How's the dog?"

"The dog's all right, my lad, thanks to you!" said the tanned man. "Thank heaven I saw you in time. I missed the dog, and looked for him, and—and saw you right out in the water with him. You went in for him?"

"The little beggar was done in," said Cardew. "He plunged into the river after a stone, and the current caught him. Glad he's out all right. He's your dog?"

"Yes."

"My gad! I'm pretty wet," said Cardew. "Which bank have you landed me on—yours or mine?"

"Mine," said the tanned man, with a smile.

"Then my hat and jacket and shoes are on the other side!" yawned Cardew. "What a bore!"

The sun-tanned man looked at him curiously.

"You risked your life to save my dog!" he said.

Cardew yawned.

"I suppose I couldn't see the little beggar drown!" he said testily. "Oh, heavens, what a state my trousers are in!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 704.

"Few would have gone in for a dog, in such a depth of water, and with such a current."

"Lots of fellows would have," answered Cardew. "It happens that I can swim." He rose to his feet. "You look pretty wet. Better get a move on, or you'll catch cold."

The sunburnt man smiled.

"Do you feel fit to walk?" he asked.

"Fit as a fiddle!" said Cardew.

"You've done a plucky thing!"

"My dear man, don't harp on that, for goodness' sake! I got your dog, and you got me, so we're quits. You must be some swimmer, though," added Cardew, "to get us both out like that. You've done some swimmin' in your time, I fancy."

"A great deal," said the tanned man. "Well, if you feel all right, you'd better run home as fast as you can and get a change of clothes."

"That's my game," assented Cardew. "You'd better do the same. There's an inn along the river—half a mile down—if you're not near home. You can get dried up there."

"Thanks! I am a stranger in this quarter," said the tanned man. "I'd like to make myself a bit more presentable before going on. Sure you're all right?"

"Right, as rain."

"I've done a dashed plucky thing, and I'd like to know your name!" said the stranger quietly.

"Not at all necessary," said Cardew urbanely. "If you'll rub out the praise and the gratitude, I'll be much obliged. Good-afternoon, my dear sir! I'm goin' to hustle now!"

He gave the bronzed man a careless nod, and started along the bank.

The man stared after him rather curiously, but Cardew did not look back. He had a good distance to go to reach the bridge, and he stepped out briskly. He reached the bridge and crossed it, and returned to the spot where he had been lying on the bank, and there he picked up his hat and jacket, and put on his shoes. His clothes had almost dried in the hot summer sunshine by that time. He started to walk towards the school rather slowly. He had told the tanned stranger that he was as fit as a fiddle and right as rain, because he hated the idea of receiving compassion or assistance; but, as a matter of fact, he was very far from being as right as rain. His exertions had told severely upon him, and he had a heavy, tired feeling and a slight headache.

He cut through the fields from the river to reach Rylcombe Lane, as the quickest way back to the school. He was feeling a keen desire to rest, to get out of the blaze of the sun.

But his progress was rather slow along the blazing lane to the school. He came to the school gates at last, and was glad of the shade of the old elms in the quadrangle as he came in.

Ducker was long over; and there were a good many fellows in the quad; and Cardew heard his name pronounced on all sides as he headed for the School House. He had almost forgotten ducker and his disobedience to orders; but that detail was brought back to his mind now.

"Hallo, there's the merry slacker!" said Figgins of the New House, as Cardew passed, and Kerr and Wynn gave a simultaneous sniff.

Slackers did not meet with the approval of Figgins & Co., who were energetic youths.

Cardew glanced at them; but he was feeling too tired for his usual cool impertinence, and he passed on without replying. Blake & Co. were chatting near the School House steps, and they all looked at Cardew. Study No. 6 were very much down on the slacker who had cut ducker.

"Bai Jove! There's Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Slacker!" growled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! I twust, Cardew, that you realise that you are regarded as a wotten slacker!"

"Go hon!" murmured Cardew.

"You look a bit fagged," remarked Digby. "Walked about half a mile, poor old crotch!"

"That's it," said Cardew. "I must have walked nearly half a mile, Digby! Awfully exhaustin' in this hot weather!"

"Bai Jove! If you are a feahful slackah, Cardew, you need not bwag of it," said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"I've got so few things to brag of," explained Cardew. "Least of all, my relations!"

And he lounged up the steps, leaving Arthur Augustus perplexed by his last remark, and Blake & Co. grinning.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Gussy, as Cardew's meaning penetrated at length into his aristocratic brain. "Was that boundah alludin' to the fact that I am his relation, you fellows?"

"I shouldn't wonder!" grinned Blake.

"I will go aftah him, and give him a feahful thwashin'!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's wrathfully. "Of all the cheek—"

"Leave him to Tom Merry," chuckled Blake. "He's booked for a licking, anyway!"

Arthur Augustus calmed down. "Yaas, that is so," he agreed. "I trust Tom Mewry will give him a weally tewfivich hidin'!"

Headless of Arthur Augustus and his lofty opinions, Cardew strolled into the School House Talbot of the Shell was in the hall, and he glanced at the Fourth-Former.

"I think Kildare wants you. Cardew," he said. Cardew nodded.

"I've no doubt he does," he assented. "Hadin' you better go?" suggested Talbot, as Cardew lounged away to the stairs.

"I think not," answered Cardew cheerfully. "I'm afraid Kildare would bore me, old bean!"

And he went up the staircase. In spite of his cool and smiling exterior, Cardew was feeling considerably "rotten" just then, and in no mood to face a ragging from the captain of the school. He hoped that he would feel better after a rest and tea; but, better or worse, he was determined not to let his outward aspect betray the fact that he was feeling anything but well.

He came up to his study—No. 9—in the Fourth, and walked in with an air of cheerful carelessness. Levison and Clive were in the study, and they were beginning tea.

"Oh, here you are!" grunted Clive, rather gruffly. "Here I am, dear man!" answered Cardew, sinking lazily into an armchair. "Turned up again like a bad penny!"

"I'm afraid there's going to be some trouble," said Levison. "It's a troublesome world," said Cardew, unmoved. "Got a cup of tea to spare for a lazy and exhausted slacker?"

"What's exhausted you?" "Dig could tell you. I've walked half a mile!" "Ass!" grunted Levison.

"Thanks!" yawned Cardew. "Hand out the tea, my polite old bean! Nothin' like a cup of tea, and sympathy therewith, when a fellow feels down and out."

The tea was very refreshing, and Cardew felt better for it; but there was still a heavy fatigue gripping him, which made him chafe. He lay back in the chair, resting; and rest was really necessary to him; but as his usual attitude was one of laziness, his chums noticed nothing out of the common. He helped himself to buttered toast, and ate idly. Trimble blinked into the study, and grinned at him.

"Thought you'd come in!" Trimble remarked. "Exactly!" said Cardew. "I've come in—and would you mind goin' out, Trimble? Your face has a rather disconcertin' effect on my nerves."

"Yah!" said Baggy. "Kildare's going to give you the asphalt for cutting ducker!"

Cardew cast an appealing glance at his chums.

"Won't one of you trundle that barrel away?" he asked plaintively.

"Yah!" said Trimble again. "And Tom Merry's going to wallop you, and serve you right! Slacker! Yah!"

And with that the worthy Baggy rolled away, as Levison picked up the loaf with the evident intention of shying it.

"The excellent Thomas is wrathful, is he?" yawned Cardew.

"Wouldn't you be, if you were junior captain, and a lazy slacker dodged out of ducker?" snapped Clive.

"Possibly! Thank goodness I'm not junior captain!" drawled Cardew. "Too strenuous a job for my taste. Hallo, those who are those fairly footsops? Is that the lofty and indignant Thomas in quest of vengeance?"

It was! As Cardew finished speaking, Tom Merry looked in at the study doorway, and Manners and Lowther looked in over his shoulders.

#### CHAPTER 5. Knocked Out.

**T**OM MERRY came quietly into the study.

As a matter of fact, Tom's wrath had had time to cool, and as there was a prefect's licking in store for Cardew, Tom would have been willing to let the matter drop—if Cardew had only made it easy for him to do so. It was no light matter for the junior captain of the school, to be "flooded" and treated with derision—but Tom's sunny nature found it difficult to nurse wrath. A word or two of civil reproof from Cardew would have been enough.

But that word or two Cardew had no intention whatever of uttering. He was almost glued to the chair with fatigue, which came of over-exertion when he was not in the best possible state of fitness. But he was in his usual whimsical mood again, and more inclined to provocation than to conciliation.

"Hallo, old top!" he said genially. "Sorry I couldn't stay longer when you were chattrin' to me so agreeably in the lane. I hope you didn't find the ground very hard!"

There was a sound from Manners and Lowther as of a suppressed chuckle. They did not like Cardew's "cheek" any more than Tom Merry did, but there was something entertaining in it.

Tom's brows knitted.

"Is that all you've got to say, Cardew?" he asked. "Not at all! I'm in the mood for light and genial conversation," answered Cardew imperturbably. "I hope you enjoyed ducker! Such strenuous exercises, I believe, are quite in your line. I admire a chap who's so keen on upholdin' the sportin' reputation of the school. My admiration knows no bounds!"

"Enough of that rot!" said Tom Merry gruffly. "Kildare told me to have all the juniors at ducker, and you dodged out, Cardew. And you had the cheek to land me with a wrestling trick when I was going to fetch you in!" exclaimed Tom, his temper rising under Cardew's mocking look.

"You were clumsy," said Cardew. "I hardly thought I should floor the mighty Thomas so easily. You went down like a ninepin, didn't you, old bean? You looked awfully funny as you sat there."

Tom Merry breathed hard. "Perhaps you'll look funny before I've done with you," he said. "Will you step down to the gym, Cardew?"

"What for, old bean?"

"To take a licking."

"The inducement," said Cardew lazily, "is not sufficiently strong. Even for the pleasure of lickin' you, dear boy, I would not take the trouble to amble down to the gym."

"Would you rather have it here?"

"The question is, am I goin' to take it or give it?" said Cardew calmly. "In either case, this study is as good as anywhere else."

"Then get out of that chair."

"This chair is very comfy, thanks!"



Kildare was fairly satisfied with his flock, though some of the slackers kept him busy. Trimble had to be dropped into the water, but Tom Merry & Co., were there in readiness to yank him out in case of accidents.



"Look here, Cardew—" began Levison uneasily.

"Dear old man," said Cardew, "don't you butt in! Thomas is doin' the talkin', and he looks as if he has lots more to say. Go ahead, Thomas! Get your grievances off your manly chest, old gun! You can't imagine what a pleasure it is to listen to you!"

Tom Merry did not answer that in words. He strode towards Cardew, grasped him by the shoulders, and wrenched him out of the armchair.

Cardew went spinning across the study, and he brought up against the wall with a crash.

Tom Merry faced him, with his hands up.

"Now come on!" he said.

Cardew leaned heavily on the wall, breathing hard. All eyes in the study were fixed very curiously upon him. Tom Merry was a "befty" fellow enough, but Cardew was no infant, and all the juniors were surprised to see him spun across the study so easily. They had not the remotest idea of what Cardew had been through, and which left him tired and heavy and almost exhausted. But though the flesh was weak, the spirit was as unsubdued as ever, and Cardew's eyes blazed as he turned on the Shell fellow.

"You—you rotter!" he panted. "I'll—"

"Come on!"

"I'm comin' on, hang you!"

Cardew's rage lent him a fictitious strength, and he rushed savagely at the captain of the Shell.

Levison and Clive had jumped up, and they dragged the table back out of the way. There was not much room in a Fourth-Form study for a rough-and-tumble.

Manners and Lowther stood back against the closed door, looking on with smiling faces. They were prepared to back their chum in a "scrap" with Cardew, or two Cardews, for that matter. But they were surprised at the ease with which Tom handled the dandy of the Fourth on this occasion.

Cardew's fierce attack drove the Shell fellow back a pace or two, and Tom caught one furious blow on his cheek that raised a mark there. Then he attacked in his turn with vigour and effect.

Right and left he hit out, and Cardew went spinning.

Crash!

"Man down!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Cardew, old chap, you should leave the smokes alone. You're out of condition."

Cardew scrambled furiously up. He was in no condition for a fight, though this time it was not due to excess of smoking, as Lowther supposed. He sprang savagely to the attack again.

But his fierce blows failed to get through Tom Merry's guard, and again and again the Shell fellow's fists came home. With a desperate effort, at last Cardew clinched, and they struggled.

"Break away!" said Manners.

Crash!

A body-blow at close quarters fairly crumpled Cardew up. He fell heavily on the study carpet, and lay gasping.

Tom Merry, breathing a little hard, looked down on him. Cardew was obviously "done," and certainly he had not put up anything like the fight that might have been expected of him. There was a glimmer of contempt in Tom's blue eyes.

"Is that all you want?" he asked.

"The gent seems to be satisfied," remarked Monty Lowther. "If he wants any more, he can come along to No. 10 in the Shell and ask for it. No reasonable request refused."

Cardew raised himself on one elbow, panting.

"You rotter!" he gasped. "I'll tackle you again when I feel a bit more fit. Get out of my study!"

"No reason why you shouldn't be quite fit now, but for your filthy smoking," said Tom contemptuously. And he left the study with his chums.

Levison quietly helped Cardew up when the Shell fellows were gone. The dandy of the Fourth collapsed, rather than sat, in the armchair, breathing in jerks.

"Dash it all, what's the matter with you, Cardew?" exclaimed Clive. "You seem knocked to bits, and Levison might could put up as good a fight as you did."

Cardew sneered.

"Oh, the smokes, you know!" he said bitterly. "Don't you know my ways! I—I—I—" His voice trailed off, and a strange pallor came over his face. Levison sprang towards him with a cry.

Cardew had fainted.

#### CHAPTER 6. In the Limesalt.

THERE was a buzz of excited comment in the School House. Fellows who were waiting in anticipation to see the new swimmer come when he arrived, forgot all about Captain Corkran, when they heard of the happenings in Study No. 9 in the Fourth.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 704.

Cardew, who was supposed to be as hard as nails, in spite of his handified ways, had fainted—fainted after a scrap; not a real scrap, either, but an apology for a scrap, as Lowther termed it. Most fellows in the School House thought that it was a case of funk, pure and simple. Fainting was a kind of thing that few St. Jim's fellows had any sympathy with. A weakling like Skimpole might faint, perhaps—but Cardew!

"Smokes!" said Blake, of the Fourth. "Smokes, you know! I shouldn't wonder if there's been some little stimulants, too—you know what a reckless ass Cardew is."

"Must be frightfully out of condish!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, polishing his eyeglass thoughtfully. "A fellow ought to be ashamed of bein' out of condish to that extent."

"Yes, rather!"

"He's got off a prefect's licking by it," said Grundy of the Shell, with a curl of the lip. "P'raps that's what he fainted for."

"Bal Jove!"

If Cardew had been master of the situation, he would have died before he would have allowed that fainting to become known throughout the School House, and the school generally. But his alarmed chums had not been able to keep it dark—they were too alarmed for that. Mr. Railton had been called in, and Cardew had been placed in charge of the house-dame, and the whole house knew that he had fainted.

Tom Merry was called into Mr. Railton's study soon afterwards; and he faced the Housemaster with flushed cheeks. Mr. Railton only asked him a few questions with regard to the trouble in No. 9, which Tom answered frankly; but it was a painful ordeal to the Shell fellow. The fight in the study had been fierce enough, in its way; but it was a slight affair—Tom had been through friendly boxing bouts in which more damage had been done. He certainly had not hurt Cardew much—certainly not enough to cause him to faint. The only explanation, to Tom's mind, was that Cardew was utterly out of condition, owing to bad habits, or that he was "spoofing." Tom was by no means fully convinced that the faint was genuine.

But it was painful for Tom, all the same, and he left the Housemaster's study with burning cheeks. His feelings towards Cardew were not amiable just then. Buggy Trim, always on the look-out for a chance to say the most disagreeable thing possible, yelled "Bully!" as Tom passed him in the corridor. Tom crimsoned and made a stride towards Buggy—who promptly disappeared round the nearest corner.

Tom Merry went to his study in an unenviable mood.

Bitterness was quite foreign to his sunny nature; but there was no doubt that he was feeling bitter now towards Ralph Rockness Cardew.

Manners and Lowther came into No. 10 presently, looking unusually grave. They found Tom with grimly contracted brows.

"Well, how is the interesting invalid?" asked Tom, with a sarcasm that was quite new to him.

"Oh, he's gone back to his study now," said Manners. "I hear that he's furious at the fellows knowing he fainted."

Tom's lips curled.

"If he really fainted, it was jolly odd," he said. "Looks to me more like one of his rotten tricks, to put me in a bad light because I punched him. And if ever a fellow asked to be punched, Cardew did."

"He did," said Lowther; "and it wasn't the punching. The fellow here probably been playing the giddy goat this afternoon, and came home full of bacy smoke. It wasn't a fight—a fag of the Third could have put up a better fight than that."

The celebrated eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gleamed in at the doorway.

"He's come, you chaps."

"Eh? Who's come?"

"The new swimmin'-coach, deah boy—Captain Corkran. Looks no end of a decent chap. Comin' down to see him?"

"May as well," said Manners. "Chap who nearly swum the Channel is worth looking at."

The Terrible Three followed Arthur Augustus downstairs. Captain Corkran had arrived; his arrival had been heralded across the quad by an excited fag, and he was standing on the step of the house, shaking hands with Mr. Railton, when Tom Merry & Co. came down. Politeness forbade the School House fellows to crowd round and stare; but while keeping a respectful distance, they managed to observe the interesting newcomer. There was no doubt that the captain was a striking man—rather tall, broad-shouldered, and with a clean-cut deeply-tanned face.

"Looks wathah decent, what?" said Arthur Augustus.

"The genuine white article!" smiled Tom Merry.

The smile left his face the next moment, as Study No. 9 came along—Cardew walking between Clive and Levison.

Apparently No. 9 wanted to see the man who had nearly swept the Channel. Tom turned his head away from Cardew's direction, his brows knitting. Cardew was looking rather pale—and his expression was not pleasant. He knew that his faint had been the talk of the House—and the knowledge was gall and wormwood to him.

"So that's the chap?" said Levison, as the newcomer entered the house with Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, gad!" muttered Cardew.

He stared at the tanned face of the man with the House-master. Well, Cardew knew that strong, bronzed face.

"Oh, gad!" he repeated blankly.

"Know the chap, Cardew?" asked Levison.

Cardew did not reply, but he moved restlessly.

"Let's get out of this," he muttered. "Dash it all, we don't want to stare at a man!"

"We're not staring at him," grunted Clive. "Besides, he's bound to know we're interested—'tain't everybody that's nearly done the Channel swim; and he had a big record in the War, too. Keep where you are!"

"Let go my arm, then!" muttered Cardew. "I'm goin'—"

"What rot!"

"He's looking at you, Cardew!" said Levison, in wonder.

"Oh, gad!" groaned Cardew.

The tanned gentleman had a very keen glance. It had swept, with a slightly amused expression, over the juniors; and it had fixed on Cardew's pale, handsome face. Captain Corkran uttered an exclamation.

"Gad! So the boy's here!"

"The boy?" repeated Mr. Railton.

"I was just telling you why I'm late," said the captain. "My dog fell into the river, and a boy jumped in for it, and was nearly drowned. I'm glad to find it was one of the crowd here."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton. "Who—"

"I don't know his name. Come here, my lad!" called out the captain, beckoning to Cardew.

"Whom the thunder does he mean?" muttered Monty Lowther, in amazement.

The sudden flush of crimson in Cardew's face told the tale. He had been trying to back away; but Levison and Clive had his arms, and would not let go.

"Come on!" said Clive, with a grin. "It's you that's wanted, Cardew."

"Let go—"

"Just be civil to the giddy captain!" smiled Levison.

Cardew was led forward. Mr. Railton regarded him with interest—and from various directions a score of pairs of eyes were turned on him. Cardew's cheeks burned. Anything in the nature of sentiment, or of a dramatic situation, was an abomination to him; but he was evidently in for it now.

Captain Corkran held out a big, bronzed hand; and shook Cardew's unwilling hand heartily.

"So you belong to St. Jim's!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," breathed Cardew.

"You would not tell me your name—"

"I didn't know who you were, of course," muttered Cardew. "My name's Cardew, if you want to know."

"And this is the boy, Corkran!" began Mr. Railton. He had just heard, in the quad, the story of the gallant rescue, without guessing that a St. Jim's fellow had been concerned in it.

"This is the boy!" said the captain heartily. "My dear lad, your schoolfellows ought to be proud of you."

Cardew writhed.

"He jumped into deep water and a racing current and saved my dog's life, Mr. Railton. If I had not caught sight of him, and gone in for him, he would have been drowned."

"Well done, Cardew!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

Cardew muttered something indistinctly.

Captain Corkran shook hands with Cardew again, and passed on with Mr. Railton to the latter's study. Cardew was left surrounded by an excited crowd.

## CHAPTER 7.

### D'Arcy's Idea.

**T**OM MERRY stood quite silent. He understood now. It was not smokes, or anything of the kind that had caused Cardew to crumple up in that brief fight in the study.

He understood now that the dandy of the Fourth had been in a state of exhaustion, after a gallant action, a fight for life in the river, and a tramp home in the sun afterwards. Cardew had been in no condition for a fight. Why could he not have said so.

Tom felt no relenting towards the perverse fellow. He felt anger than before. Had he only known the truth, Cardew could have gaped to his heart's content, and Tom would not have laid a finger upon him. He had been betrayed—that

was the only word—into, thrashing a fellow who was not fit to defend himself. It was one more example of Cardew's curious, exasperating perversity.

"So that was it!" muttered Manners.

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

"Let's get out of this!" he muttered.

And he turned back up the staircase, followed more slowly by his chums.

Cardew saw him go, and a smile flickered over his lips. He understood the feelings of the captain of the Shell, and he was distinctly amused thereby.

Clive thumped him on the shoulder.

"So you've been doing giddy heroic stunts, instead of coming down to ducker!" he exclaimed.

"Silly ass to go in for a dog!" commented Baggy Trimble.

"Catch me!" remarked Racke.

"Nobody would be likely to catch you doing anything plucky, Racke," said Jack Blake, with a snort.

"Wathah not!"

"So Cardew's a giddy conquering hero!" grinned Gore.

"Well, you won't get a prefect's licking now for cutting ducker, Cardew!"

"And the modest youth wasn't going to let it be known!" chuckled Blake.

"Keepin' it dark, bait Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That was quite wight and pwopah, Cardew. I approve."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Cardew.

"Weally Cardew—"

"For goodness' sake give a fellow a rest!" exclaimed Cardew impatiently.

"So that's why you fainted when Tom Merry walloped you," said Blake. "Why couldn't you tell him?"

"I never fainted!" shouted Cardew angrily.

"Yes, you did, old dear!" chuckled Blake. "You went right off. Tommy wouldn't have touched you if he'd known you were knocked up with doing heroic stunts. You ought to have told him."

Cardew cast an angry glance round, and jerked himself away from Clive and Levison, and strode away. Praise for having performed a deed of courage was nothing to him—it irritated him. But the knowledge that he had fainted in the study was bitterness itself. His face was white and furious as he went into Study No. 9 and slammed the door.

It was a little later that there was a tap at the door; and Tom Merry looked in, with a rather set face. Cardew greeted him with a look of bitter animosity.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"Only a word," said Tom. "I needn't say that I knew nothing of what you'd been doing, or—"

"Oh, I know! Give us a rest, for mercy's sake!"

"I suppose you were tired out, and not feeling up to a scrap," said Tom. "I'm sorry I touched you. I wouldn't have if I'd known."

Cardew's eyes glittered at him.

"Is that all you've come to say?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Then get out!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands hard. It needed all his self-control to keep from dashing his knuckles into Cardew's face, pale as it was.

"That's all," said Tom, in a choking voice. "But I'll say this much more—you played a dirty trick on me, Cardew, by letting me handle you when you weren't fit. You've got plenty of pluck, but you're a cad—an outsider and a cad! You leave a nasty taste in a fellow's mouth."

And with that Tom Merry strode out of the study, and closed the door hard.

Cardew sat down again, his lips set and bitter, his eyes glittering. Levison and Clive came into the study for prep. They were full of news, and did not for the moment observe Cardew's looks.

"What do you think is Gussy's latest?" asked Levison, with a laugh.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Now the giddy captain has come to coach us in swimming. Gussy's idea is to swim the merry Channel."

Cardew grinned, in spite of himself.

"Just like Gussy!" said Clive, laughing. "I don't think he'll be allowed to go around hunting for a watery grave. But it's a great idea, all the same—if a St. Jim's fellow could do it."

"Tom Merry!" said Levison tentatively.

"I wonder!" said Clive, his eyes glistering. "He's a tip-top swimmer, and has no one of staying power. My hat! We'd better be in the cap for St. Jim's if a Saint could do it!"

Cardew gave a sort of snarl.

"Tom Merry couldn't!" he snapped.

"Well, I suppose he couldn't," agreed Clive. "But trying it on is something. Captain Corkran's a splendid coach, and if he'd help—"

"Oh, rot!"

"Chap gets no end of kudos for trying a hefty swim like that," said Levison. "It would be one up for St. Jim's."

"Hang Tom Merry, and hang swimming the Channel!" he snapped. "For goodness' sake don't jaw Tom Merry in this study! I hear quite enough of him outside."

Clive frowned.  
"You ought to have told Tom Merry—" he began.  
"Oh, rot!"

"He feels it pretty keenly, having pitched into you when you weren't able to stand up for yourself," said Clive. "You oughtn't to have done it. Especially as you fainted—"

Cardew's face flamed with rage.  
"I didn't faint!" he hissed.  
"You did!" said Clive coolly. "You lay in that chair unconscious for a good five minutes—"

"I—I was feeling a bit seedy, but I—"  
"Rats! You fainted. And you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself for putting a decent chap like Tom Merry into such a rotten position."

Ralph Reckness Cardew gritted his teeth.  
"I'll make him sit up for it yet," he muttered. "Not that I really fainted, either—"

"Oh, both!" said Clive.  
Cardew swung round to the door, and with a dark look at his chums, left the study, slamming the door with a crash behind him. Levison whistled.

"His rag's out now!" he said.  
"Oh, let him rip!" said Clive crossly. "I'm getting fed up with his temper. Still, it was a jolly plucky thing he did this afternoon, according to Corkran," added the South African junior, and his brow cleared. "I dare say he'll be friendly enough with Tom Merry to-morrow."

But in that prediction Sidney Clive did not prove to be among the prophets. When, on the following day, Tom Merry and Cardew met in the Form-room corridor, the captain of the Shell gave Cardew one steely look, and turned his back on him.

Cardew flushed, and bit his lip hard. Then he shrugged his shoulders and went on his way carelessly. Possibly, by that time, he had been prepared to let the trouble end; but for once, Tom Merry had allowed the sun to go down on his wrath.

## CHAPTER 8.

### To Swim or Not to Swim.

CAPTAIN CORKRAN jumped into popularity at once at St. Jim's. "Ducker" had never been so popular as it became when the captain took control. The St. Jim's fellows were proud to be coached by a famous swimmer, who was not only first-class in his own line, but had the gift of imparting his knowledge to others: Tom Merry & Co. were the captain's most loyal admirers, and even Backe and Crooke showed some interest in swimming, and even Baggy Trimble ceased to grouse at compulsory ducking. Even with a little like Trimble the captain was patient and painstaking, and Baggy actually distinguished himself by getting from one side to the other of the big swimming-bath without assistance.

Tom Merry & Co. were keen to win the approval of their coach, and they received it; and even Cardew told his chums that he was "thinkin' of goin' in." But Cardew confined himself chiefly to "thinkin'" about it.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was thinking great thoughts on the subject. Arthur Augustus did not see why the school should not bag the honour and glory of a Channel swim. And Arthur Augustus was swimming, and even Baggy took that was to cover St. Jim's with glory. Gussy's idea had been greeted with a general chuckle to begin with. Swimming the Channel was a rather hefty task, and even swimmers like Tom Merry and Talbot and Figgins admitted that it was rather above their weight. And Captain Corkran smiled when he heard of it.

But Arthur Augustus was not to be beaten. He persisted in his idea, and he was one of the keenest of Mr. Corkran's pupils. And when Gussy proposed, by way of a test, doing the two-mile reach on the Rhyll, there were plenty of fellows to agree to that, at all events. Somewhat to Gussy's surprise, he finished sixth of the dozen fellows who undertook the swim, Tom Merry being an easy winner. After which Gussy put on his thinking-cap more seriously than ever; and in the junior Common-room one evening he communicated the result.

"It's up to you, Tom Mewwy!" he announced.  
"What is?" asked Tom, with a smile, looking up from the chess-table where he was being slowly but surely cornered by Manners.

"Swimmin' the Channel, dear boy. You might nevah reach the othah side," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully; "but there are some things in which even a failure is glorious, dear boy!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"A glorious dive into Davy Jones' locker isn't exactly to my taste, old man!" he remarked. "You see, it would interfere with the cricket!"

"Of course, there would be a certain amount of dangah," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "That doesn't mattah, howevah. Besides, a Channel swimmah is followed across, you know, and picked up when he gets played out. You would start somewhah neah Folkestone or Dover, and swim across to Cape Gwiz-Nez. You might nevah reach it—"

"Very likely!" grinned Lowther. "But think of the glory of appearing in the 'Daily Mail' under the heading of 'Found Drowned!'"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "We should be followin' in a yacht or somethin', and we would see that Tom Merry wasn't drowned. I should be quite willin' to undertake the job, but it appeals that Tom Mewwy is a bettah swimmah than I am—not bettah, I mean," added Arthur Augustus cautiously; "I weally do not think he has quite my style. But he is certainly more wapid, and can stick it longah."

"Thanks!" said Tom, with a smile.  
"Not at all, dear boy! Facts are facts," said Arthur Augustus. "It is up to you! I am sure the Head would give leave to a party of us to try it on."

"Mate!" said Manners calmly. "Mate in three, Tommy!"  
"That's Gussy's fault," said Tom Merry, surveying the chess-board ruefully. "Gussy, old man, you've lost me a game!"

"That is a mattah of no consequence, dear boy, so long as you undahtake to swim the Channel and covah the school with glory!"

"Quite a good idea!" said Ralph Reckness Cardew, with a rather curious look at Tom Merry. "It's up to the best swimmer in the school to take it on, if the Head will give leave."

Tom Merry compressed his lips.  
He had not spoken a word to Cardew since his trouble with that youth, and he did not want to speak to him. Cardew "buttered in" cheerfully, as if quite unaware of the Shell fellow's feelings; though he was quite aware of them.

"Oh, rot!" said Blake. "It's too big an order."  
"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.  
"The Head would give leave if Corkran thought it all right," said Kangaroo. "And Corkran is a real sport; he would back us up if he thought there was the ghost of a chance."

"But is there?" said Manners.  
"Tommy could do it, if anybody here could."  
"Ye-es," said Tom; "but—"  
"Put it to the vote," suggested Cardew. "Gussy's idea is a really noble one—"

"Quite wight, Cardew!"  
"And if our respected junior captain doesn't care to take it on, another champion can be found!" added Cardew.

Tom Merry's cheeks flushed for a moment.  
"If anybody takes it on, it will be Tom!" said Monty Lowther. "But there's a lot of difficulties in the way. For instance, a yacht will have to be got from somewhere to follow the swimmer, or at least a motor-boat."

"That's easy!" said Cardew coolly. "My Uncle Lilburn's yacht is lyin' at Dover now, and he would be glad to lend it."  
"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!"

"Perhaps your merry old uncle mightn't play up if you asked him," suggested Blake.

"Well, I'll ask him, and see," said Cardew coolly. "I can get a trunk call to his quarters at Dover now. Suppose he's willin' to lend his yacht, is it a go?"

He fixed his eyes on Tom Merry. Tom did not look at him. He was determined to have nothing to do with Ralph Reckness Cardew, and he declined to be drawn into talk with him.

"Is it a go, Tom Merry?" asked Arthur Augustus.  
"Yes," said Blake, answering for Tom. "Figgins is talking about taking it on, and we couldn't possibly leave it to the New House."

"Wathah not!"  
Cardew strode away from the group. Levison followed him as he wended down the passage towards the prefects' room.

"What are you up to now, Cardew?" Levison asked.  
"I'm goin' to telephone to ntnky."

"He won't lend his yacht."  
"I think he will."

"Look here, Cardew," said Levison slowly, "Tom Merry's got his back up against you—and you deserve it, too!"

"Thanks!"  
"Well, in the ciro, don't you think you oughtn't to butt in?"

"Exactly!" replied Cardew. "And that's why I'm goin' to do it, old top. The excellent Thomas is down on me, with a terrific down, and I'm goin' to pull his leg. See?"

"You don't believe he can swim the Channel—"  
"I know he can't," said Cardew coolly. "That's why I'm goin' to banter him into tryin', if I can. Excuse me while I telephone, Levison."



Cardew went into the prefects' room to ask leave of Kildare to use the telephone. Levison returned to the Common-room with a thoughtful brow. It was ten minutes later that Ralph Rockness Cardew rejoined the group, finding them in animated discussion of the proposed swim. Cardew's face wore a cheery smile.

"It's all serene!" he said. "I've asked Uncle Lilburn, and he's game. The yacht is at our disposal if we want it for a Channel swim, and it's for us to fix the date."

"Well, that's that!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry's brow clouded. The idea appealed to him; he was quite ready and willing to test his powers in a big swim. But he was annoyed and exasperated by Cardew's cool intervention.

"Well, what do you say, Tommy?" asked Blake.

"I want nothing to do with Cardew or his uncle or his uncle's yacht!" said Tom Merry bluntly.

"Oh!" said Blake.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But you won't have anythin' to do with the yacht—you'll be in the water!" yawned Cardew. "We shall be on the yacht—a committee of us to see you through. But if you won't take it on, there's Figgins."

"Can't leave it on, there's Figgins," said Blake decidedly. "Must be School House, if at all!" concurred Lowther.

"It's really up to you, Tom. Never mind Cardew!"

"I'll speak to Captain Corkran in the morning," said Tom.

"Now let's have another game, Manners,"

And the subject dropped at that.

### CHAPTER 9.

#### Great Preparations.

**T**OM MERRY found himself booked for an attempt to swim the Channel. Captain Corkran looked thoughtful at first, but he assented, on condition that all arrangements could be made for the safety of the swimmer. That matter was settled by the offer of Lord Lilburn; and when the proposal came before the Head, he left it to Captain Corkran to decide. So everything in the garden, as Blake said, was lovely. And Tom Merry, called upon by all his chums to do a lurking job, was quite willing to play up, only feeling a little sense of annoyance at Cardew's connection with the affair.

But it was scarcely possible to exclude Cardew. The vessel that was to accompany the swimmer was a necessity; and Cardew was the only fellow at St. Jim's who had such resources. And most of the fellows agreed that it was very decent of Cardew's uncle, and very decent of Cardew himself, considering the terms, he was upon with the captain of the Shell. Tom's repugnance to accepting anything like a favour at Cardew's hands was natural enough, but it looked a little ungracious, in the circumstances—and Tom could not help feeling that once more Cardew's impish ingenuity had succeeded in putting him in a false position. D'Arcy was of opinion that Tom ought to thank the dandy of the Fourth for coming to the rescue in this way; and Tom was feeling much more inclined to punch him than to thank him—and to punch him hard! However, he succeeded in restraining that inclination.

Now that the matter was settled, training became a serious affair; and Tom Merry trained hard.

There were other fellows who were taking training very seriously, too; such as Figgins, of the New House, and Blake, and the great Gussy. Tom Merry was expected to be the champion; but if any other fellow succeeded in beating him, Tom was prepared to fall into second place.

Ducker now always drew a crowd to the bank of the Rhyll to watch the performances of the competing champions.

Tom Merry had always been a good swimmer, but, under Captain Corkran's coaching, and with constant training, he was putting on a wonderful improvement.

In a three-mile contest Figgins was the only competitor near him at the finish, and that settled the question of the champion. It was to be Tom Merry, and the other candidates gracefully withdrew.

"It's weally wemarakable!" Arthur Augustus confided to his chums. "Tom Mewwy is quite a wondah, you know—he actually left me fah behind!"

"Wonderful!" said Blake gravely.

"Yaas, isn't it?" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I weally nevah should have thought he had it in him! I expected him to beat Figgins, and Talbot, and Owen, and the west! But he beat me, too—hollow! I wegard Tom Mewwy as a vewy wemarakable swimmah!"

"Tommy's the man!" said Blake. "And the question is, how many of us are going to see the swim? Of course, this study will have to go."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Everybody wants to go, I think!" grinned Digby.

"Even that slacker, Cardew!"

"Anything to get away from lessons!" grunted Blake.

"But I suppose Cardew will have to be there, as it's his uncle's yacht we're going on. I suppose half the school will be asking the Head for leave."

The question of leave became a burning question, and the Head finally fixed the number at a round dozen. Manners and Lowther, as the champion's best chums, of course, had to go—and Cardew, as the yacht-owner's nephew, and with Cardew, Levison and Clive were going. Study No. 6 managed to get included, and Figgins & Co. represented the New House. This made up the dozen; but the Head decided that a prefect had better accompany the juniors—for what reason the juniors couldn't even guess—and Kildare was appointed. Captain Corkran was to be in charge of the party. And when the question came up of the champion testing his powers in the salt water, before undertaking the great swim, it was Cardew who came to the rescue again. He dropped into No. 10 in the Shell while the Terrible Three were discussing the matter.

"Easy enough to fix up somewhere on the Kent coast," Monty Lowther was saying. "It will cost money, of course."

"Which isn't super-abundant at the present moment!"

Tom Merry remarked, with a smile.

"Oh, our people will have to play up on an occasion like this!" said Manners.

And then Cardew stepped in. Tom Merry did not look at him; he could not help seeing the smile on Cardew's face, however. He guessed that something was coming.

"Excuse my buttin' in, you fellows!" said Cardew grace-



Without even stopping to throw off his jacket, Cardew had dived over the rail. He went in deep—deep under the surging water, and struck out before he came to the surface. Something floated by him; and he caught at it. It was Tom Merry.

fully. "I understand that there's a question of fixing up for a week on the coast before the swim comes off?"

"That's so!" said Manners.  
"I've ventured to make a suggestion to Captain Corkran," went on Cardew cheerfully. "He thinks my idea good."

"What idea?"  
"There's a bungalow about a mile out of Folkestone that belongs to my uncle on the other side of the giddy family—you've seen old Durrance. I've written to the old gent and asked him, and he's not staying in the bung. at present," said Cardew. "He's offered it to us for the job. Rather decent of him—what?"

"Jolly decent!" said Manners.  
"By Jove!" That will see us through," said Monty Lowther.

"So glad to be of help!" smiled Cardew.  
And he retired from the study, and winked into space as he walked away.

Tom Merry's brow was clouded. He had not spoken. And his chums looked at him rather uneasily.

"What do you think, Tom?" asked Manners, after a short silence.

"I don't want to borrow a bungalow of any of Cardew's relations!" said Tom. "There's too much Cardew in this affair already!"

"Well, yes. But——" Lowther hesitated.  
"Commander Durrance is a decent old sort!" said Manners. "You rather liked him when he came down here to see Durrance of the Fourth, Tom."

"I know. But——"  
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sailed gracefully into the study.

"This is wippin', isn't it, dear boys?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"What is?" demanded Tom Merry gruffly.  
"Cardew!"

"Oh, hang Cardew!"  
"Weally, Tom Mewwy, that is wathah ungwacious, in the cires!" said Arthur Augustus, with some severity.

"Cardew is helpin' no end, and makin' things wuv vevy easily. His uncle's bungalow is just the thing!"  
Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I wogard it as vevy decent of Cardew, as you are weally not fiendly with him, Tom Mewwy."

"Not being friendly with him, I don't care to sleep under his roof!" growled Tom.

"Well, it isn't his woof; it's his uncle's woof!"  
"Bless his uncle!"

"I weally don't see how you can wefuse, Tom Mewwy!" said the swell of St. Jim's warmly. "Captain Corkran, I understand, appwoves—and all the fellows think it a good idee, and they think it is vevy decent of Cardew! It saves us no end of trouble and expense, and that is wathah a consideration in these hard times!"

Tom Merry gave a grunt.  
"It seems to me that Cardew is running the whole show!" he said. "And he's not even a swimmer!"

"I wogard Cardew as playin' up unexpectedly well," said Arthur Augustus. "Weally, we could hardly cawwy the thing through without his assistance. I twust, Tom Mewwy," he went on, in his most stately manner, "that you are not thinkin' of wefusin' Cardew's vevy kind and considerate offer."

"That's just what I am thinking of," answered Tom Merry grimly. "Cardew can go and eat coke, and all his precious uncles and other relations can hike along with him!" growled the captain of the Shell.

"I am a distant wrelation of Cardew, Tom Mewwy."

"I know. You can go and eat coke, too!"  
"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus sailed indignantly away.

But once more Tom Merry found himself outmanoeuvred by the dandy of the Fourth. The whole party thought that Commander Durrance's "bung" was a ripping idea, and this was why.

Cardew became almost popular for solving a difficulty in this way. Captain Corkran, indeed, was already making his arrangements, having accepted the offer. Tom Merry found himself in a minority of one; and he was constrained to overcome his repugnance and go with the crowd. And so it came to pass that when the party left St. Jim's for the sea, it was to the Kentish bungalow that they went—and everyone but Tom Merry was completely satisfied with the arrangement.

## CHAPTER 10.

### The Big Swim.

THE great day came at last. At first the scheme had seemed to Tom Merry & Co. only a St. Jim's stunt; but by the time the champion swimmer and his comrades were established at the bungalow, it was known far and wide.

"SCHOOLBOYS' ATTEMPT TO SWIM THE GEM LILBURN.—No. 704.

CHANNEL!" had appeared in big type in more than one newspaper. Reporters had found their way to the bungalow by the channel, athirst for particulars. Monty Lowther dealt with them chiefly, and the things he told them were wonderful. The particulars they gleaned with regard to Tom Merry were extensive and peculiar.

Swimming in the Channel, Tom found very different from swimming in the Rhyl at St. Jim's, and he made the best use of his week or two of training in the salt water.

His progress delighted his chums; and, what was more important, satisfied his trainer. Captain Corkran even expressed a hope that the St. Jim's swimmer might get to the other side.

At which Cardew smiled.  
Cardew was in somewhat the position of host to a house-party, and he played up well; and Tom, being in some sort his guest, was constrained to deal with him civilly. But he avoided the smiling dandy of the Fourth as much as he could.

Cardew watched all the trials with great interest; but only to Levison did he confide his opinion.

"He will bust up half-way, or less, you know," he remarked to Levison, "and surely that will make Study No. 10 in the Shell sing smaller—what? Of course, I wish him success."

"You don't!" growled Levison. "And you don't get much credit out of this affair, Cardew. It's just one of your impish tricks, so far as you're concerned."  
Cardew laughed.

"The dear man shouldn't have laid his hands on me in my study," he remarked. "If I pull his leg in return, that's only fair."

"Oh, rot!" growled Levison.  
"Dear boy, you don't approve?" smiled Cardew. "But then, you never do approve my little stunts. It makes the excellent Thomas quite wild to be under my roof, and, in the circumstances, he can't very well show it. No end amusing, isn't it?"

"You're as full of tricks as a monkey," said Levison crossly. "I hope it won't end by Tom Merry punching your nose under your own roof!"

"Oh, I think we can rely upon dear Thomas for that—he has been so carefully brought up by the delightful Miss Priscilla!" chuckled Cardew. "He knows that I'm playin' him like a giddy fish, and he has to keep his temper. I've asked him to have a look over nunky's yacht—the other fellows are comin', but he won't. Captain Corkran has noticed that he's rusty with me, and thinks him rather a brute."

Levison frowned.  
"Corkran thinks a lot of me for gettin' his dashed mongrel out of the river," grinned Cardew. "Never mind, dear boy, he'll know me better some day, and then he won't think so much."

When the great day came—a glorious summer's day—there was a crowd to witness the start.

A swarm of St. Jim's fellows had leave for the day, and they came down in charabancs—and other charabancs came with crowds of people of whom the Saints had never heard, but who had evidently heard of the coming attempt to swim the Channel.

Lord Lilburn's yacht lay off shore in the morning sunshine, and it was crowded.

Hundreds of pairs of eyes were fixed upon Tom Merry when he came out with Captain Corkran. The St. Jim's champion looked remarkably fit and well, and the hopes of his chums rose as they looked at him.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked to the world generally on the yacht. "Bai Jove, you know, I weally think he will get wight on the wicket, you know. Where's my field-glasses, Blake?"

"All right—I've got 'em!" answered Blake.  
"But I want to watch his pwogress, Ceah boy."

"So do I," answered Blake affably.  
"Weally, you know——"

Blake kept the binoculars to his eyes.  
"It's all right, Gussy," he said. "I'll tell you exactly when to cheer, and then you can let yourself go. It will come to just the same thing, you know."

"Weally, Blake, it does not seem to me that it will come to just the same thing at all."

"He's off!" shouted Clive.  
"Good old Tommy!"

"Bravo!"  
"Blake, you uttah ass, I weally wequest you to hand me my glasses——"

Jack Blake seemed deaf. From the crowded yacht every eye followed the dark head that could just be seen on the sunlit waters.



## A Magnificent Story of Life at Millford College. By IVOR HAYES.

### NEW READERS START HERE.

TOM MACE, whose father is a professional crackman, wins a scholarship for Millford College. His father is either pleased, for MR. BILL MACE has certain unlawful reasons for wanting to see the inside of the school. Mrs. Mace darts up her son's clothes, and Tom sets off for school. In the train he overhears a conversation between a man in a sea-green suit and a muffled ruffian. The ruffian is addressed in SPIKEY MEADOWS, and there is some suspicious talk that sets the lad thinking. At last he arrives at the school, only to be jeered at by the other juniors. Just as Lundy & Co. are fooling with Tom's things, a new master appears on the scene. He is Mr. GORDON GALE—the man in the sea-green suit, the whom Tom had seen in the train. Tom sees the headmaster, who is kind to him, and sees also MR. MULLINS, the master of the Fourth Form. He finds this man a snob, and he is feeling downhearted. He goes to Study B—Lundy and Bradshaw's study—to which he has been allotted, but he is roughly handled. BOB PEEL finds him, is friendly, and sends him a card at the tuckshop. Tom then comes across SPIKEY MEADOWS, who tries to persuade him to leave a window open, so that he can enter the school at night, explaining the consequences if he fails to make up his mind within a certain time. Tom returns to the school. Being late, he is questioned by his Form-master, Mr. Mullins, who is startled when Tom mentions the name of Meadows. The mysterious Mr. Mullins, who evidently knows something of Meadows, dismisses Tom with a slight punishment. Tom reaches the dormitory, to find that his new clothes have been tampered with. His anger is aroused, and with Peel's assistance, he sails into the jokers, but the odds soon tell upon them. That night Tom is ejected from the dormitory and made to sleep on the landing outside. The following morning Mr. Gale requests Tom's presence in his study. There, in spite of never to speak to this man again. Tom goes to the classroom, and proves that he is far from being backward in his studies. Tom's mother comes to the school to see her son, and Lundy takes this opportunity of insulting her. Tom is very angry, and threatens to fight the snob, but his mother asks him to promise not to fight. Lundy hears of this through Garnet. Knowing full well that Tom will not retaliate, Lundy gives him the coward's blow. Tom next proves his skill on the cricket ground, for with his second ball he shatters the wicket of the mighty Lundy. Tom then takes his stance at the wicket, and a ball from the cad of the Fourth, pitching short, rises, and brings Tom to the ground, with a yell of pain. Tom is stunned—perhaps killed—and Lundy is responsible.

(Now read on.)

### Lundy's Cowardly Work.

**UNCONSCIOUS!"**  
Bob Peel stepped forward anxiously, and looked down upon Tom's white, upturned face. Bob Peel was full of repentance. He had cut his chum earlier in the afternoon, and now he was sorry that he had done so. "Tom!" he whispered, kneeling beside the silent form on the ground. Mr. Gale took his shoulder gently. "Help me carry him into the house," he said. "We must have him seen to at once! I don't think it is very serious. On the other hand—" He shrugged his shoulders.

Bob Peel nodded. "I know," he said. "It won't do to leave him here!" He stooped and grasped Tom Mace's feet, while Mr. Gale took the scholarship lad's head. Round them, in a silent, frightened group stood the cads of the Fourth. Lundy, the cause of all the trouble, stood well back, thoroughly scared. His face was white with fear at his own folly. Why had he been so mad? He muttered his thoughts half aloud.

But it was too late now for remorse. If anything happened to Tom Mace! He shuddered at the thought.

Meanwhile, Tom was being carried by the master and junior across the quadrangle. Not one of the knuts offered to help; but a black-haired boy, with fine dark eyes, rushed after the two that carried the lifeless burden. It was Dick Rider.

Rider's face was flushed rather with shame. For he had no sympathy with the knuts, although, like any of the Fourth-Formers, he deemed it not worth while to go against

Lundy and his many followers. It was advisable if one wanted anything like a quiet life.

But that spiteful action of Lundy's had roused Dick Rider's ire. And he wanted to show Peel, and, if possible, Tom, that he was not in sympathy with Lundy.

"I—I'll help!" he said. "Let me support him in the middle, Peel!"

He took hold of Tom's waist, thus relieving the master and Peel of a certain amount of dead weight.

"Thanks!" said Peel gratefully. "I knew you were a decent sort, Rider!"

And that was enough for Dick Rider. Lundy looked after the small group, but said nothing. The only one of the knuts to speak was Luke Bradshaw, and he lisped vividly: "Bai Jove!"

His mouth was slightly ajar, as it always was when anything a little out of the ordinary happened. His brain, though it worked with exceeding slowness, could yet appreciate the fact that something really serious had happened.

"My hat!" gasped Garnet. "That's done it, Lundy!"

"Hang!" gritted Lundy through set teeth. "What did the fool get in the way for?"

"Why, why, weren't you trying to hit him?" asked Bradshaw innocently and foolishly.

"Shut up!" snarled his leader. "Shut up, you utter idiot! Do you think I did it on purpose?"

"Why, of course!" said the slow-witted Bradshaw. "Didn't you, dear boy?"

His look was so surprised that several of them laughed. Lundy turned upon him fiercely.

"No!" he hooted. "Of course I didn't. What would the Head say if he thought I'd tried to brain a chap?"

"Oh, bai Jove—yaas! I didn't think of that, y'know."

"Well, think next time!" said his leader scornfully. "Nice sort of pal you are! I suppose you wouldn't give a button if I were expelled?"

"Bai Jove!"

"And don't stand there like a cuckoo, stammering, hang you!"

Lundy was thoroughly roused now. He was feeling completely out of temper, and Bradshaw was really a fitting person on whom one could vent any form of spite.

"Rather not!" said Bradshaw, turning red. His eyes were blinking in deep agitation. Bradshaw was quite at a loss to know what his leader meant. He was certain that Lundy had meant to injure Tom; and he was quite right. What did not occur to him, however, was that Lundy was not going to admit the fact. That, after all said and done, would hardly be good policy. The headmaster was not likely to look upon "braining" as a suitable or beneficial pastime.

"What are you going to do, old man?" asked Garnet. All the knuts were looking interested, but now that the first moment of suspense had passed, their feelings were mixed. They were not thinking of Tom; it did not occur to them to do that. But they were not thinking of Lundy—at least, not compassionately. Many of them were feeling rather pleased that at last their leader was to receive his due punishment. They had suffered at his hands, and he had gone unpunished. Now there was trouble in store for him. And his friends—they were not such friends to him as Peel, or even Rider, was to Tom.

Even now these two were beside the scholarship lad in the school sanatorium where they had taken him.

The matron had had him placed upon a bed, while Peel and Rider, still in their shirt-sleeves, stood by anxiously.

Mr. Gale was talking to the matron. Suddenly Peel gave a delighted cry.

"Tom! Mr. Gale, he has come to! Here!"

The master turned, and strode quickly towards the bed, whilst the kindly matron followed him no less quickly.



Peel was bending over the prostrate figure and gently stroking Tom's hair.

"Mace!" exclaimed Mr. Gale. "Mace, are you better?" Tom looked up at him rather dazedly, and put his hand to his head.

"Oh!" he moaned. "My head!" He closed his eyes, then opened them again almost immediately, and looked round him in surprise.

"Where am I?" he gasped. "Oh, I thought I was playing cricket—it must have been a dream. I—why—"

Peel pressed him back on to the bed, for Tom had raised himself slightly to look round the room.

"This isn't my dorm," said Tom weakly. "Why am I here?" He pressed his hand to his head. "Oh, how my head aches!"

"It's all right, old man!" whispered Peel.

"Quite all right!" added Rider. And Mr. Gale felt Tom's pulse.

"Peel a bit fitter, old man?" asked the master anxiously. "You had a rather nasty bump on the head!"

"Oh, I remember!" said Tom. "Of course, I was batting, and—a half hit me!" He made a feeble attempt to smile.

"Yes, I'm all right, now," he said.

He sat up, but the others could tell, from the expression on his face, that he was not yet fit to walk about.

So Peel, very gently, yet quite firmly, pressed him back on to the bed. Peel's eyes were shining, for he was glad indeed that his chum was better.

Tom Mace smiled.

"I'm all right!" he protested. "Don't make me lie in bed, please!"

His tone was so pleading that Bob Peel was almost tempted to give way and let his chum get up. But Mr. Gale was firm.

"You lie there, my man," he said sternly, "and don't start tricking about. It won't do you any harm to rest for a while. You'll feel all the better for a rest. You've got a bump as big as an egg on your forehead."

Tom slipped his hand up to his head again, and felt it tenderly all over. His fingers encountered a large bump, and he winced. Yes, there was no doubt about that bump.

"All—all right, I'll lie here!" he said.

"You will," nodded the master. "And you, Peel, had better stay with him. I must get back to the others, or there'll be some more accidents."

With that, and a few words with the matron, he left the small ward.

"Master Peel," said the matron, "I think you'd better not talk. Talking won't do him an extra amount of good, you know."

The kindly old lady leant over and stroked Tom's head gently.

Then she bustled off to the further end of the sanatorium, where there was a small cupboard. This contained the various mixtures, medicines, and embrocations the small "hospital" required. The matron knew that little cup-



Peel stooped and grasped Tom Mace's feet, while Mr. Gale took the scholarship lad's head. Near them, in a silent, frightened group, stood the cad of the Fourth.

board off by heart, and she looked after it dotingly. She remained at it for some minutes, then approached Tom bearing a small bottle.

Tom Mace looked at it apprehensively, and Peel gave him a compassionate grin. Tom, without a word of protest, took the small phial, and swallowed the unpalatable contents at a gulp. Then he pulled a wry face. The matron smiled, and from her pocket drew a peppermint-cream.

"There, dear!" she said. "That'll take away the nasty taste from your mouth!"

Tom smiled his gratitude.

"Now, you go to sleep; and you two," she added, turning to Peel and Rider, "had better get off downstairs; you'll only worry the lad."

Peel and Rider went across the quadrangle, and along to the cricket-nets, where they could see a knot of fellows standing.

They knew at once that it must be Lundy, under cross-examination. As they got nearer they could hear Lundy's protests.

"Of course not, sir!" he said. "I hadn't the faintest idea. Why should I?"

Mr. Gale smiled grimly.

"If I remember," he said, "I found you taunting this lad, and throwing his things about, on the very day that I arrived."

"Yes, sir," said Lundy hastily, changing colour somewhat.

"But that—that was only our fun. We always do that with new boys—"

"Especially scholarship chaps," put in Bradshaw, with rather doubtful assistance.

"I see," said the master, setting his lips. "With scholarship lads. It is only with them. So you're merely a lot of snobs, then!"

His words cut through Lundy, and made the fellow wince.

But it also made him vow more deeply than before that he would be revenged upon Tom. Strangely enough, Lundy could never see that the trouble in which he so frequently found himself was of his own doing, brought about by himself and none other. Always he blamed it upon his victim.

If he were found bullying some fag, and punished, then the blame, in his peculiar mind, was always attached to the unfortunate fag.

Mr. Gale waved his hand to the group.

"Take the bat, someone. The whole affair's over." Then he turned to Lundy, as the others went back to their cricket.

"I am certain," he said—"quite certain—that that ball was no accident. I cannot prove it; but, to teach you to be more careful in future, you will write me five hundred lines. Understand?"

The cad nodded, seething with anger.

"I see, sir," he said.

And there the matter was dropped. Not another word did the master say, but when Lundy was put on to bowl again his deliveries were less erratic, and certainly more on the wicket than on the man, which was unusual when Lundy bowled. But Lundy had much in store yet for the scholarship lad.

#### Rider Makes a Suggestion.

THANKS to his early upbringing, and an excellent constitution, Tom Mace was not long in recovering from the effects of that blow upon the head. His early life

had used him to hardship, for, like many poor lads, he seemed to be built of iron. The food he had always had was of the nourishing, not fancy, kind, and he would never live to regret that fact. Moreover, he had buffeted about, and had had to hold his own many times against older and often stronger lads.

Thus, when tea-time arrived, and Bob Peel and Rider went into the sanatorium, Tom was sitting up in bed. The bump on his head had not noticeably decreased in size, but he was not looking so white, nor had he the sick feeling that usually accompanies such a blow.

"All right?" asked Peel eagerly, as he ran across the small ward to his friend's bedside.

Rider came forward, too, and Tom smiled at him, although as yet quite in the dark as to his friend's identity.

"This is Dick Rider," said Bob Peel, with a wave of the hand. "Rider, like us, Tom, is fed up with the precious Lundy and his gang. Aren't you, Dick, old son?"

Rider held out his hand to Tom.

"I am," he said. "I never have been really fond of them; but—well, a chap falls in with a lot like that, you know, and it's no easy to get away from them."

"I suppose not," smiled Tom. "But you have got away from them, and that's the chief thing."

"It is," answered Rider. "And you can bet I sha'n't go back to them any too quickly!"

Fearing now that he had sufficiently apologised for not being more friendly before, Rider felt more at his ease, and he helped Tom on with the jacket, which they had brought with them from the nets.





JOHN SHARPE.

## INTRODUCTION.

John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service, to track down the band of organised and dangerous criminals operating under the guidance of Iron Hand—a fearless, clever man of dominating personality. Marna Black, one of the band of crooks, is captured, and Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Marna's identity and get into the confidence of Iron Hand.

She is instructed to keep her real identity a secret even to Sharpe; but she often assists him and sends him information concerning the movements of the gang, and he is puzzled to know just where it comes from.

Iron Hand has a number of hiding-places in different parts of the country, which are referred to as "Nests," the most important of which is Eagle's Nest, situated on a deserted cliff.

## The Trial.

ONE by one the outlaws and Anne entered, carrying with them the gold. When the last two had gone through they pushed the boulder back into its place. Anne found herself in a rocky cave lighted

# The INVISIBLE HAND

Vitagraph



IRON HAND.

by pine torches. There were three men already on the scene.

One of them immediately approached Iron Hand, and informed him that "Antonio's schooner would be here in half an hour."

The leader nodded with satisfaction when he heard this news. Then, as an after-thought, he asked:

"Where are all the rest of the band?"

"We're all that's left now," replied the man, somewhat sadly.

A cynical smile crossed Iron Hand's face. He had no sympathy with men who allowed themselves to be caught by the police.

Little did he realise that his own turn was not very far off.

One of the men pointed to Anne, remarking that she was responsible for a good deal of the trouble which had come upon them.

Others showed deadly resentment towards her, and instantly there was a threatening move made against the defenceless girl.

But she showed no fear, and waited defiantly for the worst to happen.

An evil look entered Iron Hand's eyes.

"If you are waiting for the schooner to arrive, we'll dispose of this—traitor!" he said, looking at Anne.

This speech met with the full approval of the gang, and in order to amuse themselves while they were waiting, they decided to give the girl mock trial.

The men assumed various positions to make the scene resemble a real trial, with Iron Hand as the judge.

One of the men acted as a warder, and held Anne as the prisoner. Potsdam was the prosecutor, a position which pleased him immensely, and the others were the witnesses and the jury.

"Let the trial commence," he said. "Who brings charges against this woman?"

Potsdam advanced before the leader, and replied:

"I do!"

"Present your evidence!" said the chief.

Potsdam produced a telegram from his pocket, and handed it to Iron Hand.

Iron Hand felt the dread of approaching death.

## In Iron Hand's Grip.

DETECTIVE JOHN SHARPE and Captain West made good progress until they reached the rocky ground, and then they were unable to follow the trail made by the gang.

Sharpe and the officer dismounted, while the rest of the party remained on their horses.

The detective made every endeavour to pick up the lost trail again, but so far without much success.

Presently his attention was directed towards the sea.

He caught sight of a rather small schooner, which was making her way around the headland. The crew of the vessel were beginning to drop her sails, although no attempt was being made to furl them yet. A Mexican flag was flying from the masthead.

John Sharpe took in all these details swiftly, then he called the attention of the other man to the ship. The detective was convinced that the vessel was at the service of the gang. He considered for a moment.

"Possibly there is some cave we haven't found," remarked Sharpe. "That Mexican schooner certainly hasn't any business in these waters. It seems to me that Iron Hand intends to make use of the boat to get away with the gold. There's only one thing we can do."

The men crowded around to hear what the detective's suggestion was.

"We shall have to make an attempt to capture the ship!"

Four Anne Crawford, meanwhile, was suffering a terrible ordeal in the cave to which the gang had taken her. The mock trial was proceeding to the satisfaction of the villains, and at the moment Potsdam was producing evidence to prove that she was not the girl she had pretended to be for so long.

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"This telegram from our old friend Black states that the girl is Anne Crawford, of the Secret Service," remarked the second in command, holding out the telegram form.

"There was a movement of deadly enmity towards the girl, but Anne stood quite still, and her eyes were out defiance.

Potsdam who had been burning for revenge on the girl for so long, noted with intense satisfaction the impression which his words made. But Iron Hand was not to be denied, and stayed the members of his gang, pretending that Anne was to have a fair trial.

"Any more evidence?" he asked.

"Plenty!" he answered. He made a signal to one of the gang to step forward. It was the man who saw Anne riding on the back of the motor-car to which Sharpe had been tied, when the gang had endeavored to dispose of the detective by drowning him. Iron Hand listened intently.

"Then Black Flag called as a witness. He swore that he saw Anne dive into the sea and rescue their hated enemy, John Sharpe. But the plucky girl could stand no more of this nonsense.

"Why go on with this farce? I am Anne Crawford! We've thwarted you again and again, Detective Sharpe and I. Now do your worst—before you are my defenceless. This will no doubt suit a coward like you!"

The leader winced at her biting words; but even he could not refrain from admiring her, spite of the fact that she was a traitor to them.

For a moment his admiration weakened his resolve to punish her, as he did all traitors to the gang, by death. He leant forward, and in a husky voice said:

"Will you marry me if—"

The girl's eyes flashed hatred and contempt.

"No, you murderer and thief," she said. "I wish to save my life!"

The leader with difficulty restrained his temper, and many of the gang rushed forward, bent on finishing her at once.

"Iron Hand again dominated the scene in his masterful way.

"Remember the law of the band," he said. "How do you find the prisoner?"

"With one accord everyone shouted:

"Guilty!"

A smile crossed the villainous countenance of Iron Hand.

"And the punishment is—"

"Death!" came the swift answer from the gang.

"Death by what method? Fire, the knife, or water?" asked the leader.

"The water torture!"

"Very well!" murmured Iron Hand, in a solemn, judicial manner, "it shall be as you wish. Take her away!"

Anne listened to her sentence without a shudder, and no appeal for mercy left her lips.

The next instant she was led away by the gang. Some of the men carried torches in their hands to lead the way, and others took with them the gold. The poor girl knew that her end was near.

"What would these villains do to her?" she wondered.

**Boarding the Vessel.**

JOHN SHARPE decided that the best plan of action would be to swim towards the Mexican schooner, and board the vessel. From the observations which he made there were apparently very few men on board.

His friend Captain West and the police chief offered to accompany the detective in his enterprise.

The three men entered the water from a point where their movements could not be easily noticed by anyone on the deck, and after several minutes they succeeded in reaching the bow of the vessel.

Their progress in the water had been swift and quiet for all three were excellent swimmers, and they had a good chance of climbing up on deck without opposition from those at the other end of the boat.

Sharpe went first, and he discovered that there were three Mexicans near the stern, who were smoking and idly chatting to one another.

He waited in hiding until his two companions had also climbed on board. Very soon they joined him, and the three men braced themselves for the coming struggle.

They drew their revolvers, and, with the weapons levelled, they walked sharply up the deck towards the Mexicans. They were completely taken by surprise, and readily held up their hands when commanded to do so.

Captain West and the police chief forced them to go below, and followed, leaving Sharpe on deck to keep guard.

A few minutes later the two men rejoined their comrade, and they all commenced to disguise themselves. Sharpe had gathered together some articles of clothing belonging to the Mexicans, and these they speedily donned.

"There is nothing for us to do but wait for our enemies," the detective remarked. "I think Iron Hand will be surprised when he finds us here instead of his precious crew!" Sharpe put his field-glasses to his eyes, and scanned the shore, but he was unable to see any signs of the outlaws.

**Anne's Terrible Ordeal.**

CHIEF BURNETT, the head of the Secret Service, had decided to take Sharpe on deck to keep guard.

He had been very satisfied with the splendid work accomplished by John Sharpe, and his entry into the final round-up of the remaining members of the villainous gang was prompted by his desire to cut short the detective's work so that he could obtain a much-needed holiday.

Burnett had succeeded in forcing a confession from one of the recent prisoners, and thus he had secured some very valuable information which he decided to act upon without delay.

The Secret Service Chief made his way to San Pedro, where there was a small detachment of naval vessels.

Burnett presented his credentials, and informed the officer in charge of his mission. "The border is being carefully watched," he concluded, "and now I desire the aid of a boat to search the shore."

The captain listened attentively to Burnett's story. He had already heard something of the effort to capture Iron Hand and his gang, and he was pleased to be able to participate in the affair. Presently he gave some orders to a subordinate and after a brisk salute the man departed in order to execute them.

A few minutes later Chief Burnett was escorted to a place where a Revenue gun-boat was moored. There was a scene of activity on board, and a number of sailors and marines were busy at their various tasks in preparing the vessel for its journey.

Near to the gunboat a small ship's boat was moored, and it was this vessel which Burnett picked out as the one which would be the most serviceable to them.

The Secret Service Chief and the naval officer boarded the boat, and the vessel followed by a selected crew. The boat then put out to sea, in the direction indicated by Burnett.

All unknown to the chief, the girl whom he had appointed to keep a watchful eye on John Sharpe was suffering terrible agonies.

Her true mission had at last been discovered by Iron Hand. He had found out that the girl he believed to be Marna Black was in reality a spy aimed a traitor to him, and was really a member of the Secret Service.

In accordance with their usual proceedings a mock trial had been held, and Anne had been sentenced to death by a form of torture known as the water death.

The plucky girl was determined to be defiant to the last. Nothing would make her appeal for mercy, even if by so doing there was a chance to save her life.

Bound hand and foot, Anne was taken to a deep pool in the cave. In the roof of the cave a pulley and rope was fixed, with an iron hook attached to the end of it.

Two of the gang fastened a heavy rock to Anne's feet, and for a moment she wondered what this was for. But the poor, tortured, and helpless girl was soon to discover.

Another man, who was a member of the wooden barrel. This was speedily filled with water, and it was then hoisted in the air. The rope affixed to the barrel was then connected to the one to which Anne was tied, and the next minute she found herself suspended in the air in company with the barrel of water.

The outlaw who had held her during these proceedings left go, and the unfortunate girl swung to and fro, the ropes dangling at her feet. The whole ghastly scheme was now apparent to her.

She glanced around, horror-stricken, towards the barrel of water, which was being suspended by the weight of her body and the rock tied to her feet.

Iron Hand entered the cave at the moment, and, with a triumphant leer on his face, he looked up at Anne.

"It is not too late—" he muttered.

The girl looked at him with loathing and contempt.

The leader of the gang knew that she would not give in, even though a terrible death awaited her, and he decided to wait no longer for his revenge.

Iron Hand walked towards the barrel, and pulled out a small plug at the bottom. Immediately the water commenced to drip, very slowly—drop by drop.

The villainous leader looked up at Anne with a gloating expression upon his evil countenance.

"When the barrel is empty—" He moved his hands indicating that it would rise, and that Anne would drop to her death in the pool.

The other outlaws who had gathered round jeered at the unhappy Anne. Then they picked up the gold which had been deposited on a ledge, and took their departure. The men commenced to load up a skiff moored to the rock, and when their task was completed they entered, and rowed rapidly away.

Anne remained proud and defiant until she was quite sure that the outlaws had at last left her alone. Then her spirit broke, and her head drooped. It had been a really terrible ordeal for the poor girl.

She was thinking then of the man she had done so much for, and whom she so greatly admired.

"John—John Sharpe!" she murmured. "If you were only here! I helped you—why can't you help me?"

Poor Anne bowed her head in despair.

(For the continuation of this grand serial see next week's GEM.)

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## THE ST. JIM'S SWIMMERS!

(Continued from page 12.)

The engines throbbed. But it was necessary to keep well away from the swimmer, in order not to incommodate him with the wash of the vessel. Captain Corkran stood watching his pupil with a keen and anxious eye. Two boats were in readiness in case they were wanted, as the yacht, keeping well away, tracked the gallant swimmer on the sunlit sea.

Tom Merry was going strong. He was swimming with a steady stroke, reserving his strength; he knew that he would want every ounce of it before the swim was over. Cardew was unusually silent and grave as he watched him.

There was something like a look of remorse on his handsome face as he followed the dark head on the waters.

"By gad!" he muttered to Levison. "He's got no end of pluck, and he's a good man all through! I—I'm half-sorry that—"

Levison smiled grimly. He was quite accustomed to his whimsical chum's eleventh-hour repentance.

"After all, he's safe enough," said Cardew, as if arguing with himself. "If anything goes wrong, the yacht will be on him like a bird, and the boats are ready, too."

"Let us hope so," said Levison.

"Of course, there's currents, but old Corkran has been poring over tides and currents for a week past—"

"Anyhow, he's in for it now," said Levison. "My hat! He's going well, too. Some swimmer!"

"I wish I hadn't pulled his leg quite so much," muttered Cardew. "After all, he's not a bad sort, though a bit of a fool!"

"If you were a thousandth part as good a sort, you'd do!" said Levison grimly.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus, who had heard Cardew's remark. "I regard your observations, Cardew, as bein' in the worst possible taste."

"Go hon!" murmured Cardew, quite himself again at once. "Are you always as polite as that when you're visitin', Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Bai Jove! I forgot! I beg your pardon, Cardew, but pway undahstand that if we were not on your uncle's yacht, I should regard your remarks as bein' in the worst possible taste."

"Dear old bean," said Cardew, "it's awfully good of you to provide comic relief at such a serious moment!"

"Oh, wats!" Arthur Augustus turned his back on Cardew. "Blake, deah boy, if you've done with my glasses I—"

"I haven't," said Blake affably.

Cardew moved away a little from the crowd. For a slacker like the dandy of the Fourth, he seemed very keen on watching Tom Merry's valiant attempt. As the sun rose higher and higher, and the day wore on, there was keener and keener interest in the following yacht. Well out from the land, Tom Merry was in the roll of the Channel, and though a calm day had been picked, there is always rough water in the Straits. But the champion of St. Jim's was still going strong.

The cliffs of England had sunk into a dim line far away—not that the swimmer thought of looking back.

Far ahead, though he was too low down on the water to see them, the French cliffs were in sight; Cape Griz-nez loomed against the blue sky.

Progress was slower now. Tom Merry had to fight against the sea, and to the anxious eyes on the yacht, it seemed for long that the swimmer was doing little more than marking time.

But still he was winning his way—slowly, but surely. Hours had passed—they seemed almost like days to Tom Merry, as he fought on.

Cardew's eyes never left him.

The dandy of the Fourth gave a little start as a long roller passed over Tom Merry's head, and for long seconds

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he could not be seen. There was a buzz of excitement; but a shout from Blake announced that the swimmer was going strong again. But Cardew's face was now tense in its keen anxiety.

He had seen—or he thought he had seen—what had escaped the keen eyes of Captain Corkran. Tom Merry was not a fellow to give in—while he had an ounce of strength left, he would keep on—but it had come into Cardew's mind now that the swimmer was not fighting for progress, but fighting for his life. And at that thought a shudder ran through Cardew, and for a second his heart stood still. A long roller came surging, glancing in the sun, and Cardew heard a shout which was Captain Corkran's voice—and he was shouting for the boat. Cardew's eyes closed for a moment—he opened them again, staring, and the dark head was not to be seen on the water. What happened next passed like a flash.

"Man overboard!" yelled Blake.

"It's Cardew!"

Splash!

Without even stopping to throw off his jacket, Cardew had dived over the rail. He went in deep—deep under the surging water, and struck out before he came to the surface.

Where was Tom Merry?

As he came up, his eyes, dazzled in the sun and the gleam of the water, stared about him. The yacht seemed at an immense distance—the boat was in the water—pulling—something floated by him, and he caught at it.

"Tom Merry!"

Cardew's grasp was upon the exhausted swimmer. Tom Merry was still struggling, but his strength was almost gone. His face came up close to Cardew's, his eyes half-closed.

"Hold on to me!" panted Cardew. "Help!"

He held to Tom Merry, and struck out for his life. The choppy sea rolled over him, but he still held to the Shell fellow. Would the boat never come? It seemed ages—centuries—to Cardew. In those black moments he tasted the bitterness of death. Would the boat never come? The sea was over him—the short, heavy waves seemed to beat on him like blows—and Tom Merry was a dead weight on his arm. Something grasped Cardew and dragged him back from death—it was Captain Corkran, swimming now, and his strong grasp drew both the exhausted juniors back into air and life. A minute more, and they were hauled into the boat.

Cardew lay drenched and dripping. Captain Corkran was bending over Tom Merry in the boat. Cardew struggled up.

"Is he all right?"

"I think so; but it was touch and go."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Some failures," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy oracularly, "are more glorious than successes. St. Jim's has not swum the Channel, deah boys, but St. Jim's has had a jolly good tye, and I weally think we have a right to pat ourselves on the back!"

"Hear, hear!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made his oracular remarks on shore. Tom Merry was in bed; but it was only an excess of fatigue he was suffering from, and his chums' anxiety was relieved. Cardew was with him—sitting by the bedside—and the mocking look was quite gone from Ralph Reckness Cardew's face. Tom Merry awakened after a long refreshing sleep, and his eyes opened to rest on Cardew's face.

"Hullo! You!" said Tom, in quite his old cheery tone.

"Little me," said Cardew. "How do you feel now?"

"Right as rain, only a bit tired. Rotten that I couldn't pull it off, wasn't it? It was a bit too hefty for me, of course. You came in for me, Cardew?"

"Yes."

"I think I must have had a touch of cramp," said Tom. "Anyhow—" He paused. "You're a queer fish, Cardew."

"I—I'm sorry!" Cardew's chums would hardly have known him at that moment. "I've treated you like a beastly cad, Merry! I'm sorry! If—if you'd gone down—" He faltered.

"Thank goodness I didn't!" said Tom, with a smile. "It wouldn't have been your fault, anyhow!"

"I should have felt as if it was."

"What rot!"

"I—I'm sorry!"

Tom Merry held out his hand over the white coverlet, and Cardew grasped it for a moment. And in that friendly grasp all bitterness was buried.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of the Chums of St. Jim's next week. Look out for it. Also the first number of "The St. Jim's News." Edited by Tom Merry.)

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