

"CHUMS AFLOAT!"

This week's rollicking story of Tom Merry & Co., aboard the Silver Spray!

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EVERY WEDNESDAY

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(A stirring incident from the long complete holiday story—"Chums Afloat"—in this issue.)

SHIP AHOY! A life on the ocean wave is something vastly different from Latin and Greek in a stuffy Form-room! And aboard the "Silver Spray" Tom Merry & Co. settle down to enjoy their novel holiday to the full!



CHUMS AFLOAT!

A Breezy Story
of Tom Merry &
Co., the Famous
Chums of St.
Jim's, describ-
ing their holiday
adventures
aboard ship.

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

Accompanying Gussy!

O THE wollin' sea hath a charm for me,
As I list to its mighty war!
And I'd wathah sail—
"Oh dear! Dry up, Gussy!"
"Chuck it, old fellow!"
"Ring off, Gussy!"

As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his voice in song, eight youthful voices raised theirs in anguished protest.

Under a blazing mid-day sun the Silver Spray was forging ahead over the sparkling waters of the English Channel. To starboard—to use a nautical term—the tossing blue waters stretched away, speckled with white sails, and the smoke of steamers; to port glimmered the distant chalk cliffs of old England, with the rolling downs of Sussex beyond.

It was a glorious summer day, and Tom Merry & Co. were taking it easy on the big motor-boat which Mr. Glyn—Bernard Glyn's father—had lent them for their holiday cruise. Some of the juniors were sprawling over the cabin-top, some were lounging in the after cock-pit. At the wheel was seated Weary Willy—otherwise "Captain" Cragg, the "elder person" in charge of the party; and hovering over the shining, throbbing motor was Bernard Glyn, a spanner in one hand, and a large piece of oily-waste in the other, and with black, oily smudges on his bare arms and face. Where Baggy Trimble was the rest of the party neither knew—nor cared.

The Channel was inclined to be a trifle choppy, and every now and again stinging spray came lashing over the "turtle-back" fore-castle of the big motor-cruiser. But the juniors enjoyed that, and the Silver Spray seemed to enjoy it, too, as she pounded on a wide wake of foam astern. Even Arthur Augustus was enjoying it, regardless for once, of the possible damage to his elegant blazer from the flying, hissing spray.

Blue sky, curling blue water, and the lift and surge of the powerful motor-cruiser, indeed, were having such a happy effect on Arthur Augustus that he had burst forth into song. Regardless of everything, save the beauty and romance of the scene, Arthur Augustus sat on the cabin-top and opened his mouth wide and raised aloft his voice in praise of the "wollin' sea that had a charm for him."

Unfortunately, Gussy's tenor voice had no charm for his chums, whatever the sea had for them.

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"Cheese it, Gussy!" said Blake, as Arthur Augustus paused indignantly. "We're out to enjoy our gid'ly selves—not to be tortured by that awful catawauling!"

"Bai Jove!"

"If you must make that awful row, go and do it with your head inside the fo'c'sle hatch," said Herries.

"Hear, hear!"

"I shall do nothin' of the kind, Hewwies," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I see no weason, whatevah, why I should not express my feelin's by singin', bai Jove!"

And once again Arthur Augustus raised his voice in song.

"O, the wollin' sea hath a charm for me,
As I list to its might—bai Jove!"

Once again Arthur Augustus broke off indignantly as Bernard Glyn pressed the button of the electric Klaxon horn in a succession of terrific blasts that echoed across the tossing waters and completely drowned D'Arcy's dulcet tones.

"Go it, Gussy!" said Glyn, pausing encouragingly. "What have you stopped for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wretched barbwian!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "How can I sing with that awful din goin' on?"

"Awful din be blowed!" said Glyn. "It was you making the awful din; I was only accompanying you. This Klaxon is a jolly sight more musical than you are."

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Oh, let the ass warble if he wants to," suggested Herries eagerly, "and I'll fetch my cornet out and accompany him."

"You'll accompany him over the side of the boat if you jolly well fetch that awful cornet out," said Blake grimly.

"Look here, Blake—"

"Weally, Blake."

"Peace, my children," laughed Tom Merry. "If Gussy wants to warble, and Herries wants to honk—let 'em. We won't spoil their enjoyment. But they must do it in the fo'c'sle, with the hatches down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! I wepeat—"

"Hold on!" said Lowther, winking at the others, unseen by Herries and D'Arcy. "Why not have a little music, chaps? Have you any music with you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! I have sewewal famous old sea-songs among my baggage, bai Jove!"

"And you've brought your cornet, Herries?"

"Yes," said Herries eagerly. "Look here, I'll get it."

"Good! You run and get your music, Gussy. Then we'll have a little sing-song."

"Vewy well, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus a trifle reluctantly. "I would much wathah sing alone, but if you fellows would like to join in I have no objection. Pwaw, allow me to sing the verses, howevah, and you fellows join in the choruses."

"Right-ho!" said Lowther. "We'll accompany you all serene, Gussy."

Herries vanished abruptly, making his way to the fo'c'sle where the luggage was kept, and Arthur Augustus went after him.

"Well, you ass, Lowther!" groaned Blake. "You've let us in for something."

"Not at all!" grinned Lowther. "The asses can warble and honk as much as they like and we'll accompany them. With us playing on tin-cans and saucepans, and Glyn on the Klaxon we'll soon drown their giddy row. We agreed to accompany 'em, and we will. Come on!"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

Grasping the humorous Lowther's idea, the others followed him swiftly into the cabin of the cruiser. There were plenty of pots and pans in the little galley, and armed with a supply, Tom Merry & Co. hurried back to their seats, carefully concealing their "instruments" behind them.

Next moment Arthur Augustus and Herries came through the cabin, looking rather breathless and heated. Herries had his cornet and D'Arcy had an armful of music.

"Here we are, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus, clambering back on to the "saloon" top. "I weally twust Hewwies will not make too much wow with that dweadful cornet, and I weally hope you fellows will wefwain frowm shoutin', bai Jove! It is wathah fortunate that I b'wought "O, the wollin' Sea" with me, as I wathah like that song. We'll have that first, deah boys."

"Good man!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Buck up, Herries!"

Arthur Augustus stood up, adjusted his monocle, and, steadying himself to the roll of the boat, held out a sheet of music before him. Herries took up his position beside him. Herries only knew snatches of the song; but he wasn't going to tell Arthur Augustus that.

Clearing his throat, and waving his hand for silence, Arthur Augustus started, and Herries followed.

"O, the wollin' sea hath a charm for me,
As I list to its mighty war!
And I'd wathah sail on the wollin' wave,
Than wander the whole earth o'er!
O, 'tis joy to me to woam—"

Arthur Augustus got as far as that, while Herries didn't get as far, being several bars behind, when Tom Merry & Co. joined in with their accompaniment.

Crash! Bang, bang, bang! Crash!

Honk, honk, honk, honk!

Rattle, rattle, rattle!

Clang, clang, clang!

The saucepan-lids crashed on the saucepans, while Digby and Noble did what they could with tin-cans, and Manners thumped away with the dinner-gong from the saloon. And above the terrific clamour of sound came the strident voice of the Klaxon horn.

The sudden outbreak of noise caused Arthur Augustus and Herries to leap almost a yard into the air, so startled were they.

"Bai Jove! What—what— Oh, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Stop that feahful— Oh cwumbs!"

A sudden roll of the Silver Spray caused Arthur Augustus to lose his balance just then, and he flung out his hand to grasp Herries.

Unfortunately the back of his hand crashed into the end of Herries' cornet, sending the mouthpiece with a nasty jar against Herries' teeth.

"Yaroooogh!" roared Herries.

Apparently Herries was hurt, and he was undoubtedly angry. Spluttering wildly, he raised aloft his cornet, and brought it down on the head of Arthur Augustus.

Bang!

"Yawoooh!"

It was the turn of Arthur Augustus to howl. And as he did so the boat gave another roll, and this time the elegant junior lost his balance completely.

He staggered, stumbled backwards over Lowther, who happened to be lounging against the low rail of the saloon roof, and then—

"Look out!" yelled Blake.

He made a frantic clutch at Arthur Augustus and missed. But Tom Merry was luckier. Even as Arthur Augustus slithered backwards over the low rail, his hand shot out and grasped the slim ankle of the swell of the Fourth.

Splash!

Arthur Augustus was overboard—with the exception of one elegant leg which Tom Merry stuck to like grim death.

"Oh, my hat! Help me!" bellowed Tom Merry.

"Quick, you idiots!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

There was a rattle and clanging of saucepans and tin-cans as the rest of the juniors jumped to obey. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's head and shoulders were in the sea, and he was being towed along by one leg as Tom Merry held on desperately. Manners managed to get a grip on his jacket, while Lowther grabbed Tom to prevent him being dragged over the side of the speeding motor-boat.

But Bernard Glyn had acted more swiftly still, and the next moment the engine ceased to throb, and as the boat slowed down, Arthur Augustus was grabbed on all sides and hauled aboard the Silver Spray again.

He promptly collapsed in a dripping, tousled bundle on to the grating of the cockpit, gasping, and panting, and choking, and with seawater streaming from him.

"Gwoooogh! Oooooch!" he choked.

"Well, that's drowned his singing if we couldn't!" remarked Lowther. "Going to continue the song, Gussy?"

"Gwoooogh Mum-mum-mum! Oh, bai Jove! Gwoooogh! Wottahs!"

"That's what we get for saving his life," murmured Lowther. "Has the sea any charm for you now, Gussy?"

"Gwoooogh! Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet and tottered into the cabin to change his soaked clothing. Herries followed to bathe a cut lip and a loosened tooth. The boat forged ahead again.

"Well, that little sing-song was a bit of a wash-out," said Tom Merry chuckling. "I vote we have one on our own, chaps!"

"Ha, ha! Good!"

And Tom Merry & Co. did. While the fuming Arthur Augustus changed, and the equally fuming Herries bathed his lip, Tom Merry & Co. let themselves go with a will. As the throbbing Silver Spray forged on they bawled out at the top of their youthful voices that ancient classical ditty:

"O, sea, sea, sea!

Oh, why are you angry with me?

Ever since we left Dover,

I've thought the boat would go over!

Oh, dear, dear! Little Mary's been troubling me!

When I once reach the shore,

You will see me no more,

On the sea, sea, sea!"

CHAPTER 2.

Alas! Poor Baggy!

"WIND'S freshening!" remarked Tom Merry. "We're in for a bit of a dusting, I fancy!" said Glyn. "Jove! I'm hungry, you chaps! It seems ages since we left Calmhaven!"

"Same here! What about dinner?" asked Blake.

"I—I say, you chaps," said Noble rather feebly. "What—what about running in and having a decent meal ashore? We're in no hurry to get anywhere!"

Tom Merry smiled. He knew quite well that Noble's suggestion was not prompted by a desire for a decent dinner—far from it! For some time now the wind had been getting rather "fresh," and the waves "choppier." And the more the Silver Spray had tossed, the more silent Noble had become.

And Noble was not the only one. Manners and Herries had been rather quiet for some time now, and it was clear that a choppy sea did not agree with their interiors.

"That—that's a good idea, Noble," said Herries eagerly. "Shall we have dinner ashore, Glyn?"

"Might as well," grinned Glyn, looking towards the distant shore. "We're abreast of Sandbeach now."

"Sandbeach—lemme see?" said Blake, staring at the tiny cluster of red roofs showing in a wide break in the chalk cliffs. "I remember some St. Jim's chaps talking about that place recently."

"Grundy, I think," said Tom. "He's camping round there with Wilkins and Gunn."

"Good reason why we should give the place a miss, then!"

"We're not likely to drop across Grundy, though," laughed Tom Merry. "What about it? Shall we have dinner there, and then go on?"

"Just as you like," said Glyn. "But it'll take some time to get there, and I'm hungry!"

"I'm hungry, too!" grinned Tom Merry. "But there's plenty to eat in the larder, old scout. Why not have a

crack while we're running into Sandbeach—a few biscuits and things to carry us on?"

"Good wheeze!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where's Trimble?" asked Blake. "Might as well make the lazy fat thing wait on us. Trimble!"

Blake bellowed the name at the top of his voice. But no answer came.

"Let's hope he's fallen overboard," remarked Lowther fervently. "My hat, what a blessing if he has!"

"Ha, ha! No such luck!"

"He's not feeling very well, I fancy," said Tom Merry. "The fat porker was looking green about the gills more than an hour ago. Let's get the biscuits ourselves, and leave the poor beggar alone."

As he spoke Tom Merry dived into the cabin, and made for the larder. After him went all excepting Noble and Manners, and Herries, who, apparently, did not feel like eating. Tom and his companions looked for the biscuits, but did not find them. They also looked for some jam-tarts and some cakes and some bottles of lemonade that should have been there. But they did not find those, either.

There were several empty bottles there, and there were empty paper bags, and plenty of crumbs about. But there was little else visible in the eating line.

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Tom Merry, in astonishment. "Why, we got in a whole stock of things at Calm-haven before we started. Someone must have— Oh, great pip! Trimble!"

"Yaas, wathah! That awful wascal Twimble!"

"Trimble, the fat villain!"

It was undoubtedly Trimble. The juniors knew the little habits and customs of Baggy Trimble of old. At St. Jim's no study cupboard—unless it was locked—was safe from him. Baggy had an enormous appetite, and he was never particular at whose expense he satisfied it.

"The fat villain must have scoffed all the grub while we've been on deck!" breathed Blake. "I thought he was very quiet. Where is he?"

"Yes, where is the fat rotter?"

It was a chorus. All the juniors wanted to know where Trimble was? It was really quite a simple question to answer, for—unless, as Lowther had suggested, Baggy had fallen overboard—he must be somewhere about the boat, and it would be a very simple matter to find him.

"Come on!" shouted Blake wrathfully. "We'll teach the fat burglar a lesson he won't forget in a hurry! After the warning we gave him, too! Come on!"

"Yes, rather! We'll scalp the fat rotter!"

Even Tom Merry was anxious to get hold of Trimble now. He was hungry, and the sight of the empty larder made him more hungry—and wrathful.

Blake led the rush through the small, sliding doorway that led into the forward cockpit, which, in its turn, led to the fo'c'sle. But they had no need to look farther than the cockpit.

Trimble was there. He was lying on one of the side-lockers, with his head through the rails, and over the side of the boat. And from his fat form came deep, dismal groans.

The juniors stopped dead. The sight of the limp and forlorn figure took away all thoughts of vengeance. As they stood there Trimble looked slowly round, showing a fat, ghastly face. The expression of deep anguish upon it would have moved a heart of stone.

"Bad, Trimble?" asked Tom Merry.

Groan!

"Been sick, old fat man?" demanded Blake.

Groan, groan, groan!

"It serves you jolly well right!" said Lowther, rather heartlessly. "You've scoffed all our grub, you fat rotter!"

Trimble looked at Lowther with lack-lustre eyes, in which, however, showed deep reproach.

"Ooooooooh!" he groaned faintly. "You—you'll be sorry for that some day, Lowther!"

"What?"

"Grooooooh! You'll regret it to your dying day, Lowther!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"But I forgive you!" breathed Baggy Trimble. "Even though it's with my dying breath, I'll forgive you!"

"Your whatter?" yelled Blake.

"My dying breath!" said Trimble sadly. "Tom Merry, old fellow!"

"Yes, Trimble?"

"I forgive you, too, for bringing me on this trip—my last voyage," said Baggy. "You and Glyn practically forced me to come—"

"You fat ass!" said Tom laughing. "You mean you wanted a blessed invite! You're seasick, old chap; but you'll be all right presently. Shall I get you a glass of water?"

Groan, groan, groan!

"Or a nice pork-chop with plenty of nice juicy gravy!" added Lowther.

"Ooooooooh!"

"Or some fish and chips fried in salad oil, old chap? Or a dish of eggs and bacon, with—"

"Cheese it, Lowther, you ass!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Can't you see the fat ass has got it badly? Cheer up, Trimble!"

"Ooooooooh! Ow-ow-ow!" groaned Trimble. "Tommy, old fellow?"

"Order that beast Glyn to take the boat ashore," said Trimble, in a sad faint voice. "I don't expect I shall last out until we land. But I'd like to get a last glimpse of dear Old England before I die!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom Merry tried hard not to join in the chuckles.

"You're not going to die, Baggy!" he said cheerily.

"You'll live to raid the study cupboards at St. Jim's for a long time yet, old fat man! We're making for the shore now, and you'll soon be all right!"

"Oh, thank goodness!" There was deep and fervent thankfulness in Baggy's voice. "Is—is that right, Merry?"

"Yes. We'll be ashore in half an hour or so."

"Oh dear! Grooooooh! Another half-hour! I'll be dead then!" gasped Baggy faintly. "Tell those other beasts to leave us, Merry; you'll stay with me, won't you—to the end?"

"Oh, my hat! You fat ass!" grinned Tom. "You're not dying, fatty! You're seasick!"

"Ooooooooh! I'm not seasick at all!"

"You're not?" ejaculated Tom.

"No, of course not. I'm never seasick!" said Trimble, already feeling slightly better on hearing the news that they were making the shore. "It—it's overwork, you know! That beast Glyn will have this on his conscience all his life!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I'm never seasick," said Trimble, blinking shakily at the grinning juniors. "This isn't seasickness at all! It's the strain—washing-up and waiting on you chaps like I've had to do on this rotten boat. Ooooooh! Oh dear! Grooooooh! It's coming on again! Ow-ow-ow! Grooooooh!"

Trimble doubled up again, and his head went through the rails. Chuckling softly, Tom Merry & Co. left him to it. They had no need to take vengeance for the missing biscuits and cakes, and tarts, and lemonade. Those—combined with the rolling deep—were already taking vengeance on Baggy. Sad as the case was, and sorry as they were for the hapless "grub-raider," Tom Merry felt that it served him right.

"Well, that settles it!" chuckled Tom Merry, as they went back through the saloon. "We'll have to go ashore for grub now, in any case. Poor old Trimble— Hallo! What's wrong?"

The strident notes of the Klaxon horn greeted the juniors as they emerged into the after cockpit. They found Weary Willy and Bernard Glyn staring ahead over the tossing blue waters. Manners, Noble, and Herries were looking very white, and they did not appear to be taking any interest in anything.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

He saw what was afoot as he stood up on the cabin top and looked ahead.

A hundred yards ahead of the motor-cruiser was a small sailing-boat, tossing and lurching drunkenly on the heaving sea. One of her sails was in ribbons, and the other—the mainsail—was bellying out before the stiff wind, the light craft heeling over at a dangerous angle, threatening to capsize at every sickening lurch.

The boat was, plainly, either not being sailed at all, or being handled by a madman.

Then Tom caught a glimpse of three figures aboard the sailing-boat.

"Great pip! Those chaps will be capsized if they're not careful, Glyn," said Tom in alarm. "Are they potty, or what? Look how they're handling the blessed boat!"

"I've been expecting it to capsize every second," said Glyn, staring ahead. "We'd better run closer, and be ready to lend a hand, Cragg."

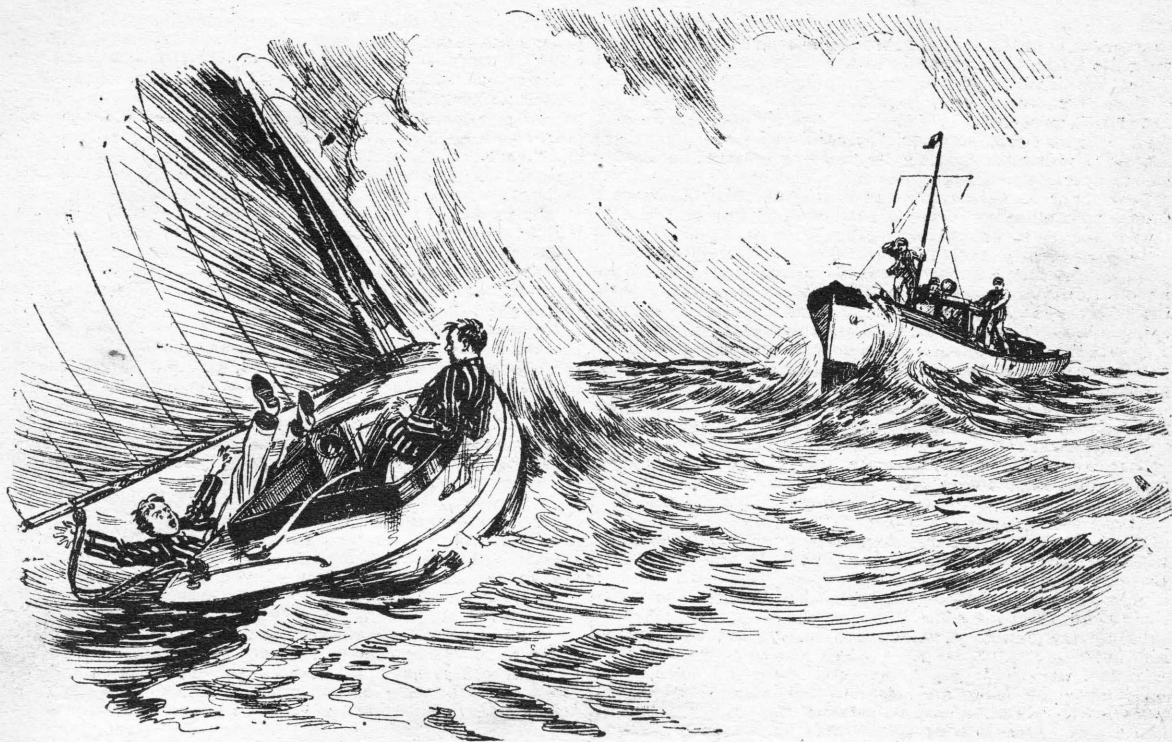
"Ay, ay, Master Glyn. Them fellers are looking for trouble!" remarked Weary Willy dolefully. "Why don't he let his sheet go?"

All the juniors were watching now and wondering that. The Silver Spray forged on at an increased speed, and rapidly came up with the sailing-craft. As the boats drew nearer the voices of the three in the sailing-boat became clear. They seemed to be arguing heatedly.

"I tell you I know what I'm jolly well doing!" came one bellowing voice. "You shut up!"

"But, you silly ass—"

"Dry up! Think I don't know how to handle a craft like this?"



There was a sudden gust of wind, and the boat swung round sickeningly; as it did so the boom of the mainsail also swung round and took Grundy clean amidships, as it were. The great George Alfred howled and vanished over the side into the tumbling waters. "Stand by, chaps!" bawled Bernard Glyn from the motor cruiser. (See Chapter 3.)

"But you'll capsize us, you raving idiot!"
 "Rot! Do you want a dot on the nose, George Wilkins?"
 "But look here, Grundy—"
 "You shut up, Gunny!"
 "But that rotten sail—if you don't—"
 "Am I sailing this boat or am I not?" bellowed the voice. "I tell you I know what I'm doing, William Gunn!"
 "You're going to drown the lot of us, you born idiot!"
 "Eh? What's that? Why, I'll jolly well—"
 "Drop that sail, you dangerous madman! I tell you—"
 "Dry up, Wilkins!"
 "But can't you see—"
 "Shut up, Gunny!"

It was a wrathful bellow, and this time there came no answer. Tom Merry & Co grinned—they could not help grinning—and then they looked at each other.

"Grundy!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "That was Grundy's voice!"

"And the others are Wilkins and Gunn!" grinned Glyn. "Well, my only hat! We might have known it! There's only one fellow in the whole wide world who would sail a boat like that, and that fellow's George Alfred Grundy!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 3.

Saving Grundy.

TOM MERRY & CO. could not help laughing as the Silver Spray tore on towards the sailing-boat through the heaving seas. At St. Jim's it was Grundy's claim that nobody could play cricket like Grundy could, or footer, like he could—or row, or box, or run, or do anything else like he could. And everybody at St. Jim's agreed with him there. They also agreed that it was a good thing for cricket, and footer, and rowing, and boxing, and the like, that nobody else could. Grundy had his own way of doing everything.

And now, as Tom Merry & Co. stared at the wildly-careering sailing-boat, they realised that he sailed a boat in much the same way that he did most things.

Yet, though they could not help laughing, Tom Merry & Co. felt a bit anxious for all that. The boat seemed almost water-logged already, and was threatening to capsize at every moment. And the sail was taking the full force of the wind, no attempt being made to free the sheet. She pounded heavily, and the juniors could see water pouring over the weather quarter.

"The—the burbling idiot!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Why the thump doesn't he let go the sheet?"
 "All serene!" grinned Bernard Glyn. "We'll just be about there in time to pick them up. I'll ease her off now."

The Silver Spray had been almost leaping the surface, her prow raised, and giant waves foaming up on either side as she tore towards the sailing-boat. But now Bernard Glyn slowed down, at the same time sending the strident notes of the Klaxon echoing across the tumbling waters.

This time, Grundy—they could see him plainly now—stood up in the lurching boat, and glanced behind him.

"Ahoy!" bawled Glyn. "Let that sheet go, Grundy, you born idiot! You'll be swamped in a sec. Are you potty?"

The juniors saw Grundy's rugged, heated face frown, and it was plain he had not recognised them.

"You go and eat coke, you cheeky outsiders!" he bawled back. "Don't you know the rule at sea—a dashed motor-boat gives way to sailing-craft, you blockheads! Sheer off!"

"What?"
 "Sheer off!" bawled George Alfred wrathfully. "What the thump are you boatload of lubbers barging in for? Take your rotten old tub away, blow you!"

"Grundy, you ass—" began Tom Merry.

"Sheer off! What in thunder are you hanging about for?"
 "To pick you up when you capsize, of course!" shouted Glyn. "Buck up and get it over, Grundy!"

"Eh? Great pip!" they heard Grundy exclaim. "Those chaps know me."

"Can't you see it's Glyn's crowd?" yelled Wilkins, his voice showing his alarm and exasperation. "Why don't you do as they tell you, you born idiot? Let that sheet go!"

"Rot! Think I don't know how to sail a boat, Wilkins?"
 "Then I'll let it go!" snorted Wilkins; and he jumped up in the wildly careering boat.

Grundy promptly shoved him down again. Next moment what Tom Merry & Co. had expected happened.

A sudden gust of wind came, the boat paid off, and swung round sickeningly; as it did so the boom of the mainsail also swung round, and took Grundy clean amidships, as it were.

Grundy howled and vanished over the side into the tumbling waters.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Stand by, chaps!" bawled Bernard Glyn.

To the juniors the situation was serious now. They knew Grundy was no swimmer—despite his claims in that direction

and with such a sea running they realised he had little chance. And in the lurching, tossing boat Wilkins and Gunn were too flustered and shaken to help their chum.

But Wilkins did his best by jumping up again, with the obvious intention of letting go the sheet, and stopping the boat's wild progress.

He had no need, however, for even as he rose, swaying, the mast was unstepped by the tearing gusts, and disappeared over the side, taking the sail with it.

"Cut away your gear and ride to it, you lubbers!" bawled Captain Cragg, alive to matters for once. "And get some o' that water out! Look lively, or you'll be swamped!"

"We'll see to Grundy!" yelled Tom Merry.

Both the dazed juniors in the sailing-boat seemed to understand, and they set to work with a will, hacking with their knives at the ropes of the mast and sail which dragged alongside, pounding and all but capsizing the small boat.

It was soon done, and as the gear floated away Wilkins grabbed a can and started to bail water madly, while Gunn grabbed the oars.

By this time the motor-boat was losing way, her engine shut off, and suddenly Blake gave a yell:

"There he is!"

Scarcely a dozen yards away was Grundy, struggling madly in the tumbling sea. In a trice Tom Merry had jumped up on the cabin top, a lifebuoy ready in his hands.

"Look out, Grundy!"

With a mighty heave, Tom Merry sent the lifebuoy whizzing towards the struggling figure in the water. It dropped with a splash, and Tom's aim was true. It fell within a yard of Grundy, and the next moment the burly Shell fellow had his arms over it.

"Hold fast, Grundy!" bawled Tom. "Now, chaps, haul him in!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Grundy, spluttering and gasping, was hauled towards the motor-cruiser, and, leaning over the rail, Blake, D'Arcy, and Digby got a grip of him—Blake by his hair, and the others by his clothing.

Manners and Lowther came to their aid, and together both Grundy and the lifebuoy were hauled aboard.

They dropped Grundy on the grating, and he sat there gasping and puffing hoarsely, water streaming from his drenched form.

"He's all right," said Glyn, with a chuckle. "Now what about those other chaps? They'd better come aboard us, too."

"Much better," agreed Tom.

Leaving the hapless Grundy to his own devices, the juniors gave their attention to the boat which was now some distance away. But it was riding easily now, and Wilkins and Gunn seemed to have the boat under good control.

Glyn started the engine again, and Cragg brought the Silver Spray about with her "eye" to the wind, and she forged down on the smaller craft with gradually diminishing way on her.

"You'd better come aboard us, Wilky!" yelled Tom Merry. "Get ready to jump for it!"

Wilkins and Gunn nodded, and they stood ready as the motor-boat ran alongside, and Blake made a cast with his boat-hook for the gunwale.

His grip held firm, and Tom Merry flung a rope to Wilkins.

"Make it fast and jump for it!" he called.

"Oh, good!"

Wilkins took the rope forward, and made it fast to the ring in the prow, and while he did so Gunn made a jump and was hauled over the rail of the motor-boat by willing hands. The next moment Wilkins had followed.

Blake shoved the boat off and released it, whilst Wilkins flopped down in the aft cockpit breathless and panting.

"Thanks, you fellows!" he panted. "Great pip! You saved our bacon that time! If you hadn't come along just then we should have been drowned by this—this raving chump!"

"Hear, hear!" echoed Gunn breathlessly. "That—that born idiot ought to be under restraint!"

"Eh? What's that, Gunny?"

It was Grundy. He was still sitting gasping on the grating, and up to now had taken no interest in the proceedings. But on hearing that from his chums he sat up straight and took notice.

"What's that, Gunny?" gasped Grundy, glaring at his chums. "If you cheeky cads mean me—"

"Of course we mean you!" articulated Wilkins wrathfully. "You aren't fit to be in charge of a blessed walnut-shell with a matchstick in it for a mast! If it hadn't been for these chaps coming along just then we should all have been drowned!"

Grundy stared speechless at his chum for a moment, and then he almost foamed at the mouth.

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"Well!" he said. "Well—well, I'm hanged! You—you have the cheek to say that after what's happened, Wilky?"

"Of course! You ought to have been left to drown, you dangerous dummy!" hooted Wilkins. "I'm fed-up to the neck with you, Grundy!"

"Same here!" snorted Gunn. "If these chaps hadn't saved us—"

"Saved us?" spluttered Grundy. "Well, if that isn't the limit! You—you'll be saying they saved my life next!"

"Well, didn't we?" ejaculated Manners.

"Saved me? Great pip!" gasped Grundy. "Why, you jolly nearly drowned the lot of us, you blundering dummies!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you hadn't chipped in like you did," roared Grundy furiously, "we should have been all right! I had the situation well in hand—didn't I say so? I knew exactly what I was doing. Then you came blundering along and made me get knocked overboard, you burbling, dangerous maniacs!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Gwundy—"

"Jolly nearly drowned me!" bellowed Grundy, glowering up at the grinning juniors. "You might have done it purposely, you clumsy cads! Oh, you—you—you—"

Words seemed to fail Grundy.

"Well, my hat!" remarked Lowther. "There's gratitude for you! We ought to have left him to drown!"

"Drown! Who was drowning?" bawled Grundy. "I should have swum after the boat and got aboard again in time to save the situation if you raving lunatics hadn't chipped in. I could easily have swum ashore for that matter."

"Then we ought not to have pulled you out?" exclaimed Lowther, in astonishment.

"Of course not! I was all right—right as rain!"

"Then I suggest we pitch Grundy in again," said Lowther. "He'll have nothing to grumble about then. In with him, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All hands to the job, chaps!"

There was a rush of juniors towards Grundy, and Grundy howled as several pairs of hands were laid upon him. He seemed to change his mind suddenly.

"Here, leggo!" he roared furiously. "You dare! Why, I'll mop up the deck with the lot of you!"

With that Grundy jumped up, and started to hit out right and left, panting and exhausted as he was. Several chuckles changed abruptly to howls as his wildly waving fists got home.

But against six or seven juniors even the mighty Grundy had little chance, and he was grabbed on all sides and bumped heavily down on the grating again. He was bumped not only once, but many times and oft—to take the fight out of him, as Tom Merry suggested.

"There!" gasped Tom as Grundy sat on the wet grating and groaned and panted huskily. "Perhaps that will make you behave yourself, old top! Any more trouble and you'll be bumped again like that!"

"Grooogoh! Ow-wow—yow! Oh, crikey!"

That was all Grundy was able to say. And there was no further trouble for some time after that. The burly Shell fellow had had enough, and his spirit was chastened for the time being. For some moments he sat, getting his wind back again, and then he crawled to his feet and started to squeeze the water from his drenched garments. But beyond glowering and fuming, Grundy did nothing and said nothing to cause further trouble. Blake had already hitched the rope to the aft rail of the Silver Spray, and the little boat, save for the lost mast and gear, seemed none the worse. She rode the waves well enough as the big motor-boat towed her into Sandbeach Bay, where all was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 4.

Gussy Blunders!

"LOOKS a decent little show!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

It certainly was a nice place, Tom Merry & Co. were agreed upon that, and they gazed with interest at the little hamlet of Sandbeach as the Silver Spray brought them nearer to it.

It was quite a tiny hamlet—a mere cluster of straggling cottages and houses in a hollow in the chalk downs. Along the front stretched a low sea-wall nearly the whole way—but not quite! Towards the end it broke off where the golden sands sloped up to a hedge, and beyond this hedge was a garden, through the trees of which showed the red roof of a fairly large house—about the only big house in the place, it seemed. Beyond this, and alongside, the cliffs and downs sloped steeply. And in front was a small jetty, alongside which was moored a small motor-boat—evidently belonging to the big house.

"Jolly nice little place," went on Tom Merry. "I wouldn't mind living at that house, and owning that little motor-boat. You've chosen a decent show for the hoiks, Wilky."

"Grundy chose it," grinned Gunn, "and it would be A1 here if it wasn't for Grundy."

"Blessed if I know how you chaps stand that awful idiot!" remarked Blake.

"Oh, we do get frightfully fed-up with him at times—most times," said Wilkins. "But—but, well, he's not such a bad sort, really," he added loyally. "He's jolly good-natured, you know."

"If you let him have his head, he's all right—sometimes," remarked Cuthbert Gunn, shaking his head. "He'll soon get over this little rumpus. You chaps thinking of staying here?"

Tom Merry shook his head. "Only for dinner," he said, almost regretfully. "The fact is we've run clean out of grub—that fat burglar, Trimble raided the larder and about cleaned us out of most things. We're just going to have a feed and then get on again. I wouldn't mind staying here longer, though."

"I wish we jolly well could," growled Herries, whose face was showing a little more colour now, "until this bit of a blow is over, at all events. I wasn't feeling sea-sick, of course, only—"

"Only you were!" grinned Lowther.

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, it's not a bad idea," said Glyn, wiping a smudgy, oily face, with a still more smudgy and oily hand. "What about staying here over the night, chaps?"

"Good wheeze!"

"Yaas, wathah! A wippin' place for bathin', deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Nice and bwright and peaceful, you know. Where is your camp, Wilky?"

"Well, it should be over there—on that patch of gorse between the cliff and the garden of that big house," grinned Wilkins. "But—"

"Great pip! You talk as if you expected it to walk away, or blow away!" chuckled Lowther.

"Well, I've just been wondering if anything can have happened to it," said Wilkins, glancing at Gunn. "The fact is we haven't had such a peaceful time here as you might think."

"Things are never peaceful where Grundy is," grinned Manners.

"It isn't Grundy's fault this time though," said Gunn. "We had a fearful rumpus just after we camped, last night. There's a crusty old military johnny living at that house, and he objected to our camping there—pitched us out, in fact."

"Didn't you ask permission to camp?" asked Blake.

"That's the rotten part of it," grunted Wilkins. "The land is common land, and doesn't belong to the old chap at all. Only he objected to us camping alongside his blessed orchard—the crusty old hunks. He ordered us to leave, and—well, you know what Grundy is, he refused."

"Well, I don't blame him!" growled Herries. "Why should you shift if it's common land? I should have told him to go and chop sticks!"

"That's what Grundy did—only more so," grinned Gunn.

"Then the old chap's nephew and some of his pals turned up. They were public school chaps, but they were smoky cads and supercilious, swanky blighters. Anyway, there was trouble, and Grundy gave the old chap's nephew a hiding, and between us we pitched all four of them out of the camp on their necks."

"Pai Jove! But—"

"That didn't end it, though," said Wilky ruefully. "They came along afterwards with a couple of gardeners and a hose-pipe, and—well, we had to clear."

"Phew! What a thundering shame!" grunted Blake. "And where are you camped now, though? I thought you said—"

"That's where Grundy comes in," grinned Wilkins. "We wanted to bite the bullet for the sake of peace, but Grundy wouldn't; he vowed he'd camp there and nowhere else. He insisted on our going back there, and after dark we did, and pitched the dashed tents again. And we've seen nothing of the cads since."

"But we're wondering if they've touched our camp while we've been out this afternoon," said Gunn, staring hard, shorewards. "I shouldn't be surprised—Hallo! I believe that's the old buffer on the jetty now."

Bernard Glyn chuckled as he gazed at the figure of an old gentleman standing on the jetty staring out towards their boat.

"Looks a crusty old merchant," he remarked. "Well, this settles it, chaps; I wasn't really keen to stay here longer, because I thought it would be too deadly dull for words. But if there looks like being some fun, I'm on the job.

Besides, it's up to us to help other St. Jim's chaps to stand up for their rights."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"We'll stay here a bit and see them through the trouble, anyway, I vote," murmured Glyn. "Hallo, the old chap looks waxy; I suppose he objects to us sailing on his sea."

"I think as 'ow we'd better give the jetty a miss, Master Glyn," observed Captain Cragg, shaking his head. "We don't want no trouble, and it looks to me as if that there jetty belongs to the house there."

"Rot!"

"We can drop anchor, and go ashore in the dinghy, Master Glyn."

"Why should we?" demanded Glyn, his eyes gleaming. "Does that jetty belong to the old hunks, Wilky?"

"Blessed if I know," said Wilkins. "I don't see why it should, though. In any case, Colonel Bolter—that's the old blighter's name—has only taken the house for the summer; it isn't his own property."

"But he's the tenant," murmured Tom Merry. "Still, I vote we chance it, chaps."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Silver Spray forged ahead on towards the little jetty, and the juniors "stood by" in readiness. As there

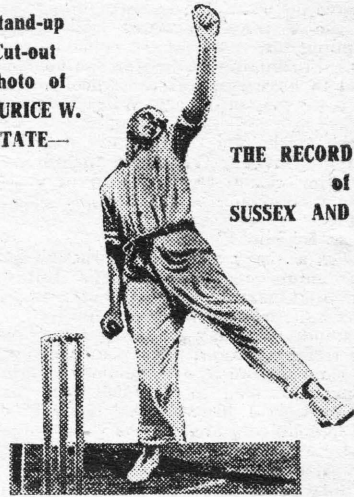
GIVEN FREE WITH THIS
WEEK'S

"MAGNET!"

Stand-up
Cut-out
Photo of
MAURICE W.

TATE—

THE RECORD BREAKER
of
SUSSEX AND ENGLAND.



ADD THIS FINE LIKENESS
TO YOUR SET, CHUMS!

was only one sailor aboard the motor-cruiser the motor-boat boys had their jobs to do, and they did them well, and enjoyed the work. Indeed, as far as the work of the boat went the juniors were the crew while Captain Cragg—who was not fond of any kind of work—was merely a sort of figurehead, as Lowther put it. He seemed to be under the impression that, beyond a "trick" at the wheel, his job consisted of giving the juniors advice—advice they rarely took, needless to say!

He was at the wheel now, and he looked very dubiously at the autocratic-looking military gentleman standing on the end of the jetty. They could all see him now. He was short and stout, and he had a very red face, "beetling" eyebrows of iron-grey, and fierce-looking whiskers of a like shade of colour and texture.

"Jove! What a dear old fire-eater!" murmured Lowther. "What a fierce-looking old warrior!"

"Hi, hi! You there—"

It was Colonel Bolter, and he was bawling at the motor-boat crew and shaking his walking stick at them.

"Aho-y!" bawled back Bernard Glyn. "What's the matter?"

"Matter!" bellowed Colonel Bolter. "I want to know where you think you are bringing that confounded motor-boat? Don't you dare to attempt to land on this jetty, my lads."

"Why? Is it yours, sir?" called Glyn.

"No; but allow me to tell you my—"

"Then we're landing!" said Bernard Glyn coolly. "Stand by there, fore and aft!" he went on. "Gussy, get that rope ashore—smartly now!"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, ay, ay, sir!" corrected Arthur Augustus, in true nautical style. "Stand clear there, sir!"

Arthur Augustus threw the coil of rope in true nautical style—at least, he attempted to do so. Unfortunately his aim was not true.

Instead of encircling the "mushroom" on the jetty, the coil of rope dropped round the head and shoulders of Colonel Bolter—greatly to the astonishment of both the colonel and Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Yaroooogh!"

Crash!

"Yoooooop!"

It all happened in a flash.

Even as the coil was falling, Arthur Augustus saw the danger, and dragged back hard and strong on the rope. Unfortunately—very unfortunately—he was just a trifle too late, and his drag came just as the coil encircled the colonel's neck.

The result was disastrous.

The hard and strong tug dragged Colonel Bolter clean off the edge of the jetty, to the accompaniment of shouts of alarm and a fierce bellow.

Fortunately the Silver Spray was still moving, and, instead of dropping into the sea, the colonel dropped into the motor-boat. Fortunately, also—for the colonel—Weary Willy happened to have just left the wheel and moved to the side, and it was upon Weary Willy that the colonel fell.

Then came the crash, and the colonel's wild bellow was followed instantly by Weary Willy's smothered howl.

The next instant both were mixed up in a struggling, yelling heap on the grating of the cockpit.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gussy, you awful idiot!"

The colonel was a heavy weight, and though he had not fallen far, the juniors trembled for him. But they need not have done so. Certainly Colonel Bolter was hurt, but he was not hurt half so much as Weary Willy.

That luckless individual lay on the grating and gasped and panted as if for a wager, with nearly every scrap of breath pounded out of him by the colonel's weight.

But the colonel scrambled up almost at once, his features scarlet with wrath, and his whiskers fairly bristled with rage. He was undoubtedly angry if he wasn't much hurt.

"Scoundrels! Assassins!" he bellowed. "That was a deliberate assault, and—"

"Bai Jove! My deah, deah sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus, stepping forward with the intention of offering a most deep and sincere apology. "Pway allow me to explain this most unfortunate— Oh, bai— Yooooop!"

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Arthur Augustus flew for his life as the irate colonel snatched up his stick, which had also fallen into the boat, and made a blind rush at the junior. Before he had reached the cabin top, the stick caught the luckless Arthur Augustus four most fearful cracks.

It was the turn of Gussy to howl, and he did howl, and flew like the wind along the cabin top.

With surprising agility for his age and figure, the colonel leaped after him and went in pursuit.

Arthur Augustus leaped down into the forward cockpit, and then up on top of the curved fo'c'sle head. Fortunately the hatchway of the fo'c'sle happened to have been opened by Gussy himself only a few minutes before, and he hurled himself down this. Next moment the hatch slammed down.

"Gad!" roared the colonel. "I have you now, you rascal!"

But Colonel Bolter was wrong there, for as he tore at the hatch, he found it was locked on the inside—Arthur Augustus had seen to that.

"Now, look out!" murmured Lowther. "Here he comes!"

The juniors stood ready as the enraged colonel strode back across the cabin top. He was panting like a war-horse, and his eyes glittered at the juniors. But he made no attempt to attack them.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 966.

"You—you shall suffer for this, my fine fellows!" he articulated in a splutter. "Begad! Lassoed like—like a confounded animal by a confounded young jackanapes!"

"It—it was an accident, sir!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Accident be hanged!" roared the colonel. "It was a deliberate assault, begad!"

"I'm sure it was not, sir!" said Tom calmly. "Gussy had one eye on you and one on the mushroom, and that's how he came to throw the rope—"

"Rubbish! You are a crowd of insolent hooligans, begad!" bellowed Colonel Bolter. "I warned you—I ordered you not to approach or land on this jetty."

"You said it didn't belong to you, sir!"

"I did not mean that I had no power to order trespassers away," roared the irate old gentleman. "This jetty belongs to the house, sir—the house I have taken furnished for the summer. I am the tenant and as such I refused you permission to land here. You ignored my order not to land, you still approached, and, not content with that you have actually assaulted me and caused me grievous injury."

"It was an accident, sir, and we thought—"

"It was not an accident!" roared the colonel furiously. "And the young scoundrel responsible shall suffer dearly for it. I have a very good mind to lay my stick about the lot of you, begad!"

"I'd advise you jolly well not to, anyway," growled a voice. "You start and you'll jolly well see, old nut!"

It was George Alfred Grundy. That worthy had been sulking until now on the top of the cabin, but at sight of the old colonel Grundy's sulkiness had fled. Moreover, the hot sun was warming his drenched clothes, and he was feeling much better. Grundy forgot his new feud with Tom Merry & Co. at the remembrance of his older feud with Colonel Bolter.

"What—what— Ha!" The colonel looked round at Grundy, and then his eyes gleamed as he recognised him. "Ha! I remember you, you young scoundrel!" he snorted. "You are one of the three young villains who dared to camp near my house last night."

"You've hit it," said Grundy. "We've camped there, and we're stopping there, old nut!"

"You—you insolent young rascal!"

"Chuck the old rotter off the boat!" snorted Grundy. "He got us chucked off land that didn't belong to him. Why don't you chuck him off your dashed boat? Don't stand his silly gas! He's a trespasser, ain't he? Chuck him into the sea!"

"Grundy, you ass—" began Tom Merry.

"Good gad! You—you dare to talk to me like that—to threaten to throw me into the sea! Why, I—I—I—" The colonel spluttered and choked, seeming on the verge of a volcanic eruption.

"Why not?" went on Grundy, glowering ferociously at the colonel. "Chuck the old boulder in—teach him a dashed lesson! Let him see he doesn't own the earth and the sea as well!"

"Good wheeze!" grinned Lowther. "We're about ten to one. Why not chuck the old gent into the sea—trespassing on our boat like this. Why not— Hallo, he's going!"

The colonel was going.

Lowther was only joking, of course; but apparently the colonel took him seriously. Gallant old warrior as he possibly was, he did not wish to be "chucked" into the sea.

He scrambled up on to the jetty with undignified haste, and then he turned and shook his fist furiously at the grinning juniors.

"You hear me?" he roared. "You shall suffer dearly for this! I will put the police on your track—"

"Go and eat coke!" bawled Grundy. "Think we care—"

He caught up a chunk of oily waste, apparently with the intention of shying it at the old gentleman. Tom Merry snatched it from him.

"None of that, Grundy!" he laughed. "Get that engine going, Glyn, and let's get out of this before there's more trouble!"

"Why should we?" snorted Glyn. "The old—"

"Because we've no right to land here, of course!" grinned Tom. "He's the tenant of the property, and we'll only put ourselves in the wrong by staying. Let's clear."

"Oh, all right!"

Glyn started the engine. With obvious relief Weary Willy—who had recovered now—took the wheel, and the Silver Spray backed away from the jetty. Colonel Bolter watched it go with fery eyes.

"Good-bye-ee!" called Monty Lowther.

He kissed his hand affectionately to the colonel. The colonel shook his stick in answer, and then he stumped away along the jetty. As he did so the fo'c'sle hatch rose, and the head of Arthur Augustus popped out cautiously.

He blinked round carefully, and then when he saw that the colonel had gone, Arthur Augustus scrambled out on deck.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped thankfully. "Has that feahful wuffian gone, deah boys?"

"Gone, but not forgotten!" said Lowther. "You'll see him again, though, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! I twust not, deah boy!"

But Arthur Augustus was doomed to be disappointed. The motor-boat boys were destined to see and hear more of Colonel Bolter.

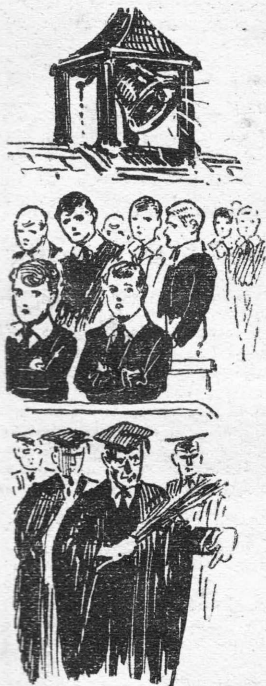
CHAPTER 5.

Gussy Insists!

"YOU fellows thinking of staying here long?"

George Alfred Grundy asked the question.

Though he still looked very much like a half-drowned rat, the great man of the Shell at St. Jim's seemed to have quite got over his wrath. Indeed,



CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE.

No. 7.—A PUBLIC FLOGGING.

*Loud rings the harsh assembly bell
Upon this gloomy morning;
And on our ears its solemn knell
Sounds like a tragic warning.
Then rank by rank, and file by file,
We flock into our places;
The innocent may jest or smile—
Others show startled faces!*

*The Head upon the platform stands
In majesty compelling;
The dreaded birch is in his hands
(Soon we shall hear the yelling!)
Behind him, in a stern-faced row,
The masters take their station;
Pity the scamps who undergo
The coming castigation!*

*"Come forward, Mellish, Racke,
and Crooke!"
The voice booms forth like thunder;
The Head bestows a piercing look—
What have they done? we wonder.
They stumble forward, one by one,
Their steps are slow and laggard;
To face a flogging is no fun,
Their cheeks are pale and haggard.*

"Oh!"
After what had taken place, the juniors were quite overcome by Grundy's generosity. Grundy's next words made the matter plain, however.
"But you can't leave this place for a day or two," said Grundy firmly. "I've been thinking things over, and I've decided that you fellows can't go—I shall want you, see?"
"S-shall you?"
"Yes. It's just struck me that you chaps will be jolly useful, in some ways, in dealing with those rotters!" said Grundy. "You see, it's like this. As the matter stands they're a bit too much for us—even with me. The blessed colonel's nephew is a rotten funk, and so is Ponsoby and his pals, too. But—"
"Ponsoby!" echoed Tom Merry. "I know that name."
"Oh, you'll know the cads all right!" grunted Grundy, his lip curling. "They come from Highcliffe School, near Greyfriars, in Kent. I've seen the cads when we've been over there for footer and cricket matches. I knew them at once, though I'd never seen the colonel's swanky young pup before. Anyway, I could handle all four myself, for



*Taggles, the porter, is at hand
To take them on his shoulders;
The wretched trio must withstand
The gaze of all beholders.
The doctor draws aside his gown,
Braces his stalwart figure;
And then, with quite a fearsome frown,
He wields the birch with vigour!*

*The anguished yells of Aubrey Racke
Provoke no grins or giggles;
The birch descends upon his back,
He writhes and squirms and wriggles.
Then Percy Mellish takes his turn,
He does his share of squealing;
Lastly comes Crooke, from whom we learn
He's not devoid of feeling!*

*The birch is laid aside at last,
The grunts and groans subsiding;
The painful ordeal's overpast,
Save for some words of chiding.
And as they totter from Big Hall,
Racke and his friends are wishing
They could abolish, once for all,
The punishment of swishing!*

The next poem in this splendid series of Cameos of School Life deals with

THE FIGHT IN THE GYM!



his eyes were gleaming eagerly, as he asked Tom Merry & Co. the question. The Silver Spray had anchored about a hundred yards from the jetty, and the juniors were just about to go ashore.

They looked at Grundy and smiled. If George Alfred was ready to bury the hatchet, they were willing enough. Tom Merry & Co. knew that Grundy was a fellow who never bore malice.

"Well," answered Tom Merry, "we only really called to get some grub in, and to get dinner ashore. That fat worm Trimble's about cleared us out of everything worth eating. But—"

"There isn't a shop within a mile or so," grinned Grundy. "So you won't get any dinner yet awhile that way."

There was a dismal chorus from the motor-boat boys. "Oh, dear! And I'm about famished!" groaned Blake.

"But that's all serene," said Grundy, with satisfaction. "I'm going to fix you chaps up with some dinner—we've heaps of grub at the camp. So that's all right. You can come along now and join us."

that matter. But when they bring gardeners and hose-pipes along we're bowled out. See? Now, with you chaps here it'll sort of turn the tables on them."

"Oh! And where do we come in, Grundy?"

"I'll tell you," said Grundy. "You see, the old colonel and those cads are determined we sha'n't camp in that field, and I'm determined we shall. I'm not a fellow to be brow-beaten by that old jesser! We're in the right, and he's in the wrong. He can't get the bobbies on the job, and he knows it. But if his gang is going to be always pitching us out as fast as we get the tent up again, we're never likely to get much time to enjoy ourselves, are we?"

"Hardly!" grinned Tom.

"Well, that's where you fellows will come in," said Grundy. "You're none of you much good in a scrap, I'll admit. But you can keep a sort of guard on the camp. That is, they won't dare to attack the camp while you lot are hanging around. I sha'n't expect you to be always on guard together. But you can take guard, half of you at a time, say. See?"

"While you're away enjoying yourselves, eh?"

"Exactly!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Gwundy, you cheeky—"

"Dry up, Gussy!" said Blake hurriedly. He gave his chum a warning wink. Grundy's cool expectations were certainly the limit. But Blake was hungry. They could tell Grundy what they thought of his idea after they had fed—at his expense. "So—so that's what you've been thinking, Grundy?" he added.

"Yes. But, mind you," said Grundy, "I shall insist upon you fellows doing exactly as I tell you. I don't want you to muck the thing up by doing silly tricks like you did this afternoon. I'm willing to take it that it was just your blundering clumsiness, and that you really thought you were saving my life. I'm going to overlook that. But understand there's to be no more of that sort of thing."

"Very well, Grundy," said Blake humbly, winking at his chums. "We won't do it again, will we, chaps?"

"Nanno!"

"But we can talk things over after dinner," said Blake.

"Let's start for your camp, Grundy. We're jolly hungry."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on, then!"

Grundy dropped down into the dinghy, and there was a chorus of soft chuckles. Tom Merry & Co. were quite willing to let Grundy "run on" until they had had dinner!

"Hallo! Here's Trimble!" remarked Lowther. "He hasn't pegged out, after all, chaps! What a rotten disappointment for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a chorus of chuckles as Baggy Trimble came rolling up. Baggy's face was still white as chalk, and his nose was red and his eyes red-rimmed. Altogether Baggy looked a really woeful sight.

"I say, you fellows—" he began; but Lowther interrupted him.

"You fearful fibber, Trimble!" he said. "You deceiving, spoofing rotter!"

"Eh? What?" gasped the astonished Baggy.

"You heartless spoofer!" said Lowther warmly. "You told us you were going to peg out—that you couldn't last out until we reached Old England. You raised our hopes on high to no purpose! Why the thump haven't you pegged out, disappointing us like this?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble feebly. "You think you're funny, don't you, Lowther? I say, if you chaps are going along to Grundy's camp for dinner I may as well come along, too. I'm just beginning to feel peckish again."

"Bai Jove!"

"If I hadn't had a good feed beforehand I should perhaps have been seasick this morning, like some of you chaps," went on Baggy, shaking his head. "Always lay a good foundation—that's my motto; and I'm never seasick!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's jolly to come across you fellows like this!" said Trimble, nodding affably at Grundy & Co. "Better buck up, Grundy, old fellow, and get to your camp before you catch cold."

And Trimble started as if to drop down into the dinghy to join Grundy & Co. Grundy caught up an oar and gave him a tap over the head with the blade. It was quite a light tap, but it hurt, and Trimble howled.

"Yarrooooooh!"

"Come on, you fat rotter!" snorted Grundy. "You come down into this boat and I'll brain you!"

"Ow! Oh, crumbs! Yow-wow-wow!"

"You stay where you are, you greedy fat thief!" snorted Grundy, brandishing the oar. "If these chaps are asses enough to stand you, I'm not!"

"That's right," agreed Blake. "Trimble's already had enough grub for one day—several days, in fact. You stay behind and look after the boat, Baggy."

"Beasts! Look here, I'm jolly well coming!" howled Trimble.

He started over the rail again. Grundy made a lunge with his oar, and the blade took Trimble in the chest, and he vanished backwards into the aft cockpit with a bump and a wild howl.

Tom Merry and the rest followed Grundy into the boat, and they pushed off. Wilkins and Gunn, with Captain Cragg, had already taken Grundy's sailing boat ashore, and beached it high and dry. And now the rest of the juniors jumped ashore from the dinghy, and drew it up, likewise high and dry.

"What about Cragg?" asked Tom Merry. "He'll want some dinner."

"That's all right," said Bernard Glyn. "He's just asked me if he can take his dinner at the Anchor Inn. It appears that the landlord is a friend of his. I told him he could. I'm hoping that one of these days he'll forget to come back."

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"He seems to have a jolly lot of friends and relations living at pubs!" grunted Herries.

"I noticed that myself," grinned Glyn. "He seems to like his meals in liquid form. Well, let him rip! Come on, chaps!"

The juniors started along the sands, Captain Cragg already having departed towards the "Anchor" to see his "friend," the landlord. As the party came opposite the big house behind the trees Arthur Augustus paused. For some minutes now the swell of the Fourth had been looking very thoughtful and very serious indeed.

"One moment, deah boys!" he said, staring towards the house. "I wewget to have to keep you fellows waitin', but I have a wathah important duty to perform befoah I accompany you. Do you fellows think I look respectable enough to make a call?"

"What the thump—"

"I weally think I had bettah return to the boat and change into Etons and a toppah," went on Arthur Augustus, shaking his head as he looked himself up and down. "This blazah is feahfully wumpled, and this panama has quite lost its shape since you emptied those wotton potatoes into it, Blake, you wotiah!"

"Well, we had to have something to keep the potatoes in," said Blake. "But why this thussness, Gussy? You don't want to dress like a tailor's dummy just to have dinner with Grundy!"

"Bai Jove, my visit to Gwundy's camp has nothin' to do with the mattah, Blake. I have decided to call upon Colonel Bolter, and I must make the call respectfully attired, bai Jove!"

"Great pip!"

The juniors stared at Arthur Augustus as if they imagined he had taken leave of his senses.

"Are you potty?" exclaimed Blake. "You—you're going to call upon that old blighter?"

"Yaas! I pwopose to do so without delay."

"After what's happened?" almost yelled Blake.

"Yaas! I have been thinkin' mattahs ovah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "and I have come to the conclusion that the colonel, atfah all, had vevy good weason to be watty, and to lose his tempah, bai Jove! It must have been a feahful shock to an elderly gentleman of his wipe yeahs to be wopped in like that and dwagged off the jetty, you know! Of course, it was quite an accident—a wewgettable accident. But, nevertheless, I considah that a vevy sincere and humble apology is due to the old gentleman fwom me."

"But—but he'll scalp you, you born idiot!" yelled Blake.

"I do not think so, Blake—and pway do not woah at me; I stwongly object to bein' woahed at," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Howevah, I do not think the colonel will attempt furthah wewisals. I should have apologised before had he given me the opportunity. He will have cooled down by this time, howevah, and will pwobably be amenable to weason. I shall explain the mattah quite weasonably, and shall offah him a fwank apology as fwom one gentleman to another."

"Well, you—you—"

"Pway do not get excited, Blake. I have quite made up my mind to do the wight thing, and I am quite suah the colonel, as a gentleman, will undahstand when he is wewoahed fwom the shock. The only question is," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head again, "whethah I am suitably dwessed to make a call. Do you fellows think I ought to change into Etons?"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I don't think you are at all suitably dressed to make such a call, Gussy," said Lowther.

"You don't think so, Lowthah, deah boy?"

"No. If you're going to call on Colonel Bolter just now I should suggest a suit of armour and a bodyguard armed with machine-guns," said Lowther seriously. "Otherwise you'll need an ambulance to take you to the hospital."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! Pway do not joke ovah such a sewious mattah, Lowthah! Yaas, on wewfection, I weally think I had bettah return to the boat and change into respectable clobbah," said Arthur Augustus. "Will you be good enough to wov me acwoss in the dinghy, Blake?"

"No, I jolly well won't!"

"But, weally, I cannot launch the boat myself!"

"Blow the boat and blow Colonel Bolter!" hooted Blake.

"You fatheaded dummy—"

"That is enough, Blake. I have already said I wewuse to be woared at, and I uttably wewuse to be dissuaded fwom doin' what I considah to be the wight and pwopah thing to do. If you will not wov me acwoss I shall be obliged to call on the colonel as I am!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

And with that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched away.

"Come back!" shrieked Blake.

"Gussy, you ass!" called Tom Merry in great alarm. But Arthur Augustus was gone. He walked across the little sandy lane, and vanished through the gateway of the big house, his elegant form swallowed up by the thick foliage of the drive.

"Well, the—the—" Words failed Jack Blake.

"Better fetch the awful ass back," said Tom Merry.

"Rot!" said Grundy, with a snort. "Let him rip!"

"Yes, let him rip!" agreed Blake wrathfully. "Isn't that just like Gussy, now? But it's no good going after him. Wild horses wouldn't drag him back once he's made up that thing he calls a mind."

"But—"

"Let him go!" snapped Blake. "Colonel Bolter asked for trouble, and got it. Now Gussy's asking for it himself. Let the ass have it—all to himself. Come on! I'm hungry!"

And Blake marched after Grundy & Co. along the sandy lane. Tom Merry and the rest chuckled and followed. If Arthur Augustus preferred trouble to dinner, then that was his own look-out.

CHAPTER 6.
The Wreckers!

COLONEL BOLTER'S house and the orchard alongside were screened from the sandy lane by a high hedge. The juniors were walking past this when Wilkins gave an exclamation and pointed out across the beach.

"Hallo! Look what the giddy sea's washed up!" he remarked. "Looks like wreckage."

"Looks more like a sail and fishing gear, or something like that," grunted Grundy. "I expect some fisherman's dumped it there. I wonder— Mum-my hat!"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Gunn. "The—the camp!"

"Where is it?" gasped Wilkins. "Great Scott! It's those cads! Look!"

"What's the matter?" asked Tom Merry.

The juniors stopped. They had passed the orchard now, and had reached a gap in the sparse hedge, showing a glimpse of gorse-covered common stretching up to the cliff-top and over the rolling downs.

"Matter!" gasped Wilkins, snorting. "Our camp was over there—just where those four cads are standing now. They must have shifted it again, the rotters! Where— Oh, my hat! That stuff over on the beach must be our tent and gear! They've dumped it there, the brutes!"

"That's it!" grunted Grundy. "Oh, very well! I'll show 'em what's what! I—I'll—"

He was about to barge through the gap, when Tom Merry hauled him back.

"Hold on!" he said quickly. "If you rush for them they'll only bolt and get clear away. Let's see what the beauties are up to first."

"That's the ticket!" agreed Blake, his eyes gleaming. "This needs strategy, old bean! Hold on!"

Grundy breathed hard, but he saw the wisdom of Tom's suggestion. The tent was undoubtedly gone from the site, but he could see various pots and pans, and articles of camp furniture still there.

Four elegantly-clad youths were there also. They appeared to be tethering a big brindled bulldog to a stake which two of the four were busily driving into the ground on the site.

"Oh, the awful cads!" breathed Gunn. "I see the wheeze now! They chuckled our tent and things on the beach, and they've stuck that dashed dog there to keep us away."

"Will it?" growled Grundy ferociously. "We'll jolly well see about that! Why, I'll—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry warningly again. "Here they come, I fancy. We'll collar them nicely as they come through."

"Oh, good!"

As Tom spoke the four finished their task, and, leaving the dog wandering aimlessly at the end of a long rope, they started to pick up camp-stools, and pots and pans, and what other of Grundy Co.'s belongings they could carry. Then they started for the gap where the St. Jim's juniors were hiding, all four laughing uproariously.

"They think it funny!" breathed Grundy. "We'll see about that! I'm glad you stopped us rushing 'em, Merry. It's not often you show sense, but you did that time."

"Thanks!" murmured Tom. "What a pity you never show any at all, old fellow!"

"Look here, if that's meant for cheek—"

"Not at all," said Tom hurriedly. "Here they come! I fancy I know three of them all right, Grundy. The chap with the long nose and the sneer is Ponsoby, and the other two Highlife chaps are Gadsby and Vavasour—rotters all three of them. I've seen them at Highlife."

"Shush!" hissed Blake. "Here they are!"

Footsteps sounded, and then Ponsoby's supercilious drawl was heard.

"What about that jolly old whitewash in the toolshed, Algy?" he was saying. "What those dashed scrubby St. Jim's cads need is something more than just pitching their beastly rubbish on the beach, you know. Why not swamp the whole bally lot with whitewash, old bean?"

"Good wheeze!" giggled Vavasour. "Oh, absolutely!"

"Pity the tide's going out," chimed in Gadsby. "Instead of coming in. It would have washed the whole pile of rubbish away—eh?"

"Yaas," came the voice of Algy. "But do be quick, deah boys; it's too much fag to bothab about anythin' else. We ought to have got the gardeners to do this, y'know. I'm afraid of the beastly ruffians comin' back and catching us. I— Yow-oo!"

Algy's piping treble ended in a startled yelp as he stepped through the gap and sighted the St. Jim's fellows. His yelp was followed by a still louder yelp as Grundy's fist met Algy's long nose.

"Yarroooooop!"

Crash! Clatter, clatter! Crash!

There followed the clang and clatter of falling camp utensils.

"Go for 'em!" roared Grundy.

"What-ho!"

"Oh, look out!" yelled Ponsoby.

He came next after Algy, having grasped the situation too late to stop himself, and the next second Grundy's useful fist met his nose also. Ponsoby collapsed on top of the howling Algy with a roar.

Gadsby and Vavasour were just behind him, and they dropped the things they were carrying and turned to bolt...

But Tom Merry & Co. were after them in a flash. Wilkins sprang on Ponsoby, and held him down, whilst Grundy jumped on Algy. In half a dozen steps Tom Merry was through the gap and had caught up the flying Gadsby, and brought him crashing down, while Blake and Herries went in chase of Vavasour.

They caught him up after a fifty yards chase, and then both Gadsby and Vavasour gave in as the rest of the juniors dashed up.

"Bring 'em along here!" bawled Grundy, banging Algy's nose into the earth. "We'll teach the cads to wreck our camp!"

"Yoooooop!" wailed Algy. "Oh, you ruffian! I'll tell my uncle, and he'll— Yooop!"

Algy yelped again as Grundy rammed his face into the turf again. Grundy was never very gentle in his methods.

Wilkins chuckled as he sat astride the scowling Ponsoby. "Caught in the act!" he chuckled. "Hallo, here come the rest!"

Just then Tom Merry & Co. returned, escorting the scowling and apprehensive Gadsby and Vavasour.

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"Quite a happy meeting!" grinned Monty Lowther. "What's dear old Algy digging for with his nose—worms?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Smash our camp up, would they?" snorted Grundy. "I'll show them! Get up, you rotter! I'm going to give you a thundering good hiding each to be going on with!"

"Oh crumbs! Easy on, Grundy!" grinned Tom Merry. "We don't want four inquests on our hands. Just roll 'em in the sand and let the rotters go!"

"That's it," agreed Blake, with a sniff. "They're not worth the trouble of a licking. Besides, I'm hungry."

"Same here!" said Wilkins. "We've had nothing since breakfast. Roll the bounders in the sand, and let's get on with the job."

"But look here—" growled Grundy.

Grundy was not listened to, however. Grundy was thirsting for the enemies' gore, but the rest were only hungering for dinner. Despite their frantic struggles, Algy & Co. were dragged down to the water's edge, and there they were rolled in the sand, left wet by the receding tide.

With Algy wailing that he would tell his uncle, and with the fuming Ponsonby hissing out savage threats of vengeance, the four were rolled over and over in the wet sand, and wet sand was crammed into their mouths and down the backs of their necks.

When Tom Merry & Co. had done with them they looked sights, covered as they were with wet sand from head to foot. And just as the juniors had finished the task there sounded the beat of hoofs on the sands, and a burly youth came along leading four saddled donkeys.

He halted the donkeys, and grinned at the juniors with their groaning prisoners.

"Donkey rides, sirs?" he asked. "Ere, y'are, sirs! Threepence a time to end of beach, young gents!"

"Good wheeze!" chuckled Tom Merry. "We don't want a ride, but we'll stand these merchants one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry spoke to the donkey-boy, and handed him some money, and the youth grinned and nodded. Business was slack that day, and he was only too glad of a bit of custom—even in such curious circumstances. He even produced some cord, and helped to tie Algy & Co. on to the donkeys.

It was not an easy task, for Algy & Co. almost fainted at the very thought of what was proposed. They were very lofty and supercilious youths, and "donkey-rides" were not in their line at all.

But they had to have them for all that. For an extra twopence each the donkey-boy produced four paper, coloured caps, which he was in the habit of selling to the children, and after Algy & Co. had been tied on the donkeys, each of them facing the donkey's tail, with feet and wrists tied, these hats were jammed on their heads. Then the donkey-boy started the animals, amid a roar of laughter from the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The donkeys ambled off along the sands, with their yelling and unwilling riders clinging on as best they could, and the grinning donkey-boy running alongside.

"Well, that should teach the rotters a lesson!" chuckled Tom Merry, as the laughing juniors watched Algy & Co. disappear along the beach. "There's a little crowd of people at the far end of the beach, and they'll be quite entertained."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, what about dinner, Grundy?" said Tom. "It looks as if you will have to camp on the beach after this. That dashed bulldog will take some shifting."

"I'll jolly soon deal with him," said Grundy. "I've never known a dog that wouldn't take to me. You fellows stay here and watch."

"Oh, all right!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

The grinning juniors watched as Grundy marched across the ground towards the bulldog. It was a very ugly beast, and for some minutes now it had been giving vent to blood-curdling growls and straining to get free—obviously desiring to get into touch with the juniors.

"Now for some fun!" murmured Lowther. "I fancy that bulldog will take to Grundy all right. Don't you fellows think so?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

Tom Merry looked rather alarmed, however. On sighting the great George Alfred approaching him, the dog had backed a few paces, growling, and showing two ugly rows of sharp teeth. It was a sight that would have frightened any ordinary fellow. But Grundy was not an ordinary fellow—a fact he always prided himself upon.

"All serene, you fellows!" he called over his shoulder. "I fancy I've got him fixed. You watch."

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Apparently George Alfred was going to rely upon the power of the human eye.

"Come back, you silly ass!" called Tom Merry. "He'll chew you up!"

"Rot! You dry up, Tom Merry!" said Grundy.

He walked briskly up to the dog with outstretched hand. Grundy had heard somewhere that it was never wise to let animals see that one was afraid of them. Boldness was the thing!

"Good dog!" he called affectionately. "Dear old boy! Fine old— Oh, you brute!"

"Gr-r-r-rrrr!"

Snap!

In the nick of time Grundy snatched his hand away and leaped backwards. Then he turned to bolt, and as he did so the horrid growling ended in a snap, followed instantly by the sound of tearing cloth and a wild howl from Grundy.

"Yarroooooop!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy came flying back minus a fair-sized piece of trouser leg. It was exceedingly lucky for Grundy that the rope was no longer.

"Blessed if you weren't right, after all, Grundy," said Lowther as Grundy panted up. "He did take to you, old chap. I don't think I ever saw a dog take to a chap quicker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared as Grundy faltered, breathless, and examined the damage done. He was looking amazed.

"Oh, the awful brute!" he panted. "Did you fellows see it? Went for me before I had the chance to talk to him. It would have been all right if only the brute would have given me time. But he wouldn't. Oh, crikey! A jolly close shave, by Jove!"

"Going to try again, old chap?" inquired Lowther.

"Rats!" snorted Grundy. "Think I'm idiot enough to try to make friends with a mad dog?"

"Mad dog?" echoed Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat!"

"Of course he's mad!" said Grundy. "I can see that now—it's the sun, I expect. We'll let the brute rip and camp somewhere else."

"We'd better!" grinned Tom Merry. "Though I'm blessed if I can see a place—unless it's the beach. That's the only really flat patch on the heath there. In any case, that brute may chew through his rope at any time."

"Hold on!" said Herries. "Let me try the old chap. He might be Tower's own brother. Blessed if I can see what there is to be afraid of. He looks a dear old chap."

"Don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry. "He looks an awful brute! Let him— Here, come back, you burbling chump!"

But Herries went on quite calmly. Herries was a friend to all dogs, and all dogs soon made friends with him. Yet even Blake looked alarmed. This bulldog certainly did look a most ferocious brute.

The juniors need not have worried, however.

Herries did not approach the dog as Grundy had done—like a bull at a gate. He strolled calmly up and spoke quietly to him.

The bulldog dropped the piece of trouser leg, and cocked one ear at Herries. The junior strolled nearer, and held out a friendly hand. The dog sniffed at it, and then his tail wagged slowly.

"Good old boy!" said Herries. "Here, try one of these."

The dog sniffed a trifle suspiciously at the sweet Herries held out, and then he licked it off Herries' flat hand. He swallowed it, and then he looked up at Herries, his tail wagging furiously.

"All serene," called out Herries cheerfully. "Come on, old boy."

He cut the rope loose with his knife, and led the now friendly bull-dog to the orchard fence some yards away. There was a little wicket gate in the fence, and after fondling the dog for some moments, Herries lifted him over the gate. Then he came back to his chums, grinning.

"Good man, Herries!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, my hat!"

"All serene," grinned Herries. "He's a dear old chap—as tame as old Powser at St. Jim's. He won't trouble us after this. Now what about shoving that tent up again, Grundy?"

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Grundy.

That was all Grundy could say. How a duffer like Herries had worked the trick after the great George Alfred Grundy had failed, was more than the junior could understand. Grundy was looking quite cross and quite dazed.

But all was "serene" now, and amidst chuckles from the rest, Grundy set about the task of making camp again. Tom Merry & Co. worked with a will. The pots and pans were retrieved, and the heap of canvas and tackle on the beach proved to be the tent, and these were carried back to the site.

Luckily, Algy & Co. had not dared to damage anything, and soon the tent was up and all made shipshape. Then the party settled down to a meal of tinned beef and other tinned stuff, washed down with lemonade. It was not an elaborate meal, but it was a meal Tom Merry & Co., at all events, thoroughly enjoyed.

CHAPTER 7.

Trouble for Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY trod gracefully up the gravel-drive of Sea View—the name of the house—and nodded genially to a gardener who was tending a flower-bed. Arthur Augustus, however, was not easy in his mind at all. He knew he was doing the "wight" thing in calling upon Colonel Bolter to apologise, certainly.

Arthur Augustus was a very just and generous youth. Though his shoulders still ached from the chastisement he had received at the hands and stick of Colonel Bolter, Arthur Augustus was willing to forgive that assault.

Colonel Bolter had undoubtedly had good cause to be angry. He was a rather irascible old gentleman, and possibly an unjust and ungenerous old gentleman. None the less it was no joke for an elderly man of his years to be roped in, and dragged off the jetty into the boat. He certainly had good cause to be angry, and Arthur Augustus was ready to forgive and forget, and to offer him a frank and manly apology, as from one gentleman to another.

Yet Arthur Augustus was far from easy in his mind as he walked with dignity up the drive to the house. He was worried because, in his view, he was not suitably dressed to make a call. Only that morning he had changed his clothes, and actually the swell of the Fourth looked very elegant. His blazer was quite nice and clean, and his trousers were nicely creased and spotless, while his panama showed no signs, whatever, of having been used as a receptacle for potatoes.

None the less, even now, Arthur Augustus hesitated, and wondered if he should not try to reach the boat and change into his Etons and best topper.

As he hesitated in sight of the front door, however, he noted that a house-maid, who had been busily polishing the brass knocker was eyeing him inquiringly. So Arthur Augustus decided to make the best of things.

"I wish to see Colonel Bolter, please," he said politely. "Colonel Bolter is resting, sir; but if you will give me your name—?"

"My name is D'Arcy, miss; the colonel, however, is scarcely likely to know it. Will you tell him that I wish to see him on a wathah important mattah?"

"Very well. Please step this way, sir."

Arthur Augustus gracefully removed his hat, and followed the housemaid into the house. She vanished next moment through one of the doors leading from the hall, leaving Arthur Augustus seated upon an oak settee.

She came back in a moment. "Colonel Bolter will see you in a few moments," the housemaid said.

"Thank you vewy much, miss." The housemaid resumed her work, and Arthur Augustus waited a few moments. The few moments became minutes, however; apparently Colonel Bolter was in no hurry to see his visitor—or else he did not like being disturbed in his rest.

Arthur Augustus grew restive as the minutes passed. He rose to his feet and prepared his most gracious smile, however, as a shuffling footstep sounded and Colonel Bolter appeared from one of the rooms.

"Well?" he snapped, giving the junior a rather irritable glare. "What is it? What—why—good gad!"

The colonel suddenly seemed to recognise his visitor. Arthur Augustus felt a sudden qualm as he saw the old gentleman's face change.

His eyes glittered, and his face went almost purple. "What, what!" he gasped. "Good gad! The very fellow! You impudent young rascal!"

It was a bellow, and Arthur Augustus jumped. "My deah, deah sir," he stammered. "Pway, allow me to explain the object of my visit. I have called—"

"You—you daring young scoundrel!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, sir—"

"You—you dare to visit me after your—your abominable assault!" hooted the colonel. "Well, upon my word!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, that wegwettable accident—"

"It was not an accident, but a deliberate assault!" bellowed Colonel Bolter. "And now—now you have had the temerity—the impudence and daring to, come here—"

"Pway, be calm and allow me—"

"Calm! You tell me—"

"Pway, contwol your tempah, sir," went on Arthur Augustus, making matters worse. "If you will remain calm and keep your tempah—"

"Temper! Good gad! You dare to tell me to keep my temper, you young rascal!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Silence! Very well, my boy," went on the colonel, keeping calm as if by a mighty effort. "I will endeavour to keep my temper. Will you be good enough to come this way?"

"Most certainly, sir."

Arthur Augustus was exceedingly relieved, and he followed quite briskly. The colonel's tone was almost calm, though he seemed to be breathing hard. Now the colonel was calm it would be a simple matter to make him see reason. Arthur Augustus prided himself on his tact and judgment, and he fancied he could easily talk the old gentleman round to a better frame of mind. Indeed, Arthur Augustus had a vague hope that with a little tact he would be able to end the feud between Grundy & Co. and the colonel.

The swell of the Fourth felt quite hopeful as he entered the library, and the old gentleman followed him in, closing the door after him, and pointing to a chair.

Arthur Augustus sat down gracefully.

The colonel gave him rather a grim look and rubbed his hands together.

Arthur Augustus gave a slight start as he watched this strange proceeding. Was it possible—

A dreadful suspicion entered the mind of Arthur Augustus and he rose to his feet.

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Now, my friend," remarked the colonel grimly. "I will see if a sound thrashing will teach you better conduct towards your elders, my boy. You asked me to keep calm, and I have endeavoured to do so. I trust you also will keep calm during your well-merited chastisement."

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, and he made a wild leap for the door.

But the old warrior was before him.

With a remarkably agile leap for his age, he reached the door first, and his arm swept round the slim form of Arthur Augustus.

The next moment the old colonel also proved that he was likewise strong for his age.

He fairly whirled the startled Arthur Augustus off his feet, and then he planted him across his knee.

What happened next was really too dreadful for the elegant and dignified Honourable Arthur Augustus.

"Spank, spank, spank, spank!"

"Yoooop! Ow-ow-yow! Oh, bai Jove!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwikey!"

He struggled furiously and desperately as the old soldier's muscular hand rose and fell. It rose often and fell hard and often.

"Spank, spank, spank, spank!"

"Yawooooogh! Oh, help! Stop, you uttah wuffian!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

The colonel stopped at last—only when he was breathless and panting. Then he stood the almost hysterical Arthur Augustus on his feet, and with an iron grasp on his collar, fairly ran him out of the room and into the hall.

There Arthur Augustus strove to make a stand, but it was useless. Before he knew what was happening Arthur Augustus found himself across the hall, and rolling down the entrance steps of Seaview House.

The door slammed, and Arthur Augustus sat up on the gravel gasping. Then he heard a smothered giggle, and scrambled to his feet.

The front door was closed, and the housemaid was standing giggling at him. Gussy flushed to the roots of his hair.

The door slammed, and Arthur Augustus sat up on the gravel gasping. Then he heard a smothered giggle, and scrambled to his feet.

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hair, and, picking up his panama, he jammed it on his head. Then he felt for his eyeglass and jammed that into his eye, and tottered away down the drive.

His first impulse had been to rush back and give the colonel a fearful thrashing despite his years. But the remembrance of the old gentleman's strong grasp had caused him to drop that idea.

He was seething with wrath and humiliation as he tottered down the drive and went out through the gates. As he emerged on the sandy lane, four youths came along. They were very much dishevelled, and they were brushing wet sand from their clothes, and passing remarks that made Arthur Augustus pause and stare.

As he did so, one of the youths sighted him and yelled.

"He's one of the cads! Collar him—quick!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus started as he recognised Ponsonby & Co. Having heard Grundy & Co. mention them, he was ready at once for trouble. His eyes gleamed as Ponsonby's hand grasped his collar.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed through his teeth. "If you do not release me at once I shall be obliged to stwike you!"

"Not much!" grinned Ponsonby. "We're going to give you a bit of what your dashed pals gave us, my pippin. Bring him along away from the house, chaps."

"Oh, absolutely!"

Three pairs of hands—far from friendly hands—fell upon Arthur Augustus. Arthur Augustus promptly hit out, and Ponsonby went down in the sand with a howl of pain. He jumped up in a fury and went to aid his chums who were struggling madly with the wrathful Arthur Augustus—who was not in the mood to be gentle at all.

"Down the cad!" hissed Ponsonby.

It was a brief fight, and a whirling one. Arthur Augustus was a great man with his fists, and he fought stoutly, loftily and disdainfully, ignoring the odds of four to one.

But the odds were there, for all that, unfortunately, and at last Arthur Augustus was down, breathless and panting.

"Bring the cad along!" snarled Ponsonby, mopping his nose. "We'll show him something."

"Is this fellah really one of them?" asked Algy breathlessly.

"Of course! I've seen the chap before, and he must have come with those St. Jim's cads on that motor-cruiser," snapped Ponsonby, his eyes glinting. "Look here. Drag the brute along and duck him."

"Good egg!"

"Oh, absolutely!" chortled Vavasour.

They dragged the struggling Arthur Augustus down the beach to the lapping waves, and then they grabbed and hoisted him, despite his frantic struggles.

"Help!" roared the hapless swell of the Fourth. "Oh, bai Jove! You feahful wuffians! Wescue!"

But no rescue was at hand for the luckless D'Arcy, and the next moment he went whirling through the air, all arms and legs.

Splash!

"Yaroooogh!"

Arthur Augustus vanished in the surf, and the triumphant four howled with laughter as he scrambled out again, drenched and gasping.

He made a furious rush at the chortling Ponsonby & Co. The four grabbed him, and sent him whirling into the sea again.

"Gad! What a scream!" chuckled Ponsonby. "Here he comes again, Algy!"

But Arthur Augustus did not come again—he had had quite enough. It had dawned upon his heroic soul at last that the odds were there, and the moment he was out again he turned and fled along the beach, his shoes squelching as he ran.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Algy & Co.

The "nuts" made no attempt to follow. Ponsonby stopped laughing, and went on mopping his nose.

"Well, that's got a bit of our own back on one of the cads," he said, his face becoming ugly again. "We've got the rest to settle up with now, you fellows. They've rolled us in the dashed sand, and they've made us look fools before the crowd along the beach there. I'm not a fellow to forget things like that!"

"They're too many for us," said Gadsby, shaking his head.

"Are they?" said Ponsonby, his eyes glinting. "We'll see! I fancy—Phew! I've got it, chaps!"

"Well?"

"Their dashed motor-boat," said Ponsonby, glancing at the Silver Spray scarcely a hundred yards from them. "Those cads must have gone on the heath, after all; they're not on the beach, and there's nobody on the boat. Why not cut the dashed boat adrift?"

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"Oh gad!"

His chums stared aghast at Ponsonby.

"Ponsonby!" gasped Algy, his weak mouth opening wide.

"You—silly ass—"

"Too jolly steep!" grunted Gadsby.

"Oh, absolutely!" said Vavasour. "Cut it out, Pon!"

"Will I thump!" breathed Ponsonby, glancing cautiously up and down the beach. "There's not a soul near enough to see us, and it'll be as easy as winking, you funky worms. Come on!"

And Ponsonby started off towards the motor-boat. His chums stared after him a moment, and then they followed slowly. Gadsby and Vavasour, at least, knew that the Highcliffe fellow was capable of any rascality, but even they were startled at Ponsonby's suggestion.

But they followed, none the less, and they helped Ponsonby launch the Silver Spray's dinghy. Beyond that, however, they refused to go.

"You—you silly funks!" sneered Ponsonby. "Well, I'll do it myself, hang you! Here goes!"

Ponsonby sprang into the dinghy, and the next moment was pulling out to the motor-boat.

"Don't do it, Pon, you fool!" called Gadsby, already regretting his aid. "Come back!"

Ponsonby ignored the call, and the next moment he was standing up in the rocking dinghy, hacking at the forward moorings with his knife.

The strands parted at last, and he pulled the dinghy aft, and set to work on the mooring-rope there. He had just started when a fat, startled face appeared over the rail of the motor-boat.

It was Baggy Trimble. The fat junior had been taking a snooze, but the bumping of the dinghy alongside had awakened him.

He looked over just as the forward rope parted under Ponsonby's knife, and Baggy's face went a shade whiter as the boat moved slowly round under the strong drag of the tide.

Even a duffer like Trimble realised what would happen if the aft mooring was cut.

"Oh, you awful rotter!" yelled Baggy. "Help! Stop it!"

He grabbed up a boathook and rushed aft. Ponsonby, his face savage now, hacked away desperately at the rope, furious at being discovered. He had never dreamed that anyone was aboard the boat.

Yet he was in too savage a mood to give up his rascally intention. He hacked away, and just as the last strand parted Baggy Trimble acted.

He swung the boathook round and made a blind swipe at Ponsonby in the dinghy below.

The blow might have brained the rascally junior had it struck his head, but it merely grazed it, and struck Ponsonby on the shoulder.

Ponsonby yelled, and staggered. Then he lost his balance in the wildly rocking dinghy, and the next instant he was over the side.

Splash!

He went sousing under, and as he came up he made a blind grab at the moving dinghy. Luckily for him—for Ponsonby could not swim—he caught the gunwale and hung on desperately.

Both the Silver Spray and the dinghy were moving now, drifting before the strong tide, slowly but surely away from the shore.

"Help!" roared Trimble. "Oh, you awful rotter! Help!" And now Ponsonby, terrified, added his gasping, panting voice to Baggy's. Then he tried to climb into the swaying dinghy. But though he tried again and again it was useless. He desisted at length, fearful of upsetting the dinghy, which was already heeling over dangerously under his weight. With one arm over the side of the drifting boat Ponsonby fairly howled for help, the yellow streak in him coming out with a vengeance now.

Ponsonby had accomplished his rascally intention, but he had good cause to regret that intention now.



The hard and strong the Silver Spray was into the motor-boat.

It was too late for regrets, however. On the shore his chums were standing, stunned at the result of their comrade's rascally action, but too helpless with fright to aid him. Both boats were in the full grip of the tide now, and already the voices of Trimble and Ponsonby were faint to the scared watchers ashore.

Ponsonby had over-reached himself this time with a vengeance.

CHAPTER 8.
Only Just in Time!

"**W**ONDER what's happened to that ass Gussy?" "Great pip!" ejaculated Jack Blake. "I'd forgotten all about him. He should have come back before this."

"Perhaps the colonel's asked him to stay to lunch," suggested Lowther.



Colonel Bolter clean off the edge of the jetty. Fortunately he was caught, and instead of dropping into the sea, the colonel dropped into the arms of Weary Willy. The next moment both were mixed up in a laughing, yelling heap. (See Chapter 4.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of the fierce old warrior asking Arthur Augustus to lunch after what had happened made the juniors roar.

"Better go and see if we can find him," said Blake, getting to his feet, with a yawn. "Thanks for the feed, Grundy!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Here, hold on!" said Grundy, as the motor-boat boys started to make a move. "What about that idea of mine? You fellows have seen now what those cads are. It's up to us as St. Jim's chaps to let 'em see we won't be sat on. Now Wilky and Gunny and I have arranged to go for a picnic to Fury Island this afternoon, and I shall want some of you to stay here and guard the camp. Understand?"

"Oh, quite!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Right!" said Grundy. "Now you can arrange who's to

stay between yourselves—I'll leave that to you chaps. But at least half of you must stop. The rest can come and join in at the picnic, if they like."

"Good!" agreed Tom Merry. "But I've got a still better suggestion, Grundy, you three stay and mind the camp, and we'll go for the picnic. How's that?"

There was a chuckle, and Grundy glared.

"Eh? Don't talk rot!" he snorted. "Haven't I said that we've arranged to go? We've come here for a dashed holiday, not to keep guard on a dashed camp! That's what I want you chaps for."

"Well, you—"
"Now, I don't want any trouble," said Grundy, shaking a warning finger at Blake, who seemed overcome. "I shall expect you to do just as I tell you, and I sha'n't stand any fag cheer if I'm not— Here, what— Yoooop!"

Crash! Lowther gave Grundy a dig in the chest, and as he was seated on an upturned box he overbalanced and went backward with a crash.

Tom Merry & Co. winked cheerfully at the grinning Wiggins and Gunn, and walked off to look for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

They met him just as they emerged through the gap in the hedge, and they almost fell down at sight of him.

Arthur Augustus had just left Ponsonby & Co., and he popped as he sighted his chums.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he panted. "Wescue, deah boys—wescue!"

He looked behind him, and seemed quite astonished to find that Ponsonby & Co. had not followed him.

"What the thump—"

"Gussy, you awful ass—"

The juniors stared transfixed at Arthur Augustus, and he certainly looked a pathetic picture. He was drenched from head to foot, and hatless and muddy, and his nose was running crimson, having come into violent contact with Ponsonby's fist.

"Gussy!" gasped Blake, in alarm. "How on earth did you get into this state?"

"Ow, ow, ow!" wailed Arthur Augustus dismally. "I have been grossly ill-tweated and insulted, bai Jove! Some fellows attacked me with no provocation whatevah, and pitched me into the sea!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry. He thought he understood.

"You mean Ponsonby and his pals, Gussy?"

"Yaas. They were three Higheliffe fellows, I know," groaned Arthur Augustus. "The feahful wuffians attacked me for no weason at all, and though I stwuggled hard, they succeeded in throwin' me into the sea, bai Jove! Oh deah, I am dwenched through to the skin, and my clobber will be uttably wuined. I have also lost my panama. I trust you fellows will weturn with me and help me give the wotten hooligans a feahful thwashin'!"

"We will!" said Blake grimly. "Poor old Gussy. But— but didn't you see the colonel, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah—unfortunately I did!" groaned Arthur Augustus, flushing crimson. "It proved to be the most humiliatin' and distwessin' expwience I have evah had in my life. He spanked me—actually spanked me!"

"Great Scott! He—he spanked you?"

"Yaas. He was feahfully watty at first, and feahfully wude. But aftah I wequested him to be calmp and keep his tempah—"

"You told him to keep his temper?"

"Yaas."

"Oh, my hat!"

"There is no weason to gwin, you fellows," groaned Arthur Augustus, subjecting his grinning chums to a glare. "Aftah I had wepwoved him he calmed down almost at once and I imagined it was goin' to be quite all wight, you know. But it wasn't. The feahful wuffian was twickin' me, bai Jove! He asked me into a woom, and the moment I got inside he gwapsed me woughly and placed me ovah his wotten knee, and spanked me—actually spanked me, the unspeakable wuffian!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sympathetic as Gussy's chums undoubtedly were, they could not help roaring, nevertheless.

"Oh, you awful ass, Gussy!" choked Blake. "You might have known he would go for you!"

"Fancy the noble scion of the House of Eastwood being spanked, you chaps!" said Lowther. "What a fearful blow for the aristocracy!"

"Ha; ha, ha!"

"There is no occasion for laughtah, you caackin' duffahs!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "I would have weturned and admintshated a feahful thwashin' to the wuffian if he had not wushed me out, and wolloed me down the steps, and slammed the fwont door on me. There was also a maidservant there, and she actually giggled at me. It was weally too awful for words, you know!"

"Poor old Gussy!" laughed Blake. "But how did you come up against Ponsonby and his pals? It's only a few moments since we rolled the rofters in the sands."

"Bai Jove! Then that is why the wifens attacked me," said Arthur Augustus, understanding now. "I was just coming out of the gates of Seaview when they came along and grabbed me. I was obliged to weteat as they were four to one, but if you fellows will wetur with me and see fair play, I will give them each a thwain; they won't forget, bai Jove! Pway huwwy, deah boy!"

"Are they about now?" asked Blake, his eyes gleaming. "I left them down by the shore," said Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle into his eye and gazin' back along the sands. "They— Bai Jove! There the ottahs are! I can just see them!"

"Only three of them," said Tom Merry, following D'Arcy's glance. "But we'll— Oh, great Scott! The cat!"

"What—"

"Look!" yelled Tom, pointing beyond the lit, jetty. "The motor-boat's adrift!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Glyn.

"Bai Jove!"

All the juniors could see it now—the Silver Spray well out from the beach, and drifting slowly. They could also see the distant form clinging to the drifting dinghy some yards behind the motor-boat.

"Great Scott! Something's happened!" yelled Glyn. "Can't you hear somebody yelling? Come on, for goodness sake!"

He led the way with a wild rush, and after him went all the rest, pelting along the sands as hard as they could go. Tom Merry and Glyn reached the spot first, and the scared Algy & Co. looked round, and then scattered and bolted on sighting the newcomers.

"Never mind them!" shouted Tom Merry. "Let's have Grundy's boat afloat—smartly, now!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

In this fresh emergency Arthur Augustus forgot his troubles, and lent a hand with a will at launching the little sailing-boat. It was afloat at last, and Tom Merry jumped in, followed by Bernard Glyn and Blake.

"That's enough!" snapped Tom Merry. "You fellows remain here. There's been dirty work here. Never mind the sail, chaps; we'll row."

"Right ho!"

CHAPTER 9.

In the Nick of Time!

TOM MERRY pushed off from the beach, and then he and Blake settled down to the oars, while Glyn took the tiller. The boat rocked away, and they settled down to work in grim earnest.

Tom Merry's face was grim and serious now. It was fairly plain that someone had cut the boat adrift, and in that first glance Tom had seen that the matter was serious indeed. The fellow clinging to the dinghy—Tom had already recognised him—obviously could not swim, for one thing.

But that was not all. The motor-boat, well away from the shore, was drifting fast now, well in the grip of the strong current. And it was drifting towards a line of jagged rocks that spread out seawards from the jutting headland to the east of the bay.

The danger was real and urgent. The motor-boat with Baggy Trimble aboard, and the dinghy with the wretched form clinging to it were making at ever increasing speed for the well-defined tide-rip, caused by the tidal current rushing over the ledge of submerged and half-submerged rocks.

It was a dangerous spot indeed. Tom Merry had heard Weary Willy speak of it only that morning. True, there was a chance, though a slender one. At the extreme edge of the submerged ledge was a narrow, deep channel dividing the rocks from a small island—Fury Island, the island Grundy had mentioned a few minutes ago. There was still a slim chance that the boats would drift safely through the channel.

But it was such a slim chance that the juniors scarcely considered it for a moment. The remaining chance was for them to reach the Silver Spray and get her under control. They knew that Baggy Trimble was hopeless to do anything in such an emergency. In any case, he could never start the engine, and he could not steer, either.

Bernard Glyn's face was white and strained. "Go it, chaps!" he said, through his teeth. "Put your beef into it for goodness' sake!"

The juniors strained at the oars, and the boat tore ahead. They were well in the grip of the current themselves now, and rowing was remarkably easy. But to Bernard Glyn

steering, it seemed to be scarcely crawling along, and he was fairly shaking with nervous tension.

He could see Trimble now. The fat junior was standing on the cabin-top yelling in terror. Ponsonby was still clinging desperately to the lurching dinghy, but he seemed exhausted already.

"Go it, chaps!" gasped Glyn. "That chap in the water seems about done. We'll have to see to him first."

Tom Merry nodded, but did not speak, reserving all his breath and energy for the task in hand.

But they were gaining fast now. Scarcely one hundred yards ahead was the drifting dinghy, and they could see Ponsonby's white arm and face.

The rocks, however, were perilously close, also.

"We'll do it," said Glyn, measuring the distance with his eye. "Keep it up like this, you fellows, and we'll do it just about. We'll just have time to get that chap aboard and do the rest, I think."

"Help!"

It was a faint cry from Ponsonby, and it made the juniors put all they knew into the pulling. The boat forged ahead. But they were getting in rougher water now, and sheets of stinging spray shot over the small boat. To Glyn in the stern-sheets the white foam of the rocks seemed dangerously close now.

"Hold on!" he bawled, as Ponsonby cried again. "We'll have you in a jiffy!"

The juniors were of the opinion that Ponsonby had brought this trouble on himself by his rascality, but they gave no thought to that now.

Ponsonby's life was in danger, and that was all they thought of.

"Only a few more yards!" called Glyn. "Easy up, chaps!"

Blake and Tom Merry eased up, and the boat slowed down. Glyn skilfully brought her alongside the dinghy, on the far side from where Ponsonby was clinging. He did not want to be crushing the half-drowned junior between the two boats.

The Glyn hung on the gunwale of the dinghy whilst Tom Merry and Blake jumped into it.

"Hold on like the dickens, Glyn," called Tom anxiously. "Now, Blake!"

Leaning over in the rocking, swaying dinghy, Tom and Blake reached over and grasped Ponsonby.

It was not an easy task, for Ponsonby seemed too exhausted to help himself, but they managed it at last. Between them they hauled the Highcliffe junior into the boat.

"Into the other boat with him!" said Tom, through his teeth. "Pull yourself together, Ponsonby!"

Every moment was precious, and, with an effort, Ponsonby roused himself, and they helped him into the sailing-boat, where he collapsed, panting and dripping.

"No good losing the dinghy, either," said Tom.

He sprang into the bows, and, grasping the painter, flung it to Glyn, who caught the rope neatly. Then Tom followed Blake into their own boat, and as they grasped the oars Glyn tied the rope to the stern.

The juniors bent again to the oars, and, with the dinghy rocking and lurching behind, the sailing-boat forged on after the drifting motor-cruiser.

It was less than forty yards ahead now, almost broadside on, and Trimble was at the stern, rowing hysterically.

"We'll just do it," said Glyn. "Another ten pulls, chaps!"

The juniors gave the ten with a will, and then at a word from Glyn they eased up, and Glyn took the boat alongside.

He had scarcely done so when Trimble appeared over the rail of the motor-boat, and he brought a boathook whizzing down, almost braining Blake as he did so.

But by more luck than skill he managed to grip the gunwale of the smaller boat with the hook, and the next moment Blake had also grabbed a boathook and got a grip of the rail of the motor-cruiser.

"Hang on, Blake!" called Tom. "Trimble, stop that yelling, and chuck Blake a rope—quick! Come on, Glyn!"

Leaving Blake to look after the two boats and Ponsonby, Tom and Glyn swarmed aboard the motor-boat. Glyn leaped to the engine, while Tom jumped to the wheel.

The motor fired at once, and as the engine throbbled Blake yelled:

"All serene! You can go ahead now—I'm hitched on!"

"Oh, good!"

The next moment the propeller was thrashing the water, and as the Silver Spray began to move Tom brought the motor-boat's nose round in a wide sweep.

And only just in time for the jagged ledge of rocks was scarcely fifty yards away now.

But it was in time, and after towing the two boats well out of the danger zone Glyn shut off the engine, and the rest was easy.

Leaving the engine, Glyn helped Trimble—almost weeping

with relief now—to haul the boats alongside, and then Blake and the shivering Ponsonby were helped aboard.

"Done it!" yelled Glyn. "Hip-pip!"

"Hurrah!"

It was a yell—Tom Merry and his two chums felt they had grounds to let themselves go now the tension was over, and they did let themselves go.

"Thanks, you fellows!" gasped Baggy Trimble, dropping shakily on to a locker in the cockpit. "Oh dear! I thought I was a goner that time!"

Ponsonby said nothing. He was lying, huddled up, on another locker, and his face was white and scared.

"How did it happen, Trimble?" asked Glyn, his grim glance resting on Ponsonby's white face.

"It was that cad!" said Trimble, glaring at the Highcliffe junior. "He cut the boat adrift. But I spotted him just in time, and I struck at him with a boathook. I was trying to stop him, but I knocked the brute overboard. I'm jolly glad I did it, too!"

"You—you little sweep!" hissed Ponsonby, giving the fat youth a glare of bitter hatred. "I'll make you sorry for it yet, though! You'll suffer for this, you fat hound!"

"So that's your tune, is it?" snapped Tom Merry.

"Right! We've saved your life, and you haven't a word of thanks, you rotter! You've even started making threats again!"

"Hang you—hang the lot of you!" snarled Ponsonby.

"You'll hang some day—playing tricks like that!" shouted Blake angrily. "Oh, you crawling worm! You'd better change your tune, my pippin, or you'll get the handling of your life!"

"Oh, let the cad rip!" sniffed Tom Merry.

He gave his attention to the wheel—the Silver Spray was forging ahead at a good speed now. Glyn had barely glanced at Ponsonby—all his attention was given to his precious engine. It was clear that Ponsonby was recovering rapidly now, and it was clear also, that the supercilious youth was determined to show his enemies that he cared nothing for them. He even took out his gold cigarette-case, but, finding the cigarettes wet, he put it back into his pocket again, sneering as he noted Blake's disgust.

Tom Merry noted the action, also, but he said nothing, nor did he speak again until the boat was close inshore. The other St. Jim's juniors were standing together on the beach, and they raised a hearty cheer as the motor-cruiser slowed down.

Luckily the Silver Spray had spare moorings, and very soon the boat was riding safely, and then the dinghy was hauled alongside.

Ponsonby stepped forward as if to drop into it.

"Hold on, Ponsonby!" snapped Bernard Glyn, his face hard. "Have you nothing to say?"

"No, hang you!"

"No regrets for what you've done, and no thanks for what we've done?" asked Glyn.

"No, hang you! Let me go, or I'll make it hot for you here!" breathed Ponsonby.

He was feeling just a bit apprehensive, however, as he noted the looks of the motor-boat boys.

"Let the cad go!" said Tom Merry, his lip curling.

"Oh, all right!" said Glyn. "But we'll give him a little present as a souvenir of the occasion. Here you are, Ponsonby!"

And, bringing his hand from behind him, Glyn plastered a handful of oily grease full into Ponsonby's sneering face.

Ponsonby staggered back, gasping and choking, his eyes glittering with passion. Glyn then picked up a can of oil, and swiftly emptied it over Ponsonby's bedraggled hair. Then he planted a hearty kick behind the Highcliffe junior.

"Now you can go, Ponsonby," he said. "You've acted like a villain, and an ill-favoured cad! If you hadn't already gone through it a bit I'd give you the thrashing of your life! Now clear!"

"Ow-yow-mum-mum! Grough!" gasped Ponsonby.

He clawed the oily filth from his face, and, grabbing some cotton-waste he mopped desperately at his hair. Then he looked at Glyn, his face fiendish.

But he only contented himself with looking. He knew better than to attempt anything else—indeed, he would never have dared to attack a fellow like Glyn in any case. The next moment Ponsonby was climbing over the rail, and as he dropped into the dinghy Tom Merry, Blake, and Glyn followed.

Tom pulled the dinghy ashore, and as it grounded Ponsonby leaped out.

"Let the brute go!" called out Tom, as Arthur Augustus and the rest of the waiting juniors rushed up. "Let him go—we've done with the cad!"

And Ponsonby was allowed to go. But the look he cast back over his shoulder as he staggered away towards Seaview was not pleasant to see.

CHAPTER 10.

Trimble's Trickery!

"ONLY a few bites?" pleaded Baggy Trimble. "Not a bite!" said Bernard Glyn grimly. "You've had your whack and more to-day, Trimble. We're going to teach you a lesson, you fat worm!"

"But I'm starving—famished!" howled Trimble. "D'you mean to say I can't have any grub to-day?"

"We might let you have a bit of supper if you behave yourself," said Glyn.

"But look here—" howled Trimble.

"We're looking," said Glyn. "We see the fattest, laziest object we've seen outside a pig-sty, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't a laughing matter!" roared Baggy Trimble furiously. "I haven't had a bit to eat since eleven o'clock this morning—you know that!"

"We know you cleared the larder out and left nothing for our dinner," grinned Tom Merry. "And we know you're having nothing more to eat until supper-time—and perhaps not then. It's your own fault, Trimble. You shouldn't be so greedy. We warned you when we started on this trip that if you started your old games we'd come down on you hard. You've started them, and gone on with them. You sneaked our grub this morning, and the sentence of the court is that you have nothing to eat until supper."

"Oh dear! Oh, you beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. seemed to find humour in Trimble's expressive remark.

"Oh, you awful beasts!" groaned Trimble, glaring at the laughing juniors. "You heartless beasts! And it's only an hour since I escaped from the—the hungry jaws of death."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at!" shouted Trimble furiously. "I jolly nearly lost my life through staying on the dashed boat and sticking to my post of duty."

"Oh crumbs!"

"If I'd known how you fellows were going to treat me I wouldn't have agreed to come with you on this rotten cruise," said Trimble. "You begged me to come, and now you treat me like this—make me risk my life, and keep me half-starved. I shall tell your pater about this, Glyn."

"Go ahead, old chap!"

"He'll jolly well make you sit up for it!" snorted Trimble. "He told you to be kind to me—you know he did!"

"We're being kind by standing you at all, old fellow," smiled Glyn. "You spoofed the pater into shoving you on us."

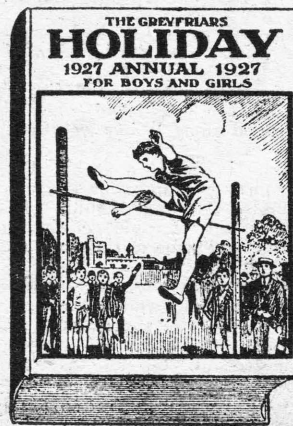
"I saved your pater's life, you rotter!"

"I thought it was his pocket-wallet, old fatty!"

"I saved his life as well," said Trimble. "I saved him from being robbed by that footpad, and perhaps killed!"

"You've told us that once or twice before," said Glyn

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calmly. "A few thousand times, in fact. But it doesn't wash with us, old chap. You see, we know you, and the pater doesn't. We're standing you because the pater ordered us to. But we've not standing too much of you—see? Now run away and play."

"I'm jolly well coming with you on the picnic!" snorted Trimble. "I know all about it. You're going with that rotter Grundy to Fury Island."

"Quite true, old chap. But you're not coming."

"I'm not staying here alone on this rotten boat again!"

"We'll see that you don't," grinned Glyn. "We'll see you don't get the chance to scoff all the grub again. Gussy and Digby are staying behind, and they've got instructions to keep an eye on the larder, old chap."

"Oh dear!"

Trimble's face was a picture of dismay. It was only too clear that he had still cherished a hope that, if he failed to be included in the picnic party, he would still get the chance to raid the larder in their absence.

And now the news that D'Arcy and Digby were remaining behind seemed almost to floor him.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, you awful beasts! You knew I meant to—I mean, I didn't mean to—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't care!" roared Baggy, realising he had nearly—if not quite—given his intention away. "I'm not jolly well going to be starved!"

"He's going to raid the larder if he can," said Lowther. "Let's shove him down the fo'c'sle hatch and lock it on him."

"Good egg!"

Lowther jumped up, and Trimble gave a howl and fled. He leaped up on to the cabin top of the Silver Spray with surprising agility considering his bulk, and vanished down the cockpit aft. A roar of laughter followed him.

"Beasts!" gasped Trimble. "Oh, the awful, mean beasts!"

Realising that nobody was following him, and that Lowther had only been joking, Trimble halted in the cockpit, and sat gasping on one of the lockers there.

Really the matter was desperate from Trimble's point of view. It was hours—it seemed like years to Trimble—since he had eaten anything, and he was wolfishly hungry. And now the rest were picnicking with Grundy & Co—at least, Trimble had imagined all were going.

Now he knew differently. Digby and D'Arcy were remaining behind. There would not even be a chance to raid the larder, after all.

Trimble reflected bitterly on the suspicious nature of some people.

As a matter of fact, the reason for Digby and D'Arcy remaining behind was nothing at all to do with Baggy Trimble. Like Grundy, Tom Merry & Co. realised that it would not do, after all that had happened, to leave the boat or the camp unguarded. They knew Ponsonby would stick at nothing to get "even."

Grundy, of course, had wanted half of the motor-boat boys to remain, but, having failed to bring them round to his view, he had reluctantly agreed to Tom Merry's suggestion. This was that lots should be drawn, and the unlucky ones should remain to guard the camp and boat.

So this was done, and Wilkins, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy had proved to be the unlucky ones. Wilkins and Herries were to remain at the camp, whilst D'Arcy and Digby were to be in charge on the boat—Captain Cragg having failed to turn up, greatly to Glyn's wrath. And each couple had been armed with a whistle to call the others in case of an alarm—four having been deemed quite enough to deal with "funks" like Algy & Co.

And, in the meantime, Tom Merry & Co. had not been idle. They had visited the village over the hill, and they had brought back supplies of footstuffs and petrol.

The juniors who were to accompany Grundy & Co. were waiting for Grundy & Co. to turn up. And while they waited Baggy Trimble had rolled along to inquire where he came in the programme.

Now he knew that he came in nowhere at all. Baggy Trimble fairly seethed with righteous indignation and wrath.

"Oh, the beasts!" he mumbled again. "Wouldn't I just like to do the rotters down! If only I could get them out of the way for a bit I could soon get some of the grub out of the larder and hide it. I—My hat!"

Trimble suddenly paused in his reflections, his eyes gleaming. He reflected again for some moments, and then he chuckled, and crept up on to the fo'c'sle, and dropped softly down the hatch.

He was inside some moments, and when he came out he carried an old bolster and an armful of clothing. There was a jacket of D'Arcy's, some trousers belonging to Blake, and a straw hat belonging to Tom Merry.

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Baggy chuckled as he dressed up the bolster in them, ramming first the trousers on, and then the jacket and hat, tying the lot on with string.

This all done, Baggy tied a bar of iron to the bolster, and finally tied a length of string to it, keeping the loose end in his hand.

"This will do the trick, I fancy," he grinned, surveying his handiwork. "I'd better make sure of my get-away first, though."

Leaving the dummy on the locker, Baggy entered the fo'c'sle again, this time by the sliding door that led from the cockpit. He quietly lowered the top of the hatch and locked it. Then he slipped back into the forward cockpit and gently opened the other sliding door that led into the cabin.

Baggy could now see one or two of the juniors lounging in the aft cockpit as they waited for Grundy & Co., and he chuckled as he saw that they were looking shorewards.

"Here goes!" grinned Baggy.

He hoisted the dummy figure carefully on to the top of the cabin roof, with its empty trousers legs hanging over the low rails, keeping the head turned away towards the bows. Then Baggy gave a wild yell.

"Yarroooogh! Help!"

Just an instant Baggy kept the dummy figure upright, and then he yanked at the string and pulled it sideways. Splash!

The dummy figure fell overboard with a resounding splash into the sea.

"Great Scott!"

"What the—"

"It's Trimble!" yelled Blake in great alarm. "I just saw the duffer go overboard. Quick—the silly idiot can't swim!"

"Oh my hat!"

Crouching down in the cockpit Baggy Trimble heard the alarmed shouts and he chuckled softly, and peeped round the doorway of the cabin.

He was just in time to see the legs of the juniors vanish upwards as they scrambled on to the roof of the cabin. There sounded yells, and then a scamper of feet on the cabin roof.

"Good!" murmured Baggy.

He slipped into the cabin safely enough now with the aft cockpit empty, and the next instant he was at the larder door, cramming handfuls of the newly-bought supplies into the empty cover of the bolster.

He stopped at last, and hastily peered round the sliding door of the forward cockpit. He saw nobody, and taking the risk he shot across the cockpit with his plunder and vanished inside the fo'c'sle.

He chuckled softly again, and shutting the door, he bolted it. Then he sat down in the gloomy fo'c'sle and set to work on his plunder.

Meanwhile Tom Merry & Co. had gone to the rescue of the dummy figure—just as Trimble had expected them to do.

Tom Merry himself was the first to reach the opposite side of the motor-boat. A hurried glance around the boat had shown no sign of Baggy Trimble, and then he scanned the water. Tom was just in time to see a dark form sink out of sight, leaving a straw hat floating and dancing on the waves.

"Good heavens!" gasped Tom. He tore off his jacket in a flash. "Fetch the dinghy round, chaps!" he roared.

"Splash!"

Tom was in, and he had scarcely gone in when there sounded three more splashes as Blake, Lowther, and Manners went in after him.

They came up spluttering, and then they dived one after the other. All of them knew Trimble could not swim, and the sight of his straw hat—they believed it was his—was quite enough for them without Tom's alarmed yell.

By this time Glyn and D'Arcy had tumbled into the dinghy, and were pulling madly round to the far side. They reached it just as Tom Merry re-appeared above the surface. In his arms was a drenched and bedraggled bundle.

"Got him?" gasped Glyn. "Oh, good man, Tommy."

"Yaas, watah! Bwavo, Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry trod water, and gasped pantingly. There was a very peculiar expression on his face.

"Yes, I've got him!" he panted grimly. "It's all right, you fellows, I can manage this bolster all right!"

Blake, Manners and Lowther had come forging up to his aid, but they almost fainted as they saw the figure that Tom held up above the water. The weight Trimble had tied on had dropped off now, and Tom held up the dummy easily.

"What—what—" gasped Blake. "Why, it—it—"

"A dashed bolster!" gasped Tom Merry, his voice almost trembling with wrath. "It's a rotten trick—that fat



As soon as Algy & Co. were fixed securely on the donkeys the boy started the animals off. "Ha, ha, ha!" The St. Jim's juniors broke into a roar of laughter as the donkeys ambled along the sands with their yelling and unwilling riders clinging on as best they could. "That'll teach the rotters a lesson!" said Tom Merry. (See Chapter 6.)

scoundrel worked it, I'll wager. Let's get aboard again—sharp!"

"Great pip!"

"Bai Jove!"

One after the other the three would-be rescuers were helped into the dinghy. Then the dinghy was brought alongside again, and the juniors swarmed on to the motor-boat in a raging crowd.

They did not halt even a second to discuss the matter, but began to look for Trimble.

He was not in the forward cockpit, and he was not in the cabin. But the open larder door, and the disturbed and obviously plundered foodstuffs told their own tale.

"Well!" gasped Tom Merry, looking round at his equally startled chums. "Well, if that fat worm doesn't take the bun! Of all the—the—"

Words proved inadequate to express Tom's feelings.

For another instant the juniors glared at each other speechlessly, and then they howled and went again in search of Trimble.

But as they made the discovery that the fo'c'sle hatch and sliding door was locked, they did not need to look farther for Trimble. They fancied even that they could hear his hungry jaws munching away.

"Well, the—the worm!"

"The—the villain!"

"Come out, you fat rascal!" howled Blake. "Come out, and we'll flay you alive for this!"

Trimble did not return any answer to this invitation—possibly it did not appeal to him. The juniors fairly danced with rage. Trimble had undoubtedly gone beyond the limit this time.

For some moments they thumped and banged, and then Glyn gave a chuckle as he noted something.

The pieces of wood, forming the slide in which the door moved were simply screwed on to the woodwork with big screws, and at a glance Glyn saw that they could easily be removed.

Without a word he rushed away, to return armed with a screwdriver.

He chuckled softly, and giving his chums a warning glance he set to work in earnest on the screws.

They were quite new, and once he got a start, Glyn had them out one by one, his chums watching grimly and eagerly. The last one was out and thrown down at last, and then Glyn called.

"Are you coming out, or not, Trimble?" he bawled. "We know you're inside, you spoofer!"

There was no reply, and Glyn, who had already taken away the slides, grasped the door and dragged it aside, only the lock inside holding it at one end now.

There followed a terrific yelp, and as the sunlight flashed into the gloomy fo'c'sle it showed up the fat, startled face of Baggy Trimble. He was seated on the floor, his face smeared with jam, and chocolate, and crumbs. It was a fat and shiny face, but it showed sheer terror now.

What happened next seemed like a horrid nightmare to Baggy Trimble. The hour of reckoning was at hand.

The juniors almost fought to get through the low, narrow doorway to him.

It was Blake who managed to get in first, and he grabbed Baggy by the collar.

"Yarrooooooop!"

Trimble's terrified and apprehensive yell rang far and wide.

The next moment he was flung like a sack of coke through the doorway, and the next instant Tom Merry & Co. fell upon him like a pack of wolves.

Tom Merry, Blake, and Lowther, and Manners were drenched to the skin, and their clothes had suffered, and they, more than the rest had good cause to make Baggy suffer.

And they did.

Those next few moments were packed with trouble and pain for the tricky Baggy Trimble. He was rolled, and he was bumped, and cinders were rubbed into his hair, and grease and oil were rubbed in his mouth, and over his fat face, and mixed with the cinders in his hair.

His howls rang far and wide over the waters.

Not having expected Tom Merry to dive and save the bolster, Baggy had never dreamed that they would "tumble," and he certainly had not anticipated this.

But he got it, nevertheless—and doubtless he deserved it.

When Tom Merry & Co. had finished with him at last the hapless fat youth was a sight and a wreck. He sat on the grating of the forward cockpit, and he roared and roared.

"There!" gasped Blake, as they finished at last. "Let that be a lesson to you, you fat wangler! We'll watch you don't play tricks like that again!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Fetch that grub out of there!" gasped Tom Merry.

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"We'll see he gets no supper to-night, after this. Hallo, here's Grundy. Let's get changed now, you chaps."

And leaving the groaning Baggy still seated with the feathers of the bolster covering him from head to foot like a shroud, Tom Merry & Co. trooped aft—Tom, Blake, Manners, and Lowther to change their drenched garments.

Luckily, they each had kicked off their shoes and thrown off their blazers, and they were soon changed, and soon tumbling into the dinghy, leaving Arthur Augustus and Digby in charge of the motor-boat—and Baggy Trimble. On the beach Grundy and Gunn were waiting, with a big picnic-basket carried between them, and soon all were aboard the sailing-boat which was to take them to Fury Island. It was a tight squeeze—especially with the basket—but the juniors did not mind that, nor did they mind when Grundy loftily took charge and started to give orders right and left.

Grundy had provided the picnic-basket, and under the happy circumstances they "let him have his silly head," as Blake expressed it. And after Herries had trotted off to join Wilkins on guard at the camp, the juniors pushed off from the beach and started for Fury Island.

They had scarcely started when four elegantly-clad youths came down to the jetty a hundred yards along from the moored boat, and they stared hard after the sailing-boat, now dancing away over the shimmering, sparkling sea, her snow-white new sail glimmering in the sunlight.

It was Algy & Co., and the four dandies stared hard after the fast-disappearing sailing-boat. Ponsonby's eyes gleamed as he watched it through his monocle. The leader of the "smart set" had changed into a lounge suit, and he looked elegant and lofty as ever.

"There the brutes go!" he said, through his teeth. "They've got a picnic-basket, I see. Where will they be making for, Algy?"

"Fury Island, I should imagine, dear boy," drawled Algy. "Looks as if they're going to picnic there, the low outsiders!"

"Does it?" remarked Ponsonby, his eyes glittering. "Then we're on this, you chaps. I fancy I've got an idea. We're going to Fury Island, too. Come on!"

CHAPTER 11.

Ponsonby's Game!

PONSONBY started to walk along the jetty, and Algy with Gadsby and Vavasour, followed slowly and with obvious reluctance.

It was very easy to see that Cecil Ponsonby was the leading spirit of the four. As Blake had remarked already that day, Algy was a worm, but a harmless worm, while Gadsby and Vavasour were crawling worms; only Ponsonby was dangerous—dangerous as a snake.

"Hold on, Pon!" burred Algy weakly. "You know that my uncle has forbidden us to take out the motor-boat without him. We really mustn't disobey the old chap."

"Rats to the old fool!" sneered Ponsonby. "He's gone to the village, hasn't he?"

"Yaas, but it's awfully risky, you know!" protested Algy.

"Risky, be thumped!" snapped Ponsonby. "Come on, you funks! Think I'm going to miss a chance like this to pay out those sweeps! Come on!"

"Chuck it, Pon!" chimed in Gadsby. "The old chap has us marked already. He nearly caught us smoking and foolin' with the cards in the tool-shed only this morning. Don't risk it!"

Ponsonby grinned and dropped down into the little motor-boat lying alongside the private jetty. It was quite a smart little motor-boat, and Colonel Bolter never allowed anyone but himself to take her out to sea. But Ponsonby was plainly bent on "risking" it. As a matter of fact, he had intended to risk it before he had seen the St. Jim's fellows start off. He was more determined than ever to take it now.

He started the engine, and took the tiller himself. Algy weakly gave way then, and jumped down into the boat, and Gadsby and Vavasour followed, after a glance towards the house just visible through the trees.

"Good men!" murmured Ponsonby approvingly, though his lip curled slightly as he said it. "Why lose a bit of sport because of that old buffer's silly order? Blow him!"

The motor-boat glided away from the jetty, and went chug-chugging out to sea, rising and falling on the sparkling waves. It was a glorious summer afternoon, and the wind had gone since noon, the sea being calm enough now.

Ponsonby released his grip of the tiller, and lit a cigarette, passing the case to his three "nutty" pals. The four smoked and chatted as the motor-boat tore towards the island. As they drew closer Ponsonby kept his eyes keenly fixed on the rocky island, obviously searching for the St. Jim's boat.

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"I don't quite see the game, Pon," said Gadsby. "Not thinking of trying to run those cads down, I hope?"

He grinned as he spoke, though he knew perfectly well that Ponsonby was not above trying such a desperate venture.

"No," said Ponsonby calmly, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "My idea is to maroon the rotters on the island here!"

"Good gad!"

"They aren't likely to leave the boat guarded," said Ponsonby thoughtfully. "And if we're slippy we can pinch their boat without them knowing it. We've already been on a picnic here ourselves, with that old buffer of an uncle of yours, Algy. We had the picnic at the ruins, didn't we?"

"Yes, but—"

"And that's just where those cads will have theirs, unless I'm mistaken," grinned Ponsonby. "The ruins are inland, and as it's already well after four, they'll make straight for the spot with their rotten basket."

"Well, that's so."

"All we do, then," grinned Ponsonby, "is to cut in and pinch their rotten boat. A night or so on that beastly island will do the cads good, I hope."

"Phew! It's a great wheeze, Pon. But—but suppose they see us coming—they may already have seen us."

"My dear man, one has to take risks in this world," said Ponsonby, with a sneer. "Dashed if you chaps don't get on my nerves! They may see us right enough, but I'm banking on them having gone inland. The ruins can't be seen from this side, and if they're there they can't see us. And they won't hear the motor from there, either."

"But—"

"Oh, stop buttin'!" snarled Ponsonby. "Keep your dashed eyes open for that confounded boat instead!"

"Better not go too close in on this side," said Algy, who was looking far from happy. "It's jolly dangerous. I believe—rocky and all that, y'know. My uncle approached from the far side, you remember."

"Your uncle's a dashed old funk!" sneered Ponsonby, whose manners and customs were like his actions. "You leave this to me, Algy."

Algy left it to him. Algy was a weak fop and a bounder, and he admired Ponsonby for his reckless daring, and because of Ponsonby's aristocratic connections. But he was getting just a bit tired of Ponsonby as a guest. True, Ponsonby was, like himself, his uncle's guest, but even Algy did not like the way Ponsonby spoke of his host.

But he said nothing, and the motor-boat, slowing down now, went on along the coast of the little island, her engine throbbing softly. And quite suddenly Ponsonby gave a triumphant exclamation.

Rounding a jutting arm of chalky cliff, the black sheep of Highcliffe suddenly sighted a boat drawn up on a stretch of sandy beach, and swiftly he brought the nose of the throbbing motor-boat round towards it.

"There it is!" he grinned. "Here goes! We'll soon have her out!"

But Ponsonby had spoken a little too soon.

Having no eyes for anything else but the boat a few yards away, Ponsonby failed to see the disturbed water in between, nor did he see the line of jagged rocks just showing beneath the surface of the clear water.

He soon discovered they were there, however.

There came a sudden, grinding crash, and the motor-boat stopped suddenly, throwing the juniors in a heap in the boat, and then she moved on with a horrible grinding sound.

Only for a brief second, however, and then she slid off the rocks into clear water. And as she did so water surged up into the cockpit of the motor-boat, and before the scared juniors had scarcely realised it the boat sank beneath them, leaving them struggling in the water.

It was only a few feet deep, however, and the next moment the motor-boat was resting on sand, her prow high, and her stern low and completely submerged.

"Oh, good gad!"

The juniors floundered about, shouting their fear, but as they found their feet they scrambled ashore badly scared and panting. Though the water had been only four or five feet deep at most, they had all gone under, and were dripping with water.

"Oh, good gad!" repeated Ponsonby, staring at the wrecked motor-boat. "That's done it!"

"Oh, how frightful!" wailed Algy. "What will my uncle say?"

Ponsonby's eyes fell on the St. Jim's boat drawn up a little on the sand, and an ugly look came into his eyes.

"If you'll back me up, Algy," he snapped, "your dashed uncle will say nothing—to us! Into that boat with you—sharp, now!"

"But—but, Pon—"

"Get in!" hissed Ponsonby. "You're wasting time, you fools! Come on!"

He sprang into the St. Jim's boat, and, roused to action now, Algy, Gadsby, and Vavasour followed with a rush. They scrambled in, and Ponsonby picked up an oar and started to push off. As he did so there came a loud shout and the pounding of running feet, and a junior rushed up.

It was Manners of the Shell at St. Jim's. He rushed up, then, stopping to place his camera on the ground, he made a rush at the boat.

"Stop, you rotters!" he yelled.

"Would you?" snapped Ponsonby.

As Manners splashed into the water Ponsonby lunged at him with the blade of the oar. It caught Manners full in the chest, and Manners staggered backwards and sat down with a splash in a foot of water.

"Go it!" gasped Ponsonby. "Out with her!"

He pushed off desperately with his oar, and Gadsby sprang to help. The boat slid off the sand suddenly, almost upsetting all four of the scared rascals. Ponsonby flopped down into a seat, and started to pull the boat round frantically.

The boat danced away just as Manners scrambled up, and, after rushing again into the water up to the thighs, Manners realised it was hopeless.

The boat was clear of the rocks now, in a deep channel by which the St. Jim's juniors had obviously brought her in. With Vavasour at the tiller and Gadsby and Ponsonby rowing, the boat swept out.

"Come back!" roared Manners furiously. "Oh, you—you thieving cads! Come back!"

Ponsonby and Gadsby rowed on. Clear of the island, Ponsonby ceased to row, and, stepping the little mast, he shook out the sheet. He had had some experience with sailing-boats, clearly, and the next moment the boat was speeding before the wind, with her nose pointing towards Sandbeach bay and home.

"That's done it!" gasped Ponsonby breathlessly. "Jove, what awful luck that that cad turned up just then! We might have got clear safely but for him! Now—"

"Now we're done in any case!" groaned Algy. "Oh, gad! I wish I hadn't agreed to come, Pon! I told you not to bring the dashed boat out! Now it's wrecked, and my uncle— Oh, dear!"

Algy almost wept.

"We're not done by any means," said Ponsonby. "If you want to get out of this hole, Algy, you'll do just as I tell you. We're going to get out of this, but we've got to lie like the deuce to do it."

"But we can't!" wailed Algy.

"Can't we?" said Ponsonby, his crafty face hard. "Now listen to me, you chaps. We've never been in the dashed motor-boat at all this afternoon. Remember that. We were strolling along the beach when we saw those St. Jim's cads clear off with it. We realised they were up to mischief with it, and so we rushed for the nearest boat—this one—and went in chase."

"Oh!"

Ponsonby's chums stared at their leader aghast.

"But we didn't!" gasped Algy.

"Of course we didn't, you born idiot!" sneered Ponsonby. "What's that got to do with it, though? If we tell Colonel Bolter we did he's bound to take our word before theirs. He knows those cads are up against him, and he'll be only too ready to believe anything against them, the old fool! Anyway, that's going to be our story. Understand?"

"Yes; but suppose—"

"You needn't suppose anything!" snarled Ponsonby. "Just do as I tell you! Nobody saw us start out in the motor-launch—at least, nobody that matters did. We're safe enough. It'll just be a matter of our word against theirs, and I fancy I can bet whose word dear old nunky will take. He's fairly got his knife into those sweeps—luckily for us. Anyway, that's going to be our dashed yarn, and we've got to stick to it like grim death and swear black's blue! Understand?"

"Oh dear! Yes."

"We went in chase," said Ponsonby, "and after scouring round we saw the motor-boat wrecked on the rocks there. We didn't see anything of those sweeps, mind you! We examined the boat, and then we started back to tell Nunky that those wicked fellows had wrecked his boat and were marooned on the island. You've got that?"

"Oh, ye-e-es!"

"Then thundering well stick to it like glue, or there's serious trouble for us!" snorted Ponsonby. "No shuffling, mind! We've got to face it boldly. We came out to maroon those chaps, and by Jove, we've done more!"

"I—I only wish we hadn't!" groaned Algy.

"Dry up, you funk! I'm thundering glad!" said Ponsonby, his eyes glinting. "It's just the best thing that could have happened. Those chaps are in the soup fairly—the colonel will never believe them. They're stranded there, and the wrecked boat's there. I vowed to get my own back, and, by gad, things couldn't have turned out

better. The colonel will kick up the very dickens of a shindy, and if he doesn't make those cads squirm I'll eat my dashed boots!"

And Ponsonby grinned and took out a cigarette. He was cool and collected now, and the look on his face boded ill for Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 12.

Marooned!

"WELL, chaps, what about a ramble round now?"

As Tom Merry made the remark he yawned and sat up on the warm grass, and took the handkerchief away from his face. Tea was over, and the picnic party had packed away the cloth and the remains of the feast into the basket with the crockery. It had been a jolly good feed—all agreed that George Alfred Grundy did things well in that line—and the juniors were happy and comfortable now. Indeed, so comfortable were they, and so warm was the sun, that none of them felt like moving yet. And for some time now they had been reclining on the warm grass, idly discussing cricket at St. Jim's, and such-like subjects.

It was a very pretty spot. Grundy, when he had suggested that the motor-boat boys should join him, had claimed that it was an interesting island, and so it had proved to be. It was certainly very small, but there were some interesting old ruins, and it was in the shade of the ruins that the St. Jim's juniors had picnicked—as Ponsonby had said they would.

"Better wait until Manne's comes back," said Lowther, with a chuckle. "Let's hope the ass hasn't fallen over a cliff or something. He said he was going to try to get a few snaps of sea-birds on the cliff."

"Blest if that chap doesn't take the biscuit, with his silly old camera!" grunted Tom. "He's taken about a thousand snaps of the old ruins. Why wasn't he satisfied with them?"

"Here he comes!" sang out Blake. "Hallo! What's the silly ass shouting about?"

All the juniors jumped up as they heard Manners yelling. He came up to them with a rush, his face red with excitement.

"We're done, you chaps!" he shouted breathlessly. "Done brown! Those cads have taken our dashed boat!"

"Eh? What the thump—"

"Ponsonby and his lot!" gasped Manners, his face showing his alarm. "They've smashed their own boat up on the rocks, and they've cleared off with ours, leaving us stranded, the rotten pirates!"

And Manners hurriedly related what had happened.

"I was just taking a snap of our boat and the jutting cliff behind us when they turned up and went a cropper over some submerged rocks," he ended. "Come along and see, chaps."

"And you let 'em get away with it?" howled Grundy.

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"I couldn't stop the cads!" snorted Manners. "Ponsonby batted me in the chest with an oar, and by the time I'd scrambled up again they were yards away."

"Well, you—you ass!" gasped Grundy.

"No good grousing at Manners," said Tom, his face going grave. "He couldn't have handled four of them, in any case. It looks as if we're fairly in the soup, chaps! Come on; let's have a look at the wreck, anyway."

"Yes, rather!"

All the juniors were aghast at the happening, but they scarcely realised yet what it meant to them; they certainly little dreamed of what the rascally Ponsonby intended doing over the affair.

They reached the spot in a very few moments, and as they saw the sunken motor-boat they gasped.

"Oh, my only topper!" said Blake, with a whistle. "Old Algy and his pals will fairly get it in the neck for this! I guess old Colonel Brickdust will make the cads sit up for this!"

"And serve 'em jolly well right!" grunted Grundy. "I bet the cads were up to some mischief or other—up to some game against us if I'm not mistaken."

"That's it, I bet!" agreed Tom, frowning. "It looks to me as if they intended to pinch our boat, in any case, and leave us stranded here."

"Phew! That's it!"

"But it's jolly serious!" said Manners. "We're stranded here—marooned. We can't stay here all the silly night!"

"I fancy we sha'n't have to do that," said Tom, smiling. "Gussy and the others know where we are, and they're bound to come to look for us. It's possible they've seen Ponsonby with our boat."

"Ponsonby's too crafty to let 'em see him!" grunted Blake.

"Well, our chaps will guess something has happened when we don't turn up."

"But who is there to drive the dashed motor?" growled Glyn. "Gussy can't—at least, he knows very little of the job, and I hardly like the thought of any of them bringing the old boat near this dangerous coast."

"I was thinking of Weary Willy," smiled Tom. "He's bound to turn up soon."

"Half squiffy, perhaps?"

"Well, we must risk that."

Tom tried to speak hopefully, but it was plain he did not like the prospect at all. Even if help did arrive it would be some time, for their chums would scarcely expect them back very early. Tom's only hope was that their chums had seen Ponsonby & Co. arrive at Sandbeach with their boat.

The juniors settled down to wait with very glum faces. But, contrary to their expectations, they had not to wait long. Quite suddenly Tom Merry leaped to his feet and pointed across the sea towards the shore.

"Here she comes!" he yelled. "Oh, good! Good man, Gussy!"

It was the Silver Spray right enough, and even at the distance they could see that she was fairly flying along. And, as she forged nearer, Bernard Glyn gave a grunt of relief as he saw the well-known figure of Weary Willy at the wheel of the motor-boat.

"Oh, good!" he breathed. "Weary Willy handling her. We're all right now, chaps!"

"Ponsonby's done in the eye!" grinned Lowther. "What a sell for him, and what a merry old rumpus in store for the cads!"

But Lowther had spoken a trifle too soon there.

Some distance out the motor-boat slowed down, and they saw Arthur Augustus and Digby pull the dinghy alongside, and the next moment or so they were pulling hard for the island.

Guided by Tom Merry's shouts, the boat entered the narrow channel, and was soon grounding on the beach. Arthur Augustus and Digby jumped ashore, their faces grim.

"Good men!" grinned Lowther. "All is merry and bright, after all. Dear old Pon gets the kybosh again!"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his horrified glance fixed on the sunken motor-launch. "I feah I do not feel so happy about it as you appear to be. Wathah not! I am afraid that w'etched old colonel will make things vewy, vewy awkward for you."

"Eh? Why should he, ass?"

"Don't you undahstand the position?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle further into his eye and glancing from face to face. "The colonel believes that you fellows are responsible for the w'eckin' of this w'etched boat. He has just been to the boat, and he has been kickin' up a feahful shinday!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Ponsonby vows you chaps did it," said Digby breath-

lessly. "He's told the old chap you pinched the motor-boat and ran her aground on the island here. He says that he and his pals followed in the sailing-boat—chased you! He's fairly raving, and vows to get the police on the job. It's really serious, chaps."

"But—but it's all lies, of course," howled Blake.

"Of course it is—we know that!" said Digby. "But the colonel believes it, and, after all, you chaps will be found stranded here with the wrecked boat—unless we get you away quickly."

"It's too late," said Arthur Augustus, staring back toward the bay. "Heah comes the old wuffian now, I fancy."

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Digby. "Come on, chaps—let's get on the motor-boat, sharp!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The mattah is vewy vewy sewious. It is a mattah of your word against Ponsonby's, and we know that unspeakable old buffah will take theirs against ours. I do not— Bai Jove, Mannahs! There is nothin' whatevah to gwin about, I can asuah you. Wathah not!"

"Was I grinning?" inquired Manners blandly.

He stepped into the boat, a curious grin on his face. The rest followed, Grundy dropping the picnic-basket into the stern.

"We'll see!" growled George Alfred, his rugged face wrathful. "We'll see if that cad Ponsonby shoves it on to us. I'm going to make him own up if I have to change his face into a boiled beetroot to do it."

There was a chuckle, but Tom Merry did not smile—he saw that there was serious trouble ahead for someone. It was a matter of their word against Algy & Co., and he knew only too well whose word the colonel would take.

It was a grim crowd that boarded the Silver Spray. The dinghy was cast astern, and the motor-cruiser turned and went speeding back. All eyes turned on the fishing-boat that was approaching the island—the boat D'Arcy had seen. A well-known figure was seated in it, besides the boatman.

As it came abreast of the motor-boat, the figure stood up, and as they had guessed it proved to be Colonel Bolter, and he was obviously in a towering rage.

"You young scoundrels!" he bellowed across the water. "I am just going to view the damage, my lads! You need not think you will escape the consequences of your dastardly conduct. I will have the police—"

His voice was swallowed up as Glyn chuckled and started to play a sort of tune on the Klaxon horn. The colonel was seen to dance about in the rocking boat with rage.

"You ass, Glyn!" said Tom, smiling grimly. "No need to make the old buffer worse. Hallo, where's Manners?"

"He's gone below into the fo's's'le," grunted Blake. "That chap is the limit! Fancy going down to develop dashed films at a time like this!"

"Is that what he's doing?" ejaculated Tom.

"He said so," said Lowther, chuckling. "He's rigged up the fo's's'le as a sort of dark-room, hasn't he? We'll have Herries going down to play his cornet there next."

"Or you to work out stale jokes," growled Digby.

"Not stale jokes," said Lowther blandly. "Seasonable ones! See—sea-sonable jokes!"

"Oh, rats!"

Lowther walked away smiling, but there were few smiling faces on board the Silver Spray as she drew to her moorings off the beach, some minutes later. The matter certainly did look serious, and none of the juniors felt comfortable about it—none, that is, with the exception of Harry Manners. The matter did not seem to trouble that junior at all, and he chuckled many times and oft as he worked away in the dim regions of the tiny fo's's'le.

CHAPTER 13.

Bowled Out!

"YOU fellows care for a visit to Colonel Bolter?" Manners asked the question, and Tom Merry & Co. stared at him as if they imagined he had taken leave of his senses.

It was some considerable time since the Silver Spray had arrived at her moorings, and Tom Merry and the others were lounging in the aft cockpit, discussing the wrecked motor-boat affair rather gloomily.

Grundy & Co. had gone to their camp, but Tom Merry had decided it best to remain on board in case Colonel Bolter paid them another visit. They had scarcely missed Manners, but now as he emerged from the fo's's'le and strolled aft, they stared at him.

"Care for a visit to Colonel Bolter?" exclaimed Tom Merry blankly. "What on earth are you gassing about, Manners? Great Scott! Have you been down in that fo's's'le all this time, you tame lunatic?"



"Now, my friend," cried Colonel Bolter grimly. "I will see if a sound slapping will teach you better conduct towards your elders!" Spank, spank, spank! "Yooop! Ow-wow!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwicky!" He struggled furiously and desperately as the old soldier's muscular hand rose and fell. (See Chapter 7.)

"Yes, old chap!"

"The darkness must have driven you off your onion, then," said Tom, staring. "Care for a visit to that old buffer—eh? Not likely!"

"I'd rather visit a giddy tiger in his den," chuckled Lowther.

"Well, I'm going, anyway," said Manners calmly. "I've got something interesting to show the old chap. I suppose he's come back from the wreck?"

"Ages ago!" said Tom Merry, grunting. "He shook his silly 'old fist at us, but he hasn't troubled us since. I suppose he's gone to get into touch with Scotland Yard."

"Or the War Office," added Lowther. "Though, as it happens to be a crime at sea, he may report it to the Admiralty. We're hanging about waiting for the old buffer to visit us."

"Then why not come with me to visit him?" said Manners.

"But why?" shouted Tom Merry.

"It's like this," said Manners. "I think I told you fellows that I was just taking a snap of our boat, and that jutting bit of cliff, when Ponsonby & Co. came along. Well, as it happened, I used the shutter just as their boat piled itself on the rocks."

"Oh!"

"I thought I had done, but wasn't quite sure until I saw the film," resumed Manners, smiling. "You see the boat just sailed round the rock as I snapped, and it was on the rocks in a flash."

"Then—then—" breathed Tom Merry.

"It's a ripping snap!" said Manners, with enthusiasm. "You should just see it—a happy stroke of the gods! It shows the boat's prow lifting as she struck, and it shows Ponsonby's dear old chivvy beautifully—his mouth wide open in sudden terror. While dear old Algy's mouth looks like a great cave. It's really a ripping likeness of them all, and I expect Colonel Bolter will be pleased to have a copy. Don't you fellows think so?"

Tom Merry suddenly clapped his chum on the back, almost sending him flat.

"Well, you blessed oyster!" he gasped, his eyes gleaming excitedly. "So that's why you were in such a jolly old hurry to develop those films!"

"Just that!"

"And have you got one done?"

"Yes, old chap. Here it is," said Manners, and he handed a print over to Tom Merry. As he glanced at it Tom Merry suddenly doubled up and roared, and the next moment Blake and the rest did likewise as they glanced at the print.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, this is weally wippin'!" laughed Arthur Augustus. "I weally could not have taken a bettah snap-shot myself."

"Go hon!"

"It is weally 'oo funny for words—apart ffrom its gweat value as evidence, bai Jove!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I think that will be quite enough evidence to put the kybosh on fwiend Ponsonby's little game, deah boys! Good man, Mannahs!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on!" grinned Tom Merry. "Yes, we would care for a visit to Colonel Bolter with this. What do you chaps say?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Pway wait while I change my clobber, deah boys!"

But Tom Merry & Co. did not intend to wait. They already had their hats on, and they dropped down one after another into the dinghy, Tom deeming it wiser to go in force on such an errand. And, fearful of being left behind, Arthur Augustus dropped down after them.

In a few strokes they reached the beach, and, jumping out, they made a bee-line for Seaview House. A few minutes later they were ringing the bell of the colonel's front door.

The colonel was at home, and he almost had a fit as he sighted the numerous deputation that awaited his presence.

"What—what— Bless my soul!" he gasped, his face going suddenly purple. "You—you have dared to come here like this—"

"We won't keep you a moment, sir," said Tom politely. "But the matter cannot wait. Your nephew and his chums have made a grave charge against us, and we are here to defend ourselves against it. It is only just and right that we should be allowed to make our defence."

"Good gad!"

The colonel glowered at the juniors. But something in Tom Merry's steady, frank glance made the old warrior's grim features relax.

Irritable and "crusty" as the old gentleman possibly was, he was not without a sense of fair play, and he saw that Tom's request was only right and just.

"Very well," he grunted, after a pause. "I am ready to hear what you have to say, my lads. But I warn you that I have already satisfied myself that you are responsible for the wrecking of my boat. I have not yet brought myself to the point of reporting the matter to the police, but I may do so yet. Well, what have you to say?"

"Only that we have not laid a finger on your motor-boat at all," said Tom Merry quietly. "We went for a picnic on Fury Island, and we went in our own sailing-boat—one that was hired to us here, at all events. Your nephew and his friends followed us in your motor-boat. Their intention was to pinch—I mean, take—our boat, and leave us stranded on the island. But instead they ran their own boat on the rocks."

"Nonsense!" snapped the colonel, though he was eyeing Tom very steadily.

"It is quite true, sir. Your nephew's lot were terrified at what they had done, and they took our boat and went back to you, laying the blame for what happened on our shoulders, and leaving us stranded on the island."

"Have you any proof to offer?" snorted the colonel.

"Yes, sir. Here it is." And Tom handed over the print. The colonel blinked at it, and his face went red. Then he grabbed his spectacles, and placed them on his nose, and blinked at the print again.

Then his jaw set hard, and he looked up.

"One of you boys took this?" he said, in a harsh voice.

"Yes, sir," said Tom, and he told how Manners had snapped the rascally Ponsonby & Co.

The colonel nodded. He was gnawing his moustache, but he seemed remarkably calm under the circumstances.

"I will see what my nephew and his friends have to say to this!" he said snappily. "Come this way!"

"Yes, sir."

The juniors followed the old gentleman out through the french windows on to the lawn. Colonel Bolter shouted to a gardener:

"Where is my nephew and his friends, Polson?"

"I saw them go into the woodshed about an hour ago, sir," was the reply. "I think they're still in there, sir!"

"Right, Polson!"

The colonel stumped down the garden-path, motioning the juniors to follow him. Polson stared after them, a curious grin on his gnarled features. Polson knew what Ponsonby & Co. were doing in the woodshed. But, like the rest of the domestic staff at Seaview, Polson was "fed-up" with Algy and his lofty, supercilious friends, and he had no intention of shielding them.

The colonel stumped down to the woodshed, and the juniors followed.

Colonel Bolter tried the latch of the shed. It did not lift, evidently being wedged with a peg of wood from inside. The colonel snorted, and placed a hefty shoulder to the door. Crash!

The door flew open and the wedge of wood snapped.

The colonel jumped.

Tom Merry & Co., looking into the shed from behind him, chuckled softly.

It was, as Lowther remarked afterwards, a fair "cop!"

Algeron & Co. were there—very much there!

They were seated on boxes round a rough wooden table. On the table were playing-cards and little piles of money. The room fairly reeked of tobacco-smoke.

With startled faces and cigarettes hanging from their loose lips, Algy & Co. stared as if transfixed at the doorway.

In the doorway stood Colonel Bolter. He seemed to be on the verge of a volcanic eruption.

"What—what— Good gad!" he articulated.

"Oh dear!" faltered Algeron. "Uncle—"

"Rascal!"

It was a bellow, and Algy leaped nearly a foot into the air, all but swallowing his lighted cigarette.

"Rascals! Young puppies!" bellowed the colonel, his red neck fairly swelling with emotion. "So—so this is how you spend your holidays—this is where you vanish to so mysteriously! I suspected that I was harbouring a gang of blackguards, and now I see that my vague suspicions were more than correct. Bah! I see you now for the gang of depraved young puppies you are!"

"Uncle—"

"Silence!" gasped the colonel, his voice trembling now with emotion. "You—you have deceived me abominably—you have abused my hospitality in a scandalous manner. But that is not all. You have lied disgracefully to me, and have done your utmost to force me to commit an act of grave injustice."

"But uncle—" burred Algy, blinking pathetically.

"Silence!" thundered Colonel Bolter. "Before you say anything, I wish you to look at that—all of you! I will then hear what you have to say!"

And with that Colonel Bolter flung the photographic print on the table. Algeron picked it up with shaky hands and blinked at it. He almost fell down as he did so. Ponsonby took it next, and his face went black with bitter chagrin as he looked at it. In turn the black sheep looked at the incriminating photo.

"Well?" demanded the colonel, in a terrible voice.

"Oh dear!" burred Algy.

"It—it's a trick—a trick of those cads!" snarled Ponsonby.

The old soldier glanced at Ponsonby.

"I think that will do!" he said grimly, controlling himself with an effort. "There have been quite enough lies told over this business! Algeron!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You will leave my house by the first train in the morning," said the colonel quietly. "And your friends will go with you. I can forgive accidents," added the old gentleman, with a grim glance at Arthur Augustus, "and I can forgive mischievous practical jokes, and even hostility and disobedience. But I cannot forgive blackguardism and lying. You may go!"

He stood on one side of the doorway, and Algy & Co. went out like whipped curs.

Tom Merry & Co. stayed the night at Sandbeach. Grundy & Co. spent the night camped in their usual spot near the orchard. But in the morning even Grundy agreed that, in the circumstances it would be more "decent" to move camp, and cease annoying the old warrior.

So Grundy & Co. started early that morning to break camp, and Tom Merry & Co. started to help them. They were thus engaged when Colonel Bolter turned up suddenly. He glowered at the juniors with a peculiar expression in his eyes, and then he asked them what the thunder they were doing.

Grundy—in his usual blundering manner—told him.

"Nonsense!" snapped the old gentleman. "This ground is public ground, I believe. Stay where you are. Only mind I do not catch you in my orchard!"

Colonel Bolter stumped away.

"Well, my hat!"

Grundy was overcome. But he stayed.

And Tom Merry & Co. stayed also—only for breakfast, however, and he then said good-bye to Grundy & Co. It had been a very exciting stay at Sandbeach, but Grundy & Co. did not need their aid any longer, and Tom Merry & Co. had already had enough of their society.

So they said good-bye to Grundy & Co., and they lifted anchor, and the Silver Spray nosed out into the open Channel in the early morning sunshine, seeking adventures new.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next exciting story in this splendid series, entitled: "The Mystery of the Silver Spray!" You'll enjoy it no end, chums.)

LOOK OUT FOR THE "SHERBET MAN!"

Would you like a free gift of a box of delicious sherbet? Of course you would! Then look out for the Special Representative of the "Gem" at the seaside this summer! At all the principal seaside resorts our Representative will be specially looking out for boys and girls who are carrying a copy of the "Gem." To everyone seen displaying this paper, he will present free a box of delicious sherbet. So take your "Gem" with you when you go on the beach, and show it as prominently as you can. Our sherbet man will be on the look out for you!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE ROUGH WITH THE SMOOTH! Ferrers Lord is not grudging in his praise when a task is well performed, but a bungled job brings a severe reprimand on the head of the bungler. And this time Val Hilton is the bungler!

A PHANTOM THRONE!

A Powerful Story dealing with the plot to restore the Monarchy in Germany.

By **SIDNEY DREW.**

On the Carpet!

VAL could only see a square patch of green light a little taller than the other patches, and this he guessed from its height to be the door. He was not very much flurried, for he felt sure that the planes would hold her up for some little time. Luck favoured him, for his foot struck something hard, which happened to be one of the chairs. There was a gangway exactly opposite the door, so that there was nothing in the way.

Val kicked against the door, and with hands outstretched he shot forward, and saw a brighter green light above him. For one thrilling and anxious moment he got mixed up with a steel stay, and then with a pumping heart, straining eyeballs, and almost bursting lungs, he got his head above water and gasped and snorted.

A whistle pealed sharply and the launch came along. "Mornin', sir," said Joe, the yacht's carpenter, saluting with one hand and extending a boat-hook with the other. "Fine, sir!"

"Phew! I'm glad you like it and think it's fine!" said Val, panting. "Have you got the other four?"

"All aboard, sir," replied Joe.

"And a nice wet bundle of mugwumps we are, too!" growled Barry O'Rooney. "Didn't Oi warn you, Masther Dave? This is the sort of thing that happens to bornn idiots who go to sea. Foirey blazes and could salt wather, crazy Huns shooting bullets at you and chasing you with naked swords, doiving off foundrther aeroplanes—pinched wans—and being hauled out of the briny dape by the nape of the neck, boots gone, coat gone, watch ruined, health ruined, temper ruined—that's phwat every silly gossoon gets when he goes to sea. No more for me, koin'd friends, no more! The minute Oi get fut on dry land Oi'm going to stick to ut like seccotine. Anybody can be a sailor for me that loikes, but give me a fried fish shop and a warm bed at night and kape your dirty wet sea!"

"If you can't give us something else, give that subject a rest, you old grouser!" said Dave. "I wish you would start a fried fish shop and fry yourself in mistake for a piece of dogfish that you'll try to palm off on your wretched customers as place! I give you my word, you ghastly worry, I wish you never had come to sea! Most of the boys here would have been a sight happier if you hadn't!"

"Bedad, Masther Dave, Oi thank you for them few koin'd words!" said Barry, with a grin.

Val hauled himself up the ladder, very tired and bedraggled, to meet Prout, very spruce and trim, with hand at salute.

"Your hot bath is ready, sir," said the steersman of the Lord of the Deep.

"I'm very pleased to hear it, Mr. Prout," said Val. "Is the chief here?"

"No, sir!"

"Have you any message from him for me?"

"No message—I mean no message for you, sir!" said Prout. "Soon after we picked up your wireless—which the chief must have picked up, too—a message did come through in the fifth code, but it was for me, sir! I was told to send Gan Waga with petrol and get you off if you could fly it. If you couldn't, I was to take the yacht along!"

"But when you didn't hear from us you must have known that something was wrong," said Val. "Was nothing done?"

Prout, usually so outspoken, hesitated.

"No, by honey, nothing was done, nothing that you could call anything, sir," he answered, after a pause. "I tried to get you on the wireless, Morse and 'phone, but it was all dead silence, and of course I was mighty anxious. I took the liberty of wirelessly the chief and I got my reply, which didn't make me too keen to do any more interfering. I was told to let you alone!"

"Oh!" said Val. "And have you any orders now?"

"Only such orders as you care to give me, sir," said Prout. "If you haven't any, I'd trek back to Porthampton. I see that 'plane still keeps afloat, and she'd better be scuttled. Where's O'Rooney, Joe?"

"Gone below to change, I expect, Tom," said the tall and bony carpenter.

"I've no orders for you, Prout," said Val.

"Then fetch O'Rooney and tell him to bang a few holes in the 'plane and sink her," said Prout, making for the bridge.

Val was in his bath and the yacht was steaming for Porthampton, when he heard the crash of a gun and the boom of a bursting shell, which sent the stolen German aeroplane to the bottom. Val felt that he had nothing to blame himself for except that, as the wireless apparatus was of such importance, he ought to have put it in a place of safety first of all. But he had been blindfolded all through. His directions had been to land certain goods and assemble the aeroplane on the barren island of Klarspafen. With great difficulty he had carried out the first part of his instructions, but after that everything had gone against him.

He had just finished dressing and was enjoying the luxury of warm, dry clothes when Dave came into his cabin.

"Gee, old thing! I've just discovered what a topping thing a hot bath really is," said Dave, who looked very pink and clean. "There was about half an inch of grit and sand at the bottom of the bath, mostly out of my hair. Have you discovered why they didn't come along sooner and pick us out of that dustheap?"

"I got it out of Prout that the chief told him to leave us alone. How would you take it—as a compliment or a smack in the eye?"

"It's a bit of a puzzle, old top," said Dave, "but I'd take it as a compliment. If the chief told Prout to sit tight and let us alone, it looks as though he thought we were capable of muddling through. But of course he can't have guessed that the Huns were roasting us out of our rat-hole with blazing petrol."

"I wouldn't care to take an oath on that, either," said Val. "It's impossible to say what the chief knows and what he doesn't know. Prout must have had the wind up badly about us, for he's a good-hearted sort, but he couldn't move a finger without orders. I've been thinking it over, kid, and all round I think it was hard lines on our side. It was that great lout of a German baron who spoiled things mostly, and if only we'd managed to pounce on him for a start we might have told a very different yarn. There was something there for us to do, something big, I'm certain. Wireless or no wireless, I'm confident the chief would have got the orders through to us, but when the aeroplane went west—"

"Do you really believe the chief knew we had lost the 'plane, Val? Rather a big order, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's a big order, I admit," said Val. "But I do believe it."

"Perhaps it was Wigland," said Dave, thoughtfully. "He's a quiet old stick, and I'm a bit distrustful of those quiet ones. He may have had a wireless hidden somewhere. You may be right that the chief had arranged some big stunt for us, and losing the plane fooled it. But why worry? I never thought any great shakes of you, my lad, but I must say you acted pretty decently to haul us out of it. Of course, you're a fathead and all that, but you're slowly improving!"

It was not Dave's habit to be very complimentary in his remarks, but he gave his chum's hand a warm squeeze.

"And now to see the merry old chief," he went on. "I've got a longing for veal and ham pie, and I'm off to wangle a hefty big slab out of him. Will pie with me, saucy varlet?"

"No, I'm off to have a sleep," said Val. "It wasn't all honey and lavender on the top of that plane last night, so you can beat it and gover yourself. I'm off to sleep, and it may rain tar or treacle for the next hour or so for all I care! Heigho! If I don't waken before we're at our moorings, let me sleep till then!"

While Val, as tired as an overdriven horse, was slumbering dreamlessly, Ching Lung, who had also had a bath and a change, joined Prout and Maddock on the bridge.

"Ben's been telling me, sir," said the steersman. "Bad luck, by honey! You hit up against it having a spy on shore!"

"Yes, Tom," said the prince. "Val hit up against it with a very nasty jar! We can't very well blame Wigland, for the spy seems to have come ashore with a gang of smugglers. We scared the smugglers off, but not the other chap—very unfortunately for Midshipman Hilton. As a matter of fact, he wasn't the sort you could frighten very easily."

"And the great Wilhelm turned up, Ben tells me," said the steersman. "By honey, what a pity!"

"Champagne, flashing swords, and 'Hoch der Kaiser,' complete with military cloaks and helmets, and an easy chair for His Nibs of Doorn," said Ching Lung. "We had a blanket on the manhole, and just when things were getting interesting and Wilhelm was feeling himself back on the throne again the silly thing slipped and let the light through! Pursued by maddened Huns with naked swords, we hopped it for our dug-out, and Kaiser Billy hopped it for Holland, considerably jarred!"

"A pity, by honey!" said the steersman again. "I'm not pretending I know, for I don't, but if things had gone right I think Mr. Val would have got orders to borrow the Kaiser and Zeimeyer and bring them back. Not such an easy job, perhaps, but you had the invisible stuff, and it could have been done!"

"Easy as sitting on a fence, souse me!" growled the bo'sun. "We could have knocked the whole bunch of them sideways before they knew anybody was within miles of them, and hustled Bill down the trap before you could say 'Knife.' I'm not so sure about Zeimeyer, for I didn't see him, but Master Dave told me he was as fat as a butter cask and weighed a ton, so he might have stuck tight in the manhole. There was no luck, Tommy, no luck at all, souse me, except that we crawled out of the soup at the finish and wriggled away!"

"And put the wind up Bill and the other conspirators!" said Prout. "Well, well, he who sprints and gets away may be jolly well nabbed another day, by honey! I wish it had come off, for it would have been a fine scoop!"

Dave had obtained his pie, and Gan Waga the Eskimo, always generous and obliging in such matters, had helped him to eat it in the smaller saloon. When the last crumb had vanished the Eskimo patted himself.

"My, that good stuffs, Dave, and I feel a lot better now! Oooh, I say, old beetroofs, I gotted an invitation to supper to-night on old Scobber's blancamgery boats! No, that wrongfuls, and I means

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR!

FERRERS LORD, millionaire and world traveller, entertains the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary aboard his yacht, the Lord of the Deep. In the privacy of Ferrers Lord's cabin these Ministers of H.M. Government discuss informally with the millionaire and Rupert Thurston the activities of the Royalist party in Germany. Lord declares that the plot to restore the Kaiser to the throne is likely to be put into operation at any moment, and adds that should Germany be plunged into civil war, the whole of Europe would be involved in consequences too horrible to contemplate. Ferrers Lord then suggests a way out of the trouble, and although it is fraught with much risk to those who throw in their lot with him, the millionaire answers for the loyalty of all aboard the Lord of the Deep, and offers to take that risk.

Under the command of Midshipman Val Hilton, Prince Ching Lung, David ap Rees, Benjamin Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and a number of ordinary seamen, proceed to an island named Klarspargen, where, in accordance with the orders of Ferrers Lord, they meet James Wigland, an interpreter, who leads them to a rectangular underground chamber—a one-time German submarine base—built below an old mill.

They are investigating its inner secrets when the mill is blown sky-high by Baron von Stolzenburg, a German spy.

Later, Val and his companions are discovered by a party of Royalists who have forgerthed on the island to meet the ex-Kaiser, and in consequence are forced to flee. Commandeering a German plane fitted with wireless, they vacate Klarspargen. Scarcity of petrol, however, necessitates their taking refuge on an island seven miles distant. Barry O'Rooney sends a wireless call for aid with the result that Gan Waga locates the stranded crew and directs them back to the Lord of the Deep. Realising the danger of landing without floats, Val instructs his chums to jump clear. The next moment, however, the plane strikes the water and sinks with the midshipman a prisoner in its saloon.

(Now read on.)

menagerie boats, not blancamgery! How you likes to come along, Dave? I takes yo' all rightness if yo' likes to come!"

"Don't ask me, don't mention it, Fatty," said Dave. "If I saw Scobber trying to eat through those whiskers of his, I think I should drop dead. And if he kicked off with soup, especially thick soup—oh, for the love of Mike, don't, Gan!"

"It would be worseness if it was macaroni," said the Eskimo, thoughtfully, "or hotness buttered crumpets. Funny that old Scobber can grow whiskers like haystacks and none ever grow on my chin. Well, if yo' nots come I'll ask Ben Maddocks and Barry O'Rooney. So I'd better remember to give old hairy-faces a chi-ike as we go ups and tells him to have lotses of grub ready. I wonder if Ching will joins the jolly old beanfeasts? You'd enjoyfuls yourselves, Dave, 'cos there'll be singsongs afters. I'm going to sing!"

"I'd sooner see Scobber eat than hear you sing, so there's nothing doing!" said Dave.

Ching Lung excused himself, but the bo'sun and Barry O'Rooney agreed to dine with the captain of the menagerie boat if they could get off. The hairy-faced captain was sunning himself on his deck when the yacht came up the harbour, and through a megaphone Gan Waga told him there would be three to dinner.

Val slept his dreamless sleep until a touch roused him, and he saw the chief steward at his bedside.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, sir, but the chief is asking for you," said the steward.

"So the chief's aboard?" thought Val, giving his face a sponge and his hair a hairy brush. "Now for it!"

It was almost dusk and Ferrers Lord was writing by the light of a shaded electric lamp. When Val entered the saloon the millionaire stood up and switched on more lights and looked searchingly at Val with his keen grey eyes as the midshipman saluted, and when he spoke his deep voice had an icy chill in it.

"Good-evening, Mr. Hilton," he said. "So you have failed, failed dismally. Have you any excuses to offer?"

"I never make excuses, sir," said Val. "I left them all behind me when I first stepped aboard your yacht!"

A Reprimand!

FERRERS LORD gave a curt nod. "It is as well, Mr. Hilton, that you did," he said, "for I never accept excuses, and the reason is that I never ask any person in my service to do what is impossible. As you have no excuses, have you any explanation? Do not be afraid of speaking out."

"Then I think the instructions you gave me, sir, were too vague," said Val, "though I am not grumbling on that account. At the outset we ran into a dense fog, and the whole merit of finding the island and getting the goods ashore at all belongs to Mr. Prout. Of course I know you are well aware of this part of the story, and probably of the whole of it. When I received your note from Wigland I very naturally expected further instructions. I see my error now. Though I had not been told what was in the bales, I ought to have guessed that there was wireless there and installed it at once so that I could keep in communication with the yacht. I ought also to have searched the mill, but after the smugglers had gone it never occurred to me that there could be anyone on the island except our own people. This spy who called himself Baron von Stolzenburg got his blow in first."

Again the millionaire gave a curt nod.

"You are becoming the accuser, Mr. Hilton, and charge me with giving you vague instructions. To me they appear to be very simple and concise. You were merely to land the goods and get the plane ready for flight. Wigland showed you where this was to be done, and your common sense must have told you that when you had carried out this very simple order you would receive further instructions from me. It has been a very expensive failure, but I am just enough to admit that when you found yourself in difficulties you did your utmost to get out of them. I did not send you to Klarspargen merely to make a rather sensational escape. Even in that you were only partially successful, for I had to send the Eskimo to your assistance. Are you still of the opinion that your instructions were vague?"

"No, sir, but very brief."

The millionaire lighted a cigarette.

"I am glad you are beginning to see reason, Mr. Hilton," he said. "They were perfectly simple and straightforward!"

"Yes, I agree, sir," said Val, "but Von Stolzenburg was not there by accident. He's a bit of a talker, and rather bragged about their spy system. There can be no possible doubt that when the meeting of the ex-Kaiser was arranged on the island by the heads of the German royalist party they expected danger from you."

"And instead of that you only gave them a fright, Mr. Hilton! I know you are not at all satisfied in your mind, for you think that when I sent you on your mission I ought to have told you more. All you know is that there is a plot to replace the ex-Kaiser on the throne of Germany and that I am trying to frustrate it. Thought is free, but I wish to point out something to you, Mr. Hilton, which you may take as a reprimand. An order from me is an order to be obeyed—first, foremost, and finally! In future, remember that!"

"I have never forgotten it, sir," said Val, flushing.

"Then the matter is ended. Good-evening, Mr. Hilton!"

Val saluted and turned to the door, feeling angry and rebellious. In the Klarspargen affair he had been terribly unlucky, but it was no use pleading ill-luck. His cheeks were still flushed when he encountered Ching Lung in the alleyway.

"Been through it, son?" asked the prince.

"Reprimanded," said Val. "And I don't think I deserve it."

"Only a reprimand?" said Ching Lung. "If you hadn't deserved it you wouldn't have got it. But you needn't be so down in the mouth about it. Was it a very severe one?"

"Not too severe, but nasty enough to hurt," said Val. "No good grousing, I suppose, but I don't like it. The chief did modify it a bit by saying we pulled out of the mess pretty well, in a sense, but he

spoil it by telling me my job wasn't to get into trouble and make sensational escapes like some American film hero!"

"That's better than the sack, old son," said Ching Lung. "Take a tip from me, and don't worry about it. A chap who can go through this life without being called over the coals some time or other must be born lucky, or else be too good for this world. Perhaps our shemuzzle at Klarspiargen hasn't done too much harm, and I hope it hasn't!"

Ching Lung went into the saloon, but it was some time before Val could get rid of the idea that Ferrers Lord's reprimand was unjust. His uncle always seemed so harsh and cold and distant, a man who was more likely to inspire fear or dislike in others than affection, and yet Val knew perfectly well that every person aboard the yacht would have gone to certain death at his bidding or followed him to it with a cheer.

The sunset was just fading out when Val came on deck and inspected the duty sheet which Prout kept pinned on the door of the chart room. His own name did not appear on it. Joe, the carpenter, was on the bridge.

"Seen Mr. ap Rees?" Val asked.
"He's gone aboard Scobber's hooker with the blubber-biter, sir," said Joe, "and I was to tell you if I saw you when you woke up. It's a dinner or something, and I think the bo'sun and O'Rooney was to join 'em after they've been ashore."

"Who follows you then?"
"Prince Ching Lung, sir," said the carpenter. "It was O'Rooney's spell, but he wanted to clear off, so the prince offered to take his turn."

This arrangement meant a clear night off for Val. If Dave had been there he would have suggested an evening ashore. But there was not much pleasure in going alone. He hailed a waterman who was prowling about looking for a fare, and was rowed across to Captain Scobber's rusty old steamer. Telling the boatman to stand by, Val climbed on board.

"Chi-ike! Anybody alive here, or are you only asleep?" he shouted.

There was no response and there was nobody in the captain's cabin, but there was a fairly clean cloth on the table, and the unusual number of cracked plates and chipped tumblers and knives and forks that did suggest the captain was expecting visitors. Val's nose led him to the ship's galley, where Captain Scobber was imperilling his whiskers by looking into the oven at the hissing joint of beef, while Dave peeled potatoes and Gan Waga cut up a cabbage.

"It's the dratted engineer of mine, that red-headed haggis-eater, McNort, sir," explained Captain Scobber. "He promised to do the cooking, but he's mizzled. When he comes back—if ever he dares to come back, then weevil—you'll see the flag flying at half-mast to celebrate his sudden death!"

"And so we helps a bit," said Gan Waga. "Every man his own jolly old cooks. 'Ho, ho, hoo! Yo' gets busy, Val, and make the horse radishes sauce! Hurry ups with the spuds, Dave, for we nots wants sirlions overdone!"

"And don't you leave any snails or caterpillars in that cabbage or I'll jump on your neck!" said Dave. "I thought you were going to sleep the clock round, Val, so I cleared out! Who gave you leave to quit?"

"I wasn't on the list, so I just quitted. Sorry to drop on you like this without an invitation, captain, but if you don't want to fire me out, I'll pay off my old bumboat man and stop with you for an hour."

With his whiskers again in the oven, Captain Scobber was understood to remark that the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la, were not more welcome than Mr. Midshipman Hilton.

"And I only wish," growled the captain as he grasped the big iron basting spoon, "that I had that red-headed McNort here, for I'd pour enough hot fat down his neck to make him lam manners!"

Val discharged the waiting boatman. He thought there were quite enough cooks in the galley already to spoil any dinner, and as it was smelly and stuffy down there, he remained on the deck watching the twinkling lights of the town and the shipping. At last the Lord of the Deep's white motor launch ran alongside Captain Scobber's hooker, and Mr. Barry O'Rooney and Mr. Benjamin Maddock, with large cigars in their mouths, climbed aboard.

"I hope we aren't late for the festivities, souce me!" said the bo'sun, with a grin. "And we didn't expect the pleasure of meeting you, sir, till Joe told us. 'Ahoj, skipper! How goes it, my lad?'"

Captain Scobber, who had come up to greet his guests, shook his head.

"That lubber, McNort, has got my goat," he growled. "Promised to cook the grub, he did, the tomato-headed weevil, and never turned up! Howsoever, my lads, I've got a bit of help from Mr. ap Rees and our fat messmate, Gan Waga, so never say die. And if I'm called away from the table for a minute or two never mind me, for you'll know I've only gone to kill a Scotch engineer named McNort, which is useful and necessary."

As McNort was the only person on earth who could keep Scobber's ancient engines working and prevent the leaky old boiler from blowing up, he was not in any serious danger. A hail from Gan Waga announced that dinner was ready, and after escorting his three visitors to the cabin, the captain hurried away to help-dish up.

Gan Waga bore in the smoking sirlion, and the captain and Dave followed with the potatoes and cabbage.

"For being rough-and-ready, gentlemen and messmates, apologies," said the captain, "and welcome to my humble board. And so say all of us, with a heave-ho holly, and a cheer for little Polly, and the King and his ships at sea!"

After these remarks, Captain Scobber sharpened the carving knife and inserted the fork in the sirlion.

Then came a thunderous roar.

Foul Play!

VAL was the first to reach the deck, to find a cloud of smoke enveloping the hooker, smoke that had an acrid smell. There had been an explosion somewhere, and not far away, for the waves caused by it were already lapping against the menagerie ship's rusty planks.

It was quite dark, until suddenly the searchlight of an anchored battleship shot a broad silvery beam across the water, and a light breeze from the shore thinned the smoke and drove it astern. A bigger and more powerful searchlight blazed out from the fort at the end of the harbour.

"Gee!" shouted Dave's startled voice. "It's the Lord of the Deep!"

Both lights had found the beautiful yacht and were shining on her. Her tapering bowsprit had been torn away, and they could see a dark, jagged rent in her white bows extending from water-line to the hawser-hole from which a thin grey vapour was rising.

"Foul play, souce me!" growled the bo'sun. "She's badly pipped, too, and shipping water like a little Niagara!"

After putting Barry O'Rooney and Maddock aboard the hooker, the launch had gone back to the yacht, but in all directions boats were being lowered. McNort had gone off in Captain Scobber's dinghy, and his two other boats were on the davits. As they rushed to lower one of the leaky old tubs Gan Waga took a header overboard, while Val stood with folded arms watching the yacht.

Shore leave had been given, and she had only about a third of the normal crew aboard. Unless some of the men had been killed or maimed by the explosion there was little danger, for there was quite a flotilla of launches and rowing boats round her. But Val knew she was doomed, for there was a heavy sag on her forward.

He sprang into the boat the moment the keel was in the water, and Dave and O'Rooney and the bo'sun slid down the falls. Maddock and O'Rooney plied the oars as the salt water trickled through the leaky seams.

"Ease up!" said Dave quickly. "We're not wanted!"

The other boats were getting out of the way, for it was obvious now that the yacht was going to founder, and in the glare she showed up like a vessel of burnished silver. Suddenly a flag was hauled to her truck and broke in the breeze, and all her lights gleamed out. She gave a roll to starboard and almost righted, and then came a more dangerous roll, and still a third, and with her colours flying, she settled down and sank.

Captain Scobber, who had remained on the deck of his ship, stroked his amazing beard, shook his grizzled head, and coming to the conclusion that his guests would not return, he went below to dinner.

As a matter of fact, his guests were in grave danger of having to swim back, for they were ankle-deep in water. A few yells from Barry O'Rooney attracted the attention of a middy in a naval launch.

"Anything the matter?" he shouted.

"Leaking like a colander!" said Val. "We shall never make the slipway without foundering. We belong to the Lord of the Deep."

"If that's so I'll chuck you a line and tow you in," said the middy.

"How did you manage to scuttle her?"

"As Val did not know he did not answer, but asked for the loan of a bailer, for Captain Scobber's boat was not provided with one of those very useful articles. By using it vigorously they managed to keep the water down till they were near the slipway.

"Good-night," said the middy. "I'm not asking for your names and addresses, so you won't get a bill from the Admiralty for towage! Pity about your yacht, for I've often admired her! So long!"

"So long, and thank you!" said Val.

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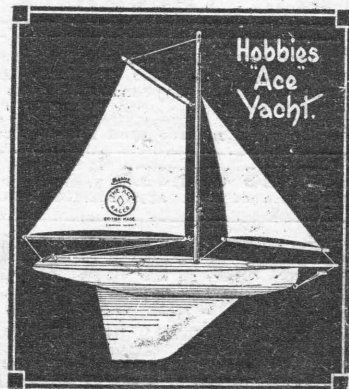
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