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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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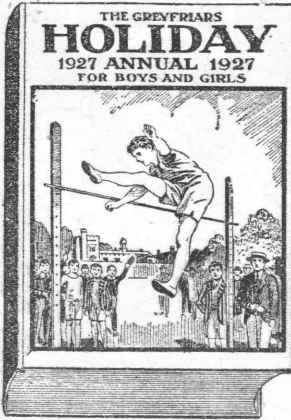


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NEXT WEEK'S STUNNING FREE GIFT!

GEMITES all over the world have been dying to know what form the promised Free Gift, due with next week's GEM, will take, and it is with no little pleasure and pride that I make this disclosure. You have been promised something out of the ordinary, have you not, and you will agree that I have kept my word when you see the

WONDERFUL FACIOGRAPH NOVELTY

of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy between the pages of next week's GEM. To those unacquainted with this particular type of novelty let me do my best to explain to them what it is. You are, of course, all familiar with Arthur Augustus' classic features. Well, Gussy has a postcard all to himself next week, and a thin flexible wire chain constitutes the major portion of his chivvy. When you jog the card the chain, of course, moves, with the result that you see something really original and unique in the way of funny faces. And every time you tap this Faciograph you see a different face. But there, you'll jolly soon see these things for yourselves once you have next week's topping Free Gift in your hands. Don't forget to tell your pals about it, chums.

FREE GIFT No. 2!

The week after next is another Free Gift Number, and it will contain a fine puzzle constructed round the photographs of well-known footballers. The solving of this puzzle will make you think a bit, but it's jolly interesting for all that and won't try your patience too far. And should you fail to solve it in a week the solution will be found in the following week's GEM. You might give your pals the tip about this stunning Free Gift, too, while you are about it. Many thanks!

CAMPING!

Am I interested in camping, a reader asks me. What-ho! As a matter of fact, I have spent a very happy three weeks under canvas this year amongst a jolly crowd of Boy Scouts. My correspondent who put the query informs me that he, and a party of chums, intend to camp at Rosgolyn, near Rhosneigr, North Wales. The tents are to be pitched in a field near a farm with a well close by, and not far from the sea. I should say that my chums are in for a good time; the site of the camp seems ideal, and the company is of the right sort to make a holiday a success. My correspondent, continuing, asks me if I would like to be with him. Wouldn't I just! But there's the old GEM to consider, you know. All play and no work—you know the rest! Good weather, chums, and a good healthy holiday—that's my wish.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"THE FOOL OF THE SCHOOL!"

By Martin Clifford.

This is the first of the magnificent new series of St. Jim's stories I have promised you. It deals with the coming of a new boy—and, believe me, he's *some* boy. You'll like this yarn, without a doubt! Be sure and read it.

"WHITE EAGLE!"

By Arthur Patterson.

This will be the first time that Arthur Patterson has contributed a yarn to the GEM, but he's a well-known author for all that, and certainly deserves the reputation his excellent yarns have earned. "White Eagle!" takes us to New Mexico with the fortunes of one Tom Holt. You'll like him, he's real grit throughout, and British! Look out for the opening chapters of this amazing serial then next week.

"THE FOOTBALL MEETING!"

That's the subject our Rhymester has chosen for his next jolly Cameo of School Life, and he hits the bulls-eye fair and square. Make sure of this bumper Free Gift Number by ordering your copy of the GEM to-day. Chin, chin!

YOUR EDITOR.

BAGGY TRIMBLE AGAIN! Hunger has a habit of sharpening Baggy Trimble's fat wits as no other means can, and to appease that hunger the fat and fatuous Baggy is capable of any trickery. He certainly "puts it across" Tom Merry & Co.—the motor-boat boys—this trip!



THE SPOOFER OF THE "SILVER SPRAY!"

A Rollicking Long
Complete Story of Tom
Merry & Co., the
Cheery Chums of St.
Jim's, on Holiday.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Going!

"I'M going, you fellows!"

Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, made the announcement earnestly and with great emphasis.

He made it to Tom Merry & Co., who were sitting together on the cabin roof of the Silver Spray, which was lying alongside the jetty at Lynridge. Dinner was just over on board the motor-cruiser, and the juniors were chatting and admiring the scenery.

It was very nice scenery. From where they sat they had a very good view of the pretty fishing-village, with its rugged streets, red-roofed houses and green-clad slopes beyond. In the September sunshine it was certainly looking its best. Indeed, so charmed with the place were Tom Merry & Co. that they were just discussing staying there a couple of days longer when Baggy Trimble rolled up to say that he was "going."

The motor-boat boys ceased swinging their legs and gazed at Trimble. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his glimmering monocle deeper into his eye.

Tom Merry & Co. were astonished—as well they might be. At the beginning of their holiday tour, Trimble had managed to "wangle" himself into the party, and he had been more or less an unwelcome member of it ever since. Indeed, at times, Tom Merry & Co. would have given a great deal to get rid of Baggy Trimble.

But Trimble was a stickler. Though he must have been perfectly well aware that his fascinating society was unwelcome, he had made it very plain from the start that he had no intention of deserting his "old pals" until the termination of the holiday cruise.

Hence the astonishment of Tom Merry & Co. now.

"You—you're going?" ejaculated Bernard Glyn.

"Yes!" said Trimble firmly. "I'm going!"

"G-g-gug-going?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yes—going!"

"Actually going?" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Yes!" said Trimble, blinking up at the juniors grimly.

"I'm fed-up with being left out of things, and I'm going!"

"Well, my hat!"

"You actually mean to tell us that you're going, Trimble?" asked Monty Lowther again, as if unable to believe his own ears.

"Yes—I'm going!"

"Hurrah!"

"What?"

"Hurrah!" roared Lowther, jumping up and waving his hat wildly. "Hurrah! Trimble's going! Come on, you fellows, let's help him pack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot!" yelled Trimble, giving a sudden jump.

"I didn't mean I was going—"

"You said you were going—"

"I am going!" snorted Trimble. "But I—"

"Hurrah!" roared Lowther. "Come on, you fellows! Fetch his bag, Manners!"

"Yes, rather!"

Manners jumped up, and Trimble gave a howl.

"I tell you I meant to say—"

"Buck up, chaps! Who's got the time-table?" bawled Lowther. "Who's going to look up trains for Trimble? Trimble's going! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!"

It was a roar from the rest of the juniors now. They all jumped up—apparently to help Trimble to pack. The fat junior fairly glared at them.

"I tell you you're making a mistake!" he howled. "I'm going—"

"Well, don't worry about it!" said Lowther cheerily. "Just go, old chap. Great pip! This is the first decent thing Trimble's done since the start of the cruise—deciding to go!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good man, Trimble."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I tell you—" shrieked Trimble.

"Now, don't get excited, Baggy," said Tom Merry. "We'll see you don't miss your train. Got his bag, Manners?"

"Here it is!"

Manners ran out of the cabin carrying Trimble's bag. Blake rushed off to find his raincoat. Tom Merry hurried away to look up the railway guide. In a moment all was bustle and excitement on board the Silver Spray. It did not seem to occur to Trimble that the juniors were pulling his leg, and he almost went frantic in his desperate attempts to explain matters.

But everybody seemed to be too busy to get off to allow him to explain.

"Here we are!" called Tom Merry cheerily, running out of the cabin with a railway guide. "Two-fifteen from Lynridge—London express, Baggy; you'll be home in time for tea—"

"I tell you—"

"Now, don't get excited, old chap," warned Lowther. "I know it's exciting going home, but try to keep cool and—"

"You silly asses—" roared Trimble. "Don't I keep telling you—"

"If it's your fare that's worrying you," said Bernard Glyn. "Don't worry about that, old fellow. We'll have a whip round—"

"Yes, rather! Don't worry about that, Trimble—we'll get your ticket, old chap!"

"Yaas, wathah! Do not bothah about that, Twimble," chuckled Arthur Augustus.

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"Worth a quid or two to help Trimble to get home," said Noble.

"Especially to us!" grinned Blake. "Don't worry about the ticket, Trimble."

"I tell you I don't want a rotten ticket!" shrieked Trimble. "Don't I keep on telling you—"

"That's all right, then," said Glyn cheerfully. "Save us a quid or so, Baggy! You chaps ready? I think I'll stay aboard, and leave you fellows to see Trimble off at the station."

"Right-ho! Help Trimble ashore, you fellows—musn't let him miss his train! Besides, he may change his mind!"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Come along, Trimble!"

"It's the last train to London to-day, Trimble," explained Tom Merry.

"Look here—" howled Trimble.

"Good-bye, old chap!" said Glyn, grasping Trimble's fat hand and giving it a squeeze that made Trimble yelp. "Good-bye, old fellow! So glad—I mean sorry—that you're leaving us. See you at St. Jim's when term starts!"

"I tell you," roared Trimble, "you're making a mistake! Leggo, you rotters! Oh crumbs!"

"Steady!" bawled Lowther, as many hands grasped Trimble. "Mind the boat doesn't turn turtle when Trimble steps off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!"

Trimble yelled as willing hands grasped him, and almost before he knew it he found himself ashore, hustled and busted there by the grinning juniors.

He stood and blinked round him in helpless wrath. Whether the juniors were in earnest, or whether they were only pulling his leg for a lark, he did not know. He only knew that he didn't want to go home, and that he had no intention of going home if he could help it.

Certainly he had stated that he was "going." But he had not meant that he was going home—far from it. That afternoon Tom Merry & Co. had planned an afternoon's outing to Alborough Abbey, and to picnic there—leaving Trimble in charge of the boat. And naturally Trimble was not pleased at the idea of being left behind, and he had approached the juniors just now to make it quite understood that he intended going—with them!

Unfortunately, Tom Merry & Co. had jumped to the conclusion—or pretended to do so—that he was going home.

It was really unfortunate for Trimble, and especially so as Tom Merry & Co. seemed determined not to give him a chance to explain what he really had meant.

"Oh!" gasped Trimble, getting back his breath at last. "Oh, you rotters! I believe you know jolly well that I never meant—"

"My dear man, don't worry about that," said Blake cheerfully. "We know you never meant to leave us in the lurch like this, of course. But we don't mind—"

"Not a scrap, old chap!"

"Not a tiny little bit!" said Tom Merry. "Come along, old man, you'll miss your train if you don't buck up!"

"Oh, you—you—" Trimble spluttered.

"I believe he's worrying about his ticket," said Blake, shaking his head. "I remember him saying he was stony this morning."

"Yaas. He tried to bowwow a bob of me this mornin', bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway do not wovwy about your ticket, deah boy. We'll stand that—"

"And a bit of pocket-money to see you home," said Digby. "We'll see you don't go home penniless, old chap."

"Wathah not, bai Jove!"

Trimble was about to make a last desperate attempt to explain matters, when he paused suddenly, a glimmer appearing in his crafty little eyes.

If Tom Merry & Co. wanted to give him the price of a ticket to London, with pocket-money as well, why not let them? It was quite true that he was stony, only too true. It was also true that he did not want to go home, and that he had no intention of going home. The money would come in very useful for a good feed while the rest were away that afternoon, and he could easily say he had lost the ticket.

The idea fairly took the fat youth by storm, and he blinked round loftily at the juniors now, his hysterical excitement vanishing abruptly.

"Very well, you fellows," he said calmly. "I will accept your offer. Matter of fact, the question of the ticket was worrying me no end. I should have gone before this if I'd had the money. But if you fellows will loan me the cash I'll go at once."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors blinked.

"You—you'll go at once, Trimble?"

"Certainly!"

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CHAPTER 2.

Not Gone!

TOM MERRY & CO. fairly blinked in amazement at Baggy Trimble—all the wind taken out of their sails as it were. For they certainly had been "pulling his leg."

Actually, it would not have broken their hearts had Trimble decided to go. Neither his customs nor his manners, nor his speech, appealed in any sort of way to Tom Merry & Co. Baggy was greedy and over-talkative, and untruthful, and troublesome in every sort of way. The society of Baggy Trimble was not fascinating, and was much more enjoyable at a distance than at close quarters.

And now, here was Baggy actually agreeing to go! He had evidently meant that he was going home after all.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry, gazing blankly at the fat youth. "Did you really mean that you were going home all the time, Trimble?"

"Nothing of the kind!" said Trimble, with indignation. "I meant that I was going to Alborough with you rotters! I'm fed-up with being left here to look after the dashed boat while you chaps enjoy yourselves."

"That's your own fault, Baggy!" said Glyn, warmly. "You've disgraced yourself and us every time we've taken you anywhere, you fat ass! Besides, we've made it up to you in other ways!"

"Rot! What a fib!" said Trimble loftily. "But it's no good making excuses now, Glyn—it's too late! I'm fed-up, and I'm going! You chaps thought I was going home just now, and you've shown me you'd be glad if I did go. Very well, I'll go; I'm not a chap to want to stay where I'm not wanted, I hope!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You were cheering just now at the thought of me going!" went on Trimble bitterly. "Right! That's enough for me! I should have gone off long ago, only I refused to leave you chaps in the lurch," added Trimble. "But I've had enough. I've never been so disgusted with anyone's hospitality in my life!"

"Bai Jove, weally—Twimble—"

"You've treated me like—like a skivvy instead of a guest," said Trimble warmly. "Make me work like a nigger—washing up dishes and doing all the dirty work. Yah! Call that being hospitable?"

"You silly, fat ass!" said Glyn, half laughing. "You've had your work to do like the rest of us. Why, you've been lounging and sleeping all this morning while we've been scrubbing decks and polishing brasswork. We all do a jolly sight more work than you do, you fat ass!"

"I refuse to argue the point," said Trimble, sniffing. "I've had enough, and now I know I'm unwelcome, I'll go!"

"Then go, and be blown to you, you old fat man!" grunted Herries.

"Hold on!" said Glyn. Some of the juniors were looking rather uncomfortable now—Glyn especially. He did not like being called inhospitable, even by Trimble. True, Trimble was unwelcome; but even unwelcome guests had to be treated with a certain amount of politeness quietly. "You needn't take any notice of what was said just now—we were only pulling your leg, you fat ass! There's no need for you to go unless you really wish to!"

"That's so!" said Tom Merry. "Couldn't you see we were only joking, fathead?"

Trimble raised a fat and not over-clean hand.

"That's enough!" he said loftily. "If you went on your bended knees now I would absolutely refuse to stay any longer. I'm going; I shake the dust of this boat off my feet this very afternoon!"

"Go hon!" said Lowther. "Why not take it with you, old chap—save us brushing up, you know!"

"Chuck it, Lowther!" smiled Tom. "Look here, Trimble—"

"I refuse to discuss the matter further," said Trimble, with dignity. "I have my feelings and self respect to consider. I leave this boat this afternoon. I refuse to stay as the guest of a fellow who treats his guests so rottenly. Hand me my bag, Tom Merry. Noble, give me my raincoat."

"Then you really mean to go?" said Glyn.

"Certainly! My mind is made up," said Trimble. "All I ask you fellows to do is to loan me the money for my ticket."

"Oh!"

"You offered to do so just now," said Trimble, "and I accept on the strict condition that it is to be a loan and not a gift. I absolutely refuse to accept gifts from fellows I despise."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Twimble—"

"You dry up, Gussy!" said Trimble, with a sniff. "You refused to lend me a bob this morning—"

"Bai Jove! I lent you five bob only last night, you gweedy fat—"

"Well, you've no need to make a song about it," said Trimble, his lip curling. "I sha'n't expect you to contribute to the loan, anyway, D'Arcy. Now, you fellows, what about that two quid?"

"Two quid?"

"Yes, I shall need that amount at least. If you'll hand it me now, I'll give you a proper I O U and get off. You fellows have no need to come and see me off at the station, of course. We'll part here and now."

And Trimble held out a fat palm—apparently expecting two pounds to be put into it. It was a vain expectation.

"No thumping fear," said Blake, with emphasis. "If we handed you the cash for your ticket now you'd blue it on the way, and then come back for more, you fat fraud! Not likely!"

"Wathah not!"

"I don't believe the fat rotter means to go at all," sniffed Herries, bluntly. "Don't give him a dashed penny!"

"We won't until he's in the train, anyway!" said Tom Merry. "We know you, Trimble. But if you really mean to go home—"

"I do mean to go home!"

"Very well," said Tom, looking at Glyn. "We cer-

tainly won't stand in your way, Trimble. But we'll come with you to the station and get the ticket for you, and when you're actually in the train, we'll hand you a bit of money to see you through until you land home. That agreed, you fellows?"

"Yaas, wathah! I will stand my whack, deah boy."

"Same here!"

It was a chorus—a hearty chorus. Tom Merry & Co. did not wish to hurt Trimble's feelings by showing that they would be glad to see the back of him; but they could not help being eager to agree for all that.

But Trimble was looking far from pleased now—indeed, he was looking very disturbed. It was plain he did not wish the juniors to accompany him.

"Look here, you fellows," he stammered. "There's no need for anyone to come with me. In fact, I strongly object to taking up so much of you fellows' time, you know."

"I told you so," said Herries, grinning. "The fat fraud doesn't—"

"Oh, really, Herries—"

"We've wasted quite enough dashed time!" snorted Blake.

"Look here, Trimble, are you going home or not?"

"I—I'm going home, of course!" said Trimble warmly.

"But—"

"Then yank the fat ass along," said Blake, grabbing Trimble's bag. "We'll never get to Alborough at this rate, and Trimble will miss his dashed train. We don't want that to happen!"

"No fear! Come along, Trimble!"

"Look here— Here, leggo!" Trimble roared in alarm as half a dozen hands grasped him and hustled him away.

"Don't lose him!" yelled Glyn from behind. "Mind he doesn't get up to any tricks!"

"We'll watch that!" said Blake grimly.

"Oh crumbs!"

Trimble gasped in great alarm as he was propelled along the jetty at a great rate. Apparently Tom Merry & Co. had got tired of discussing the matter, and had decided upon brisk action. Trimble was bound for the station whether he wanted to go or not.

With Blake and Herries on either side of him, and the

rest in the rear he was hustled off the jetty, and the party started off at a brisk trot up the cobbled street towards the little station.

It was not a long way, and Trimble was fairly gasping for breath when they reached it. He was also inwardly trembling with apprehension.

What was to happen now he did not know. His crafty intention had been to spend the fare money, and return to the boat later with the sad news that he had lost his ticket.

It had seemed a very simple dodge for getting a couple of quid for nothing, and also a good chance of doing down the chaps who had treated him so badly.

That had been Trimble's intention and plan; but now he saw something would have to be done. He certainly had no intention of going home. Badly as he claimed to have been treated by Tom Merry & Co., Trimble was having quite a good time with them, and he knew it well enough. He did not want to leave them—far from it.

Either he must now own up that he didn't wish to go home, or else he must carry on for a bit and trust to luck to see him through.

Trimble decided to try the latter. It was worth taking a big risk to get a couple of quid for nothing. Besides, he wasn't at all sure that Tom Merry & Co. would allow him to draw back now. Trimble was under no delusion as to how

his charming society was regarded on board the Silver Spray.

But he made a last desperate stand when the station entrance was reached.

"Look here, you fellows!" he said. "You've come far enough. I absolutely refuse to allow you chaps to spoil your afternoon seeing me off. If you'll hand over the cash now, Merry—"

He blinked hopefully at Tom Merry and held out his fat hand.

Tom Merry smiled and shook his head. He was beginning, like Herries and several of the others, to be very suspicious of Trimble now.

"Not much, old fat man!" he said grimly. "Anything might happen to the cash if I handed it to you; it might never reach the booking-office."

"Oh, really, Merry, that's a rotten thing to say!" grumbled Trimble, blinking furiously at the grinning juniors. "Think I'm jolly well going to be dry-nursed like this! Yah! Why can't you hand over the money and lemme get my own ticket, you beast!"

"Now, look here, Trimble," said Tom frankly. "If you've got one of your little games on, I might tell you right away that it's not going to come off. Understand? If you really mean to go, we'll get your ticket and see you do go. For the last time, Trimble, are you going, or not?"

"Of course I'm going!" roared Trimble. "Gimme the money now! I don't see—"

"That's enough, then!" snapped Tom. "Take him on to the platform, chaps. I'll go and get his ticket!"

And to Trimble's great alarm Tom Merry hurried away towards the ticket-office. Trimble glared after him, and then he glared at the grinning juniors.

"Stop him!" he gasped. "Oh, my hat! I—I say, you fellows, I didn't really mean to say I was going. Nothing of the kind! I was only joking, of course! I wouldn't leave you chaps for anything. Oh crumbs! Fetch him back, you idiots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared, their suspicions fully confirmed now. Trimble yelled again, and then started as if to rush after Tom Merry. Blake and Herries held him fast, however.

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Hold Me Flat,
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"No, you don't!" said Blake grimly. "You've said you were going, and you've brought us all this way, you fat rotter! We'll jolly well see you've not brought us for nothing!"

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows, don't be such beasts, you know!" gasped Trimble almost tearfully. "And you know what a jolly good time I was having with you chaps—a ripping time! I don't want to go home—of course I don't! It's all a mistake!"

"Come along!" said Blake. "It's too late for regrets now, you fat fraud. Spoof us out of a couple of quid—eh? We'll watch it!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, Twimble, what a feahful little wottah you are!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I should certainly nevah allow the fat wascal to wemain with us now!"

"No fear!"

"Hallo, here's Tommy!" said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "Got the ticket, old man?"

"Yes, here we are!"

Tom Merry hurried up, and shoved a ticket into Trimble's fat hand. Trimble blinked at it, and then he gave a deep groan. It was a ticket for London right enough. But he was not done yet.

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows, don't be so mean!" he gasped. "Look here, Tom Merry! Take that ticket back, and tell 'em it won't be needed, after all!"

"Eh? How's that?"

"It's all a mistake!" groaned Trimble. "Look here, lemme take it back—"

"No fear!" said Tom, staring hard at Trimble.

"Why, you fat fraud, I do believe you never meant to go, Trimble!"

"Oh, crumbs! Yes, I did; only—only I've changed my mind now."

"Changed your mind?"

"Yes. You—you see, it was like this," stammered Trimble, blinking hopefully at the juniors. "I suddenly felt homesick—horribly homesick, you know! But it's passed off now. I've decided to stay with you fellows, after all. In fact, I simply couldn't leave you in the lurch—after all you've done for me. Your great kindness and— and chumminess," said Trimble, trying hard to produce a tear. "I can't bear the thought of leaving you, in fact."

"You fat fraud!"

"Living together like we've done," went on Trimble, pathetically, "makes the thought of parting awful, you know. I simply couldn't bear it! And as for washing the dishes up and all that—"

"Well, I'm hanged!" snorted Tom Merry. "And so you don't want to go now?"

"Nunno! Not at all. I—"

"After we've come along here, and after I've bought your ticket?" howled Tom.

"They'll give the money back, perhaps," said Trimble. "Here, I'll just run back with it now—"

"No you don't, my pippin!"

Tom Merry's grasp closed on Trimble's fat shoulder just as Trimble was turning to make a run for the booking-office.

"No, you don't!" repeated Tom, grimly. "You've brought us here, and you've got to go now, Trimble."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, dear! I say, you fellows don't be mean, you know!"

"Come on! Yank the fat ass along!" said Tom Merry, wrathfully. "We'll teach the fat rotter to make fools of us like this!"

"Look here—oh, all right, I'll come," yelled Trimble. "But I'm not jolly well going all that way without any grub. You fellows wait—"

Without stopping to finish, Trimble suddenly wrenched his shoulder free and leaped for the open door of the refreshment room; and as he did so, he made a grab at a tall trunk standing on the platform, pulling it over as he rushed on.

Crash!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look out!"

Bump!

"Yoooooop!"

What Trimble had hoped for happened swiftly enough. As he jumped away, Tom Merry leaped after him, and went sprawling with a crash over the fallen trunk—and over him went Blake and the others in a yelling heap.

By this time, Trimble was in the refreshment room. But he did not stay to order any "grub." There was another door at the far end, opening on to the station yard, and Trimble rushed across and through this.

Then he dashed along to the outer entrance of the

booking-office. Rushing inside, he slammed the ticket down on to the window ledge.

"Look here," he gasped to the clerk. "There's been a mistake—this ticket to London wasn't wanted, after all. Can I have my money back?"

The ticket-office clerk blinked at him.

"Eh? What?" he snorted. "Look here, young fellow, think we've nothing else to do but sell tickets and buy 'em back again?"

"But it was all a mistake," gasped Trimble, glancing behind him in an agony of fear. "It ought never to have been bought. You can easily sell it to someone else, can't you?"

"That's all very well—" the ticket-clerk was beginning when he was interrupted by a tall, genial-looking man who had listened in some amazement to Baggy's remarks.

"Hold on!" said the gentleman, smiling down at Trimble. "That a ticket for London, youngster?"

"Yes. It ought not—"

"That's just what I'm wanting," said the stranger, good-naturedly. "Here, I'll take it."

"Oh, good!"

Trimble's heart leaped, and he handed over the ticket. The man glanced at it, and then he handed a pound note and the odd silver over to the delighted Baggy. Then, with a smiling nod, he hurried out towards the platform for the London train was almost due.

"Oh, good!" gasped Trimble, pocketing the money with a chuckle. "Yah!" he added to the ticket-clerk. "Keep your rotten money!"

And Trimble was just turning away, when there came a shout from the platform.

"There he is—there's the fat rotter! Quick!"

It was Tom Merry, and behind him was Blake and the rest.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Trimble.

He fairly flew out of the booking-office and down the cobbled street.

"After him!" roared Tom Merry. "Great Scott! I believe he's sold that ticket back again!"

"Phew! That's it!"

Tom Merry and Co. went through the ticket-office with a mad stampede.

But Trimble had a good start, and he was half-way down the street, when Tom Merry and Co. emerged from the booking-office.

"There he goes!"

Trimble heard the howl, and he gasped and tore on, knowing he was fairly "in for it" now. Turning a corner abruptly, he went crashing into a group of youths who happened to be strolling along the street. They were very cheery, healthy-faced youths, dressed in Sea Scouts' uniforms, and they scattered to right and left as Trimble dived amongst them.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Crash, crash!

Trimble and one of the Sea Scouts sat down with a heavy concussion on the pavement. Trimble started to scramble up again, but he was instantly grabbed on all sides.

"Here, you careless dummy, what—"

"Lemme go!" roared Trimble frantically. "Lemme go, they're after me!"

"Eh? Who're after you, fatty?"

"Those awful cads—those rotten bullies," howled Trimble. Then, catching sight of the youths' uniforms, he got an inspiration. "Look here, you're Scouts, aren't you? Well, do your good turn to-day by helping to stop a chap being bullied."

"Oh, great pip!"

The Sea Scouts blinked at the ingenious Baggy—as well they might. And as they stood blinking there came a rush of feet round the corner, and Tom Merry and Co. appeared.

It was quite an unexpected appearance—just as unexpected as Trimble's sudden appearance had been. And the same result had happened.

Crash, crash, crash!

"Look out!"

"What the giddy thump—"

There was a chorus of yells and a series of bumps, and the next moment Tom Merry & Co. and the Sea Scouts were mixed up together in a yelling, scrambling heap.

But Trimble was not in the heap. He had heard the footsteps in time, and he had fled, leaving the rest to sort themselves out.

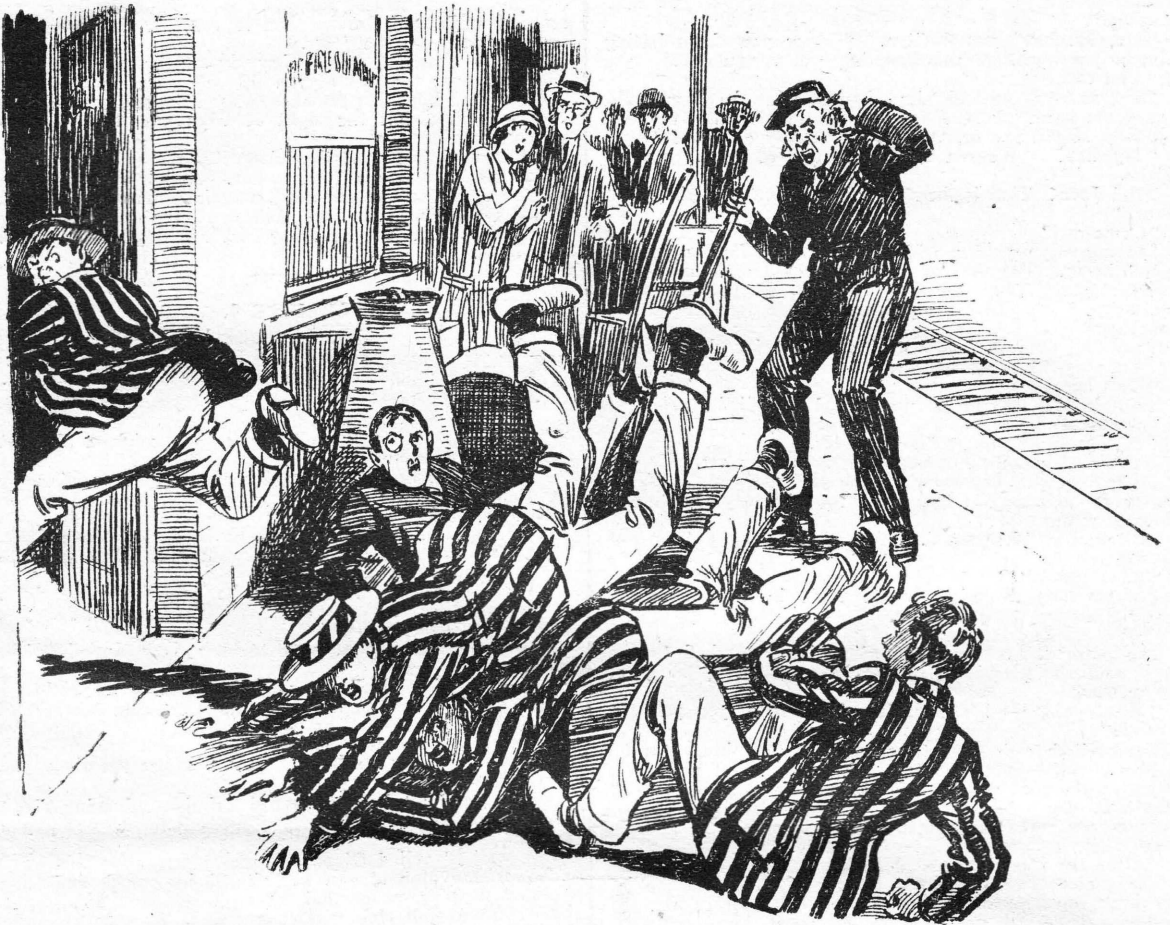
CHAPTER 3. Caught!

"O W-O-W!"

"Oh, Great Scott! My napper!"

"My eye! Take your dashed elbow out of my eye, somebody!"

"Oh crumbs! What—what—"



As Trimble leaped for the door of the refreshment-room he made a grab at a trunk standing on the platform and pulled it over. Crash! "Oh, my hat!" "Look out!" Bump! With a howl Tom Merry went sprawling over the trunk in his path, and over him went Blake and the other juniors. (See Chapter 2.)

A chorus of wrathful exclamations went up from Sea Scouts and juniors alike as they struggled together in a confused heap on and off the pavement. Tom Merry & Co. had been running at full speed, and the collision had not been a gentle one. The Sea Scouts came off the worst, and they were naturally wrathful.

"You careless dummies!"

"You clumsy owls!"

"Look where you're jolly well rushing, blow you!"

"Oh, my hat! Where's that fat rotter?"

Tom Merry scrambled up, breathless and panting. He blinked down the street, just in time to see Trimble's fat form vanishing round the corner, and he gave a roar.

"There he goes! After him!"

"No, you don't, my pippin!"

It was the leader of the Sea Scouts—a tall, cheery-faced youth with a thatch of ruddy hair. He grabbed Tom Merry just as that incensed junior was rushing off after Trimble.

"Leggo!" shouted Tom. "That fat rotter—"

"Hold on!" said the Sea Scout grimly. "Not so fast, old top! You can't charge about like mad bulls, knocking people down, and then clearing off without a word!"

"Leggo!" gasped Tom Merry. "I'm sorry, but that fat bouncer—"

"Yes, leggo, you silly, interfering idiots!" roared Blake, struggling, as one of the Scouts grasped him in response to a nod from his leader. "We want to catch that fat worm—that podgy fraud!"

"We know all about that!" chuckled the Scout leader grimly. "But first of all we want an apology, and then we want to know what you want that fat chap for? He says you were bullying him—"

"We'll jolly well bully him—the fat cad! Leggo!"

"Not much! Look here!"

"Rush the idiots!"

It was a yell from Tom Merry, and on the instant his chums obeyed. Only Tom Merry and Blake were held, and they wrenched themselves away like a flash, and, butting their captors in the chest, they tore away. The rest of the

St. Jim's juniors sent the Sea Scouts staggering away to right and left, and went in pursuit at top speed.

The Sea Scouts were taken by surprise by the unexpected onslaught, and by the time they had recovered themselves Tom Merry & Co. had vanished, like Trimble, round the distant corner.

"After them!" snorted one of the Scouts. "Come on, Dick!"

"Hold on!" said the leader, with a good-humoured laugh.

"No good going after the merchants now. My hat! We were slow then! But, after all, we stopped 'em catching that fat chap, and we may see 'em again yet."

"Oh, all right!"

And the Sea Scouts resumed their stroll, after dusting themselves down, looking upon the incident as a lark, apparently.

And, meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. had raced on without sighting Trimble; and they reached the boat without sighting him. Bernard Glyn was leaning on the rails of the Silver Spray, and he stared as the juniors raced up, panting and furious.

"What—what the thump?" he began.

"Trimble!" roared Tom Merry. "Has that fat fraud come back, Glyn?"

"Eh? No, of course not. Hasn't he gone?"

"Gone? Of course he hasn't!" gasped Blake, almost spluttering with wrath. "The fat rotter's done us—done us fairly!"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove! Twimble has fairly done us!"

"Great pip! You don't mean to say you gave him the cash for his ticket?" demanded Glyn.

"No, of course not! But we gave him his ticket, and he bolted with it and sold it to somebody—we're sure he did!" gasped Tom Merry.

And he related the sad circumstances to Glyn. Glyn doubled up and roared.

"It's nothing to laugh at, you burbling chump!" howled

Blake wrathfully. "Come on, you fellows, let's go after him again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn. "Fancy you chaps letting him do you like that—and knowing him as you did!"

"You cackling ass!"

"If you want to find him, though, why the thump did you come here?" howled Glyn. "You'll find him blowing the dubs at the nearest grubshop, you silly dummies!"

"My hat! We—we never thought of that!" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove! That is the vevy place to look for him, deah boys!"

"Come on!"

Leaving Glyn yelling with laughter, the furious juniors pelted away. The nearest cakeshop would undoubtedly be the first place Trimble—with money in his pocket—would make for. So the wrathful juniors made for the nearest cakeshop.

They very soon reached it, and, after a quick glance round the doorway, Tom Merry yelled:

"He's here!"

Trimble was there. He was seated at a little table just inside the shop, and he had a heaped-up plate of jam-tarts before him and a bottle of ginger-beer.

He fairly jumped as he heard Tom's wrathful cry. He had been sitting with one wary eye on the doorway, but Tom Merry & Co.'s arrival had come too suddenly for him to think of escape.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

"Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Trimble leaped up from the table in sudden terror, sending the table flying over.

Crash, crash!

The plate of tarts and the ginger-beer smashed to the floor, and the proprietor of the cafe rushed up in great alarm.

"What—what—?" he exclaimed. "Why, you young—Yooop!"

The excited tradesman staggered back as Trimble turned suddenly and butted him full in his red-spotted waistcoat. Then, as the man staggered back gasping, Trimble rushed past him. On entering the shop, Trimble had noticed that a passage-way led through to a yard beyond, and Trimble headed for it now with desperate haste.

"After the rotter!" howled Blake.

The juniors swarmed after Trimble, heedless of the indignant proprietor of the shop who was yelling for the police. They all managed to get past him with the exception of Arthur Augustus.

Just as that junior was racing past in pursuit, the man made a jump and grasped him—fast!

"No, you don't, you young rascal!" he roared angrily.

"Turn my shop into a bear-garden and smash my goods up, would you? Why, I'll fetch the police—I'll have you booked up for this, my lad!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "My deah, good man, pway allow me to go—"

"Not much! I wants paying for this mess before you goes," snorted the man, shaking the hapless junior. "There's three bobs' worth of stuff there besides what's smashed, and there's an assault on me to be settled."

"Oh, bai Jove! Pway welease me, and I will settle with you," gasped Arthur Augustus. The thought of the police was enough for him. "Pway allow me to pay for the damage!"

"Oh, all right!"

The proprietor had already noted D'Arcy's elegant clothes, and he released him, keeping a wary eye on him, however. Arthur Augustus fumbled for his wallet, and, producing a ten-shilling note, he handed it over.

"Will that settle the matter?" he asked.

The man grunted.

"I reckon five bob's enough," he said, churlishly. "Here, hold on!"

He went to the till, and, taking out five shillings, he handed the money to Arthur Augustus.

"Now, get out!" he said. "And go by the front door, you young raskil. I don't allow a gang of young imps to go racing over my premises."

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus staggered out of the shop—the loser over the affair by five shillings, and his feelings towards the missing Trimble were truly too deep for words.

As Gussy started off down the street, wondering how he was to find his chums, he suddenly gasped as he glimpsed a figure run out from some double-gates alongside the cake-shop.

It was Trimble, and as the fat junior sighted him, he gave a startled yelp and took to his heels.

Arthur Augustus was after him in a flash, breathing hard, his eyes gleaming.

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Trimble was making for the beach—indeed, there was scarcely anywhere else for him to run, for the street ran straight down to the jetty.

But he doubled quite abruptly as he spotted Glyn lounging over the rail of the Silver Spray, by the jetty. Trimble had hoped to get aboard the boat and lock himself in the fo'c'sle, but the sight of Glyn put that idea out of his mind.

He decided to risk Arthur Augustus rather than Glyn.

But his hope was a forlorn one. Arthur Augustus was far too agile for the awkward, ungainly fat youth, and as Trimble tried to rush past, Arthur Augustus made a leap and caught him low, bringing him crashing down with a wild howl.

CHAPTER 4.

Nimble Trimble!

"YARROOOOOGH!"

Trimble roared as Arthur Augustus planted a knee on his fat chest, pinning him down. Glyn rushed up, grinning.

"You've got him, then?" he called, with a chuckle. "Good! Where are the other chaps, Gussy?"

"I weally do not know," said Arthur Augustus, glancing in some astonishment along the steep, cobbled street. "They wushed through a shop to the back, and I cannot undahstand what has happened to them, bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus related what had taken place to Glyn. Glyn chuckled.

"Well, this beats the band," he said, grinning down at the panting, fat youth. "What on earth have you done with those fellows, Trimble?"

Trimble groaned. He was looking very apprehensive, indeed.

"It—it's all right," he gasped. "Quite all right. I assure you! I've explained everything to Tom Merry and the others. They—they quite understand now, and they've forgiven me. Lemme gerrup!"

"I don't think!" chuckled Glyn. "Where are they, you fat fraud?"

"I really don't know," gasped Trimble, glancing about him in alarm. "They—they went off for a walk, you know."

"A walk?" yelled Glyn.

"Yes. I explained just how it all happened, and they decided to forgive me and let bygones be bygones, you know. So it's all right; you can lemme go, now."

"Not much," chuckled Glyn.

"Wathah not!" snorted Arthur Augustus. "You let me in for a vevy unpleasant scene with that w'etched shop fellow, and I had to pay him five shillings, you fat wascal!"

"That—that's all right, Gussy!" stammered Trimble, still glancing rather apprehensively about him. "I—I'll pay you back that five bob, of course. I—I'll make a note of it if you'll lemme gerrup! I've already paid back those fellows the money they paid for my ticket. Honour bright!"

"Your giddy honour is more muddy than bright, old scout," chuckled Glyn. "Why, here's a half-crown just dropped out of your pocket, and I know you hadn't a blessed bean this morning. Here, hold the fat rascal a sec, Gussy, and we'll jolly soon see if he has that money yet."

"Yarroooooogh! I say, don't you— Oh crikey!"

Trimble howled as Glyn whirled him over on his back. Then as Arthur Augustus held him down, Glyn shoved a hand in his pockets in turn. After what had happened, Bernard Glyn felt no compunction in doing that.

And his act was very soon justified.

From his trousers-pocket Glyn drew a crumpled pound-note and a handful of silver.

"We'll take charge of this, Gussy," grinned Glyn. "Well, the awful fibber! Now bring him along to the boat. I bet those other chaps will be pleased to see him."

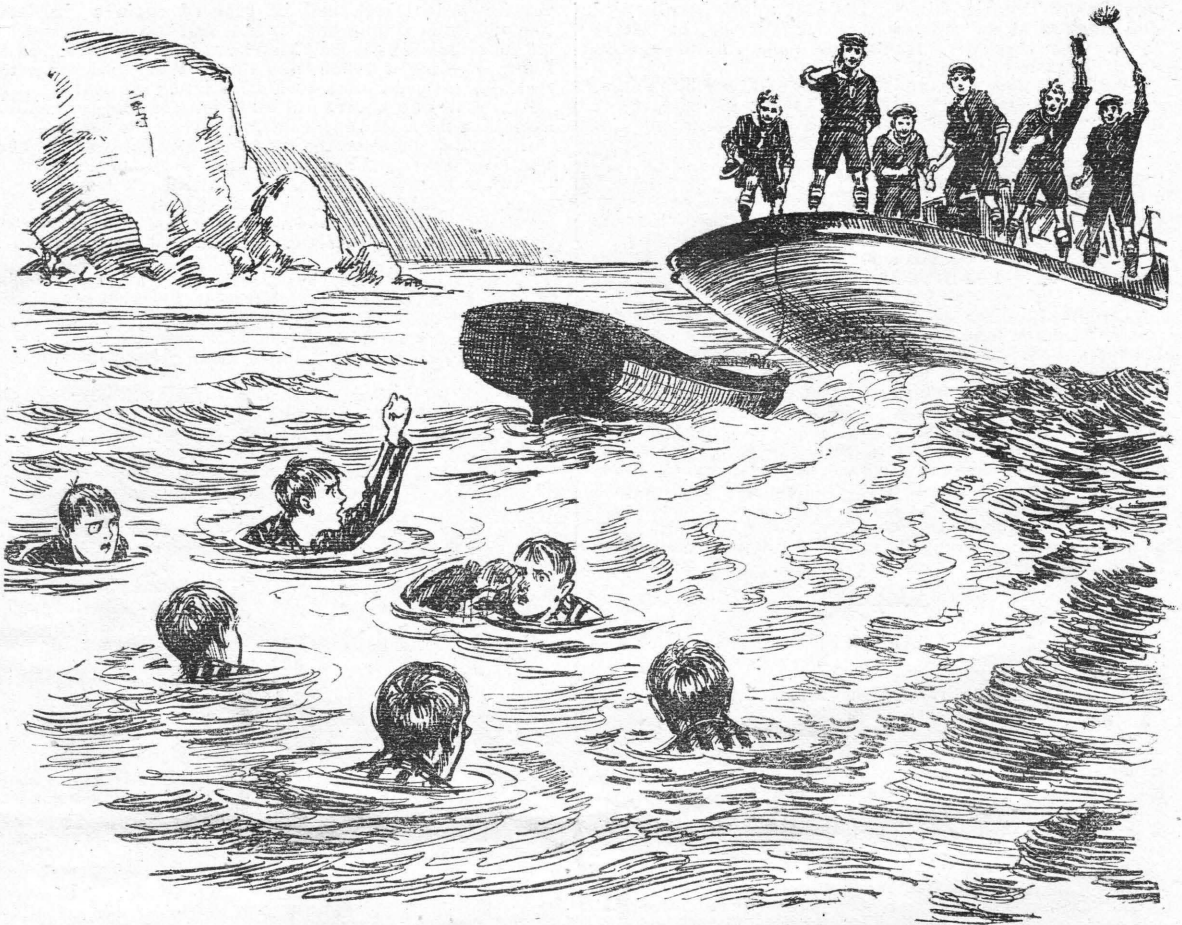
"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Weally, I cannot undahstand what can have happened to them. Up you come, Twimble! You are booked for a vevy warm time."

Between them they yanked the yelling Baggy Trimble to his feet, and started towards the Silver Spray. They reached the mooring-rope, and then Baggy Trimble showed that even yet he was not beaten.

Without warning he suddenly gave a desperate "back-heel" on the shin of Arthur Augustus, and as Gussy staggered back with a fiendish howl, Trimble ducked and butted Bernard Glyn full in his waistcoat.

Bernard Glyn yelled and staggered back, tripped over the ropp, and the next moment—
Splash!

Bernard Glyn went backwards over the edge of the jetty, and plunged into the blue waters of Lynridge Harbour.



A howl of derision came from the Sea Scouts lining the rail of the Silver Spray. "Oh, the cads!" spluttered Glyn, shaking a fist after the boat. "We're done!" "Let's get ashore!" called Tom Merry. And the hapless juniors started to swim for the shore. (See Chapter 7.)

Arthur Augustus was clutching his injured shin, and as he stood thus, like a stork, Baggy Trimble butted him in the ribs.

"Ooooooh!"

Once again Arthur Augustus howled, and then he followed Bernard Glyn.

Splash!

The waters of Lynridge Harbour closed over the head of Arthur Augustus.

Baggy Trimble gasped and gasped, and then he blinked over the edge of the jetty. Two heads had just appeared above the surface, and as Glyn and Gussy rose, spluttering, Trimble took to his heels and fairly flew.

This time he stuck to the beach, however, and he vanished from sight beyond a jutting arm of rock.

He had just gone when Bernard Glyn and Arthur Augustus reached the dinghy tied up alongside the Silver Spray.

The two juniors clung on, gasping and spluttering for a moment, and then, as if moved by the same spring, they climbed aboard and collapsed there, panting and wheezing and dripping streams of water.

"Oh—oh, bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus. "The— the feahful wottah!"

"I—I'll smash the fat worm!" choked Glyn, his face red with wrath. "I—I'll—I'll—"

Without waiting to explain what else he intended doing to Baggy Trimble, Bernard Glyn swarmed up on to the Silver Spray in order to look for him. He scarcely expected to find Trimble in sight, and in that he was right.

Trimble was gone

With water streaming from him, Bernard Glyn jumped ashore from the motor-cruiser, and glared about him in search of the fat junior.

"Is he theah?" panted Arthur Augustus, joining him on the jetty. "Oh, bai Jove! I—"

A sudden commotion from the village street broke in upon Gussy's remarks. Glancing that way, the soaked juniors were just in time to see a crowd of juniors in blazers and St. Jim's colours come charging out from an opening in

the cobbled street. And after them came a figure in a white apron, who was wielding a broom with great energy.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "What— what—"

The juniors were Tom Merry & Co., and the man in the white apron was undoubtedly the proprietor of the cake-shop wherein Trimble had taken refuge.

The next moment Tom Merry and the rest came racing up, the confectioner apparently having given up the chase.

"What—what the thump—" ejaculated Tom Merry, coming to a halt, panting and gasping. "What on earth have you fellows been up to?"

"And have you seen anything of that fat worm Trimble?" yelled Blake, who was caressing his head, which had evidently come into violent contact with the confectioner's broom.

"Yes, we thundering well have!" groaned Glyn. "The fat rascal butted us both into the sea only a minute ago!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"It's a fact!" gasped Glyn, his eyes fairly glinting with wrath. "We were just yanking the little beast along to the boat when he suddenly kicked Gussy on the shin and butted me in. Then he served Gussy the same."

"Well, my hat!" panted Tom Merry. "If that little sweep doesn't take the bun! D'you know what he did to us?"

"No. Why—"

"Locked us in a beastly shed!" howled Herries. "Us, mind you! We chased him into the backyard, and when we got in he'd vanished. But there was a shed door open, and, thinking he was inside, we all rushed in."

"It was a silly ass trick to do," said Tom Merry ruefully, "and it served us right. We might have known the rotter would be up to his usual tricks. Anyway, he did us nicely—must have been hiding behind the door, for when we rushed in he slammed it shut, and locked us in."

"Well, my hat!"

But for their own recent defeat at the hands of the slip

pery Baggy Trimble, Glyn and D'Arcy might have howled with laughter at the sad fate that had befallen Tom Merry & Co. But they were feeling far too wrathful against Baggy Trimble to do that.

"Well, he's gone now, and I bet we sha'n't see him again, so that's one comfort," said Tom Merry, cheering up a little. "He won't dare to come back, and now he's got his fare home he'll go."

"But he hasn't got his fare home," said Glyn grimly. "We took the cash from him. Here it is!"

Glyn managed to get his hand inside his soaked trouser pocket, and brought forth the money he had taken from the troublesome Trimble. He handed it over to Tom Merry.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake. "So—so we shall see him again. Good! I—I'll smash him into little tiny bits of bacon-fat!"

"I think I'd have preferred to see the last of the fat rotter," grunted Tom Merry. "Anyway, it can't be helped. I expect he'll come along crawling with some terrific whoppers before night. Let's get off to Alborough now, and blow the fat worm!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove! This is anoathah suit absolutely wuined! Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus tottered aboard the Silver Spray to change his drenched garments, and Glyn followed him for a like purpose. The rest of the juniors also boarded the Silver Spray to dust themselves down and to get ready for the picnic to Alborough. And the remarks they all passed concerning Baggy Trimble, would have made that fat youth's hair curl had he heard them.

CHAPTER 5.

"For Hire!"

"O H dear! I've fairly done it now!"

Thus Baggy Trimble.

The fat youth was seated on the sandy floor of a little cave in the cliffs, well away from the village of Lynridge. He was panting and blowing like a grampus, for he had run hard and long, along the beach, heedless of direction, his only desire being to put as great a distance between himself and the Silver Spray as was possible.

Then, winded and exhausted, he had happened to espy the little cave, and he had taken refuge there.

He was now going over recent events in his fat mind, and the contemplation of his misdeeds filled Baggy Trimble with dismal forebodings of the future.

"Oh dear!" groaned the fat youth again. "What shall I do now? The beasts will flay me alive when they catch me. As if it was my fault, anyway! Oh crumbs!"

The thought of the reception awaiting him on board the Silver Spray almost made the fat junior weep.

And to return to the Silver Spray was the only thing open for him to do. He had no money, and he had no ticket now. The only thing to do was to stay away as long as possible in the hope that time would cool down the tempers of Tom Merry & Co. After all, he had often been in worse scrapes at St. Jim's.

It was not much comfort to Trimble, however, to reflect upon that. And there was a very big drawback to staying away from the Silver Spray.

Trimble was hungry. He had scarcely bitten into one of the jam-tarts in the bunshop, and he had not even opened the bottle of ginger-beer when Tom Merry & Co. had arrived. What was he to do until teatime?

It was just then that Trimble remembered the proposed picnic to Alborough, and his face brightened at the thought. When the picnickers departed he would get his chance to board the Silver Spray.

Trimble could see the motor-cruiser in the distance alongside the jetty, and he kept his eyes fixed upon it anxiously.

For ten minutes the fat youth sat in the entrance to the little cave, watching the distant boat, and then his vigil was rewarded by the sight of several flannelled figures swarming from the cruiser on to the jetty.

Then they vanished up the street beyond.

"Oh, good!" murmured Trimble.

For another ten minutes the fat junior waited, and then he got to his feet and hurried back along the shore. Despite his relief on seeing Tom Merry & Co. depart, he was still anxious and apprehensive. It was quite possible—highly probable, in fact—that the juniors had locked up the cabin. They were scarcely likely to leave the boat at the mercy of any stray stranger who happened along.

Baggy Trimble's fears were quite justified. As he stepped on board he groaned a deep, hollow groan on finding the sliding door of the cabin locked. He hurried to

the forward cockpit, and he groaned again as he found that the cabin sliding door at that end was also locked.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Trimble. "Oh, the awful beasts! Fancy treating a fellow like this! What about my tea, and they may not come back until late. Oh dear!"

Really it was a dreadful situation for Baggy Trimble. To miss a meal was an awful prospect to the fat junior.

In sheer desperation the fat junior roamed over the boat. He tried the skylight of the cabin, and groaned on finding it bolted from the inside. He rattled the doors of the cabin, and rattled them in vain. Only the fo'c'sle had been left open—a kindness towards the fat youth that Trimble did not appreciate. But there wasn't a crumb in the fo'c'sle.

Trimble gave the hopeless search up at last, and sat himself down dismally on the cabin top. It was late now, and the beach was beginning to fill with holiday-makers. Their cheery laughter and the splash of waves, and merry voices of children, only made Trimble more grumpy and dismal, however.

But the musical sounds had a lulling effect on the fat youth, and he was just dozing off when a sudden thump on his fat shoulders brought him up with a jerk.

Then he stared, as well he might.

On the deck before him stood a stout, elderly female. She had a big green parasol folded in her hands, and it was with this, apparently, that she had wakened Trimble.

Trimble glared at her. Then he glared at a younger female, who was standing on the jetty with half a dozen children.

"Well, what d'you want?" he snorted wrathfully. "What d'you want waking a chap up like that for?"

"Ere, don't you tork to me like that, young fellow!" exclaimed the elderly lady, grimly. "I want to know if this 'ere boat is for hire, young man?"

"Mum-my hat!" Trimble blinked at her. "For hire—oh erikey!"

"Well, can't you answer a lady," said the female, with some asperity, "instead of staring like a great, fat jelly-fish?"

Trimble glared harder than ever. It was bad enough to be wakened up like that without being called a great, fat jellyfish.

"Look here!" he snorted. "You clear off this boat—sharp, madam!"

"What?"

"Clear out!" sniffed Trimble, wrathfully. "For hire, eh—I should jolly well say so—I don't think. Nice cheek, I must say, coming trespassing here and waking people up with a rotten old gamp! Clear off! Get off this boat before I call the—Yoooooop!"

Thump, thump, thump!

Three times the irate old lady brought her gamp down on Trimble's fat shoulders. Apparently she was just as short-tempered as Baggy was grumpy and bad-tempered.

"There!" she gasped, shaking her parasol at the horrified fat youth. "Take that. That'll perhaps teach you to treat a lady with respect, young man! I'll give you cheek—I'll give you rotten old gamp! I won't stand none of your impudence! I ask a civil question, and I expects a civil answer. If the boat ain't for hire, why can't you say so?"

And with that, the elderly lady stumped away and climbed ashore. Joining her family, she led them off the jetty, all of them glaring back at the hapless Trimble, and discussing the matter loudly and volubly.

"Ow-ow!" groaned Trimble, rubbing his shoulders. "Oh, the awful old cat! Fancy going for a chap like that, all for nothing! For hire, eh? What awful cheek!"

And Trimble resumed, rubbing his aches and pains.

But his little eyes were gleaming strangely now, for the incident had brought a startling scheme into his mind.

"By Jingo!" he murmured. "By Jingo! I wonder if it would work? Those cads won't be back until late, and it ought to be easy enough. In any case, if I couldn't hire this rotten boat out, perhaps I could hire the dinghy! Phew! What a wheeze!"

The idea took Trimble by storm. He was hungry and he was desperate.

For some minutes longer, Baggy Trimble debated the matter, and then he hurried along to the fo'c'sle, having quite made up his mind to risk it.

In the fo'c'sle he rooted out a large sheet of cardboard, and a piece of blue crayon, and on the sheet he printed in big letters the following announcement:

"FOR HIRE!
Who Wants A Sea Trip?
1/- per head per hour!
ROLL UP!
Children ½ Price!"

"That ought to do the trick!" murmured the fat youth with satisfaction. "Now for it!"

After reflecting a moment, Trimble carried his handy-work to the small mast of the motor-cruiser and tied it on with a piece of string.

Then he lounged on the cabin top and waited for customers.

It seemed a brilliant wheeze to Baggy Trimble—though who was to man the motor-cruiser, Baggy had not stopped to reflect. He only saw in his mind's eye boatload after boatload of gay trippers going out for hourly-trips on the Silver Spray, while he pocketed the "bobs."

He had not to wait long. The notice had scarcely been up three minutes when several youths came strolling along the jetty, their eyes fixed on the Silver Spray with no little admiration. They were in Sea Scouts' uniform, and were, in fact, the very youths Trimble had collided with earlier on that afternoon.

"My eye, Dick!" exclaimed one, staring at the motor-cruiser. "How would you like to own that, eh? Isn't she a ripper?"

"Tophole!" said the fellow addressed as Dick, who was apparently the leader of the patrol. "She's a beauty! I wouldn't mind—great jumping snakes, she's for hire, chaps!"

"So she is!"

The Scouts stared at the Silver Spray and at the notice announcing sea trips at a shilling a time. It was plain that they were astonished at seeing such a fine craft for hire.

"A bob a time!" said Dick, his eyes dancing. "What about a bob's worth, chaps? Our own boat's laid up, and it'll perhaps be days before we can get a run out. Who's game?"

"I'm on, Dick!"

"What-ho!"

It was a chorus from all ten of the Sea Scouts. A trip out to sea in such a fine boat was certainly enticing.

"Come on, then!" grinned Dick.

He led the way aboard the motor-cruiser, and his chums followed. Trimble rose up and rolled to meet them, a fat smirk on his podgy countenance.

"Hallo, you chaps again!" he remarked calmly.

"My hat!" exclaimed the patrol-leader, staring at Trimble. "It's that chap who butted into us in the village. Do you belong to this boat?" he added, staring at Trimble.

"Yes; I'm in charge of her!" said Trimble with some dignity. "Fine boat—what?"

"Do you want to hire her?"

"Yes, she's a fine boat, a rattling fine boat," said Dick. "We'd certainly like a trip in her! Who takes the money, Fatty?"

Baggy Trimble frowned—but though he did not like being called "fatty," he let it pass.

"Eh? Oh, I do, of course!" he said.

"Does the boat belong to you?" ejaculated the leader.

"Eh? Oh, no! It—it belongs to my father, of course," said Trimble hastily. "He's left me in charge, though—given me a free hand, you know. Lemme see. Ten of you. That's ten bob, please!"

"But where the thump's the crew?" asked Dick, glancing about him in a puzzled way. "Who's running the boat, Fatty?"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Trimble. "I—I'd forgotten all about that. But—but it's all right. I suppose you chaps can run her yourselves, can't you? Pretty rotten Scouts, if you can't."

"Well, I suppose we can," said one of the Scouts, with a chuckle. "But you surely don't let every Dick, Tom, and Harry who comes along with a bob take out a craft like this?"

"Oh, no!" said Trimble. "It—it's like this, you know. The chaps who usually run it are—have not returned from their dinner yet. That's it. But I thought, being Scouts; that you chaps could run her on your own. See?"

The Scouts eyed each other rather strangely. They evidently thought it just a bit queer—as it certainly was. Trimble saw their hesitation, and trembled.

"Buck up!" he said. "You'll have some other crowd coming along and doing you down, if you don't look lively. Can't you drive a blessed motor-boat, or what?"

"Yes, we can manage the boat all right," said the Scout, laughing. "We have an auxiliary motor on our cutter, and we're pretty used to motor craft. But—but I suppose you've been driving her, Fatty?"

"Me?" ejaculated Trimble, who knew as much about motor-boat engines as he did about aeroplane engines. "Nunno—I mean yes. I can drive her, of course—in fact, I usually do, but I want my dinner. I'll be back here by the time you fellows return. Mind you, if you're over the hour an extra bob each will be charged, remember that."

"All right, we'll remember," laughed the patrol-leader.

"Well, I think we'll risk it, chaps."

"Yes, rather!"

And though they didn't quite like the look of things, the Sea Scouts did risk it. They paid their money into Trimble's greedy, fat palm, and the fat junior chuckled and pocketed the ten bob. Then he ambled ashore and rolled away up the village street in search of something to satisfy his hunger. What happened to the Silver Spray—or what was likely to happen to her—did not trouble Trimble in the least.

CHAPTER 6.

Amazing!

"RIPPING view from here," remarked Tom Merry lazily.

"Yes, rather!"

Alborough Abbey was about two miles out of Lynridge, and half a mile from the coast. Tom Merry & Co. had taken their time walking it, and now, there being plenty of time before tea, they were lying at their ease on the sloping ground just below the abbey ruins.

It was a pretty spot indeed, with the afternoon sunlight shining full on the ancient ivy-clad walls, and on the moss-grown stones and masonry scattered in broken confusion about the ruins.

But the juniors had their backs to the ruins now, and it was the sea view that Tom Merry referred to. In gentle, wooded slopes the ground ran down to a golden beach, beyond which the blue Channel shimmered and sparkled in the sun.

All agreed that it was a "ripping" view, and all felt very comfortable and satisfied with their excursion. It had certainly been worth the walk, especially with the prospect of a picnic on the grassy slopes.

Out at sea a few white sails glimmered, and nearer the shore, and rapidly approaching it, was a large motor-boat, coming from the direction of Lynridge.

Bernard Glyn was watching the motor-boat rather curiously. He was always more or less interested in motor-boats of all descriptions.

It seemed to him that the boat was just about the same size and turn of speed as the Silver Spray, and even at that distance it seemed to Glyn curiously like the Silver Spray.

"By jingo!" he remarked. "See that motor-boat, chaps?"

"Yes. I've been watching it some moments now," said Blake. "It's got a good turn of speed."

"About the same size as the Silver Spray," said Tom Merry.

"Just what I was thinking," said Glyn. He sat up abruptly and climbed to his feet. Shading his eyes from the sun, he gazed hard and long at the distant boat, which was growing larger every second. "By jingo! If that isn't our old tub, then it's her twin sister, chaps!"

"Go on!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "You'll be saying you can see Trimble aboard her next. I wonder if the fat ass has gone back yet."

"Bai Jove! I wondah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I should be far too afraid to return if I was in that fat wascal's shoes. I— What is the matter, Glyn?"

Arthur Augustus broke off as Glyn suddenly stooped and snatched up a pair of small field-glasses that lay on the grass by D'Arcy's hand.

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He gazed through them with rapidly-growing excitement, and then he gave a wild yell.

"It is the Silver Spray!" he yelled. "Great pip! It's the old boat right enough! What in thunder—"

He kept his eyes fairly glued to the glasses. By this time the big motor-boat had reached to within fifty yards or so of the shore, and several figures could be seen on her deck.

"Yes, it is!" he went on in dumbfounded amazement. "Great jumping crackers! What's it mean?"

The other juniors were staring at him as if he had taken leave of his senses.

"What the thump are you saying, Glyn?" gasped Tom Merry.

"That boat out there is our boat—the Silver Spray!" howled Bernard Glyn in great excitement.

"What?"

"Look at it!" shouted Glyn. "It's ours right enough!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

In turn the astonished juniors looked through D'Arcy's field-glasses. They all jumped as they read the name on the boat.

It certainly was the Silver Spray, without a doubt.

"Well, my only hat!" breathed Tom Merry, looking at Glyn. "How the thump has the boat got here? Trimble—"

"Trimble's not to be seen, anyway!" gasped Manners. "We could easily pick that fat rotter's figure out with the glasses. Those chaps are Sea Scouts."

"Phew! So they are! Well, I'm hanged!"

"They're the same chaps we barged into this afternoon, I believe," said Blake. "Well, fancy Sea Scouts pinching a boat like that!"

"But—but it can't be the Silver Spray!" stuttered Herries.

"It is, I tell you, and those dashed Sea Scouts have collared it!" stormed Glyn. "Well, if this doesn't take the dashed bun! Who are the rotters?"

"They have a sailing-boat—a cutter—in Lynridge Bay," said Tom Merry, frowning. "I saw some of the Scouts on it early this morning. It's among that group of yachts and fishing-boats moored at the far end of the beach."

"Then why on earth should they pinch our boat?" snorted Glyn. "They can't have done it for a blessed joy-ride."

"Goodness knows! Hallo, they're slowing down. Looks as if they're going to call here."

"They handle the boat all right, anyway," grunted Herries.

"Handle her!" bawled Bernard Glyn, almost dancing with wrath. "And we'll jolly well handle them! Come on, for goodness' sake!"

He started off full tilt down the slope, and after a moment's hesitation the rest of the juniors followed, heedless of the small picnic-basket they had brought with them. They ran hard, and Glyn led the way at a terrific pace.

For some distance they lost sight of the boat through the trees, but presently they burst out into open ground again, and then it was seen that the Silver Spray had stopped fifty yards or so from the shore. The dinghy was just being hauled alongside.

"Put it on!" gasped Glyn.

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors raced at top speed towards the beach. They saw that the dinghy had left the motor-cruiser now, and was being rowed towards the shore.

"We'll just be in time to greet the rotters!" gasped Glyn.

"And we'll give the cheeky cads a warm greeting," panted Tom Merry.

They were on the beach now, racing hard for the boat which was just a few yards off the beach. The Sea Scouts had sighted the running juniors now, and they stared in wonderment at them.

"What's up?" yelled one. "By jingo!" he added to his chums. "I believe these merchants mean mischief."

Glyn heard the words, and he gave a roar.

"Yes, we do mean mischief, you cads!" he shouted. "Go for the rotters, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Stand by!" shouted one of the Scouts. "Oh, my hat! Look out!"

The boat was almost grounding now, and as he shouted the youth leapt up, an oar in his hand.

"Rush them!" hissed Glyn. "There's more on board, and we'll deal with them afterwards!"

"St. Jim's for ever!" bawled Lowther.

Without waiting for the boat to land, the wrathful St. Jim's juniors charged in with a series of splashes, and rushed at the boat.

"Here, keep off!" yelled a Scout, in astonishment. "What's this mean? Look— Yarrooogh!"

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Splash!

Glyn hadn't waited to answer the question. He just grabbed an arm and pulled savagely. The Sea Scout came overboard, too astonished to attempt to save himself until it was too late.

There followed three more splashes as Tom Merry & Co. got to work in real earnest.

What followed was swift and intensely exciting.

The other five Scouts had realised the danger by this time, and they jumped up; but they were far too bewildered to do much, and the motor-boat boys overcame their resistance by sheer surprise.

Before they knew what was happening, the St. Jim's juniors had swarmed on board the rocking, swaying dinghy. Luckily, it was a roomy, solidly-built boat, or it must have capsized under the onslaught.

"Over with them!" ordered Tom Merry.

"What-ho!"

The rush of Tom Merry & Co. was irresistible, and the startled Scouts went plunging overboard one after the other. Only one—the patrol-leader—gave any serious trouble; but after a furious struggle, Glyn and Tom Merry managed to send him sprawling across the gunwale, and a hefty shove did the rest.

Splash!

The St. Jim's juniors were triumphant—for the moment. And they followed up their victory with swift action.

The Sea Scouts were wakened up in real earnest now, and they made a frantic rush at the boat, waist-deep in water as they were.

"Back up!" yelled Tom Merry.

He grasped an oar and started to push off with all his force, and at the same time the rest of the juniors prepared to repel boarders.

The boat moved, but Blake & Co. were ready to repel the rush with oars and fists; and they did so, pushing and jabbing and smiting.

There arose a chorus of howls and yells, and the next instant the boat rocked away out of the Scouts' reach, leaving most of them sprawling and splashing in the water.

"Our win!" yelled Blake. "Hurrah!"

"You rotten cads!" howled the spluttering patrol-leader.

"Fetch that boat back! Oh, you—you—"

"You asked for it, you cheeky rotters!" roared Glyn.

"That ought to teach you to respect other people's property, you cads!"

"Call yourselves Scouts?" bawled Lowther. "Yah!"

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry. "They're following us! Oh, my hat!"

They were! The Sea Scouts had been beaten for the moment by the sheer surprise of the St. Jim's juniors' attack; but they were not finished with yet—far from it. It had all happened in a few whirling seconds, and even at the last moment they had scarcely expected Tom Merry & Co. to attack them. And the attack—for no reason at all, it seemed to them—had dazed them.

But they had got over it now, and one and all came plunging in pursuit of the boat, clothed as they were. Their clothes, indeed, could scarcely have got wetter than they were. And Tom Merry glanced behind him anxiously. He could see two figures at least on board the motor-cruiser, and he knew that unless they were swift, the St. Jim's juniors would stand little chance against such numbers.

CHAPTER 7.

Beaten!

"LOOK out aboard, there!"

It was a frantic yell from the leader of the Sea Scouts, and it was answered immediately by the two fellows leaning over the rail. Tom Merry glanced that way, and he saw that the two Sea Scouts aboard the Silver Spray had armed themselves with deck-mops.

They had also got ready something else which Tom Merry & Co. did not discover until they thudded alongside.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Two buckets full of sea-water swished down on the heads of Tom Merry & Co. as they ranged alongside.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Groooogh!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Splash!

The second bucketful had caught Blake full in the face, and the stream of water sent him clean overboard.

The next instant the deck-mops were at work in real earnest.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

On the hapless heads of Tom Merry & Co. the mops rained down unmercifully as the gallant two above swung and jabbed with them. The juniors ducked and dodged in

frantic efforts to escape them; and then suddenly Glyn caught hold of one and wrenched it from its owner's grasp.

In a flash Glyn and Tom Merry had swarmed up on to the deck of the motor-cruiser, and the next instant they were locked in deadly embrace with the two defenders of the boat.

But by this time the swimming Scouts were within reach of them, and Blake and the rest stopped to attend to them.

But it was eight to six now, and the result was inevitable. Two of the Sea Scouts were aboard the dinghy in a flash, and Lowther and Herries thudded to the floorboards, struggling furiously with them.

The boat rocked dangerously as one after the other the Sea Scouts swarmed aboard and engaged in the general fight. They were hefty youths, all of them, and they fought as gallantly and desperately as did Tom Merry & Co.

The result of the combat was as might have been expected. In the cockpit of the motor-cruiser, Tom Merry and Glyn were holding their own all right; but the rest in the dinghy were outnumbered, and suffered in consequence.

First one went overboard and then another, and there

ball of soaked cotton-waste caught him full in the mouth, and he dropped back, spluttering and gasping.

"No good!" panted Tom Merry, treading water. "Keep clear, chaps! They've done us, the cads!"

And Tom Merry was quite right there—the Sea Scouts had come through victorious; though they would not have done so had the numbers been equal, no doubt.

But they were victorious, and Tom Merry saw the folly of attempting further attacks. Indeed, there was no time, for the motor-boat was moving now, and the next moment the dinghy was also out of reach, rocking in the wake of the Silver Spray as she turned in a wide sweep and went forging away towards Lynridge.

A howl of derision and wrath came from the Sea Scouts lining her rails.

"Oh, the cads!" spluttered Glyn, shaking a fist furiously after the boat. "Oh, my hat! Done!"

"Let's get ashore!" called Tom Merry.

The juniors started to swim ashore—indeed, there was nothing else to be done, and already more than one of the juniors was feeling the weight of his clothes.

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE. THE PILLOW FIGHT.



The solemn stroke of midnight sounds
From the historic tower;
And out of bed each fellow bounds—
This is the fateful hour!
"Take up your pillows!" Merry cries,
"Fall in and follow me!
We'll take the Fourth Form by surprise,
And make them bow the knee!"



"All clear!" the scout is heard to say,
"No master is a-prowling."
We then form up in massed array,
Some smiling, others scowling,
In slippers feet we march along,
A silent, ghostly army;
And even Skimpole joins our throng,
And murmurs, "Pray, don't bar me!"

Jack Blake & Co. are sound asleep,
They have no premonition;
Into their dormitory we creep,
A stealthy expedition!
And then Tom Merry gives the word,
"Sock into them, my hearties!"
And soon the battle-cries are heard
Of the contending parties!

Arthur Augustus leaps from bed—
"A waid, deah boys—a waid!"
A pillow smites him on the head,
But he is undismayed.
With Blake and Herries at his side
He rushes into action:
The battle rages far and wide
Between each rival faction!

The moonlight glimmers on the scene—
A scene that's most inspiring!
Them—"What does this disturbance mean?"
A voice is heard inquiring.
The tumult and the shouting dies,
As if suppressed by magic:
Railton is here! we realise
The sequel will be tragic!

Back to our dormitory we go,
And wars and discords cease:
We are the richer (to our woes)
By fifty lines apiece.
But how we love these hectic nights,
So thrilling and exciting;
And gladly taste the keen delights
That spring from pillow-fighting!



was a series of splashes. Noble was the last to go, and as he went the Sea Scouts cheered and swarmed aboard to the aid of their two comrades.

They had scarcely gone aboard when Tom Merry came flying over the side, to plunge into the sea with a splash and a howl. Then Glyn appeared, struggling furiously at the rail. But his struggles availed him little.

He clung on desperately to the rail for a brief instant, and then he joined Tom Merry & Co. in the water.

But Tom Merry & Co. were not beaten yet. They swam to the dinghy, spluttering and gasping, and, clinging on, they started to climb into the swaying boat.

The attempt was doomed from the first, however, for the Sea Scouts had anticipated such a move, and were ready.

They tumbled pell-mell down into the rocking dinghy, and Tom Merry had scarcely swarmed aboard when a swift lunge sent him splashing back again. And Glyn and Herries followed him the next moment.

"All clear there?" rang out the patrol-leader's voice.

The engine of the Silver Spray roared, and the propeller thrashed the water into foam.

"Quick!" spluttered Glyn. "Oh, my hat!"

He made a frantic clutch at the dinghy, but a well-aimed

They reached the shore at last, and collapsed there, dripping and exhausted.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Tom Merry, water streaming from him as he lay on the sands. "I'm whacked—whacked to the world!"

"Same here!"

"Yaas, wathah! Oh deah! This is weally too awful for words!"

The disgusted and wrathful juniors filled the air with their lamentations. But Tom Merry staggered to his feet at last.

"No good lying here catching cold," he groaned. "Better squeeze some of the water from our clothes and get back home."

"Home, eh?" choked Bernard Glyn, his eyes blazing with rage. "Where is it? How do we know that those rotteu cads will take our boat back?"

"I'm pretty sure they will," said Tom Merry, taking off his blazer and squeezing some of the water out. "They looked to me quite decent chaps, really. I suppose they've done this to pay us out for having barged them over this afternoon—though it seems a jolly thin reason."

"What rot!" snorted Glyn. "The howling cads watched their chance, and cleared off with the boat, knowing we were away. They didn't dream we were here."

"I can't understand it at all," said Tom Merry, his brow puzzled. "I know those fellows."

"You know them?" yelled Glyn.

"Yes, I think so," said Tom quietly. "They come from Pegg—not far from Greyfriars School—in Kent. That patrol-leader's name's Dick Trumper, I believe. They were at a Greyfriars match when we were playing there some weeks ago, and Harry Wharton introduced me to one or two of them. Wharton said they were jolly decent sorts. Most of them belong to a Council school at Courtfield."

"Decent chaps, eh?" stormed Glyn. "Do you call pinching a valuable motor-boat being decent?"

"I'm blessed if I can understand the business at all!" said Tom Merry. "Anyway, what about that picnic-basket? The picnic's off, of course, now. Sooner we get back to Lynridge the better, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah! Better all take a wun to get the basket, deah boys. It will keep us fwom catchin' cold, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

It was sage advice, and the next moment they were acting upon it briskly. Most of the juniors had knocks and damages in plenty, and Glyn and Herries were mopping streaming noses. But damages had to be ignored for once as far as was possible.

They started off at a trot up the slope towards the ruins, tired and dispirited; and a little later, having got the basket, they started back for Lynridge. It had been an exciting afternoon, but a far from pleasant one, and as they trotted homewards in their drenched and bedraggled clothing Tom Merry & Co. had only one comforting reflection—and that was in the contemplation of what they intended doing to Dick Trumper & Co. if ever they met again.

CHAPTER 8.

Trimble is Missing!

BAGGY TRIMBLE was waiting on the jetty when the Silver Spray eased up alongside there and was smartly tied up by the Pegg Sea Scouts.

The fat youth was looking fat and satisfied and very jammy and sticky. It was very plain to be seen from his appearance where the ten shillings had gone and what it had been expended on.

"So you've got back all right, then?" grunted Trimble, eyeing the dishevelled and somewhat damaged appearance of the Scouts, in some surprise. "Look here, you've had over an hour. You owe me another ten bob."

"Do we?" said Dick Trumper, jumping ashore. "Well, we'll pay you all serene, Fatty. The fact is we decided to take her for another hour as we wanted to visit Alborough Abbey. But something happened to stop us, old pippin."

"Oh, did it?" sniffed Trimble. "You jolly well look as if you've been scrapping!" he added, eyeing Dick Trumper's right eye, which was considerably swollen.

"We have, old lard-tub!" said Dick Trumper grimly. "Some fellows went for us when we landed—goodness knows why. Anyway, they tried to collar the boat, and you can think yourself jolly lucky we've brought her back safely!"

"Some—some fellows tried to collar the boat?" ejaculated Trimble, with a start.

"Yes—and, curiously enough, they happened to be the same fellows who were chasing you this afternoon, Fatty."

"Were—were they?" gasped Baggy.

"Yes," said Dick Trumper, eyeing Trimble very suspiciously. "Look here, Fatty, there's something jolly fishy about this business! Those fellows were St. Jim's fellows—belonging to a school in Sussex. Do you happen to know them?"

Trimble paled.

"Me know them?" he gasped, thankful that he was not wearing the St. Jim's colours at the moment. "Of course I don't! How—how should I know the rotters? Look here—"

"It's jolly queer!" said Dick Trumper, eyeing Trimble fixedly. "Why those fellows should have attacked us like that beats me hollow. They seemed to be under the impression we'd no right with the boat, and they were hopping mad about something. Look here—"

"I've no desire to hear anything about those rotters," said Trimble loftily. "Look here, you owe me ten bob, and I'm a—a busy chap, you know. Hand over the money and go, unless you want the boat for another hour."

"We don't want it for another minute," said Dick Trumper grimly. "She's a jolly fine boat, and we've had a jolly good run in her. But there's too thumping much mystery about this hiring business for us! Let's hand over our bobs, chaps, and we'll clear."

"The thooner the better, old thon," added a Jewish-looking

youth, with a grin. "Thith is a little too mythterious for me. And if thoth St. Jim's fellows come along again there'll be trouble, old thons!"

"Rather!"

One after another the Sea Scouts dropped a shilling into Trimble's fat palm, and then they departed, eyeing Trimble very suspiciously indeed as they went. It was plain that Dick Trumper & Co. were feeling very uncomfortable about the hiring business.

Trimble pocketed the money and whistled dismally. He was shaking at the knees with fear.

"Oh crumbs!" he groaned. "What awful luck them meeting those beasts. Oh dear! Supposing it all comes out! I think I'd better hide before those beasts do come back. They'll be simply raving after this! Oh dear! I'll hide in the fo'e'sle!"



Blake shoved a boat-hook over the rail and hooked it in the slack of Trimble's trousers. "Up and shrieking with dismal appearance!"

And, after a swift glance about him, Trimble started off for the fo'e'sle.

He had scarcely been in hiding five minutes when Tom Merry & Co. came tramping along, their drenched clothes clinging to them dismally.

Their faces brightened a little as they sighted the motor-boat, however. It was plain that they had been none too certain that they would find the boat safely moored there.

Glyn was the first to board her, and he drew a deep breath of relief on seeing everything in good order, as they had left it. There was still water to be seen on the deck; but everything else was neat and tidy, for all that.

The engine was also unharmed—though Glyn had scarcely expected it to be harmed. From the manner in which the Sea Scouts had handled the boat he felt confident all would be well.

"And now what about Trimble?" said Blake. "Hold on! I bet the fat worm is hiding somewhere!"

"Squint in the fo'c'sle," said Lowther. "We left it open for the fat ass in case it rained."

And Lowther started off himself across the cabin-top. He reached the fo'c'sle and tried the door. Then he yelled.

"Here he is! The door's locked, chaps!"
The juniors rushed up, and Glyn climbed on the fo'c'sle head and tried the hatch. It was fastened—obviously from the inside.

"Never mind the fat idiot now!" said Tom Merry, with a shiver. "Let's get changed; no good getting colds even to collar Trimble. We'll get him all right later."

"We jolly well will!" vowed Glyn.
So the juniors postponed dealing with Trimble; and after the cabin had been unlocked they swarmed inside and changed swiftly, having a good rub-down with rough towels first. Then, feeling considerably better, they went along to deal with Trimble.



Trimble's jacket, whilst Monty Lowther grabbed another comes! bawled Lowther. And up Trimble came, fairly ension. (See Chapter 12.)

"Better bust the door down!" grinned Tom Merry. "Trimble, you fat rotter!" he added, raising his voice. "Better come out, or it'll be the worse for you!"

There came no answer, and Glyn set his lips hard. "I'll soon get the rotter out of that!" he gritted. "You remember how I got those stowaways out when we were crossing to France? I'll try that dodge."

Bernard Glyn rushed away to the cabin. He was not long away, and when he returned he carried a long syringe. Placing the nozzle in a crack in the door, he pressed the handle of the syringe.

There was a faint hissing sound, but nothing happened for a moment. Then there sounded a sudden sound of gasping and choking and sneezing from within the locked fo'c'sle.

It was followed after a moment or so by a wild, strangled howl in the well-known tones of Baggy Trimble.

"Yaroooogh! Murder! I'm being poisoned! Grooogh! Lemme out, you beasts! Yaroooogh! Oh crikey!"

There was a frantic fumbling at the sliding door, and then it slid aside, and the fat form of Trimble fairly tumbled out, gasping and spluttering frantically, with eyes and nose streaming.

He collapsed on to the grating, howling for help. In a flash the juniors were round him, and a dozen wrathful hands had grasped him.

"Got you, you fat fraud!"
"Now, you rotten trickster!"

"Bai Jove! Don't let the wascal get away!"
"Yarrough! Leggo!" howled Trimble. "Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, you might forgive a chap! I tell you it wasn't me that locked you in that shed; and as for shoving you over the jetty, that was an accident; I never meant to do it, I swear! Honour bright! Oh dear!"

With the tears streaming down his fat features Trimble blinked up apprehensively at the juniors. Evidently the gas, or whatever it was, in Glyn's syringe had frightened the life out of the fat youth.

"Hold on!" grinned Tom Merry, taking pity on the dismal junior. "Let the fat ass get over that giddy gas of yours first, Glyn!"

"No fear!" snorted Glyn. "That gas is only a harmless invention of mine, and he'll soon get over it. We'll deal with the rotter now!"

"Yes, rather!"
"But before we do I want to know something," snapped Glyn. "Look here, you little sweep! How did these dashed Sea Scouts come to get hold of this boat, Trimble?"

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble, sitting on the grating and wiping the tears from his eyes. "I know nothing about any Scouts, nothing at all! I've been asleep in the fo'c'sle here ever since you fellows went!"

"You fat fibber!" snapped Glyn. "I don't jolly well believe you. You know the fellows we mean—those Scouts who stopped us catching you in the street this afternoon!"

"I tell you I know nothing at all about them," howled Trimble. "I've been asleep all the time. I watched you chaps go, and then I sneaked in here and must have dropped asleep."

"Well, that's feasible enough," said Tom Merry, feeling rather sorry for the hapless-looking fat junior. "Hang it all, Glyn, he might easily have slept through it all—we know how the lazy slacker sleeps at St. Jim's; nothing short of cold water will waken the fat ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! That is quite twue, Tom Mewwy," added Arthur Augustus, shaking his head seriously. "We weally must be quite fair, even to Twimble."

Glyn breathed hard. But he could not fail to see that they could scarcely punish Trimble for complicity in the Scout affair without some proof.

"Well, we'll let that pass," he said grimly. "But we're jolly well not going to let the other things pass."

"No fear!"
It was a roar, and Trimble trembled.

"I say, you fellows—" he stammered, quaking.
"You need say nothing," said Blake wrathfully. "We're fed-up with you, Trimble, and we're going to make you feel fed-up with us. Collar him! I vote we give him a sound bumping, and then kick him off the boat for good!"

"Hear, hear!"
"Here's a giddy half-crown just dropped from his pocket now," said Digby suddenly, picking up the coin from the grating.

"Is that yours, Trimble?" snapped Glyn.
"Ow! Oh dear! Yes!"

"Then here you are!" said Glyn, cramming it into the fat junior's pocket. "That will do for a telegram home, asking your people to send your fare on. And now you're going to go through it."

"Hear, hear!"
"Yaas, wathah!"

And Baggy Trimble did go through it. He was bumped on the grating until his howls of anguish raised the echoes, and then, with eight pairs of boots behind him, he fairly flew over the cabin-top and leaped ashore with surprising agility. Then he fled for his life.

"That's that!" said Tom Merry, watching him vanish up the beach. "The fat little toad has got less than he deserves, and I expect he'll be back before dark begging to be forgiven and taken in again. And I suppose we'll have to let him come back—for to-night, at all events. We can't let the fat idiot sleep out all night. And now what about those Sea Scouts, chaps? We're not going to take this business lying down."

"No fear!"
"Right!" said Tom grimly. "We'll have tea now, and then we'll discuss plans for giving the rotters the kybosh. I don't pretend to know why they did such a trick, but

I'm jolly sure we're going to get satisfaction from the rotters!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And all the motor-boat boys were fully agreed upon that. The Sea Scouts had come off best so far, but Tom Merry & Co. were not the fellows to take a licking lying down, and they were determined to have a settlement with Dick Trumper & Co.

Curiously enough, on board the Skylark—the Pegg Sea Scout's cutter—Dick Trumper & Co. were saying the same sort of thing. They hadn't as yet any clear suspicion where Tom Merry & Co. were to be found, but though they had come off best in the encounter, they were feeling very sore indeed in more ways than one. In their view the attack of the St. Jim's juniors had been entirely unprovoked and unjustifiable, and they were grimly determined to get a proper explanation when they met again.

CHAPTER 9.

Awkward!

"STEADY, now! We don't want to make a muck of it this time!"

"Wathah not! Pway don't talk so much, Tom Mewwy; sound cawwies vewy easily across the watah, deah boy!"

"You silly ass! It's you who're doing all the silly gasing!" snorted Tom Merry. "Dry up!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I stwongly object to being called a silly ass!" snorted Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Rather not advertise the fact—what?" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Oh, chuck it!" grunted Jack Blake. "This is not the time for silly squabbling. We really ought to have left Gussy at home. He's bound to muck the whole thing up!"

"Bai Jove! Blake, you feahful wottah—"

"Oh, do dry up!" hissed Tom Merry in great exasperation. "We had to bring Gussy as he's the only one who pretends to know which boat it is. You're sure you're right, Gussy?"

"Quite sure!" said Arthur Augustus, after bestowing a glare upon Blake. "I remember seein' two Sea Scouts standin' on board when I was takin' a stwoll this mornin', bai Jove!"

"The second boat from the end, Gussy?"

"Yaas! It is wathah a nice boat," said Arthur Augustus. "White paint and bwass, you know!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "You chaps know what to do! We creep up to the cutter, and if we're lucky we'll board her without being spotted. If we're spotted, we've got to be jolly slippy, for they're in the majority, remember. They wouldn't have licked us this afternoon if they hadn't been. Got the stuff handy, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then come on! We'll bung Glyn's stink-bombs through the portholes first—that'll make their dashed boat hum for a few days, at all events. Then we'll swarm aboard and give 'em the bags of flour."

"What-ho!"

The dinghy began to move again, and crept on across the little bay. At the far end the lights of several boats at anchor could be seen, and it was towards this the boat was creeping. It was getting late, and the dusk was deepening over the Channel. Tom Merry & Co. began to feel quite excited now. They had laid their plans very carefully, and all was in readiness for the attack on the Sea Scouts who had—so they believed—treated them so disgracefully. In Tom Merry & Co.'s view, Dick Trumper & Co. needed a lasting lesson, and they proposed now to give them one.

That the Pegg Sea Scouts had any reasonable excuse for having taken out their boat for a joy-ride, the juniors did not dream. They would have been very much surprised, indeed, had they known that Baggy Trimble was at the bottom of it. But they did not know.

The dinghy crept nearer with its cargo of avengers. They could see the anchored boats clearly now. The end boat showed only a glimmer from her port-holes, but the second craft was ablaze with lights. Lights streamed from her portholes on to the glimmering water, and a blaze of light streamed out from the doorway of the saloon. The rest of the craft at anchor were in darkness, save for riding-lights.

Now they were closer they could see that the second boat was quite a big boat—much bigger than they had expected. It rather disturbed the juniors.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Glyn, in a whisper. "I hope we aren't biting off more than we can chew, chaps. We've only counted ten of the blighters, but there may be a whole giddy scoop on board that boat."

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"I never thought of that, either," said Tom Merry, setting his lips. "But we're not backing out now, chaps?"

"Rather not!"

"Here goes, then!"

"Once aboard the lugger and the girl is mine!" murmured Lowther.

"Dry up, silly ass!"

Dip, dip, dip!

Three more gentle dips of the blades sent the boat gently nosing against the side of the white-painted cutter, and Digby got a grip with a boathook and held on.

"Now!" breathed Tom. "Sling those stink-bombs through when I give the word. Then we swarm aboard, and let 'em have it good and strong through the doorway of the cabin. Jolly lucky nobody's on deck! Ready?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then go it!"

And Tom Merry & Co. went it with a will. The line of portholes were very small and very close together, but the aim of the juniors was good.

Whiz, whiz, whiz, whiz!

One after the other the juniors let fly through the portholes while the boat was edged gently towards the stern.

And suddenly from inside came a most ferocious howl, followed by a chorus of howls from within the lighted cabin.

"Now!" hissed Tom Merry. "Out boarders!"

"What-ho!"

Up the sides of the cutter swarmed the avengers, and they were on deck in a flash, paper bags of flour in their pockets in readiness, while Manners and Blake remained in the boat and handed more up.

It was surprise, complete and overwhelming.

Unfortunately, though, it was all a most horrible mistake.

The juniors reached the doorway of the cabin, and even as he blinked in the dazzling light that streamed out, Tom Merry let fly with a bag of flour, as did Herries beside him.

But, even as the bag left Tom's hand he fairly yelled in dismay at what he saw.

The cabin was brilliantly lit, and most luxuriously furnished. Inside were four men in evening dress, and they were—or, rather, had been—sitting down to dinner apparently.

But they were not doing so now. They were dancing about and sneezing and coughing and choking, with handkerchiefs clasped to their nostrils.

One of them was just staggering backwards with flour smothered over his features and hair. And the stench in the cabin was truly overpowering.

"Oh—oh, my hat!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. stood blinking in at the doorway, simply rooted to the floor with sheer horror at what they had done. In their excitement they had not noted that the sudden yells from the cabin had been in men's voices and not boys'.

But now they realised it. There had been a mistake—a dreadful mistake somewhere! It was only too clear—too painfully clear—that they had boarded the wrong boat.

And as they stood there in their dumbfounded horror one of the men suddenly sighted them and gave a dreadful roar.

"It's those little rascals! Stop them—quick!"

As he spoke he grabbed a plate and hurled it at the juniors in the doorway. Evidently he was a gentleman of sudden impulse.

Crash!

The plate smashed on the door-jamb, and a splinter caught D'Arcy on the chin, making him yell fiendishly.

"Run for it!" yelled Tom Merry.

And the juniors ran for it, and only just in time, for hard on their heels came the furious yachtsmen with a ferocious rush.

"Oh, great Scott! Look out!"

In a mad stampede the horrified juniors sprang over the rail and tumbled pell-mell into the waiting boat in a struggling heap.

"Pull away!" panted Tom Merry. "Pull, you burbling idiots!"

"What—what the thump—"

Apparently Blake and Manners had not quite grasped the position yet, and, acting swiftly, Tom Merry sent Manners sprawling back over the seat as he grabbed an oar and pushed off frantically.

At the same moment four figures appeared at the rail above, gesticulating and shouting furiously. The next instant a fusillade of articles rained down on the hapless heads of the juniors.

A bucket sent Blake sprawling on his face in the bottom of the boat with a yell, and a deck-mop took Tom Merry a fearful clump on the head.

But he ignored it, and pulled furiously at the oars. The next moment the dinghy was dancing and rocking well out of range, as Herries also got to work with the oars.

A stream of lurid exclamations and angry yells floated

after them over the silvery waters from the furious yachtsmen. Then Tom Merry gave a gasp.

"Keep it up, Herries!" he gasped. "The beggars are pulling their dinghy alongside. Put it on, for goodness' sake!"

Herries bent to the oars with a will, as did Tom himself, and the dinghy fairly forged over the glimmering water in the gathering dusk. It was very lucky indeed that it was dusky.

Soon the other boats at anchor hid the yacht—it was obviously a yacht—from sight, and Tom Merry and Herries pulled madly, their one aim being to reach the motor-cruiser before they could be seen.

But the dusk was thick now, and Tom Merry panted his relief as he saw that already the anchored boats could scarcely be seen.

"Oh, good!" he gasped. "We're all right now, I think, chaps! Phew! Yachtsmen—eh?"

"More like hooligans, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus, nursing his cut chin. "Oh cwumbs!"

"We'll give you crumbs when we get you aboard the yacht!" said Blake ferociously.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, you fellows——"

"Dry up now!" hissed Tom Merry. "We can deal with that born idiot afterwards. Sooner we get aboard the better. They may suspect us, but I don't think they'd know us again, and if they did they'd have a hard job to prove anything. Hallo, here we are!"

The jetty loomed up ahead with the Silver Spray lying alongside. Scarcely had the dinghy touched the side when the juniors were swarming aboard, all thoughts of the Sea Scouts gone from their minds now. The dinghy was made fast, and then Tom Merry spoke.

"Now we've got to lie low until we're sure they haven't followed us," he said. "Come into the cabin and fasten the door. But don't put on the light, for goodness' sake!"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors crowded into the little cabin, and, with the door fastened they waited, listening for the splash of oars, and staring through the portholes, on the look-out for a boat.

But nothing happened—no splash of oars sounded, and no shadowy boat came stealing over the darkening sea. And after five minutes had passed Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Safe enough now," he said thankfully. "They don't

suspect us—probably know nothing about us being here. But we'll have to lie low after this for a bit, chaps. And now what about dealing with Gussy, the—the burbling idiot?"

"The crass ass!"

"The blundering donkey!"

"The idiotic botcher!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped as his chums surrounded him with various wrathful and far from complimentary remarks. He jammed his monocle further into place, and glared round indignantly at his chums.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I fail to see how it was my fault, you wottahs! It was all a mistake—a vevy natuwal mistake!"

"Mistake be blowed!" hooted Blake wrathfully. "You said it was the second boat from the end, you burbling dummy!"

"I weally felt certain it was, you know!" stammered Arthur Augustus. "I was almost certain that it was the second from the end!"

"Almost?" yelled Herries. "You ought to have made quite certain before saying so, you born idiot!"

"You said you were quite certain!" hooted Glyn.

"Trust Gussy to make a muck of things," said Lowther.

"We ought never to have listened to him!"

"Rather not!"

"I am vevy sowwy—vevy sowwy, indeed," said Arthur Augustus, frigidly. "But I wefuse to be wagged in this wuffianly mannah! I can only suppose that anoathah boat—the one at the end now—came in and anchored there since I passed. That is the only explanation I can weally think of to account for the mistake."

"Rubbish!"

"Rot!"

"Bunkum!" snorted Blake. "You've mucked things up, as usual, and we're going to teach you to take more care in future, you born idiot! Bump him, chaps!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! Hold on—Yawoooooogh!"

Bump! Bump, bump, bump!

Collared on all sides by his irate chums, Arthur Augustus was lifted and lowered again—hard! He was lifted and lowered in like manner several times, and then, leaving him sprawling and roaring with anguish, his wrathy chums left him there and marched out of the cabin.

(Continued overleaf.)



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THAT FATAL SPOT!

Lady of the House: "This is the portrait of my great-grandfather who fell at Waterloo." Charwoman: "Now, isn't that a coincidence? My 'usband slipped on a banana skin and broke his nose at the same station!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Jeffrey Summer, 73, Mallinson Road, Wandsworth Common, London, S.W. 11.

HOT STUFF!

"Now, my lad," said the Form master, "we read that Pompey mustered an army. What happened next?" "Please, sir," piped Perkins minor, "he peppered the enemy and carried the city by assault!" "Sit down!" ordered the master. "I'll take no sauce from you!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to George Colley, Fitz-Ford, Lymington Road, Torquay, Devon.

FISHY!

Mrs. Gayfellow: "Are you sure you caught this fish?" Mr. Gayfellow: "Yes, my dear." Mrs. Gayfellow: "It smells very strong." Mr. Gayfellow: "And I don't wonder at it, considering it nearly pulled me overboard!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Joseph Flaker, Ward G 1, St. Giles' Hospital, Brunswick Square, Camberwell, S.E.

KEEPING HIS WORD!

Bert: "What do you think of the new shooting tenant?" Bill: "Whatever he is he's a man of his word. He said he would send what he shot to the village hospital. I saw two keepers and a guest go by in the ambulance about half an hour ago!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Stanley Cooper, 109, Donore Terrace, Sth. Cir Road, Dublin.

AN AWKWARD SITUATION!

A young lawyer, retained by a farmer to prosecute a railway company for killing twenty-four hogs, wanted to impress the jury with the magnitude of the injury. "Twenty-four hogs, gentlemen!" he said sternly. "Twenty-four—twice the number there are in the jury box!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss May Daniels, "Ellonville," Park Road, Eskbank, Midlothian.

TYRE-ING!

A young lady was eating a sausage in a cafe when suddenly she came upon a piece of motor-tyre. "Waiter! Waiter!" cried the irate customer. "Look! I have found this piece of motor-car in my sausage!" "That's all right, madam," replied the waiter coolly. "Haven't you heard that the motor-car has taken the place of the horse everywhere nowadays!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. W. Stride, 51, Halstead Street, Caulfield, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

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CHAPTER 10.
A Night Alarm!

"Oh dear! This is awful! I wish I'd never come with these beasts on this rotten cruise!" It was Baggy Trimble again, and he murmured the words in a most dismal tone.

Darkness lay over land and sea, and Baggy was making his way dolorously towards the jetty. It was not the first time by any means that the luckless fat youth had ventured near to the Silver Spray that evening, but each time he had seen lights on board, and he wandered off again.

On one occasion he had even ventured on board, hoping to sneak unseen into the fo'c'sle, but Tom Merry had happened to come out of the cabin, and he had fled away into the night again like a great fat shadow.

Baggy Trimble was feeling very sorry for himself—very sorry. He felt like a wanderer on the face of the earth—homeless and unwanted. Friendless and forlorn, he had spent the evening wandering about, and he had even considered the thought of visiting the Sea Scouts and begging shelter from them for the night.

But he felt it wiser not to in the circumstances—indeed, he saw no possibility of getting over to the cutter without swimming it. And that, in Baggy's case, was out of the question.

He had to find shelter for the night somewhere, however. He had had a very trying day, and he was tired out. Moreover, he was desperately hungry. He had long ago spent every penny of the second ten shillings—but that was hours ago, and he was now hungry again. It was amazing how soon Baggy Trimble did get hungry—even after getting outside enough food to last an ordinary fellow a whole day.

"Oh dear!" he groaned again. "And if I do manage to get into the fo'c'sle, they'll kick me out in the morning. I wish—oh, good!"

Baggy had just come in sight of the Silver Spray, and his fat heart leaped with relief as he saw that the boat was in deep darkness.

His wanderings were ended at last! Baggy almost wept in his deep relief. He crept on the jetty and climbed cautiously aboard the boat. And caution was very necessary, for Tom Merry and Co. were light sleepers, and half of them were sleeping in the aft cockpit with only a light canvas awning between them and the night air.

Trimble groaned with self-pity as he thought of them swinging gently in their comfortable hammocks.

Creeping over the cabin top, he reached the fo'c'sle, and tried the door apprehensively. It was quite possible that the juniors had even locked the fo'c'sle up, suspecting that he might creep aboard.

As a matter of fact Tom Merry and Co. had been pretty certain that Trimble would creep aboard. But they had not locked the fo'c'sle up. Tom Merry and Co. were very good natured youths, indeed, and, wild as they had been with Baggy Trimble, they had no intention of leaving him to wander about all night.

So they had left it open, and in deep relief, Baggy crawled inside, leaving the sliding door slightly open. It was dark and smelly inside, and Trimble groaned as he thought of the night's sleep he was likely to get.

Then he suddenly remembered something. His own bedding and blankets were in the locker outside, and he crept out again, and after fumbling in the darkness, he managed to find the things. Then he took them into the fo'c'sle and, as best he could in the darkness, he spread out the bed and wrapped the blankets round him without taking off anything but his shoes.

Then, with a weary sigh, the fat junior composed himself to sleep.

But sleep would not come. Tired as he was, Trimble was more hungry than tired. For perhaps an hour he lay tossing and turning in misery on the hard floor, and then he got up in sheer desperation.

"It's no good!" he groaned dismally. "Unless I get something to jolly well eat, I'll never get to sleep. Oh crumbs! This is simply awful! I shall have to risk it—the beasts may have left the larder door unlocked as I'm not supposed to be aboard. Beasts!"

It was not a flattering reflection that the larder door might have been left unlocked because he had gone—or was supposed to have gone—but it brought great hope to the fat junior now.

His mind made up, he crept from the fo'c'sle cautiously. Only the slash and ripple of the waves against the sides of the boat could he hear, and, save for a few lights ashore and on the boats, everywhere was in deep darkness.

To his relief, the sliding-door at the forward end was

wide open, for the September night was warm, and the juniors had left the cabin doors wide open to get all the fresh air they could. It was lucky for Baggy Trimble, however.

Hardly daring to breathe, Trimble crept softly into the cabin. The sound of gentle breathing from the sleeping juniors in the bunks was clear enough, but he could see nothing, for it was pitch dark inside the cabin save for a dim glimmer of starlight through the skylight.

In a moment, Trimble had reached the little larder door, and as he tried it, his heart leaped with sheer joy. It was unlocked!

"Oh, good!" murmured Trimble, under his breath. "Here goes! There was some rabbit pie for dinner, and I never got the chance to scoff what was left. Those beasts are so suspicious of a chap. They seemed to think I might scoff it!"

Trimble reached up to where he remembered the rabbit-pie had been put. He fumbled and soon found it. Then he found a spoon and started to work in earnest on the remains of the rabbit-pie.

He finished the lot in less than two minutes, and then Trimble remembered there should have been a packet of chocolate biscuits on the top shelf—he remembered seeing Blake place them there himself.

Trimble reached up for them. He found them all right, and was reaching them down when something fell on his face.

It was a small packet of pepper that some careless individual had shoved just on top of the packet of biscuits and, unluckily for Baggy, it had been opened and not fastened up properly.

As it dropped full on Baggy's upturned face, the packet burst open and the pepper spread over Baggy's fat features in a dusty cloud.

The sudden involuntary yelp that Baggy gave as the pepper was showered into his open eyes was enough to waken the famous Seven Sleepers, not to mention Tom Merry & Co.

As Baggy jumped about frantically, yelling and sneezing and gasping, there arose startled exclamations from the occupants of the bunks, abruptly awakened from dreamland by Baggy's howls of woe.

"What the thump—"

"Bai Jove! Whatvah is the mattah?"

It was the sleepy voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and as he asked the question, Gussy suddenly glimpsed the strange form prancing about close to his bunk.

In a flash Arthur Augustus got out of bed, and as he did so, one of Trimble's wildly waving fists caught him—quite by accident—full on the nose.

It was the turn of Arthur Augustus to yell—and he yelled. He also had a sudden startling suspicion.

At first he had imagined that the strange form was that of a burglar; but now he noted that it was not a man's form at all, and as he had gone to sleep thinking of the Sea Scouts, at once Gussy jumped to the quite natural conclusion that it was a raid by the Pegg Sea Scouts.

Without hesitation, Arthur Augustus rushed at the prancing figure, and clasped his arms around him, yelling for help.

"Wescue, deah boys! It's those wotten Sea Scouts! Wescue! A waid, a waid! Wescue!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

Blake leaped out of bed next, and jumped towards the light switch. Unfortunately, Herries, at the same moment, jumped out from his own bunk across the cabin to do likewise.

The two collided, and with Gussy's yell of "Sea Scouts! A waid! A waid!" ringing in their ears, it was scarcely to be wondered at that they each jumped to the conclusion he had collided with an enemy.

At all events, they did, and the next moment both were lurching about fighting furiously in the deep darkness.

By this time the other fellows had slipped from their bunks, and all seemed to be trying to reach the electric-light switch. Then in the midst of the confusion that reigned in the deep darkness, Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, and Glyn rushed in from the aft cockpit to see what was happening.

They made confusion more confounded still, but after a strenuous three minutes of uproar and confusion, Tom Merry managed to switch the light on.

Then he yelled in sheer astonishment.

On the floor Trimble and D'Arcy were rolling, struggling frantically, both of them sneezing and gasping as they struggled. Close by them Blake and Herries were also on the floor—or, at least, they were just scrambling up, having discovered—rather late—with whom each had been fighting. The rest of the fellows seemed to have been playing a game of hide-and-seek with each other.

"M-mum-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What the—what the dickens does this rumpus mean?"



As Tom Merry switched on the light, Trimble and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were revealed, rolling and struggling fiercely on the floor. Close by them Blake and Herries were scrambling up, having realised rather late in the day with whom each had been fighting. "M-mum-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What the—what the dickens does this rumpus mean?" (See Chapter 10.)

The startled juniors glared at each other in amazement. Arthur Augustus almost fell down as he sighted whom he had been struggling with.

He gave a violent sneeze, and then he pointed a finger at the hapless Baggy Trimble, who looked on the verge of collapse.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped. "Twimble—that wottah Twimble! And I thought— Oh deah! I thought it was those wotten Sea Scouts makin' a waid, bai Jove!"

The juniors blinked from Trimble to Arthur Augustus in sheer amazement. Arthur Augustus looked a sight, his elegant pyjamas being smothered in crushed biscuits, and pepper, and his nose and eyes were red and streaming with moisture. But Trimble was a far worse sight. His nose was streaming with crimson, and his eyes were red and swollen, and he coughed and sneezed and howled with misery.

"You—you thought it was the Sea Scouts making a raid?" choked Blake. "And it was only Trimble?"

"Oh, yaas! I heard a feahful noise which woke me up, and then I saw somebody jumpin' about by my bunk. I jumped to the conclusion, natuwallly, that it was a waid—a waid by those w'etched Sea Scouts!"

"And it was only Trimble?" howled Blake.

"Yaas! Oh cwumbs!"

"You—you blithering idiot!" roared Blake. "You've made me punch Herries, and you've made Herries punch me! Oh, you—you—"

Words failed Jack Blake, and he simply glared and glared at the unfortunate Arthur Augustus.

"But what in thunder does it mean?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What is Trimble doing in here, anyway? Oh, I see!"

Quite suddenly Tom saw the larder door open and he understood.

"It's pretty clear what's happened," snorted Glyn, glaring at the hapless Baggy Trimble. "That fat thief sneaked aboard as we expected he would, and he's made a dashed raid on the larder, the fat burglar!"

"That's it!"

That much was only too clear. Baggy Trimble fairly shook as he saw the looks on the faces of the juniors.

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows," he wept, "you mightn't be so hard on a chap. I've had an awful time—really, I have. I was famished for something to eat, and I simply had to get some grub from somewhere. I couldn't sleep I was so hungry. Groooogh!"

And Trimble broke off with a terrific attack of sneezing that left him almost prostrate.

The juniors simply could not help feeling sorry for him, such a weary, doleful object did he cut.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "So this is the meaning of all the rumpus!"

"It was the pup-pepper did it!" groaned Trimble, rubbing more pepper into his eyes with his hands in an effort to clear them. "It dropped right in my face and burst all over me. Oh crumbs! I feel— Groooogh! Atish-oooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a sudden burst of uncontrollable laughter from Monty Lowther, and even Arthur Augustus and Blake and Herries joined in—they could not help it.

"Well, you awful young idiot!" laughed Tom Merry, looking at the fat junior with no little compassion. "You've had a rough time, and no mistake. What shall we do with the fat ass, you fellows?"

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows," gasped Trimble tearfully. "Don't be heartless and kick me out again. I'll promise to work and touch no more grub, and I'll not try on any more games. Besides—"

"The fat ass deserves what he's got," grunted Herries. "But—"

"Oh dear! I say, look here," went on Baggy, as if fearful of the result. "If you'll lemme stay and leave me alone, I'll tell you how to get square with those rotten Sea Scouts—honour bright!"

"Eh? What's that?" said Glyn quickly.

"Those rotten Sea Scouts!" gasped Trimble eagerly. "I was in a cafe to-night and they came in for some grub, and I overheard them. They couldn't see me 'cause I was sitting at a table behind the partition."

"Well, go on—what about it?" snapped Glyn. "If you can show us how to get square with those cads we'll see you all right, Trimble, never fear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It was like this," said Trimble, after another violent fit of sneezing. "They were buying a lot of grub for a picnic. I heard that chap Trumper saying what it was for. The beasts are going to-morrow to Alborough Abbey for a picnic."

"Oh!"

"I heard all about it," said Trimble eagerly. "They're going just after dinner, and they're going to have the picnic in the abbey ruins."

"Are they walking there?" asked Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming.

"Nunno! Their boat's been lying up—something smashed or something. But I heard them say the spare part had come last night, and they're going to go in their boat, picnic at the ruins, and then go on along the coast!"

"Bai Jove! That is vevy intevestin' news, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Those feahful wuffians uttably wuined my suit, and I shall be vevy glad indeed to give them a feahful thwashin'. Yaas, wathah!"

"I thought you fellows would be interested," said Trimble, taking courage from the looks on the juniors' faces. "Well, what about it? They were buying heaps of grub, you know. What about raiding them and collaring the grub?"

And Trimble's red eyes gleamed at the delightful prospect. It was clear that Trimble was only thinking of the grub, and not vengeance.

"Well, it's not a bad idea," said Tom Merry reflectively. "We must talk it over in the morning, chaps."

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll draw up a plan, and we'll not only raid the grub but we'll teach the cheeky rotters a lasting lesson," said Tom grimly. "And now let's get back to bed, for goodness' sake. We've had enough excitement for one day."

"What about Trimble?" grinned Lowther.

Tom Merry looked at the fat, woeful face of Baggy and he chuckled.

"Oh, let him stay!" he said. "You hear, Trimble? You can bring your hammock in the forward cockpit, as usual, you fat clam. But any more tricks, my lad, and you're for it next time."

And Tom Merry was turning away when Trimble gave a groan. Apparently he wasn't satisfied yet.

"Look here," he gasped. "What about some grub for me—I simply can't sleep without something to eat, and I only had the chance to taste a bit of that rabbit-pie before that beastly pepper fell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, give the fat ass some grub!" grinned Glyn.

"Oh, good man, Glyn, old fellow!" said Trimble. "I always knew you were a rattling good sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Trimble was given some "grub." He was handed some biscuits, and some cheese, and a bottle of lemonade, and then the larder door was closed and locked, and he was gently led by the ear out of the cabin. The juniors had had enough of Trimble for one day. And very soon silence reigned on board the Silver Spray again.

CHAPTER 11.

St. Jim's for Ever!

TOM MERRY & Co. were up bright and early the following morning, despite the loss of sleep and excitement of the night before. Even Trimble was up early, though not very bright. As a matter of fact the fat junior had been thinking things over very seriously, and he had come to the conclusion that, if he wanted to stay with Tom Merry & Co. for the remainder of the cruise, he would have to behave himself. Dense as the fat junior undoubtedly was, he could not fail to see that Tom Merry & Co. were "fed-up," and that they would not stand much more of his nonsense.

And Trimble wanted to stay on badly. In spite of his statements to the contrary, on the whole Baggy Trimble was enjoying himself very much indeed.

But, unlike the rest of the juniors, who were looking forward eagerly to putting the "kybosh" as they expressed it, on Dick Trumper & Co., Baggy Trimble looked forward to that operation with great misgiving.

In his frantic eagerness to save his skin the night before he had been only too eager to do anything that would in any way bring Tom Merry & Co. to look upon him with a more kindly eye. And he had given the information regarding the Sea Scouts' picnic to Alborough Abbey—

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which was quite true information—without thought of any possible consequences to himself of the rivals coming to grips.

Now, however, having had time to think things over, it had suddenly occurred to him that there was grave danger to himself in the coming meeting. Something was bound to come out. As yet the Sea Scouts, obviously, did not dream that Tom Merry & Co. had any connection with the Silver Spray. While Tom Merry & Co. hadn't the faintest suspicion that the daring Trimble had hired the boat to the Scouts the day before.

Trimble shuddered to think of what would happen to him if they ever did get to know.

And now he saw that there was very grave danger of that coming about.

It was no wonder that Trimble was not very merry and bright on that sunny morning. For not only was there danger in the coming raid, but Trimble knew that at any moment one of the Sea Scouts might happen along and see the juniors aboard the Silver Spray. Indeed, it was really a miracle that they had not done so already, and "tumbled" to the real inwardness of matters.

But as it happened, Baggy Trimble need not have worried in regard to the latter possibility. For Tom Merry & Co. were not anxious to stay at Lynridge any longer than was necessary, in view of their indiscretion of the previous night.

It was certainly unsafe to stay in Lynridge a moment longer. Tom Merry & Co. were very sorry for what had taken place. It was certainly an unfortunate mistake, and they could understand the men being very angry indeed about it.

None the less, they saw no earthly reason why they should stay and suffer for the mistake. It seemed to them very unnecessary, and would serve no useful purpose to anyone, and be possibly very painful and unpleasant for themselves.

But they had no intention of giving up their proposed vengeance on the Sea Scouts. Tom Merry & Co. felt they deserved a lasting lesson, and they proposed, with luck, to give them one.

So the nose of the Silver Spray was turned towards Alborough Abbey, and very soon they sighted the fine old ruins up the slope. But they did not anchor opposite. It was unwise to let Dick Trumper & Co. come along and find them there.

A hiding-place for the Silver Spray was very necessary, and luckily there was one. From the hill the previous day Tom Merry had seen a little wooded cove about half a mile farther west, and here Tom Merry hoped to find shelter.

Accordingly, the motor-cruiser was headed for this, and very soon after leaving Lynridge they had dropped anchor in the pretty cove, quite close inshore.

It was a jolly little place, and the juniors were soon splashing about in the waves. Then they had a stroll to the abbey up the hill, and Manners took some snapshots of the ruins with his camera.

The morning passed quickly enough, and after dinner the juniors left the cruiser in charge of Baggy Trimble, and started out on their errand of vengeance.

Taking cover in the trees on the slope, the juniors waited for the enemy to arrive. They had not to wait long. The faint sound of a throbbing motor reached them at last, and then they saw a cutter of about eight or nine tons running inshore. There was no wind, and she was throbbing along steadily under her auxiliary motor.

"That's it!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "I remember now, it was the third one from the end, after all, Gussy."

"It was the second one when I saw it," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I weep that the end one must have come along and anchored aftahwards, bai Jove!"

"Well, we won't squabble about it now—it's done with!" grinned Tom Merry. "Hallo, down goes the anchor!"

"Oh, good!"

If the juniors had doubted Baggy Trimble's information at all, they did not do so now. The Sea Scouts could be seen plainly as they drew their dinghy alongside and jumped down, one after the other, into it.

"Now you know the plan," said Tom Merry. "We wait until they come along, and then we go for them and give them a right good drubbing. They're bound to leave someone in charge of their cutter, and by taking them by surprise we'll have the advantage. Anyway, I'm just spoiling for a scrap with 'em!"

"Hear, hear!"

"After that," resumed Tom Merry, with a chuckle, "we'll collar their giddy grub, tie 'em leg to leg, and let 'em hoof it back to Lynridge like that. You've got the blacking and the flour?"

"Yes, rather!"

"That'll do to daub their chivvies with," said Tom. "Then we'll let 'em loose and board their boat, and tow it for a

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couple of miles along the coast. We'll tell them where it is; of course, and they can hoof it after it."

"Mustn't touch their grub, though," said Manners, shaking his head. "It isn't like ragging our own chaps or the Grammarians."

"Wathah not!"

"Of course we won't do that!" grinned Tom. "We'll shove it on their cutter, and they can earn it by tramping for it."

"Hear, hear!"

The plan appealed to Tom Merry & Co. as being just and suitable punishment for the fellows who had—so they supposed—fairly "asked for it."

But Tom Merry & Co. had not won the battle yet!

"Here they come!" said Blake suddenly. "Oh, good! They've left two chaps on board, just as they did before. Now for it!"

The juniors crouched down in the undergrowth as Dick Trumper & Co., little dreaming of what lay in wait for them, came up from the shore, laughing and chatting cheerily. Two of them carried a large basket, and nearly all of them carried paper bags and packages, while two carried cameras.

They reached the edge of the bit of woodland, and then they came tramping through the undergrowth.

"Ready?" murmured Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "Mind you wait for the word!"

"What-ho!"

The word came swiftly enough as the Sea Scouts tramped up to within a few feet of the hiding juniors.

"Now, go for 'em!"

"St. Jim's for ever!"

It was a howl from the St. Jim's juniors, and as they heard it Dick Trumper & Co. all but leapt from their skins. Then as he glimpsed the figures rushing at them Dick Trumper raised his voice in a wild yell:

"Look out! Oh, great pip! It's them St. Jim's fellows! Back up! Steady!"

The next moment fists were thumping home, and the little glade was like Bedlam. The Sea Scouts had dropped their burdens on the instant, and startled as they were they put up a terrific resistance.

Tom Merry had singled out Dick Trumper, and the two were soon rolling over and over on the grass, punching at each other right heartily.

The yells and gasps and howls awakened the echoes of that hitherto peaceful glade.

Blake had gone for Solly Lazarus, the Jewish boy—and he was not enjoying the encounter. Solly was a great man with his fists, and he seemed to be enjoying himself.

But Tom Merry & Co. were nine to eight, and even the odd one told a tale. Moreover, the Sea Scouts had been taken completely by surprise, and before he knew it one

of them was down, and in a flash Digby had pinned him down, and was sitting on his chest.

And Digby was not slow to take advantage of the chance. In a flash he had his length of cord out, and had twisted and tied it round the wrists of his wriggling captor.

Then Digby jumped up, and leaving the Scout to wriggle in vain, he jumped up to aid his companions. It was now nine to seven, and the result was soon seen to be a foregone conclusion. Digby's sudden and unexpected success had given the St. Jim's juniors an advantage they had not expected.

Dick Trumper tripped suddenly, and in a flash Tom Merry was on him, pinning him down. The struggle was one of the catch-as-catch-can variety, and the ordinary rules of scrapping were flung to the winds.

The same moment Digby rushed to aid Tom, and, despite Dick Trumper's heroic struggles, he was held fast, and his wrists were tied behind him.

"Go it, men!" yelled Dick Trumper. "Stick to it! We're not done yet!"

And he went on struggling furiously to free himself as Tom Merry and Digby rushed away to join in the fray anew.

It did not last long after that, however. With their leader a prisoner, and against the odds, the rest of the Scouts had little chance, though they fought gallantly.

One by one they were overpowered, and flung down and tied up. Solly Lazarus was the last to be overpowered, and he went down with three St. Jim's juniors on top of him.

"Ow-ow!" gasped Blake, caressing his streaming nose as he looked down at the fuming Solly, who was tied at last. "Ow-yow! That chap's mustard, and no mistake! Ow! He's nearly busted my boko! He's too jolly good for me! Grooogh!"

Tom Merry, holding his hand to a rapidly-darkening eye, looked down at the stricken field with a rueful grin.

"Well, we've managed it!" he gasped. "But it was some scrap!"

"Yes, you've managed it all right, you howling rotter!" snorted Dick Trumper, glaring up at the St. Jim's leader. "You wouldn't have done it if we'd been on equal terms, though."

"That's just what we felt, after yesterday," chuckled Tom Merry. "You had your turn yesterday, my pippins, and now it's our turn."

"But what're you thumping well doing it for?" said Dick Trumper, his rugged face dark. "I can stand a bit of fun with anyone, but it's beyond a joke going for us like this for nothing. If you want a scrap, we're always ready to oblige you, but I'm blessed if I can see any reason why you should want to go for us at all."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, the fearful nerve!"

The St. Jim's juniors stared hard at Trumper. He seemed so wildly and genuinely indignant that they were quite startled.

"You silly dummy!" snorted Bernard Glyn. "I should think we have a jolly good reason, you cheeky rotters!"

"I can't see any," said Dick Trumper, glaring up at Glyn. "Unless you were waxy because we stopped you from catching that fat chap yesterday."

"We weren't waxy about that at all," snapped Tom Merry. "In fact, we thought your stopping us was an accident. You know jolly well why we're doing this. I suppose you thought it was a fine lark to run off with our motor-boat yesterday afternoon, and I suppose you thought it was a bigger lark when you chucked us all into the sea because we tried to get our boat back?"

"Y-y-your—your boat?" stammered Dick Trumper. "Oh, my hat!"

CHAPTER 12.

Trouble for Trimble!

DICK TRUMPER gazed blankly at the St. Jim's juniors, and then he looked at his fellow-Scouts. "That—that motor-cruiser your boat?" he stammered.

"Of course it is, you rotter!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Dick Trumper. "But—but it couldn't be!"

"Of course it is!" yelled Bernard Glyn in great exasperation. "You know jolly well it is. That boat belongs to my father, and we're cruising the Channel in it."

"Oh crumbs!"

The Sea Scouts looked astounded. They could scarcely fail to believe the irate Glyn, at all events.

"Then—then—" babbled Dick Trumper—"who's that fat chap—the fellow you were after in the street? The fellow who hired us the boat?"

"Who whatter?"

It was a yell.

"Hired us the boat," repeated Dick Trumper, his eyes gleaming as he began to see things. "We paid him two bob each for the hire of it, didn't we, chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

The Sea Scouts chorused an agreement.

"We paid him two bob a head," said Trumper grimly. "We happened to come along the jetty, to have a look at your boat, and then we saw the notice saying the boat was for hire at a bob an hour, children half-price."

"The crafty, fat thief!"

"The—the daring little rotter!"

Tom Merry & Co. were astounded at the news—news they did not doubt now for one moment. They understood suddenly where Trimble had got that half-crown.

"So that's it!" spluttered Glyn wrathfully. "Oh, the little sweep! No wonder you chaps were waxy when we went for you."

"And no wonder you went for us if that fat chap's been hiring the boat out without permission. Who is the beggar?"

"Trimble!" said Tom Merry, breathing hard. "Baggy Trimble, the fattest, laziest, craftiest, greediest fellow at St. Jim's!"

"He's a St. Jim's chap?" gasped Trumper.

"Yes, worse luck!"

"Well, I'm blowed!"

The St. Jim's juniors looked at each other. They were almost bursting with wrath.

"And—and that fat worm's caused all this trouble," breathed Blake. "Made us go for these chaps like this!"

"And made them go for us," said Tom Merry ruefully. "Oh crumbs! They ought to have made a bit more sure of the hiring business, though."

"I know that," said Dick Trumper dismally. "We were silly asses, I suppose, not to spot it. But our boat was laid up, and the temptation to take a run in a boat like yours was too much for us. Where is that fat rotter, though? I'd like to punch his fat head!"

"Same here!"

"And you jolly well shall!" snorted Glyn. "Come on! We'll go and deal with the fat merchant!"

"Here, hold on!" howled Trumper, as the rest were following. "What about us? Cut us loose, blow you!"

"Sorry!"

In a flash the juniors had their knives out and were slashing at the cords that bound the Sea Scouts, and then they started off at a rush for the Silver Spray—and Baggy Trimble. After rubbing their aching wrists for a moment or two the wrathful Sea Scouts followed them.

As the juniors rushed down to the waiting dinghy they saw him on the cabin roof, and then they saw him rush round the boat frantically, as if searching for a way of escape.

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But there was no escape for Baggy Trimble. The juniors jumped into the boat and pulled out to the Silver Spray. They caught a glimpse of Baggy as he rushed towards the fo'c'sle, and then rushed away again, apparently remembering what had happened to him when he took refuge there before.

Then Baggy Trimble vanished from sight.

The dinghy touched the side of the Silver Spray, and Tom Merry & Co., with Dick Trumper, swarmed aboard her, while a Scout, who had managed to get into the dinghy, rowed it back for the rest of his chums.

"Now for Trimble!" said Glyn ferociously. "We'll give the fat spoofer the time of his life!"

But Trimble had vanished, apparently. He was not in the fo'c'sle, and he was not in the cabin, and he was not in either aft cockpit or forward cockpit.

The juniors were absolutely mystified, until a sudden inspiration struck Lowther, and he glanced over the starboard rail.

Then he yelled:

"Here he is!"

"Oh, good!"

Trimble was there right enough. He had hurriedly tied a rope to the rail, and was clinging to it desperately, just below the rail, his feet dangling some feet above the lapping waves.

Quite calmly Monty Lowther took out his knife and cut the rope through.

Splash!

The blue waters of the little cove closed over the hapless head of Baggy Trimble.

He reappeared the next moment, however, gasping and panting and shrieking for help. And the help came quickly. Blake shoved a boathook downwards and hooked it in the slack of Trimble's jacket. The next instant Lowther had grabbed another boathook, and as Blake raised Trimble a little he hooked this in the slack of Trimble's trousers.

"Up he comes!" bawled Lowther.

And up Trimble came, fairly shrieking with dismal apprehension. With several fellows hauling on the boathooks, he was hoisted on board the Silver Spray, and dropped flopping on to the grating in a drenched and bedraggled heap.

"Ow! Ow-yow! Groooogh!" he gasped. "Oh erikey! Oh, help! Lemme alone! I tell you it wasn't me! Yarroooogh! Keep off! I tell you I know nothing about anything! I never even thought of hiring out the boat! Wow! Don't you believe those rotters! Yarroogh!"

But the juniors did not believe Trimble.

"Now put the fat worm through it!" gasped Glyn.

And the hapless fat youth went through it. What happened to him next Trimble least of all knew. He felt as if he had wandered into a train smash, and an aeroplane smash, and an earthquake combined.

When Tom Merry & Co. had done with him, and when the Sea Scouts had done with him, Trimble crawled down into the fo'c'sle, wishing from the bottom of his heart that he had chosen somebody else but Tom Merry & Co. upon whom to bestow his fascinating society for that summer vacation.

Tom Merry & Co. stayed for a couple of days in that pretty little cove, and the Sea Scouts brought their cutter along and joined them. And a jolly time the two rival factions—friendly rivals now—spent together, boating, and bathing, and swimming. Tom Merry & Co. found Dick Trumper & Co. the very best of good fellows, and Dick Trumper & Co. found the St. Jim's fellows the same. And at the end of the two days they parted on the best of terms, the Sea Scouts to go eastwards in their cutter, their holidays being up, and Tom Merry & Co. to journey westwards in search of fresh adventures.

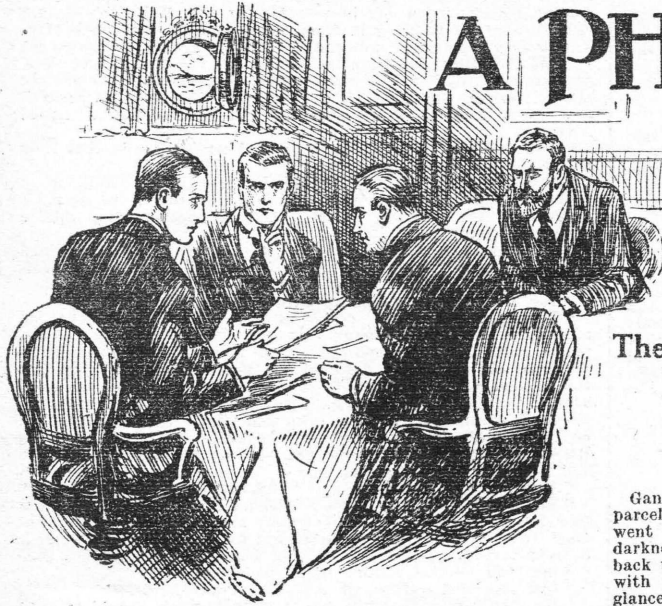
And with them went Baggy Trimble. That fat, troublesome junior had pleaded for forgiveness, and he had been forgiven, Tom Merry & Co. being fellows who very quickly forgot and forgave. For the rest of that memorable holiday cruise Baggy Trimble shared in their joys and troubles, and in the biggest part of the grub, and in the least amount of work.

And when at last, brown as berries and as chirpy as crickets, the famous Co. returned at last to St. Jim's when term commenced, Baggy Trimble had the great pleasure of telling all and sundry what a rotten time he had had, and what beasts Tom Merry & Co. were, and how they had made him slave, and how they had half-starved him, and the like. But as nobody ever believed Trimble, there was no harm done, unless it was to Baggy Trimble himself.

THE END.

(Look out for another topping yarn of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled "THE FOOL OF THE SCHOOL!" And don't forget to order your FREE GIFT NUMBER of the GEM in advance.)

THE RIGHT MAN AT THE RIGHT MOMENT! The plot to restore the ex-Kaiser to the throne is all but complete; millions of people await the signal that will set them at war with their neighbours. But before that signal can be given the German plotters have to account for Ferrers Lord!



A PHANTOM THRONE

By Sidney Drew

The Concluding Chapters of This
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Ferrers Lord Listens to the German Wireless!

FERRERS LORD, sitting in the chair in which the ex-Kaiser had been sitting before making his hurried flight from the lonely island, opened a little leather-bound pocket-book and flicked over the pages until he found a pencilled entry. Gan Waga, who had hidden his loot, looked in through the little hole he had cut in the side of the marquee and ventured to wink at Thomas Prout, who stood very stiff and erect waiting for orders from his chief.

With a gold pencil Ferrers Lord added something to the entry and then tore out the leaf.

"Gan Waga!"

The Eskimo dragged out a couple of tent-pegs, wriggled under the canvas, and stood up, a good deal of sand clinging to his wet garments.

"For the prince," said the millionaire. "Do not lose it! Tell the prince to be at the aerodrome to meet Gan Waga, Prout!"

Gan Waga put the folded paper in the mysterious pocket which was always dry, and waited for the steersman to return. Ferrers Lord said something to him in his own language, and with a quick nod the Eskimo took up a flash lamp. They went down to the edge of the water, and the millionaire inspected the marks in the sand.

"Dave, chief," said Gan Waga, "and the big man. They had a big man prisoner!"

Ferrers Lord nodded and walked slowly back, his hands clasped behind him.

"Prout is through, sir," said the bo'sun. "Do you wish to speak to the prince, sir?"

"No," answered the millionaire, curtly. "Get aboard and away, Gan Waga!"

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

In order to avert another European upheaval, **FERRERS LORD**, millionaire and owner of the magnificent yacht, the *Lord of the Deep*, sets out to crush the Royalists in Germany, who are striving might and main to restore the ex-Kaiser to the throne. Lord despatches his nephew, Midshipman **VAL HILTON**, accompanied by Prince Ching Lung, David ap Rees, Benjamin Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and a number of ordinary seamen, to carry out certain instructions on a lonely island named *Klarspargen*. With great difficulty, Val carries out the first part of his instructions; but afterwards he has the misfortune to run foul of **BARON VON STOLZENBURG**, a German spy, with the result that he and his party are forced to flee back to the *Lord of the Deep*. Val is brought before his chief, and suffers the ignominy of a reprimand. During "shore leave" that same evening a terrible explosion is heard, and the *Lord of the Deep* is seen to founder. Val and Dave set out to investigate, but they are captured by the baron and taken back to *Klarspargen*, where they come face to face with the ex-Kaiser. Before the War Lord can interrogate his prisoners, however, an approaching plane is heard. An instant bustle follows; the ex-Kaiser escapes in his plane, what time Baron von Stolzenburg takes Val and Dave away in a launch just prior to Ferrers Lord's arrival upon the scene.

(Now read on.)

Gan Waga only waited long enough to recover his precious parcel, and then the engine roared and Ching Lung's aeroplane went rocking over the sand and then skimmed westward in the darkness. Someone had left a German newspaper behind. Going back to the ex-Kaiser's chair, Ferrers Lord opened the newspaper with the lazy air of a man who was merely killing time and glanced over it.

"Somebody had better be at the phone, Prout," he said.

"O'Rooney is there, sir," answered the steersman.

Ferrers Lord turned to the announcements of the various German wireless programmes. Germany has many wireless stations, and excellent ones. Presently the millionaire found what he was looking for, and read:

"To-morrow, at midnight, President Zeinmeyer will resume his interrupted lecture entitled, 'Germany, her finances and her future.' This important lecture will be relayed from all stations, and should not be missed. The president has fully recovered from the cold and slight sore throat which caused the interruption. The two earlier lectures will be read at nine p.m., so that listeners-in may be reminded of what has gone before."

The millionaire looked at the date of the newspaper.

"If he says it to-night," he thought, "we shall be too late. What are the words? 'After battling almost alone against the world, the Fatherland remains crushed, but still unconquered. Our grievous wounds are almost healed; our strength is returning. The great darkness is passing, so arise to welcome a new and glorious dawn! Arise! Arise!'"

He tossed the newspaper aside, lighted another cigarette, looked past Prout into the darkness with inscrutable eyes, his chin resting on his hand. Then, stifling a yawn, he pushed the table aside and rose. Barry O'Rooney, with the headphones over his ears, gave a salute as the chief came into the cockpit and opened a mahogany locker. A faint whistle announced a call, and the millionaire reached for another set of headphones and listened. No voice came through; only an indistinct muttering mingled with music. Waving Barry O'Rooney aside, the millionaire looked at his watch, changed the wave-length, and waited.

A band was playing, and a very good band. The music ended with a martial blare of brass instruments and a rattle of drums. An announcement followed in some language unknown to Barry O'Rooney, and then a woman began to sing in a rich soprano voice. Ferrers Lord listened patiently until the song was over. Then came a man's voice—the voice that had spoken before.

"I regret very much," said the voice in German, "that we shall not have the pleasure of hearing our beloved President Herr Zeinmeyer to-night. Unfortunately, his cold has left his throat a little weak, and his physician has advised him to defer the third portion of his lecture until to-morrow. I am advised that this portion of his lecture will be of such importance to all of us, that, although it will be given at a late hour, I entreat you to do with a little less sleep for one night in order to listen to it. In the regretted absence of the president, selections from famous operas will be given at midnight!"

Ferrers Lord smiled, and altered the wave-length.

"The cat amongst the pigeons again," he thought. "Another delay!"

He removed the headphones, and then a familiar voice spoke:

"Anybody theres?"

"Hallo, Gan!" said O'Rooney. "Ut's swate to hear your poipe! Where are you, bhoy?"

"Nearly at Porthampton, old dears," replied Gan Waga. "Dears, dears! I make Chingy's old bus hustles alongs this times fasterer than she ever hustle! I goings downs now. Yo' gotted any more message, Barry, before I bump?"

"Gan Waga, sor, speaking," said Barry to the chief. "He's over Porthampton, and dropping for the aerodrome. Any message, sor?"

Ferrers Lord shook his head.

"Nothing else, Gan," said Barry O'Rooney.

The millionaire climbed down and stood beside his almost invisible aeroplane. Along came the bo'sun, and saluted. Maddock had been down to inspect the underground submarine base, and his report was unfavourable.

"It's not safe, sir," he said. "The heat has cracked the roof, and a lot of the cement has fallen in, and more looks like falling. There are cracks as wide as my hand everywhere, and the steel girders have bulged, and it looks as if a lot of the roof only wanted a shake to fetch it down with a run. No, souse me, it's not safe!"

"Very good!"

Time dragged on, until at last Ching Lung's aeroplane came whirring out of the darkness, and Prout and Maddock showed a couple of guiding lights. Prince Ching Lung walked into the marquee.

"Honour has built me something extra good, chief!" he said. "I've been breaking records with my little bus! Any more?"

"Nothing of astonishing interest," said the millionaire lazily. "You sent to Honour?"

"At once! The car went while we were taking in petrol. What about the boys?"

"I think I know where they are," said Ferrers Lord. "And their little adventure may have done more harm than good! But I want to talk to you. I have an idea that the ex-Kaiser has been here again by the marquee and the relics of a cold repast. They left in great haste when they heard our aeroplane, and I fancy the boys were here, too!"

"And taken away?"

"Not by aeroplane, but by launch, I think. Von Stolzenburg seems to have them in charge."

"They might have a worse gaoler," said Ching Lung; "for from what I saw of him, he seemed a decent sort of Hun."

"I don't wish to discuss the boys just now," said the millionaire. "Herr President Zeimmeyer is alleged to be suffering from a sore throat!"

"You mystify me, chief!" said the prince. "What has Zeimmeyer's throat got to do with it, except that it sounds quite impossible? I only saw him in the dusk, but to me he didn't appear to have any throat at all! His big head seemed to be stuck on his shoulders without any vestige of a neck. Anyhow, what does his sore throat matter, even if he has one?"

"I did not say that he had one; only that he is stated to be suffering in that way. And the president of the German Republic brings us back to the Kaiser. You have seen the newspapers, of course, Ching?"

"Yes. And I think I noticed what you mean, chief. The ex-Kaiser, who kept himself so aloof in exile in his secluded Dutch home, has been breaking out and seeing the Press photographers at last. I've seen photos of him in all the newspapers lately seated peacefully amongst the flowers in his garden, resigned to exile, and looking quite happy, that he hasn't to give himself headaches any longer by wearing his gold hat! Yes, it's been a regular picture-gallery lately!"

"The man who poses for him is quite a good double," said Ferrers Lord.

"I thought so, too!" said Ching Lung. "It's just eyewash, then, and the All-Highest isn't at Doorn at all!"

"Who knows? The Dutch authorities seem to be quite satisfied that he is. And if they are satisfied, the rest of the world ought to be satisfied. I have never heard it suggested that he is not at Doorn, or that he ever left there. He seems—or his advisers do—to be taking great pains to convince people of something they never doubted. Not that it will ever strike them in that particular light. It is only people like ourselves who notice such things!"

"I had not noticed Herr Zeimmeyer's sore throat until you mentioned it to me, chief! Owing to technical difficulties, I suppose I haven't met with a photograph of it! I am quite concerned about the health of the fat Herr President, as he seems to be of far more importance than the Kaiser. Why has he a sore throat? And if he hasn't, why should they say he has?"

"Because," replied the millionaire, "the Herr President cannot address his adoring millions over the wireless. At midnight he was to have delivered the third portion of his lecture called 'Germany, her finances and her future,' but he has had to cancel it until to-morrow, providing his voice is sufficiently restored by then to undergo the strain."

He took a cigarette from the prince's proffered case, but did not light it.

"It's quite a good address, for I've read extracts from it," said Ching Lung. "Absolutely democratic and anti-royalist. Monarchs to Zeimmeyer are worse than red rags to infuriated bulls. Germany for the people and the people alone! All monarchs are tyrants and parasites. It is their greed for power and wealth that brings war and misery. I believe that he suggested that the safest and most suitable place for a king was hanging from a lamppost! Yes, old Zein is a whole-hogger, chief, and, being a sort of monarch myself in a small way, I don't like his politics. We have long discarded lampposts in my go-ahead little capital, but we have plenty of electric light standards. I hope my government have kept Herr Zeimmeyer's lecture out of the newspaper, for though I might look more imposing hanging from an electric light standard than a lamppost, I don't want to hang just yet."

"To be serious," said the millionaire, as he struck a match, "it is only the third instalment of Herr President's address that interests me, and only the last few lines of it!"

"The portion that has yet to be delivered," said Ching Lung, without betraying the least surprise.

Ferrers Lord frowned.

"I hate, loathe, and detest it, Ching!" he said bitterly. "To me there are few things more abominable than this bribery and corruption and everlasting spying. It cannot be helped, I suppose, until the world changes—if ever it does change. Zeim-

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meyer is a fraud and a traitor, and you cannot fight men who will never come out into the open with clean weapons. His secretary wrote this series of addresses for him, and his secretary prefers the certainty of enough money paid to his account in an English bank to keep him in ease for the rest of his life—to the risk of what he might gain from the revolution that might fail. This is how the lecture will end if the Herr President delivers it: "After battling almost alone against the world, the Fatherland remains crushed, but still unconquered. Our grievous wounds are almost healed. Our strength is returning. The great darkness is passing, so arise to welcome a new and glorious dawn. Arise! Arise!"

"I think I see," said Ching Lung. "There's more in that than meets the ear, chief. And then?"

"It all depends on that," said Ferrers Lord. "Millions of people in the Fatherland know how the president is to close his address on the wireless. It may end in another way, with a change of words, so:

"The great darkness is passing, so be prepared to arise and welcome a new and glorious dawn. Dawn is not yet; but it is near at hand, so await it patiently."

"And if Zeimmeyer winds up with the first version, chief?"

"The signal, of course. Unless we have caused an interruption, everything should be ready. At the signal, railway-stations, public buildings, and important roads all over Germany will be seized by the Royalists. Germany has not much of an army, but the officers are pro-Kaiser to a man. The Royalists are well armed, and all of them, except the younger generation, have had a military training. In every town and village the monarchy will be proclaimed, the ex-Kaiser will suddenly appear in state in Berlin, and an amazed Europe will wake up and rub its eyes and find Germany again in arms!"

"Amazing!" said Ching Lung. "But could she put up a fight?"

"She would claim her rights to defend herself and appoint her own ruler. Though Russia is soviet, she might think she had much to gain by backing up Germany; for the Allies took a great deal of territory from her. It would be the match to the gunpowder, and Central Europe would be ablaze again!"

"But you have warned all the allied Powers, chief?"

"Oh, yes," said the millionaire, shrugging his shoulders. "I have warned them, and they will not be unprepared. Unfortunately, such things cannot be hidden however quietly one goes about it. The all-important thing now is to see that Zeimmeyer does not end his address at all, or else ensure that he ends it in the second way."

"Yes. But can it be done, worker of miracles? Is it possible? In Europe not so long ago, and in my benighted country even until quite recently, we had quite a simple method of getting out of a little difficulty like this. When a man made himself too much of a nuisance, all you required was a gentle assassin and a bag of gold—the bigger the nuisance, the bigger the bag of gold. A very effective method, but a little bit out of fashion nowadays."

"It's quite bad enough to employ spies, so I'm glad assassination is out of fashion, prince," said Ferrers Lord. "It is not quite out of fashion," he added, "as you and I know, for we have both escaped the assassin's dagger, bomb, and pistol-shot. Zeimmeyer runs no risks that way, unless some ardent nationalist of his own people discovers his treachery and decides that it would be safer for the republic to remove the traitor president in the old way."

Ferrers Lord caught sight of Barry O'Rooney, who was standing in the entrance, and beckoned him to come forward.

"A message from Mister Honour, sir," said Barry.

"I'll wager it's a long one, then, if it's from Hal Honour," remarked Ching Lung. "Yards and yards of it!"

"Mister Honour's message is 'Yes,'" said Barry O'Rooney.

"I knew it would be a long one," said the prince, with a chuckle. "I could have guessed it in twice—either 'yes' or 'no.'"

"Let us go to Schloss Stolzenburg," said Ferrers Lord. "Perhaps we might find the baron at home!"

A thin mist was drifting over Klarspargen—a wet mist that congealed on the canvas of the marquee and fell from the eaves in cold drops. One by one the batteries of the lamps were becoming exhausted and fading out. Ching Lung picked up one of the bottles of champagne and looked at the label.

"Easy, chief," he said. "Here's luxury! A bottle of fizz with the imperial seal. I ought to be neutral, you know; but I'm afraid I'm not in this case, so let us drink success to your schemes in the Kaiser's own imperial wine."

"With all my heart, friend Ching Lung!" said Ferrers Lord.

Barry O'Rooney found clean glasses and uncorked the fine vintage wine, which creamed and bubbled.

"Let's trust it hasn't been doped and been left behind purposely for us," said Ching Lung. "Here's to our side, anyhow!"

"To our side, then," said the millionaire. "Send Gan Waga here, O'Rooney!"

They emptied their glasses and climbed into the ghostly aeroplane. She creaked a little and then glided into the misty air with a low, purring sound—a thing practically invisible. But the sound, faint as it was, did not please Ferrers Lord.

"She is imperfect yet," he said. "We have failed to make her absolutely silent, and after so many failures I am beginning to think we had better scrap the whole type and start afresh on other lines. Honour has improved the dope immensely, and we may get actual invisibility in time; but this purring seems to be beyond us."

Left all alone in the mist below, Gan Waga, the Eskimo, gave his shiny head a rub.

"Well, that jolly all rights!" he gurgled. "I likes this lotses and lotses! I think I'd better go and see if there is any mores left to eat before all the lights go out. All gone but little me, and I'm the king of the dusty old castle! A bit more roast chicken and a cigar do me lots of goodness!"

Schloss Stolzenburg!

IN a huge oak-raftered room, with a log fire blazing on the hearth, sat Mr. Midshipman Hilton and his chum, David ap Rees. They occupied a large oak settee, whose hardness was tempered by a long hair cushion covered with faded red cloth. Above the open fireplace, massively carved, were the arms of the baronial house of Von Stolzenburg. On the walls were smoky oil portraits of Von Stolzenburgs, dead and gone, and on the floor were rugs of great value, but now like the cushion, faded and worn.

The old man who had brought them up from the launch through what in the gloom appeared to be a wilderness of neglected garden unlocked the arched door and brought in two plates of bread and cheese and a jug of milk.

"It seems to me, kid," said Dave, "that the baron didn't make any fortunes out of the War, and he's pretty short of cash. Bread and cheese and milk don't exactly make a banquet, but I expect we've got to put up with it."

"Better than dry bread and skilly," said Val. "And I believe that's what they usually dole out to prisoners."

"Not to prisoners of war. What black-looking bread! It looks as if the baker hadn't washed his hands!"

"Rye bread," said Val. "Beastly stuff like sawdust and nails! I've a jolly good mind to shy it at the head of the gaoler! Ask him what it's all about. Tell him we can't eat this awful muck. I'm peckish, but I can't tackle this. Tell him we want the baron!"

The old man seemed to be trying to explain something, for he kept jabbering and spreading out his hands. He spoke some sort of German, but Dave could make nothing of it. The boys drank the milk, and as the huge room was very damp and full of draughts, the two boys were glad to go back to the settee.

"If there was any earthly chance of getting clear, we could easily deal with that old hunk," said Dave, "and yet we couldn't."

"No; he's too old," Val threw another log on the fire. "We couldn't be rough with him, for he looks as if any bit of a shock would kill him. We might stand the old boy on his head in the corner and make a dash for it; but it's sure to be another of these beastly islands, so we're whacked again."

"Anyhow, you did get a bit of dinner," said Dave. "Almost before I got a bite they started packing up."

"Precious little I got!"

"I expect having the high honour of sitting opposite the All-Highest-Who-Isn't look your appetite away," said Dave. "I was a wash-out; but the old boy looked at you as if you were some rare sort of curiosity he'd just been presented with to put in his private museum. I heard him tell Stolz he was in for a good time for having bagged you, so you seem to be an important sort of gink. I'll have another try to make this old muffin understand that we want bread for supper, not baked coal-dust! I know the German name for bread. But what's the German for white?"

"Never mind that. Tell him we want the baron."

A bell changed, and the old man, after pulling a red flannel cap over his long, white hair, toddled to the door. He left the door wide open; but Val and Dave did not stir, for they knew that it would be pure folly to attempt to escape.

After a time the old man toddled in again, bearing a large tray. There was white bread this time, butter and an ox-tongue, a glass jar containing pickles, and a couple of bottles of mineral waters. Behind the old man came the baron.

"Sorry, young gentlemen, sorry," said Von Stolzenburg. "This is a poor home of mine, this miserable Schloss Stolzenburg—so poor, I have to go down to the yacht of my friend who steered us to borrow food good enough to offer you. It is not much yet; but to-morrow, if I still have the pleasure to call you my guests, it will be different. My poor Ulric offer you all he have, I see. Never before you saw black bread, perhaps, you so rich English. In the War millions of us eat it, and were thankful to get it."

"You didn't get any more on Klarspargen than I did, baron," said Dave, "so come and tuck in."

Though Val had been furious about the savage outrage of the gas-cartridge, he believed it had been fired against the baron's wish and bore no malice, or very little, and Dave bore none at all. They were all three players in a very mysterious and important game, and Von Stolzenburg happened to be on the opposing side. He seemed to have bowled them out; but they hoped that it was only the first innings of the match and the stumps had not been drawn yet.

They sat down, and the baron carved for them and drank beer out of an enormous pewter pot that must have held a couple of quarts. He was an enormous eater as well as a drinker, for he demolished the two portions of cheese and rye bread before he started on the tongue and pickles.

"It's so strange, Herr Midshipman," he said, after a long pull at the tankard, "that we should sup together. My old Schloss was once a big place, but now one-half of it is in ruins. Now, without anger, I say it, for it was the fortunes of war; but to your uncle, Ferrers Lord, I owe it that my castle is but half a castle. It was the night he made the great raid on the submarine bases was the bomb dropped and the sad ruin it made."

"Was it the headquarters of the submarine staff, baron?" Dave asked.

"I do not know, Herr ap Rees. I was then with my regiment in Alsace. Perhaps it was. Before the War I am not rich, and after it I am a very poor man. But, der tag—der tag! Not the old day that turned out so black for us, but the new day. Then I shall rebuild my ruined Schloss, and you shall come and visit me as my guests of high honour, and together we shall laugh over the time I kidnap you in Porthampton and bring you to Schloss Stolzenburg and offer to you to eat cheese and black bread."

"We'll come, like a shot, baron," said Dave. "If you win this shemozzle then, you'll fire us out and send us home?"

"Ach, it is not for me to decide that. But why not? I see no reason otherwise. We haf our little fight in the old mill, you and I. You startle me very much, and I fight rough. What is the good of a fight if it is not rough? But I gave you your chance. Cruel stuff that explosive, and I did not know that it was so strong. Even if you had run the other way as I expected, instead of running to steal the boat and keep me from my escape, it would not have been different. But the thing I do not expect you do. It was brave work. Herr ap Rees, I give you 'hoch.'"

The baron drained the mighty tankard and handed it to the old man to be refilled, for it was evident that Schloss Stolzenburg had a well-supplied beer-cellar, although it had very little in the larder.

"By the way, baron," said Val, "you got even with us for your Schloss by sinking the Lord of the Deep. As I suppose there's no secret about it now, how did you work it? How did your man get aboard?"

"Ach, nobody went aboard! The explosion was from outside," said the baron. "I am sent to England by air. I get my passport and fly to Croydon as a passenger, and take with me a diver. We board the ship moored above the yacht. When it was quiet the diver went down. Ach, yes, it was very simple. We do not wish to murder, only to delay, and so the charge was not very powerful."

"I'm glad you didn't use the beastly stuff you exploded in the mill," said Dave.

The baron filled his pipe, lighted it, and smoked it thoughtfully. And then the old retainer who had left the hall came hobbling in at an unusual pace and said something to his master in a cracked, excited voice. The baron whistled and rose to his feet, his big, red face also betraying excitement. Footsteps echoed in the flagged passage outside, and the boys heard voices. The next moment the baron's heels clicked together, and he gave a salute as the ex-Kaiser entered, followed by three officers dressed in the uniform of the now disbanded Imperial Guard.

"Zeinmeyer tells me it must be to-morrow, baron," said the ex-Kaiser. "These delays are making our friends nervous and dispirited, so we have come back. We claim your hospitality until to-morrow evening, when we shall fly to Berlin."

"All I have is yours, sire; but alas, it is very little," said the baron. "I had even to go foraging to obtain a supper for myself and my prisoners!"

"Like many more, you did not get very rich in my service, baron," said the ex-Kaiser. "But all that will soon be changed. We have provisions, I think. We are safe here."

"Perfectly safe, your Majesty. A plane landed on Klarspargen after you had gone, so you may be sure they were looking for the two boys; but no plane can land here, except where the pilot landed your Majesty—at least, only in daylight. I have run barbed-wire all round. Oh, yes, I am sure your Majesty is quite safe at Schloss Stolzenburg!"

As they spoke in German, Val began to wish he had not neglected that despised language so much at school. He thought that the ex-Emperor, though he still held himself erect with a military air, looked old and grey. He sat down at the table, and one of the staff officers, a man with heavy jowls and heavy red moustache, gave him a sheaf of papers and a fountain-pen. Without reading the papers he signed them, and, gathering them up, the staff officer slipped a rubber band round them and handed them to a younger man, who saluted and went out.

"Do these young fellows speak German, baron?" asked the ex-Kaiser.

"The Herr Midshipman none at all, sire; his friend, a little. It is not strange, for our unequalled language is not popular with these Englishers since the War. Is it your Majesty's wish that I should take them away?"

The dethroned monarch shook his head. He went to the fire and warmed his hands; for amongst those sandy and water-washed islands it was damp and cold after nightfall at any season of the year. Suddenly he turned to Val.

"Tell me," he said in English, "why it is your uncle, Ferrers Lord, hates me so much?"

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"GEM"!

"I'm not in my uncle's confidence, sir," said Val. "Perhaps he doesn't hate you at all, only what you stand for."

"And what do I stand for, Herr Midshipman?"

Val shook his head.

"I can only think it is something that Mr. Ferrers Lord thinks unwise and dangerous from his point of view, sir," he answered. "I am only a middy, not a politician. It is not my business to think; only to do what I am told."

"But you know something, Herr Midshipman. You are not a fool. You have eyes and ears and an intelligence."

"I'm not always sure that Mr. Ferrers Lord thinks so," said Val. "If I knew anything I would not tell it; but as I do not know anything, there's nothing I can possibly betray."

"Of course—of course," said the ex-Emperor, shrugging his shoulders. "He would not trust a boy with secrets. A great man, but a dangerous man—a terribly dangerous man! It was an evil fate that he should live in my time; but I have him beaten, and in a few days he will know it. Ach, I hate him, and yet I admire him! A shadow of a man, and yet so strong and so powerful. Always like a shadow—always behind, unseen, yet always threatening. He will not come out into the open that we may face him and grapple with him; but he is there—a haunting ghost."

He passed one hand across his forehead as if to drive some vision away, and then he turned to the baron with a smile.

"You have dined," he said; "but our dinner was interrupted, so let us sup instead. Gentlemen, this is not time for gloom, but for rejoicing. All goes well for the Fatherland! One day more and then to Berlin, and victory and my throne!"

"I wonder?" muttered Dave, who had caught the drift of it. "He says he'll be in Berlin to-morrow and on his throne again, Val," he added, in a whisper. "And I heard the baron say a bit ago that the plane we heard over Klarsparfen when we were hopping it in the launch must have been chasing us."

Val grunted.

"If we get out of this I shall be in the soup again," he said. "The chief won't worry you; but I shall have it for being lunatic enough to let those Huns kidnap us. It won't be hot and strong, for that's not the chief's way, but it will be nasty."

"I'll put in a word for you, kid, but I don't think it will be needed. For how the thump could we help it? I don't think you deserved being jumped on for that Klarsparfen stunt; though when you come to look at it, you ought to have trotted round right away to see if you had any wireless. Jolly important, that, old thing!"

"Easy while you're safe, look you," said Val. "Don't start digging up that and throwing it at me, or I shall surprise the ex-War Lord and these other guys by landing you a hard one on the nose! I'm sick and tired of hearing about wireless! There's one thing I'd like to know—what they mean to do with us. For if the ex-Kaiser's so jolly sure he'll be wearing his gold hat and waving his sceptre about to-morrow, I can't see that we're of any earthly use to him! As a hostage, I never was worth a ha'porth of cold gin, though the chief might stretch a point to get you back!"

"Oh, I give it up!" said Dave. "Anyhow, they're not exactly cannibals, so they won't eat us—though if we happened to have been beer, the baron would have drunk us by now! What a tiring thing it is to watch people eat when you're not hungry, even if they're kings and big military officers!"

The only light in the big, gloomy hall came from half a dozen candles in tarnished candlesticks, and the glow from the fire. In the many draughts the candles flickered uncertainly. The baron had taken a seat at the table, and the tankard had been refilled

with beer. The others drank champagne, the ex-War Lord very sparingly, but the two staff officers not with so much caution. As the wine warmed them, conversation became more brisk, and there was some laughter.

"They seem to think they're on a certainty," said Val. "They fancy their old revolution can't come unstuck!"

"Keep quiet, old man!" said Dave. "My German is as rusty as an old nail, but I'm picking up a bit here and there. There's a signal to be given at midnight to-morrow by broadcast, and all the loyalists are waiting for it to rise and proclaim the restoration of the monarchy. The guy with the moustache they address as general has just said that every man who belonged to the old army is with them for life and death, and that nineteen-tens of the Socialists are only Socialists in name, and will go over to the monarchy as soon as the bugle blows."

"Being a lot of fatheads, I expect they will!" said Val. "And what does it matter if they do?"

"Only another little war, I suppose, kid, and we shall have all the trouble of licking the beggars again, which will be a nuisance and cost a lot of bother and cash! One little hitch may spoil the whole plot; but I'll bet they've got all this cunningly planned and worked out, for these Huns are crafty and take a lot of pains."

Suddenly the ex-Kaiser spoke to the baron, and Von Stolzenburg rose and bowed.

"The All-Highest bids you good-night, Herr Midshipman and Herr ap Rees," he said to the boys. "Will you please come through to your room? Would it be possible for you to give me your parole as gentlemen not to try and escape yourselves?"

"Sorry, baron, but we prefer not to do that," answered Val.

"Ach, I did not expect it, and I do not press it!" said the baron. "And Schloss Stolzenburg is not a place easy to escape from. You will not be very comfortable, but I offer you the best my poverty permits. Some other day, as you have promised, you shall visit me again, and see a great and splendid change."

Val and Dave followed the baron through a smaller door. The servant had brought a hurricane lamp, which he hung up on a nail. Two mattresses lay on the stone floor, each covered with a pair of thin blankets. The polite baron bowed himself out, still apologising for his lack of hospitality.

"The old guard-room," said Val, glancing round him. "I expect the baron's ancestors were nothing better than a gang of pirates. Look at the windows—about as wide as the slot in a letter-box! Give me a hitch up, old man!"

Val climbed on Dave's back; but all he could see through the narrow window in the thick stone wall was a patch of cloudy sky. In the light of the hurricane lamp they saw the thin sea mist creeping in. Then Dave discovered that there were two circular peep-holes in the door covered by a faded curtain hung on the other side.

"There have been prisoners here before we arrived, kid," he said. "They've got a gadget here for squinting in at them, so there's no reason why we shouldn't squint out if we want to—though it's an awful shame to damage the baron's valuable curtain!"

"Be careful not to let them see you," said Val.

"No risk; it's too dark and too far away," said Dave, opening his penknife.

He pulled a portion of the curtain through the hole and cut a slit in it. Through the slit he could see across the hall to the opposite door; but not very clearly, for the half-dozen flickering candles and the fire did not afford much light in such a spacious place, and the dark panelling intensified the gloom.

"They've got their heads together now, old son," he said. "Talking about something they didn't want us to hear, so that's why they've chucked us out. Do you want to chance one eye or not? If you do, I'll cut another hole!"

"I dunno!" said Val. "They're not such a handsome crowd that I want to watch them!"

Val sat down on one of the mattresses and started to unlace his boots.

"Well, if the baron isn't a human beer-vat!" said Dave. "That henchman of his with the wobbly legs has filled that big pot again! It must be a weak sort of swipes, for Stolz hasn't turned a hair. Big William has got a cigar going. Gosh! What's this stunt? Well, may I be shot at dawn!"

The tone of astonishment in Dave's voice brought Val to his feet. He dragged Dave away from the peep-hole and took possession of it. Muttering a threat to knock his chum's head through the door, Dave cut another slit in the curtain.

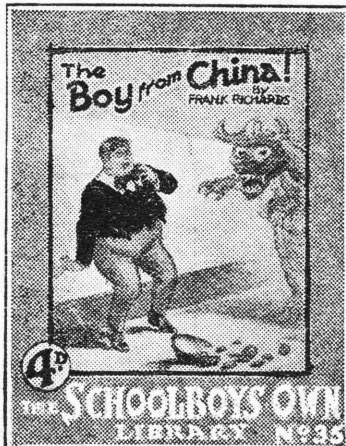
The ex-Kaiser was preparing to sacrifice the beard he had grown during his exile, and the barber was Baron von Stolzenburg, who was busy with a bowl of hot water, shaving-soap, and a lather-brush. Ten minutes later the ex-War Lord was handed a mirror. The beard had gone, and his moustache, a good deal whiter than of old, had again assumed the famous twirl at the ends as in the days before he had flung down the gage of battle and plunged the mighty battalions of the Fatherland into the terrible war that devastated half a world.

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WHITE EAGLE



The baron, the two staff officers, and the old serving-man were standing in admiring attitudes, when Val happened to glance beyond them. He fancied he saw the arched door open and close again, and that some undefined and hazy obstacle was obscuring a portion of the dark-coloured wood as if a ghost had glided into the great raftered hall of Schloss Stolzenburg.

And then came the tones of a deep, quiet voice that thrilled him to the finger-tips.

A long hooded cloak slipped to the floor, and the astonished Germans and the two prisoners saw Ferrers Lord in evening dress, his folded opera-hat in one hand and a little gold-topped cane in the other.

Conclusion.

THERE was a hush. No man stirred a muscle. The silence was so tense that when one of the burning logs in the grate slipped it made a noise that to Val and Dave sounded like faint thunder. Then Ferrers Lord walked forward and placed his hat and cane on the oak table. He nodded to the baron in a friendly way, and then bowed to the ex-Kaiser. It was not a mocking bow, but quite a kindly one. The ex-Kaiser's voice broke the silence.

"We have no chance, then, Mr. Lord?" he said in English.

The millionaire smiled.

"Perhaps you have, sir," he said. "I have three men with me—but only three!"

Dave banged at the door of their prison, but Ferrers Lord did not even turn his head.

"And my three men are as good as three hundred," added Ferrers Lord. "If there is to be trouble, I mean."

"And what are your intentions?"

The ex-Kaiser spoke very quietly; but there was a look in his eyes of a man who had staked his all and lost. Into the great hall of the Schloss glided two other shadows just vaguely perceptible to Val and Dave. Very daring Dave hammered again at the locked door. One of the shadows advanced ghost-like and opened the door and the two youngsters came out.

"Whisht!" whispered the voice of Barry O'Rooney. "Not wan single word!"

The millionaire spoke again in his deep, level voice.

"My intentions, sir, ought to need no telling," he said. "I have no spite or malice. That you should attempt to recover your lost throne is not a matter that could create spite or malice in me. It is the most natural thing in the world, and I cannot blame these gentlemen for helping you. I assure you, sir, that from a personal point of view I have no quarrel with you or with any of your friends, but just the feeling that one must have for those in misfortune. My plans and my ideas happen to be in conflict with yours. From my point of view, your return to the German throne would bring the horrors of war back to Europe, and I am rather tired of wars. And so you, sir, and you, gentlemen, must look upon yourselves as my prisoners. I want and wish no bloodshed—I do not even wish to speak an unkind word—so please keep your hands from your swords and from your pockets. I have only three men with me and two boys; but that is quite sufficient."

He waved his hand, and Prout, Barry O'Rooney, and Maddock shed their cloaks, and vague shadows became three lusty seamen, each with an automatic pistol in a holster at his hip and each

with a big hand on the butt of the weapon. The ex-Kaiser dropped into a chair and sank his forehead on his folded arms.

Val and Dave felt sorry for him. There was no reason to be sorry, but they could not help it as they saw him there, grey-headed and brown. And yet about Ferrers Lord there was nothing of the triumphant conqueror. His voice was soft and polite, and the gleam in his steel-grey eyes was not unkind as he looked at the shaken man.

"But this cannot stop the rising, Ferrers Lord," said the baron. "We are not beaten!"

"Then you are hopeful, my dear baron," said the millionaire. "Unless something amazing happens, your ex-Kaiser cannot be in Berlin to-morrow. That in itself would make an enormous difference."

"It would be almost impertinent to suggest that you do not know our plans, Herr Ferrers Lord."

"Not impertinent; ridiculous. My engineer, Mr. Harold Honour, will be in Berlin to-morrow night."

"To kidnap Zeimmeyer before he makes his speech on the wireless?" said the baron.

"Perhaps, Herr Baron, or perhaps not," said Ferrers Lord. "I have given my engineer a free hand. My engineer is not fond of violent methods. He may not use force with Herr Zeimmeyer; but if the president goes to the microphone to give his address, Germany will not hear the last words as he speaks them. My engineer has a little instrument, and that little instrument will speak at the right moment. It will finish the president's speech as you had arranged it to tell all in the plot that the great rising was deferred or cancelled."

The ex-Kaiser lifted his head, and Dave and Val saw a face that was twisted and grey.

"How did you learn all this?" he asked, in a choking voice.

"Who has betrayed us?"

"In this sad world, sir," said Ferrers Lord, almost bitterly, "money will make the dumb speak. Do not place the blame on me. I do not wish to see Europe in blood and ashes again, and that is what must have happened. You were studying your own ambitions, and you thought nothing of the misery and horrors you would bring about. Well, I think we have managed to prevent it. Though I do not wish to be harsh, I must ask you to be my guest in England for a few days, sir, at Ferrers Hall, and then you may go back to your Dutch home."

He turned to Val.

"Mr. Hilton," he said, "you will proceed to Ferrers Hall. The ex-Kaiser will accompany you. You will bring the plane back from Klarspargen, Mr. O'Rooney. And, Mr. Hilton, you will treat my guest as you would treat me."

"I refuse to go," said the ex-Kaiser. "Herr Lord, this is an outrage! And once the world knelt at my feet!"

"Mr. Hilton, you have received your instructions," said the millionaire sharply.

Val wished his instructions had been to face a machine-gun in full blast, but he went up to the ex-Kaiser.

"I am at your service, sir," he said, and gave a salute. "I have had my orders, sir!"

Slowly the Kaiser stood up. The burly baron was wiping tears from his eyes. Stiff and erect stood Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney, hands on weapons and their faces as stolid as if carved out of wood. Then Barry O'Rooney stepped forward. Without a glance at anyone, and with bowed head, the ex-Kaiser followed Val through the arched doorway, and at a nod from the

"A PHANTOM THRONE!"

(Continued from previous page.)

millionaire Dave followed O'Rooney and Maddock and shut the door.

Half an hour later Gan Waga, the Eskimo, all alone on that dreary sandbank, Klarspargen, removed the stump of a cigar from his lips and cocked a wideawake ear.

"That's better!" he gurgled to himself. "The olds plane coming backs, so I think I show a lights."

A less delicate ear than Gan Waga's would not have heard the faint purring whisper. He waddled into the clear space, and switched on a flash-lamp. The aeroplane almost evaded his keen eyes, and he had to rush out of the way as it dropped and came swaying towards him, and out of the almost invisible machine came three passengers and also the voice of Barry O'Rooney.

"Ferrers Hall, quick, ye lucky, fat bunch of tallow," said Barry. "Bedad, you were born as lucky as you're ugly, and that's saying an earful!"

"Oh, go homes and eats worms!" said Gan Waga. "I gotted go to Ferrers Hall, hunk? All rightness, old beans! If I was as lucky as you're ugly, Barry, I should be three or five billionnaires by this times."

"For the love of Moike, go and thread on your face a few toimes," said Barry O'Rooney. "Good-night, Mister Hilton and Mister Dave, and good-night, sir! And good luck, Gan bhoy—and how Oi hate you!"

Gan had a joyful surprise when he discovered Ching Lung already in the plane.

"My words, Chingy, old beans, I thoughts I losted yo'!" he said. "I thoughts yo' stopped behinds with the chief!"

"Well, I didn't," said Ching Lung. "You see, my fat one, I'm a bit of an outsider in this show. I can walk on, but I'm not allowed to act. I saw a bit of the fun and then got chucked off. That's the worst of these International stunts when you're unlucky enough to be born a prince. Take a tip from me, Gan, and never be born a prince!"

"I watches that all rightness, Chingy, old dears," said Gan Waga, as he started the engine. "I'll see abouts it."

Dawn was just breaking when the aeroplane glided over the tops of the elm avenue and alighted on the stretch of lawn of Ferrers Hall. It was a very grey and tired old man to whom Midshipman Hilton gave his arm. At the door the butler was waiting as if expecting visitors.

"His Excellency's bed-room and a bath, if he wishes it, are ready," said the butler to Val. "Will your Excellency come this way?"

With his hands deep in his trouser-pockets, Dave looked at Val when the ex-Kaiser had gone.

"Well, what about it?" asked Dave. "What about it, I ask you? Tell me, you perisher!"

Val gave a slow and thoughtful grin.

"I don't quite know," he said. "A bit lucky, taking it all round. It strikes me we've been living fast and furiously this last day or two, chum. We got kidnapped ourselves. But did we even dream we'd finish up by kidnapping the ex-Kaiser? It's the limit, isn't it? What have you to say about it, prince?"

Ching Lung stretched himself and yawned.

"I'm a passenger," he answered, "so I've got precious little

to say about it, and I'm going to bed. I'm just tell you one thing before I hop it, Val. Though you made a bit of a mess of things at Klarspargen, I don't think you came out of it so badly. I have a notion that little reprimand will be wiped off the slate. I don't know for sure, mind you, but I think so. Bye-ee!"

"Bow-wow!" said Gan Waga. "I wants my breakfasts, and I wants sossiges fo' my breakfasts. And it's there noots any sossiges fo' breakfasts I kills and eats the silly old cooks."

Val and Dave slept the sleep of the weary, and the fatal day for Germany and Europe dawned and waned. The prince kept out of the way; but Val and Dave were very polite to their guest. There was nothing in the newspapers, and it was certain there had been no revolution in Germany. Though whether Hal Honour had kidnapped the president and spoiled his speech, they could not tell.

And then came a telegram for Val. He read it, his eyes shining, and gave it to Dave. It was this.

"To Lieutenant Hilton.—Go Southampton at once and supervise refitting of Lord of the Deep, of which you are now in full command. If your friend, Mr. Ap Rees, cares to enter my service, he may do so with rank of midshipman. FERRERS LORD."

"Wow!" yelled Mr. David ap Rees. "Fathead, knew it!"

Lieutenant Hilton and Midshipman ap Rees rushed at each other and grappled. In their wild delight they rolled over and over on the lawn, trying to slaughter one another out of pure joy. A man came to the french-windows, folded his arms, and watched the two lusty, sun-browned youngsters wrestling there—the ex-War Lord of Germany.

Perhaps the ex-Kaiser did not realise it, but in their strong, youthful hands the boys held the world. All he held was a phantom throne!

THE END.

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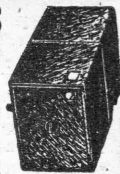
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