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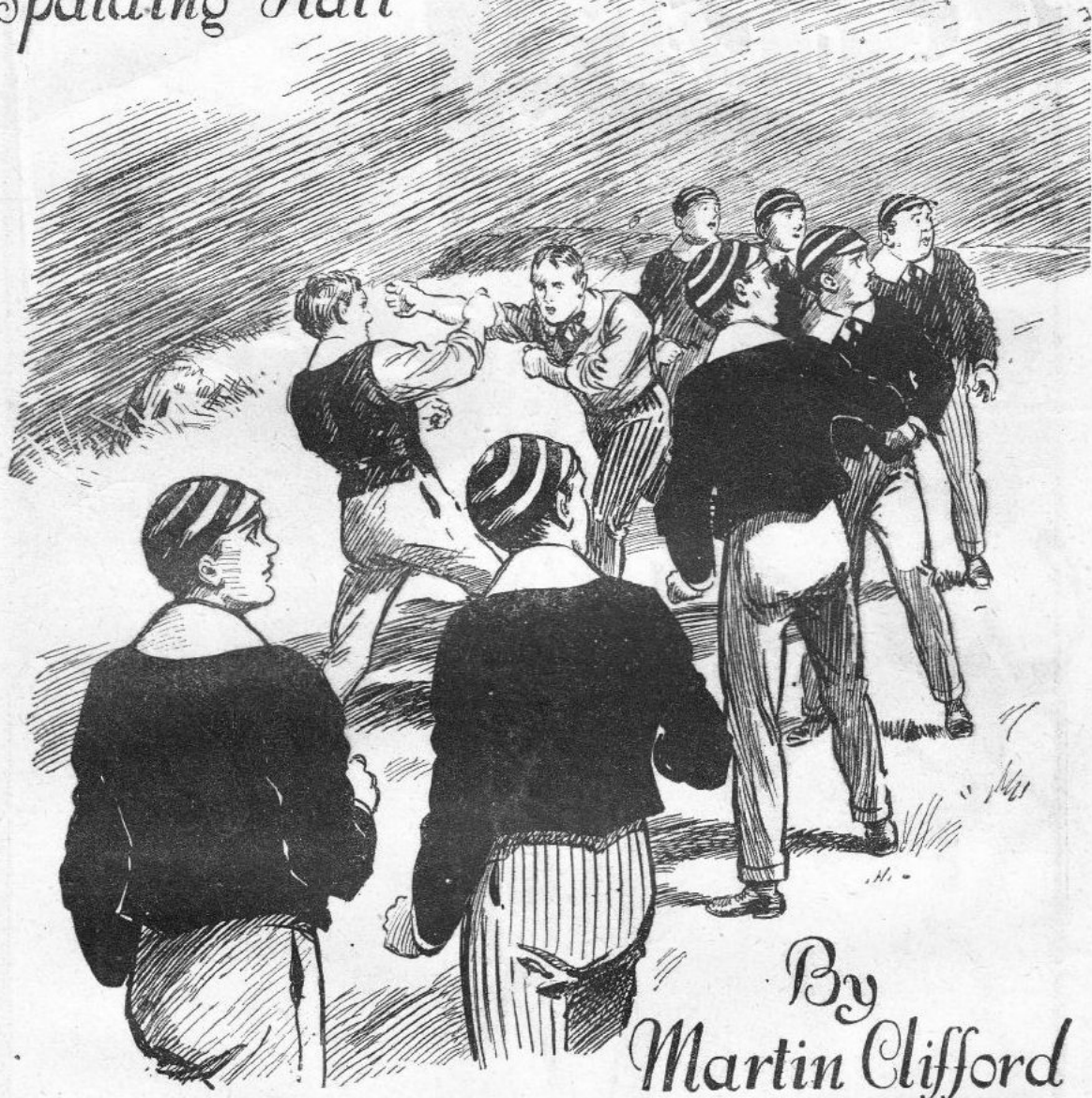
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“WHO KISSED ETHEL?”

THIS WEEK'S BEST SCHOOL & ADVENTURE YARN

Here's an unusual Holiday Story of Tom Merry & Co. and their girl chums of Spalding Hall



By
Martin Clifford

"Oh!" cried Cousin Ethel breathlessly. "I'm furious! I was hiding in a box-room at the top of the stairs! Somebody found me—I don't know who it was—" "Yes?" queried Tom Merry in bewilderment. "In the dark, whoever it was, he kissed me!" . . . Suddenly and without warning a cloud of suspicion is thrown over what had promised to be one of the jolliest of house-parties!

CHAPTER 1.

Faggy on the Prowl!

"ALL clear!" Bagley Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, murmured those words with much satisfaction.

Trimble—the fattest junior at St. Jim's—had stepped cautiously into the Shell passage from the stairs, and he grinned when he found that the passage was empty. With a fat waddle he rolled swiftly in the direction of the door of Study No. 10.

Study No. 10 was the room occupied by Tom Merry, the

captain of the Shell, and his two chums, Harry Manners and Monty Lowther. Three minutes ago, Baggy had seen Tom Merry & Co. hurrying down to the river with their bathing things, evidently intent upon a plunge into the Rhyl before tea, so that he knew their study to be empty.

Baggy Trimble had a very particular reason for wishing to visit Study No. 10 when it was empty.

That morning Baggy had seen a large hamper being borne into Tom Merry & Co.'s study. Evidently the Terrible Three were in funds, and had been laying in a supply of tuck from Dame Taggles' little shop. It was near the end of the term; in fact, in a few days St. Jim's would be breaking up for the summer holidays. Tom Merry & Co. were apparently intending to celebrate the



Who Kissed Ethel?

end of the term with a cheery little feed to some friends, since the amount of tuck that Baggy had seen being carried into their study was far too much for their own needs.

Baggy Trimble was about the last person whom Tom Merry & Co. would invite to the feast, however. Nevertheless, the fat Fourth-Former meant to sample the contents of that hamper, by hook or by crook!

Softly the Falstaff of the School House pushed open the study door, slipped in with a gleeful chuckle, and closed it noiselessly behind him.

The study was empty, as he had known it to be.

"Good!" chuckled Baggy to himself.

He rolled across the room to the cupboard and opened the door. It was a relief to find it unlocked. Mean, suspicious fellows had a habit of locking up tuck that Baggy found most uncalled for. He stared in with greedily gleaming eyes.

"My hat!"

Baggy's mouth fairly watered.

The tuck had been removed from the hamper, and was laid out on the shelves. Pork-pies, brown and tasty, a couple of big iced cakes, a tin of chocolate biscuits, jam-tarts and buns galore, ham and tongue, and pickles and ginger-beer. There was a collection in the cupboard that even Baggy could not have improved upon!

"This is ripping!" muttered Baggy, licking his lips. "Oh, prime! The beasts won't be back from their bathe for a while, either. Mean rotters! They'd never have asked me to their spread, I know. Stingy beasts!"

Baggy reached out a greedy hand for one of the pork-pies.

Then he hesitated. Though Tom Merry & Co. were unlikely to return to the study for some time, there was always the danger that someone else might look in to see them. And Baggy knew what the results of discovery would be.

"Better lock the door," grinned Baggy to himself, and turned to do so.

But as he was rolling across the study to accomplish his purpose he halted suddenly, listening.

Footsteps were approaching along the passage.

Baggy jumped. His face went a sickly colour as the footsteps stopped outside the study door.

"Oh lor!"

Baggy glanced round wildly.

A tall screen stood in one corner of the room, and it did not take the fat junior more than two seconds to vanish behind it as the door opened, after a brisk tap.

Crouching behind the screen, Baggy gasped as he heard footsteps enter the room. He had hoped that the visitor, whoever it was, would go away at once, on finding that Tom Merry & Co. were not at home. But apparently the fellow who had entered the study had no such intention. Baggy heard the door close.

"I may as well wait till Tom Mewwy returns," came a murmuring voice that Baggy recognised without difficulty as that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, the swell of St. Jim's.

And, to Baggy's utter horror, Arthur Augustus could be heard seating his elegant person in the armchair, to await the return of the captain of the Shell.

Beads of perspiration stood out on Baggy's fat face.

"Oh crumbs!"

Baggy hardly dared to breathe.

If the swell of St. Jim's discovered him there, he would undoubtedly inform Tom Merry & Co. of the fact! It would not take the Terrible Three long to guess the true reason for Baggy's presence in the study during their absence, and the results would undoubtedly be painful for that fat grub-hunter!

"Oh dear!" gasped Baggy. "What on earth does that ass Gussy want to stay here for?"

He shifted his cramped position a trifle, and groaned inwardly.

There was still the chance that Arthur Augustus would get tired of waiting. But if Baggy pinned his hopes to that possibility, he was doomed to disappointment. Arthur Augustus had picked up a magazine that had been lying on the arm of his chair and was contentedly glancing through it.

The wild idea came to Baggy that it might be possible for him to steal out of the study behind the back of the swell of St. Jim's without being noticed. But he dismissed it with a despairing groan. Better to wait, even though it meant waiting all the evening, till the study was empty again, than risk discovery.

After what seemed an eternity to Baggy, footsteps were again to be heard approaching the study door.

The door swung back with a crash, and the cheery voice of Tom Merry rang through the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's old Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet as Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, looking very fit and healthy after their dip, tramped into the study.

"Hallo, Gussy!" grinned Monty Lowther. "What have you parked yourself in here for? Have Blake & Co. kicked you out of their study at last? I wondered how much longer they'd stand your waistcoats."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hallo!" ejaculated Manners, his eyes falling on the open door of the cupboard. "You don't mean to say you've been raiding our tuck, Gussy?"

"Pway do not be wiculous, Mannahs!"

"No, it's all right," grinned Manners, closing the door of the cupboard, after a glance in. "The grub's all there. Gussy's not guilty!"

"Weally, Mannahs!" Arthur Augustus polished his celebrated eyeglass and placed it in his eye, surveying Manners with rather a frosty look. "I trust you do not sewiously suggest that I would stoop to waidin' anothah fellow's gwub?"

"Well, what's the reason for the honour of your esteemed visit, my lord?" inquired Monty Lowther, tossing a wet towel into the corner.

"I have had a lettah—"

"A letter?" echoed Monty Lowther. "Not from the young lady in the Rylcombe linendraper's Gussy?"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus went decidedly pink. "Pway do not be an uttah ass, Lowthah! You know vewy well that I am not even acquainted with the young lady at the dwapah's."

"Must be from his tailor, then," said Manners solemnly.

"An urgent message about the new cut in trousers—"

"The lettah is not fwom my tailor, Mannahs, you ass! The lettah is fwom my patah—"

"Oh!"

"It appeahs that my patah has taken a house in Cornwall for the holidays," went on Arthur Augustus. "A place on the cliffs at a vewy wild and lonely part of the coast—"

"Sounds ripping!" cut in Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! It does, doesn't it! Well, my patah has w'ritten to suggest that I bwing along a few pals to spend the vac there. Blake and Hewwies and Dig have already agweed to come, and so have Levison and Clive. I undahstand that my patah has himself w'ritten to Ethel, and she and Dowis Levison and Lady Peggy will be in the party, too."

"Lucky chap!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Ethel Cleveland was D'Arcy's pretty cousin, who was a pupil at Spalding Hall, a school for girls near Wayland. With Ethel, and her great chums, Doris and Lady Peggy, Gussy's holiday house-party looked like being a very cheery affair indeed.

"I looked in to ask you thwee if you would join the crowsd, too," finished Arthur Augustus, glancing from one to another of the Terrible Three.

Tom Merry & Co.'s faces lit up.

Arthur Augustus chuckled. The looks upon their faces were in themselves sufficient answer to his question.

"You bet!" cried Monty Lowther excitedly, and he broke into a wild war-dance on the study carpet. "Rather!"

"Thanks awfully, Gussy!" gasped Manners. "I'll come if my people don't object, and I know they won't!"

"Same here! Count me in!" chuckled Tom Merry, and he smacked the swell of St. Jim's on the back so heartily that Gussy's eyeglass shot from his eye, and he almost went sprawling.

"Ow! Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus rubbed his back. "Pway do not be so wuff, Tom Mewwy—"

"Sorry, old hoss!" grinned Tom.

There was a delighted gleam in the face of the captain of the Shell.

The Terrible Three had been guests of Lord Eastwood's—Gussy's father—on previous occasions, and they had always had a splendid time, whether at Eastwood House, their noble chum's home, or elsewhere. The prospect of a holiday spent in a house on the Cornish cliffs, together with Blake & Co. and Levison and Clive, and Ethel & Co., from Spalding Hall, was one that appealed more than anything else could have done to the chums of Study No. 10.

"The place is called Penpewwo House," went on the swell of St. Jim's. "It is a vewy old place, I undahstand."

"Penperro House?" repeated Manners eagerly. "That sounds a good old Cornish name—"

He broke off, with a jump.

Crash!

Baggy Trimble had been listening to the conversation from behind the screen, with an eager gleam in his eyes. He had forgotten caution for a moment, and in venturing to move his cramped limbs he had leaned against the screen.

In the middle of Manners' words, the screen went crashing over, to reveal the fat figure of Baggy Trimble crouching, with dismayed face, in the corner of the room.

CHAPTER 2.

Chucked Out!

"GWEAT SCOTT!"

"M-my only aunt!"

The four juniors stared at the quaking figure of the fat Fourth-Former in utter astonishment.

Baggy gasped.

"Oh, lor!"

Then he gave a yelp as Tom Merry strode towards him

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and grasped him by the collar, jerking him to his feet.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"What are you doing in here, you fat worm?" demanded Tom angrily.

"Yow! N-nothing! I—I just looked in to—to borrow a book—"

and so I thought it would be doing you a good turn to watch him—"

"That why you hid behind the screen?" smiled Tom grimly.

"Ow! Yes! I mean, nunno! You see, I heard Gussy come in, and I thought perhaps he'd come to raid your grub, and so I thought it would be doing you a good turn to watch him—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course, I didn't come to raid the grub myself," went on Baggy hastily. "I hope you don't think that, you know. I wouldn't do such a thing. We Trimbles are the soul of honour, and to raid a chap's grub is a thing I wouldn't stoop to myself. I only came in to borrow some ink—"

"Ink?"

"I—I mean some paper—"

"It was a book before!" said Tom grimly.

"Oh crumbs! Was it? I—I mean, of course! You see, I wanted to borrow a book, and some ink and paper as well. Yow! Leggo, you beast!"

"You fat fibber!" snorted Tom. "You know jolly well you came here to loot that tuck!"

"I didn't!" hooted Trimble desperately. "I didn't know you'd got any tuck! I thought the cupboard was empty, as a matter of fact."

"Then why did you think Gussy might have come to raid the grub?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Baggy blinked at him.

"Ahem! You see—"

"Oh, chuck that fat pirate out!" growled Manners. "Pass him across!"

"Certainly!" grinned Tom.

"Yarooogh!"

Baggy gave a wild yell as Tom Merry sent him spinning across to Lowther. Lowther, with a hefty shove, sent him on to Manners. Manners had already opened the door, and with a well-placed boot he propelled the yelling fat figure of Baggy Trimble into the passage.

"Oh! Yow! Whoops!"

Baggy collapsed on the linoleum in a wild heap.

"And stay out!" growled Manners. "If we catch you in here again before the end of the term, you'll get flayed!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh! Grooooh!"

Baggy gave a heart-rending groan.

"I'm injured!" moaned Baggy, rolling his eyes in a truly awful way. "Oh! Yow! I think my back's broken in three places! A few ribs have gone, too, I think! Ow!"

"Oh, get up, you fat shammer!" grunted Manners.

"I can't!" groaned Baggy. "I—I'm dying! Every-

thing's going dark! Oh! Manners, I forgive you!"

"Thanks!" grinned Manners, and slammed the door.

Baggy blinked at the closed door indignantly.

"Beasts!" he gasped. "They jolly well don't care if I am dying! Heartless beasts!"

He was about to scramble to his feet and roll away when he heard footsteps at the end of the passage. Talbot of the Shell had appeared from the stairs. He stared at Baggy in surprise.

Baggy uttered a heart-rending groan. He always liked to get a little sympathy if possible; though in his case it was very seldom possible.

"Oh! Grooooooh! Yow!"

Talbot halted, staring down at Baggy's rolling eyes in astonishment.

"What on earth's the matter with you?" he demanded.

"I'm dying!" moaned Baggy feebly. "Manners set on me like a madman, for some reason. My spine's broken in five places, I think. Ow! The agony's awful!"

"Must be!" nodded Talbot gravely. "But perhaps you aren't as ill as you think, old chap."

"Eh?"

Baggy blinked at Talbot a trifle suspiciously. But Talbot's face was very grave and sympathetic.

"If you ask me," went on Talbot, shaking his head solemnly, "ill though you are, a snack might pull you round."

"A snack?" repeated Baggy. He sat up a trifle.

"Yes," nodded Talbot. "What about some cold chicken and ham, and a few pork pies?"

Baggy's eyes glinted. He happened to know that Talbot was in funds. If he could only work on the Shell fellow's sympathy enough it looked to Baggy as though he would be in luck!

He gave another heart-rending groan.

"I—I fancy a snack might pull me round!" he gasped.

"Ow! Yes!"

"Then what about some sardines and some poached eggs?" murmured Talbot sympathetically.

"Yawoooooh!" "Oooooop!" There was a terrific crash, followed by two wild howls, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Baggy Trimble landed in a heap at the bottom of the School House steps. With Trimble's fat figure pinning him down, D'Arcy spluttered and gasped faintly. "Ow! Dwg him off!"

(See Chapter 3.)



"Ow! They'd do me a lot of good!" moaned Baggy.

"Might save my life, in fact."

"And perhaps a dozen or two of tarts—"

"Rather!"

"And some nice cheese-cakes—"

"Yes," nodded Baggy, with an agonised groan. "Two-penny ones."

"And some cream buns, eh?"

"Yes!"

"You think they would be really good for you, old chap?"

"Sure of it!"

"Anything else you'd like?" asked Talbot gravely.

"Well, some sponge-cakes, perhaps, and eclairs."

"Anything else?"

"Just a few bottles of ginger-pop," moaned Baggy.

"That the lot? Mind you, you ought to be sure first that all that would really do you good!"

"I know they would!"

"Then I sincerely hope you get 'em," said Talbot cheerily, and strolled on, grinning, leaving Baggy Trimble to stare after him in speechless wrath.

"You—you—you—"

But words failed Baggy as he realised that Talbot had been pulling his leg. He scrambled up and rolled off with feelings too deep for words.

Apparently there was to be no feed for Baggy that day, after all!

CHAPTER 3.

Not Wanted!

"I SAY, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his head. He had been strolling across the Hall when he had heard that hail. His expression was not particularly friendly when he found that it was Baggy Trimble who was rolling towards him.

"Yaas? I am in wathah a huwwy, Twimble—"

"Shan't keep you a jiff!" smirked Baggy, buttonholing the swell of St. Jim's with a fat finger and thumb. "I—I say, old chap, about your party for Cornwall—"

"Well?"

"Haven't you forgotten something?" inquired Baggy eagerly.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus frowned in thought. Then he shook his head. "Not that I am aware of, Twimble!"

"But you have, old chap!" smirked Baggy.

"Weally? What have I forgotten, deah boy?"

"Why," chuckled Baggy, "you've forgotten to invite me!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"But it's all right," went on Baggy kindly. "I'm not offended. It only slipped your memory, I suppose?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Anyway, thanks awfully for the invitation, old chap," smirked Baggy. "Jolly kind of you. Though, of course, the presence of a chap like me will lend some tone to the party—"

"M-my hat!"

"I accept your kind invitation, old fellow," continued Baggy. "My people will be awfully cut up not having me with them over the hols, but they'll have to lump it. Trimble Towers won't seem the same without me, of course—"

"Why, you—you cheekay wottah!"

"Eh?"

"I have not invited you to join the partay, Twimble!" hooted Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Oh, really, Gussy—"

"And I do not intend to do so, you fat wottah!"

"B-but I—I say—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus sailed away with a very indignant look upon his aristocratic face. Baggy Trimble stared after him blankly.

That a fellow could deliberately turn down the offer of his charming companionship for the summer holidays was quite astonishing to Baggy Trimble.

He scuttled after Arthur Augustus and caught up with him at the top of the steps leading down into the quad. Baggy clucked the swell of St. Jim's by the sleeve.

"Gussy, old chap—"

"Wats!"

"But, I say—"

"Pway leave me alone, Twimble!"

"Look here," hooted Baggy, with great indignation, "are you going to listen to what I have to say or not?"

"Not!"

Arthur Augustus shook off Baggy's fat hand and proceeded down the steps. Baggy jumped after him and clutched him by the tail of his coat.

"Look here, Gussy," he exclaimed in a wheedling voice, "don't be a beast, you know! I've had lots of offers from various titled relations to spend the holidays with them, but I'm willing to turn 'em all down in your favour. See? I'll spend the vac with you in Cornwall instead, since you press me—"

"I don't pweess you, deah boy!" sniffed Arthur Augustus. "Oh, really, Gussy! The girls will be disappointed if I'm not there. Ethel's frightfully keen on me—"

"B-bai Jove!"

"And so's Lady Peggy! They'd be awfully cut up—"

"You—you impudent wotah!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "How dare you pweess that Lady Peggy or my cousin are even interestwed in you, you fat boundah? I feel compelled to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Yarooop!"

True to his threat, Arthur Augustus had planted a fist upon Baggy's fat little nose. Baggy gave a howl, and toppled backwards. He clutched frantically at Arthur Augustus as he felt himself falling, and there was another yell from the swell of St. Jim's as that aristocratic youth felt two fat arms clutching him round the neck.

"Gweat Scott! Oh! Yaroooogh!"

With wildly waving arms Arthur Augustus went flying down the steps in Baggy's clutching embrace. There was a terrific crash as the two landed in the quad at the bottom of the steps.

"Oh! Gwooooh! Yawooop!"

It was unfortunate for Arthur Augustus that he was underneath when he and the Falstaff of the School House landed on the gravel! With his face in a puddle left by the recent rain, pinned down by the fat figure of Baggy Trimble seated on his back, the swell of St. Jim's spluttered and gasped and yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were several juniors near the foot of the steps, and they shrieked at the sight of the swell of St. Jim's sprawling in the puddle with Baggy Trimble reclining dazedly on top of him.

"Ha, ha, ha! Look at old Gussy!" chortled Clifton Dane, the Canadian junior. "What's the idea, Gussy? Practising an acrobatic turn with Baggy, or what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Bai Jove! Dwag him off, deah boys!" panted Arthur Augustus faintly.

Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn hauled Baggy up, and the swell of St. Jim's rose unsteadily to his feet.

His face was splashed with dirty water, his waistcoat was muddy, and his immaculate trousers were no longer a thing of beauty and a joy for ever! With one speechless glare at Baggy Trimble, Arthur Augustus turned and stamped up the steps back into the School House.

Baggy blinked after him. He scuttled hastily in pursuit, and his clutching fingers buttonholed Arthur Augustus at the top of the steps.

"Gussy, old chap! It's all right about Cornwall, eh?" gasped Baggy. "I'm in the party, of course?"

Arthur Augustus did not reply in words.

He hit out, and his fist landed on Baggy's eye. Baggy went rolling down the steps again, with heavy bumps, to land with a crash and a yell at the bottom. Arthur Augustus turned and vanished into the House, breathing hard.

"Oh! Yooop! Ow!"

Baggy sat up and blinked at the grinning group of juniors.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Baggy. "The beast! He seems quite waxy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy scrambled up painfully, and limped disconsolately away, followed by the chuckles of the juniors.

Somehow his kind suggestion that he should join the party that Lord Eastwood was to entertain in Cornwall during the holidays had not met with much success.

But even now Baggy Trimble had by no means given up his intention of joining the party. By fair means or foul, he was determined to enjoy the hospitality of Penperro House.

CHAPTER 4.

Baggy, Too!

THE last days of the term seemed to fly by for most of the fellows at St. Jim's.

With the exams at last over, and only a couple more days to go before the final breaking-up, seniors and juniors alike were in high spirits. End-of-term

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ragings and celebrations were the order of the day! Even the masters went about with expectant smiles upon their faces. And on the final day of all, after the Head's breaking-up speech in Big Hall, and the prize distribution, with nothing left for the fellows but to finish their packing and hurry away from the school to their various scattered destinations, there was only one unhappy face to be seen!

That was the fat face of Baggy Trimble.

Baggy was faced with the dismal prospect of a holiday spent with his people. Trimble senior by no means approved of his fat son and heir's slacking habits, and was wont to insist upon Baggy taking long walks and other healthy exercise—a prospect which appalled Baggy beyond words!

By now Baggy was not feeling quite so sure of his ability to tack himself on to the cheery party destined for the hospitality of Lord Eastwood in Cornwall.

In Baggy's opinion, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a heart of stone!

All Baggy's efforts to coax an invitation for himself to Penperro House had been utterly wasted. In fact, he had been bumped by Blake & Co. on several occasions for hanging round Study No. 6 in the Fourth in his attempts to persuade the swell of St. Jim's that the one fellow who was essential for the success of a holiday house-party was Baggy Trimble.

By the last morning Baggy was feeling just about desperate.

He stood at the top of the steps outside the School House and watched noisy groups departing for the station, with their luggage piled high in the station van, and scowled.

He was still wondering how he could successfully tack himself on to Arthur Augustus' party, but his hopes were low.

"Gussy's a beast!"

"Eh? Who's a beast?"

Baggy jumped. He had not realised that anyone was within earshot when he had given vent to his feelings with that angry remark. He turned, to find Jack Blake of the Fourth standing beside him.

"Ahem!" Baggy coughed. Blake, as Arthur Augustus' best chum, was looking rather grim, and Baggy edged away hastily. "I—I said that Grundy's a beast, that's all—"

"What?" roared an angry voice behind him.

"Oh, lor'!"

Baggy jumped again. He had not noticed the rugged figure of George Alfred Grundy of the Shell coming up behind him, with Wilkins and Gunn.

"I—I meant Gore's a beast!" stammered Baggy, very hastily. "I—"

"Oh, I'm a beast, am I?"

Gore of the Shell appeared at the top of the steps at that moment, with a suitcase in his hand, evidently bound for the station. Baggy turned a very sickly hue.

"I—I meant—"

But Gore did not wait to hear what Baggy had meant. All he knew was that for some reason the fat Fourth-Former had called him a beast, and he hit out, landing a large fist on Baggy's nose.

"Yaroooogh!"

"I'll give you another next term, Fatty!" grinned Gore. "Cheerio, you chaps!"

And Gore tramped down the steps and across towards the gates, whistling. Baggy, tenderly rubbing his nose, turned disconsolately into the House and rolled up the stairs.

At the end of the Fourth Form passage he hesitated. Then he turned in the direction of Study No. 6.

There was no harm in asking Arthur Augustus yet again for the coveted invitation to Penperro House!

Baggy knocked at the door of the celebrated apartment, but there was no reply from within. Baggy opened the door and blinked into the room.

It was empty. But as he was about to close the door again and roll dejectedly away he paused.

His eyes were fastened on a large trunk standing in the middle of the floor, with the swell of St. Jim's initials on it in big letters. Suddenly Baggy's eyes gleamed.

"My hat!"

A desperate idea had come to Baggy Trimble.

He glanced up and down the passage. It was empty. Rolling quickly into the room, he shut the door behind him, and in another moment he was raising the lid of the trunk, which was unlocked.

It was full to the brim with neatly folded clothes. Arthur Augustus had evidently packed with great care. The rest of the luggage from Study No. 6 had gone to the station in advance, but the swell of St. Jim's had not finished his careful packing till less than half an hour ago, and so the trunk was left behind, and the juniors would have to take it with them to the station themselves.

Baggy chuckled, and his eyes glistened.

"I'll do it!" he breathed. He dragged open the door of the study cupboard, and with feverish haste began to bundle the elegant contents of the trunk on to the empty shelves. Coats and trousers and shirts and gorgeous ties and gleaming shoes were thrown into the cupboard in a way that would have made Gussy's blood boil had he been there to see!

When at last the trunk was empty, Baggy shut the cupboard, turned the key in the lock, and hid the key under the carpet.

"He, he, he! They'll never guess—"

Baggy broke off sharply. Footsteps were coming along the passage.

It was the work of a moment for Baggy to clamber into the deep trunk and close the lid upon himself. Even as the lid fell, the door opened, and tramping feet entered the study.

"I will lock the twunk, Taggles!"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus. Baggy, in the trunk, heard a key turned above his head. Then came the voice of old Taggles, the porter.

"Wot I says is, it's werry thirsty work, Master D'Arcy." There followed the musical clink of money and a gratified grunt from Ephraim Taggles. Then the trunk rocked, and Baggy held his breath.

"My heye! Which it's a werry heavy trunk, Master D'Arcy!" grumbled Taggles.

"Allow me to help you. We are wathah late—the taxi is waitin'!"

With the aid of the swell of St. Jim's, Taggles at last hoisted the trunk on to his back, and staggered with it from the study and down the stairs, followed by the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Within the trunk Baggy lay curled-up comfortably, and grinned to himself.

He was bound for Penperro House, after all!

"He, he, he!"

Baggy gave vent to a soft, gleeful chuckle. Down the steps into the quad he was borne, and a little later he felt himself being hoisted on to the roof of a waiting taxicab.

He could hear the voices of the juniors and the cheery shouts and farewells that were going on by the gates. A number of taxis and cabs were rolling off to Rylcombe and Wayland, bearing grinning St. Jim's fellows away for the summer vac. St. Jim's was emptying rapidly. Already most of the fellows had gone. Arthur Augustus and his guests were among the last to leave.

"Ewewybody heah, deah boys?"

"Rather!"

"Off we go, Gussy!"

"Cheerio, Taggles! See you next term!"

"Wot I says is, it's werry hot work, young gentlemen—"

"Plenty of water in the fountain, Taggy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My heye! Wot I says is—"

But already Gussy's party were climbing into the waiting

(Continued on next page.)

ASK THE ORACLE!




"Why does the chicken cross the road?" This is only one of the many questions that our wizard-wonder man, the Oracle, can answer without blinking an eye. Test him, and you'll be surprised at the result!

Q. Who was Houdini?

A. He was a performer who specialised in "escapes" from handcuffs, ropes, boxes, and prisons, "Webb," of Gerrard's Cross. So expert did he become that he earned the name of the Handcuff King. One of his successors is Murray, the Escapologist, who, a year or two ago, performed the amazing feat of getting out of bonds while suspended at a great height over London traffic.

Q. Can a bearded man tell a bare-faced lie?

A. What do you think yourself, "Collegian"? I'll bet it's a close shave with him sometimes!

Q. Who is the best all-round sportsman in the world?

A. Our sub-editor—or thinks he is! Next to him comes the office boy—in his own estimation!

Q. What is a Maltese cross?

A. Sam Smiley, of Woking, wants to know the shape of one, so I think I can best show him by including the illustration herewith, drawn by our special artist whose picture "Bluebells in Bloomsbury" was recently hung on the clothes-line to dry.

Q. What is the pons asinorum?

A. Yes, "Laddie," you certainly came

unstuck in your Latin translation by stating it was a "ponderous ass." But you must not take your reproof to heart too much; Form-masters have the habit of temporarily disliking chaps who do things like that. Literally, pons asinorum is the "bridge of asses." But perhaps you will soon be tackling the 5th proposition of the 1st book of Euclid! This is also the prime example of something extremely difficult for beginners, and so the term pons asinorum has come to mean anything that is jargon or "double Dutch" to people.

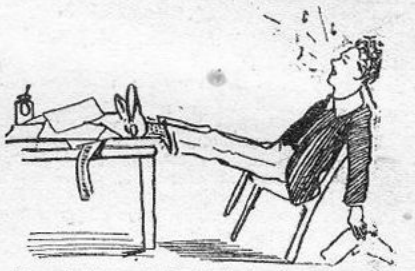
Q. What are the doldrums?

A. I believe I have answered this question before in these columns, "Tommy Dodd," of Derby. It is a region of calm or light winds near the Equator which used to prove exceedingly trying to the numerous sailing ships of the old days. Some luckless craft have been becalmed for weeks! The doldrums also means depression, down in the dumps. Your second question as to how much money is needed for emigrating to Canada is a more difficult one, as it depends on so much. You should write to the Salvation Army, Migration House, Upper Thames Street, London, E.C.4, and the experts there will be glad to give you full particulars about the Dominion.

Q. What is a fetish?

A. I include this question because the word occurs in a letter which I have received from an enthusiastic coloured reader of the "Gem" who lives in some place with a jaw-cracking name on the Gold Coast—West Africa, you know. Here is his epistolatory effort: "So dear Mister Oracle, May your shadow never grow less or birds nest in your beard. I am Old-Time Reader of

your Mighty Paper and wish to make communications with further Subscriptionists to the illustrious 'Gem.' To each Chum who sends to me (Post-Paid) specimens of English half-sovereigns, Fourteen-Carrot rings or Gold Tooth-Fillings, I will return one handsome Lucky Pebble from African beach, Carriage-Paid on Delivery. Also, Mister Oracle, I will send you handsome fetich—a luck charm, made of Solid Wood guaranteed. In return for Same I wish that first you send me one big hamper of English tinned foods and other edible Such-Likes. P.S. Please also put Top Hat and some Starched Shirts in with tinned foods when dispatching Same." Well, there's the letter, chums, just as it arrived from the Gold Coast. I have not published my optimistic coloured reader's name and address in case you other fellows write and send him—your personal opinions!



Q. What is dolce far niente?


A. We seem to be hot on Latin this week, chums! Here's "Lover of Greek" asking why he can't find it in his French dictionary! Probably because it's not there, "L., of G." The translation of it is pleasant idleness, and I have bribed the artist with a bag of monkey-nuts (without which he can never do his best work), to depict a perfect symbol of it in the office boy earning his living when the Editor has been called out to talk over a new serial with an author in the local bun-and-milk shop!

Q. Where and what are the Manacles?

A. Rocks off the Cornish coast, P. B.

Q. What does B.N.C. stand for?

A. Brasenose College, Oxford.
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,120.



What is a Maltese Cross? Well, here are two answers to that query. Take your choice, chums.

taxi that were to take them to Wayland Junction, looking in for Ethel & Co. at Spalding Hall on the way.

It was a big party. In addition to Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. and Levison and Clive, Talbot of the Shell had been invited to spend his holidays at the big house in Cornwall, and had accepted the invitation gladly. And, by the special request of Ethel Cleveland and Lady Peggy, Figgins & Co. of the New House had been included in the party, too.

George Figgins and his two chums, Kerr and Fatty Wynn, had been delighted to swell the number of Gussy's guests. But Arthur Augustus himself was not, perhaps, very enthusiastic over the prospect of having George Figgins with them; Arthur Augustus by no means viewed with a favourable eye the warm friendship that existed between his pretty Cousin Ethel and Figgins!

In the same way, Jack Blake had not been particularly joyful at the thought that Fatty Wynn would be with them during the holiday in Cornwall! Jack Blake and David Llewellyn Wynn were the two especial chums of Lady Peggy Brooke, and there was a distinct rivalry between them for the honour of first place in her regard!

But the wishes of the girls had had to be respected, and so Figgins & Co. had been included in the party, to the satisfaction of everyone but Blake and Arthur Augustus.

A number of juniors standing by the gates beside their luggage, waiting for cabs, waved their caps and cheered lustily as the four taxis bearing the swell of St. Jim's and his guests hummed out of the gates.

"Cheerio, you chaps!" yelled Kangaroo, the Australian junior, who was off with Clifton Dane to spend the holidays with Bernard Glyn.

"Bye-bye, Gussy!" sang out Kerruish. "Don't forget to change your socks sometimes!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Kerruish—"

"G'-bye, Figgy!" shouted Redfern of the New House. "Don't let those School House wasters get too cocky during the hols!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather not!" returned Figgy, waving his cap as the taxi he was in sailed past. "Cheerio, chaps!"

Churning up the dust, the four taxis sped away along the Wayland road, with the old gateway of St. Jim's dwindling in the distance.

Gussy's guests were off to Cornwall at last, little dreaming as yet of the strange adventures that were awaiting them on that wild, desolate stretch of coast.

And on the top of the taxi, in the dark confines of the big trunk, Baggy Trimble lay curled up comfortably, with a cunning grin on his fat face.

As yet nobody knew it, but, so far, Baggy had succeeded, in spite of all snubs and refusals, in tacking himself on to the party that was to enjoy Lord Eastwood's hospitality in the old house on the Cornish cliffs!

CHAPTER 5.

Startling Surprises!

"**W**HEW!"

It was very hot in the big trunk.

Baggy mopped his brow and wriggled his cramped limbs.

From the recent movements of the trunk and the muffled sounds going on all around him, Baggy knew that he was on the platform at Wayland, while the juniors waited for their train.

Baggy was beginning to wish very heartily that he had remembered to lay in a supply of grub for the journey! But there had been scarcely time to think of that. Already, however, the pangs of hunger were beginning to stir within his podgy frame, and the prospect of travelling all the way to Cornwall in the trunk without so much as a sandwich brought rather a blank expression to Baggy's face in the darkness!

"It's rotten!" muttered Baggy. "Oh dear! I shall be frightfully peckish! But it can't be helped. So long as I get to Gussy's pater's blessed place it doesn't matter. I'll get a really ripping feed when I get there to make up! And Lord Eastwood'll never kick me out!"

That Lord Eastwood was a kind-hearted individual Baggy knew very well, and he was relying on his generous nature to offer him the hospitality of Penperro House for the holidays once Baggy had landed there.

The fact that there was anything to be ashamed of in forcing his company upon the house-party when he had not been invited never occurred to Baggy for a moment!

"Whew! It's hot!"

Again Baggy mopped his fat face with a handkerchief.

While the taxi had been on the way to the station, Baggy had taken the opportunity of boring a few holes in the trunk for air. He was beginning to feel now that he

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,120.

needed still more ventilation, unless he was to suffocate! He took from his pocket his pocket-knife, felt for the gimlet with which it was provided, and fumbling fingers began to bore another hole in the lid.

"Hallo! It's dear old Knox!"

Tom Merry nodded down the platform. The tall figure of Gerald Knox, the unpopular prefect, had appeared from the booking office.

Knox had caught sight of the group of juniors and the Spalding Hall girls standing waiting for the train. For a moment he hesitated.

There was warfare between Knox and Blake & Co. and the other juniors; but Knox had a secret warm admiration for the three Spalding Hall girls. At sight of them he hastily checked the scowl that he had been about to bestow upon the juniors, and smiled gallantly instead.

"Oh, my hat!" grinned Blake. "Knox is going to be friendly."

"Who said the age of miracles was past?" chuckled Talbot.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox halted before the group and raised his cap.

"Off for the hols—oh?" he asked, in what was meant to be a cheery tone.

"Oh, no," said Monty Lowther gravely; "just coming back to St. Jim's!"

The juniors chuckled. Ethel & Co. smiled. Knox went decidedly pink, and glared at Lowther.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed feebly. "Well, I hope you will look after these young scamps, Miss Cleveland!"

"Bai Jove!" snorted Arthur Augustus. "I must protest at 'bein' wefewwed to as a scamp! I—"

The swell of St. Jim's got no further.

Knox, to show how friendly he could be, had seated himself on the big trunk beside the party. It was at that very moment that Baggy Trimble, within the trunk, was getting busy with his gimlet.

"Yarooooogh!"

Knox gave a wild howl, and leapt into the air, clasping the seat of his trousers.

"Oh! Yow! Gerrooow!"

"My only aunt!"

"What the merry dickens—"

"Bai Jove! Whatever is the mattah with Knox?"

"Ow!" roared Knox, glaring at the amazed and grinning juniors. "Yow! I'm punctured! Your blessed trunk's got a nail in it! I believe you put it there on purpose, you little cads!"

"Bai Jove! Pway wemembah there are ladies pwesent, Knox!" snorted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I uttahly fail to compwehend—"

But at that moment the train came roaring into the station, and the rattle of the train drowned the roaring of Gerald Knox! In the scramble for seats, Knox and his mysterious behaviour were both completely forgotten, which was perhaps fortunate for Baggy Trimble, or discovery might have resulted. As it was, Baggy, in the trunk, was placed carefully in the guard's van by a porter, under the watchful eye of Arthur Augustus, who imagined that all his pet ties and waistcoats were within it. The swell of St. Jim's hurried off to join the others in one of the two compartments that his party had reserved for themselves, the guard's whistle shrilled, and the train moved off, leaving Gerald Knox, who was travelling by the next train, glaring after it.

"Yow!" grunted Knox. "Ow! What the dickens was it, anyway? Something stuck right into me! Wow!"

The guard's van at the end of the departing train vanished in the distance. Inside the trunk on the floor of the van Baggy Trimble chuckled.

He had heard Knox yell, and guessed what had happened. At first he had been in terror that he would be discovered as a result. But his luck was evidently in!

"He, he, he!" sniggered Baggy. "Serve Knox right!"

He settled down into as comfortable a position as his cramped quarters would allow, and listened to the clicking of the wheels over the rails. He began to doze.

Baggy woke with a jerk to feel the trunk swaying in mid-air. All around him was a great din and clatter.

"Trubury Junction!" came the faint, muffled voice of a porter.

"Careful with that twunk, portah!"

"Yessir!" answered the porter who was dragging the trunk containing Baggy from the van. "Cornish express, sir? That's over the bridge at the other platform. I'll bring it across for you, sir!"

"Wippin'! Pway be vewy careful, portah—that twunk contains my best clobber."

"Very good, sir!"

The porter was a big, burly man, but it was with difficulty that he hoisted the precious trunk on to his shoulders



With an unusually pleasant expression on his face, Gerald Knox seated himself on the big trunk beside the St. Jim's party and the Spalding Hall girls. It was at that very moment that Baggy Trimble, inside the trunk, was getting busy with his gimlet. Suddenly Knox gave a wild howl and leapt into the air. "Yarooop!" (See Chapter 5.)

and set off to climb the stairs of the bridge between the platforms.

"My heye! This is bloomin' weighty, an' no horror!" granted the porter to himself as he laboured up the stairs in the wake of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was sailing along gracefully at the side of Cousin Ethel, with the rest of the party around them.

Bump!

"Ow!"

At the top of the stairs the porter planted the trunk on the boards, to give himself a breathing spell. In the trunk, Baggy gasped painfully.

"Feels as if it's full o' bloomin' lead, this here trunk!" the porter told himself as he swung it on to his shoulders again. "His best clobber? Lumme, he must wear suits of armour, that young gent!"

He marched along to the stairs leading down to the next platform. The St. Jim's juniors and the three girls had already descended them, and were standing in a group at the bottom.

The porter put out his foot for the top stair.

It was unlucky for the porter—and still more unlucky for Baggy Trimble—that a small boy had been eating a banana by that spot a little while before. The skin was lying on the top stair, and the porter trod on it. His foot slid from under him, and there was a bump and a crash, and a wild yell.

"Oh lor! Yaroooop!" gasped the porter, as he sat down on the stairs and stared dazedly at the big trunk as it rolled away from him, bumping from stair to stair, bounding faster and faster to the platform below.

And then the porter's eyes went glassy. He stared at the bounding trunk as though paralysed.

For wild yells were issuing from it as it careered down the broad stairs.

Bump, bump, bump! Crash, bump!

"Oh! Yerroough! Grooh! Help! Yarooop!"

The trunk bumped faster and faster from stair to stair, and at every bump there was a yell from within. The porter stared down at it dazedly as it went.

Vague memories of ghost stories containing haunted trunks came to him. His jaw dropped and he passed a damp hand across his brow.

"M-my heye!" gasped the porter. "Oh lor! What's in it? Them yells sound yooman!"

But the porter was not an atom more startled than the people on the platform below—including the St. Jim's party!

Arthur Augustus had given a startled cry as he had first seen his precious trunk rolling down the stairs towards him. But when the first yell issued from within it, the swell of St. Jim's jumped almost out of his skin.

"Bai Jove!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yow! Oh! Oooch!"

"Listen!" yelled Tom Merry.

With blank astonishment on their faces, the juniors stared at the rolling trunk as it careered down towards them. There was a wild scramble a moment later to avoid it as it came hurtling into their midst with a final crash and came to rest on the platform.

There was a splintering sound on top of the final mighty bang as the trunk landed, and the next moment it had burst open.

A fat, dishevelled, red-faced, gasping figure came sprawling out with a yell at the very feet of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"G-gweat Scott!" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's faintly. "Twimble!"

CHAPTER 6. Off to Cornwall!

"**T**TRIMBLE!"

"Of—of all the—"

"Great pip!"

The juniors could hardly believe their eyes.

Arthur Augustus stared down at the gasping figure of the Falstaff of the School House through his gleaming monocle, and his face was a picture.

"Ow! Yow! I'm hurt!"

Baggy Trimble sat up, rubbing his bruises, and eyeing the juniors with a very doubtful expression. Now that

their faces were losing their first expressions of amazement, grim looks were to be seen on all sides.

Arthur Augustus found his voice again.

"Bai Jove! Twimble, you fat boundah! You—your uttah little toad! Oh, gweat Scott!"

Words failed Arthur Augustus as he realised the whole truth. His face went crimson with rage.

"You—you have wemoved my clobber fwom that trunk, and let it be left behind at St. Jim's?" hooted Arthur Augustus, for the moment the loss of his precious articles of apparel ousting all else from his mind. "You howwible cad!"

He grasped Baggy by the ear and hauled him to his feet.

"Ow! Leggo my ear, Gussy, you rotter—"

"Wats! I am stwongly inclined to administah a feahful thwashin'—"

"Not here, Gussy, old hoss," grinned Tom Merry, stepping quickly forward.

"Vevy well!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "I must apologise for speakin' so stwongly, Ethel, deah gal," he went on turning to his cousin. "But in the circumstances I—"

"But what on earth's the idea of getting in old Gussy's trunk?" cried Lady Peggy in bewilderment.

Fatty Wynn chuckled.

"Don't you see? Baggy wants to spend his hols down in Cornwall with us! He asked Gussy lots of times, but Gussy turned him down! So he's worked it like this!"

"My hat!" gasped Lady Peggy, with a little gurgle of laughter.

"Poor Twimble!" exclaimed Ethel sympathetically. "Why not let him come with us, Arthur?"

"Oh cwumbs!" Arthur Augustus stared at his pretty cousin with very mixed feelings. "And have the howwid little boundah planted on us for all the vac? Bai Jove, no!"

"Oh, really, Gussy—" mumbled Baggy.

"Wats!"

"You'd better go and buy yourself a ticket back to Wayland, Baggy," put in Tom Merry grimly.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas! Cleah off, Twimble!"

"But I haven't got any money!" howled Baggy.

"Then you'll have to walk back to St. Jim's," said Figgins cheerfully. "It's only about a hundred miles or so!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Figgins—"

"Anyway, you're not comin' with us, Twimble!" declared Arthur Augustus indignantly, surveying the ruins of his trunk in anger to which the good-natured swell of St. Jim's was rarely roused. "If you are stwanded heah without money, you have only bwrought it on yourself, you fat fwaud!"

"I say, Gussy, don't be a beast, you know!" exclaimed Baggy, in dismay. "I—I can't go back now. Lemme come with you. Be a sport. Between friends—"

"Bai Jove! You are no fwriend of mine, Twimble!"

"Oh, really, Gussy, old chap—"

"Pway do not address me in that familiah mannah, Twimble!" snapped Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "You are not in our partay, so please go away!"

Baggy's face took on a very sickly look indeed. It was beginning to appear as if his desperate attempt to include himself among Gussy's guests was to end in a miserable failure. The prospect of being stranded at Trubury Junction, miles away from anywhere, filled him with dismay.

He glanced round pleadingly. The faces of all the juniors were grim—very grim! Not one of them wanted Baggy to be a member of Lord Eastwood's house-party, it was very clear.

Baggy had brought his troubles on himself. But now that he had been bowled out he was not at all inclined to face the music. He turned pleadingly to Tom Merry.

"Merry, off chap—"

"Rats!"

"Figgins, old man—"

"Br-r-r!"

"I—I say, Talbot—"

Talbot turned away.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Baggy. "I—I say, don't be beasts, you fellows!" He turned desperately to the Spalding Hall girls. "Miss Ethel, I—I wonder if you'd help a chap—"

Baggy had at last found the weak spot in the armour!

Cousin Ethel knew that Baggy was anything but popular at St. Jim's, and she by no means approved of his impudent attempt to force his company upon the party. But she had a very kind heart, and she could not resist Baggy's pleading look, even though the juniors could. She turned impulsively to Arthur Augustus.

"Arthur!"

"Y-yaas," responded the swell of St. Jim's uneasily.

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"Please let Trimble come with us. It seems a shame to leave him here. For my sake!"

"Oh, deah!"

Arthur Augustus looked anything but happy. The rest of the juniors looked thoroughly taken aback, and glanced at one another in dismay. They did not want Baggy. But if Ethel asked them to take Baggy with them, it would be difficult—in fact, impossible—to refuse.

"I don't mind lending Trimble the cash to get back to Wayland with," put in Tom Merry hastily. "But—"

But Ethel shook her head firmly. Her eyes sparkled with determination. Baggy's evident longing to be of the party had suggested to her that he had no prospect of a happy holiday otherwise, and her kind heart was touched.

"I want him to come with us," she said quietly. "I will pay his fare myself."

"Oh, wathah not, deah gal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hastily. "I cannot allow you to pay Twimble's fare! If you weally insist on his comin' with us, I will pay the fat boundah's fare myself, of course. But—"

"Good!" said Ethel, with a bright smile. "Thank you, Arthur!"

"Oh deah!"

The swell of St. Jim's looked at Baggy Trimble with a look that, if looks could kill, would have laid the Falstaff of the School House lifeless on the platform! But there was no escaping from Ethel's express wish. There was nothing that Arthur Augustus would not have done for his pretty cousin, even to the inclusion of Baggy Trimble in the cheery party bound for Cornwall.

"Vevy well, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus, with as good a grace as he could muster. "I will go and get Twimble a ticket."

The swell of St. Jim's turned away towards the booking office with a mixture of very odd expressions struggling in his aristocratic countenance.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Monty Lowther. "This is rotten!"

"Fancy having that fat ass planted on us for the hols!" agreed Manners, with a growl.

"It's the limit!" nodded Blake. "But Ethel—"

"If she knew what a fat worm he is—"

"She doesn't!"

If the faces of the juniors were anything but bright, Baggy's own flabby features had undergone a great change during the last half-minute. In a moment Baggy was holding himself jauntily and smirking. He shot a triumphant look at the glaring juniors.

"I say, that's jolly decent of you, Miss Ethel!" grinned Baggy. "Of course, Gussy was only joking when he pretended he didn't want me! We're great pals really. He, he, he!"

"Oh, shut up, you fat worm!" breathed Tom Merry disgustedly, in a voice too low for Ethel to hear.

Baggy blinked at him.

"What did you say, Merry?" he asked loudly.

Tom coloured as he caught Ethel's glance, and turned away. Baggy chuckled.

His luck was in, after all!

But when the big express thundered in, Baggy was very careful to select the carriage in which Ethel Cleveland seated herself. He had no wish to be left alone with half a dozen indignant juniors in the other compartment occupied by the St. Jim's party. He was pretty certain that he would have been in for a very warm time once the train had started.

But he need not have worried. Doris Levison got into the next carriage with her brother, and Clive, joining Tom Merry & Co. and Talbot there, leaving Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. to share with Ethel and Lady Peggy the doubtful privilege of Baggy's companionship. As the train rolled from the station, Baggy grunted and settled himself in his seat with a fat sprawl.

"Don't take up such a lot of room, Figgins!" complained Baggy peevishly.

"My hat!" gasped Figgins faintly.

Baggy was already taking up far more than his fair share of room; but it was impossible to tell him what he thought of him, so Figgins relapsed into a wrathful silence, with one of Baggy's elbows in his ribs.

On the other side of the carriage, Arthur Augustus and Blake, Herries and Digby and Fatty Wynn, glared at Baggy Trimble with feelings too deep for words. Baggy returned their glares with a look of cool impudence.

There was a triumphant gleam in his little eyes.

Baggy had won! There was no denying that.

He was not wanted, but he was there. He had not even been properly invited; but, invited or not, Baggy Trimble was at last included in the party speeding westward to enjoy the hospitality of Lord Eastwood at the old house on the Cornish cliffs!

CHAPTER 7.

At Penperro House!

"HERE we are!"
 "Huwah!"
 "Ripping!"

The train had drawn up by a little wayside station in the heart of Cornwall. The St. Jim's party alighted eagerly. A man in a chauffeur's uniform, who was standing on the platform, stepped forward and touched his hat to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Why, hello, Woberts!" grinned the swell of St. Jim's, as he recognised one of his father's chauffeurs. "Heah we are at last, bai Jove!"

On the heels of the smiling Roberts, the St. Jim's party followed to where three cars were waiting to bear them to

Penperro House, thirty miles away, on the wild northern coast.

"Gussy's pater knows how to make his guests comfortable!" chuckled Levison, seated in one of the big cars with Tom Merry & Co. and Talbot and Clive, as the car rolled away from the station over a wild moorland road.

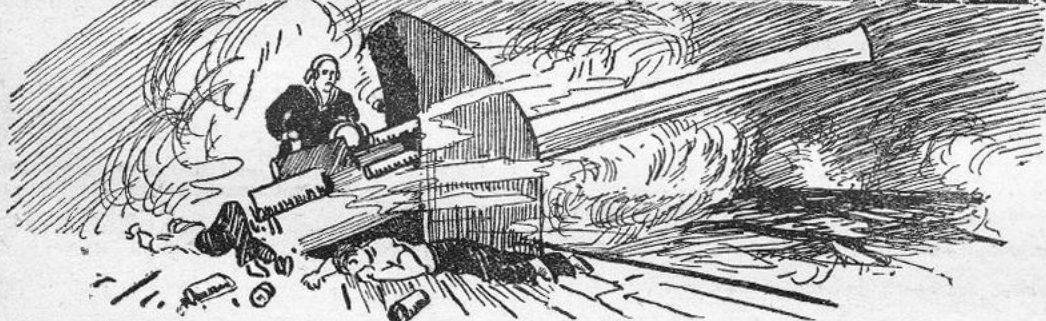
"Rather!" grinned Tom Merry.

It did not take the cars long to cover the thirty miles of country that separated the nearest station from Penperro House. In considerably less than an hour they were speeding along a high cliff road, with the foaming sea thundering on their right. They swept by a high, jutting rock round which the road twisted, and Lady Peggy, in the foremost car, gave a sudden exclamation.

"My hat! Look!"

(Continued on next page.)

FAMOUS DAREDEVILS!



One of the most stirring epics of the World War was the Battle of Jutland, in which a young Scout, Jack Cornwell, by his great bravery and devotion, added his name to the roll of national heroes!

John Travers Cornwell, V.C.

"OH, we carried on all right!" Those were the simple words spoken by John Travers Cornwell, V.C., the brave young British seaman, when he lay dying in a Grimsby hospital, after his heroic conduct on H.M.S. Chester during the Battle of Jutland, May 31st, 1916.

A great daredevil in every sense of the word was John Cornwell, and it is only right that we should remember his epic deed this week, for was not Cornwell an ex-Scout of the Manor Park Troop, and are not 50,000 Scouts gathered at Arrows Park, near Birkenhead, at this very moment to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of the Boy Scouts' movement in a World Jamboree?

Picture to yourselves the position of the rival fleets, before the Battle of Jutland, where Cornwell earned undying fame for his courage in sticking to his post under heavy fire, when all the men around him were dead, and he himself mortally wounded.

Slim, grey shapes steal across the surface of the sea, destroyers racing backwards and forwards on patrol, guarding the great dreadnoughts, battleships, and cruisers, heaving through the mighty billows of the North Sea like a pack of bloodhounds on the scent.

They are the British Grand Fleet, under Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, racing to join the battle cruiser fleet farther south, with Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty.

"Bulldog Beatty" has engaged the whole German Battle Fleet, and is now steaming back to join Jellicoe, with the enemy in hot pursuit, hoping thus to lead them into a trap.

Rear-Admiral Hood, in command of the third battle cruiser squadron, is in the van of Jellicoe's fleet. He has received instructions to steam as fast as possible to Beatty's aid, and keep the enemy in check until the remainder of the British Fleet arrives.

When the sound of guns comes to the

ears of Hood's squadron and flashes of fire flim ominously against the horizon, H.M.S. Chester, Cornwell's ship, is ordered to scout ahead and report.

H.M.S. Chester steams rapidly away. It is five-thirty in the afternoon of May 31st, 1916. A sea mist steals like a curtain across the water, shrouding the enemy ships, and at the same time exposing the British vessel to the German gunfire.

Every member of the Chester's crew is grim-faced and tense. Officers and men know that this is their great trial. Their time has come. Now will be seen the result of weeks and weeks of concentrated training and preparation.

Officers on the bridge gaze anxiously through their glasses, and bark out clipped commands to engineers and stokers down in the bowels of the cruiser. The gun crews leap to their appointed stations.

John Cornwell is stationed at the forward six-inch gun. Over his head is a telepad, a similar instrument to those used by operators in telephone exchanges, in order to leave their hands free. From this apparatus a wire goes to the gunnery officer, who issues rapid instructions as to how each gun must be fired.

Cornwell is the sight-setter for this forward six-inch gun. By the speed and accuracy of his movement in carrying out the telephoned instructions depends the percentage of hits or misses registered by the weapon.

Boom!

The deck rocks beneath him as the first shell is discharged. Shell after shell thunders away through the air. Amid the din of explosives and reek of burning cordite comes the voice of the gunnery officer in Cornwell's shattered ear-drums, altering the position of the gun as the enemy ships manoeuvre out of range.

The enemy reply! Missiles begin to rain about the Chester. She is fighting four enemy cruisers off her own bat,

Explosives slash, rip, tear, below and above, juddering against the thick armour-plating covering the gun. Missiles scream down upon Cornwell, masses of metal travelling at 3,000 feet per second, wreaking death and destruction on every hand. Men fall all around upon the splintered deck.

Still Cornwell sticks to his post. The ex-Scout remembers the Scout motto: "Stick to it! Stick to it!"

Then there is silence. No more instructions come through. Cornwell is badly wounded. All his mates of the gun crew are dead around him.

No one can blame him if he crawls away to the comparative safety below decks. But no! Cornwell grits his teeth and remembers that a gun must be kept firing so long as there is one man left to carry on.

He stands tensely under the shelter of the weapon, his ears straining for the message which never comes. Waiting—waiting, until the Chester steams back in triumph to rejoin the rest of the squadron and report. Waiting with "just his own brave heart and God's help to support him," as the captain of the Chester afterwards wrote.

A few days later John Cornwell died in hospital at Grimsby from his wounds, but he left to the world a great example of the true Scouting spirit, a spirit which made him fight on to the last gasp, and stick to his post to the end despite the stark terror of his situation.

That is why Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Chief Scout, instituted the "Cornwell Badge," the highest honour to which any Scout can hope to aspire.

That is why John Cornwell's epic deed will never be forgotten. It will live on as a lasting tribute to the memory of one of the greatest daredevils and the bravest Scout the world has ever known.

(Next week our special contributor deals with Piper David Laidlaw, V.C.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,120.

High on the jagged cliffs ahead of them the handsome pile of a big mansion rose black against the evening sky. The road wound towards it along the cliff edge like a white ribbon, and at the foot of the lofty cliffs white-capped waves crashed among the rocks. Opposite the house, across a narrow channel where the sea thundered and churned in a mad maelstrom, a small island of rock rose from the foaming waters to an almost equal height with the opposite cliffs. On its summit could be seen a gaunt broken arch—evidently part of the remains of some ancient building that had once stood upon it, torn down now for the most part by the stormy winds of many years.

The chauffeur glanced back. "That's Penperro House," he said, slowing down the car to a crawl to give them a chance of appreciating the view of it. "That bit of an island opposite is called Penperro Rock." He chuckled. "His lordship was saying there's supposed to be a big treasure hidden on that rock somewhere!"

"A treasure?" cried Lady Peggy. "Yes, miss!" grinned the chauffeur. "I expect you and the young gentlemen will go exploring that rock, looking for it, before you've been here long."

"You bet we will!" nodded Lady Peggy, and her brown eyes were sparkling.

"Rather!" grinned Blake eagerly. "A treasure—eh? How ripping!"

And Herries and Digby and Fatty Wynn, who were sharing the car with Blake and Lady Peggy, agreed heartily.

The car went on, climbing the winding ascent to the old mansion still half a mile away. Before long they were all descending before the great front door, and the handsome, upright figure of an elderly man, with smiling face and soldierly bearing, was coming down the steps to meet them. It was Lord Eastwood, the father of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"So here you all are!" he exclaimed genially. "Splendid! Delighted to see you!"

They entered the house, and the juniors were shown to their rooms. Soon afterwards a gong sounded, and they gathered in the long dining-room for dinner. Through the tall windows, the great Atlantic breakers could be seen as they swept towards the cliffs. The faint booming of the waves could be heard even in the room. And across the channel separating it from the mainland, the gaunt shape of Penperro Rock rose black and forbidding-looking from the seething race of waters.

"What a ripping place this is!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's eagerly. "Is it true there is a treasure on Penperro Wock, patah?"

Lord Eastwood smiled. "Well, there is supposed to be," he said, with a shrug.

"The ruins on the rock are those of some old monastic building, and it is said that, when the monks were driven out by Henry the Eighth, they left a huge treasure hidden on the rock. According to the legend, the treasure is still there."

"Oh, good!" chimed in Wally D'Arcy, with his mouth full—a little error of manners that caused his major to frown upon him severely. "We'll find the giddy treasure, won't we, you chaps?"

"Rather!" agreed Reggie Manners and Frank Levison.

The three Third-Formers had come by an earlier train than Arthur Augustus and his friends. Wally & Co. already bore signs of having been rambling along the cliffs. Wally had sand in his ears, and Reggie Manners' hair was sticky with salt water, after a fall into a pool among the rocks!

"That'll be great fun, looking for the treasure!" laughed Cousin Ethel brightly.

"Topping!" cried Lady Peggy. The faces of all the juniors were eager. Baggy Trimble's eyes were gleaming particularly brightly. The thought of unearthing a vast treasure, and the wealth it would bring, appealed to Baggy tremendously.

But Lord Eastwood shook his head. "I don't want to be a wet blanket," he said, with a smile. "But I should not count upon finding any treasure on the island, if I were you. I'm afraid it is only a legend—nothing more."

"But it may be true, sir!" put in Blake. "It may," agreed Lord Eastwood. "But I think myself it is very improbable."

"Anyway, there will be no harm in having a jolly good hunt for it!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Unfortunately," went on Lord Eastwood, "that is easier said than done!"

"Why is that, sir?" inquired Figgins. "The island is inaccessible except in the very calmest weather, you see," explained his host. "No boat can approach if the sea is at all rough, and at this part of the coast it is usually fairly rough. You may have to wait a long while before you get an opportunity of landing on Penperro Rock."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,120.

The faces of the juniors showed their disappointment. But staring through the window at the leaping foam round the base of the high, rocky island, they could well understand that what Lord Eastwood had said was true enough. "Well, we'll get a chance one day, with luck," said Talbot hopefully.

"Wonder how much there would be for each of us, if we found the giddy treasure?" put in Manners, with a chuckle. "A few thousand each would be jolly useful pocket-money for the next term!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"

"I'm afraid," smiled Lord Eastwood, "that even supposing this treasure actually exists, and that it were found, it would not be the property of the finders, but of the owner of this house. You see, Penperro Rock is part of the Penperro House land. The owner, from whom I am renting the house, is a friend of mine, as a matter of fact. He is, unhappily, an invalid, and is at present in the South of France for his health. He was glad of the opportunity of letting this place for the summer, for he is by no means a rich man. Were it not for sentimental reasons, he would have sold this house long ago. But the place has been in his family for generations, and so he is hanging on to it as long as he can. If the treasure were found, it would be his, and it would be a wonderful boon to him, too!"

"It would be ripping to find it and hand it over to him!" exclaimed Blake eagerly.

"Rather!" chimed in some of the others.

"I agree," nodded Lord Eastwood. "Poor Emerson! It would be wonderful for him, if this legendary treasure proved to exist, and came into his hands. It would not only rid him of the haunting fear that he may have to sell this house one day, but by putting the services of the best surgeons in the world at his disposal might even restore his broken health!"

But even as he spoke, it was clear to his listeners from their host's face that he had no real hope that the supposed treasure of Penperro Rock even existed.

The juniors turned in early, intending to be up bright and early in the morning for a swim in the sea before breakfast with Ethel & Co.

Tom Merry stood at the window of the bed-room he was sharing with Manners and Lowther, and gazed across at the moonlit shape of the great rock, with its crown of ruins, with a very thoughtful look on his face.

The thunder of the waves under the cliffs on which the big old house stood could be heard plainly. He could see the white foam dancing madly at the foot of the great rock where the old monks' treasure was supposed to be hidden. It was a wild, romantic scene, and Tom drew a sudden deep breath. His eyes were shining.

"Isn't it all just ripping?" he exclaimed. "Even if we never find the giddy treasure, it looks to me as if we're in for a top-hole holiday!"

"Rather!" grinned Monty Lowther, slipping into his pyjamas. "Even though we've got Baggy with us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" As the three chums of the Shell fell asleep, the roar of the waves thundering at the foot of the cliffs and round the rock-bound base of the mysterious island still filled their ears.

CHAPTER 8.

In the Dark!

DURING the next few days, Lord Eastwood's youthful guests spent their time in the delights of bathing, and tramping along the wild, rugged coast, exploring the innumerable little sandy beaches under the great cliffs, and revelling in the hot sunshine on the sands.

Despite the glorious sunny weather, the sea continued rough, however. It made bathing good fun; but it prevented any visit to Penperro Rock for the time being, and the juniors and the three girls were beginning to look forward with increasing eagerness to their proposed visit to the rock when the sea turned calm.

Everyone was in a very good humour—even Arthur Augustus and Figgins hit it off splendidly, which was partly due, perhaps, to the tact of Cousin Ethel! And Blake and Fatty Wynn went about with Lady Peggy in perfect harmony. Inter-House rivalry of any kind had been completely dropped upon arrival at Penperro House, and Figgins & Co. mixed in with their School House rivals very happily.

Not till the third night did the sunny weather show any signs of breaking. But in that evening banks of black clouds came drifting up unexpectedly across the blue, turning the sea to a sullen grey.

It looked as though a storm were brewing, and at Lord Eastwood's advice the party stayed indoors after dinner, though Gussy's father himself left the house early in the evening to motor over to St. Ives. The juniors and Ethel & Co. played games, and the great rambling house echoed with cheerful laughter.

It was Doris Levison who suggested a game of hide-and-seek. The others agreed readily enough.

"It'll be wathah good fun!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I p'pose we turn out all the lights, except in this room, and the gals go and hide in different places! We'll see who can find all three first."

"Good egg!" grinned Lady Peggy. "Come on!" Together with Ethel and Doris, Peggy hurried from the room.

"We'll give you thwee minutes to hide!" Arthur Augustus called after them.

While the juniors were waiting for the three minutes to pass, Tom Merry went to the window and looked at the sky. It was dark and ominous, but as yet there was no sign of a storm breaking.

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake at last. "Three minutes are up!"

And the juniors hurried from the room in a body. The lights had been turned out, and in the darkness of the hall the searchers scattered cheerfully on their quest.

The last to be left in the hall was Baggy Trimble. There was a cunning gleam in Baggy's eyes.

Though he had eaten an excellent dinner, Baggy was feeling that another little snack would not do any harm! He turned and sneaked off in the direction of the kitchen, with a fat chuckle. If he could find the larders while the rest were searching for the girls, Baggy could have a quiet tuck-in all on his own, unknown to anyone!

In a few minutes the juniors had scattered widely through the rambling old building. Upstairs and downstairs hurrying, eager figures moved and peered, bumping into one another and meeting in all sorts of odd corners.

Tom Merry was one of the first to have any success. He discovered Doris Levison hidden in the library, and set off to find the other two. Drawing blank downstairs, he went up the broad staircase to the floor above.

At the top of the stairs he ran into Figgins.

"Any luck, old hoss?" chuckled Figgins.

"I've bowled out Doris!" grinned Tom.

The two separated, Figgins vanishing along a dark corridor leading to the north wing. Tom turned in the opposite direction.

For a long while he searched through the south wing without result. He gave it up at last and turned in the direction of the north wing.

He looked into several rooms and drew blank. Then he came to the foot of a narrow flight of stairs, and hesitated. It certainly looked the sort of place Lady Peggy or Ethel might well have chosen for a hiding-place, wherever it led.

"Here goes!" grinned Tom to himself.

He put a foot on to the bottom stair. But as he was about to ascend he heard footsteps hurrying down. The lanky figure of Figgins appeared. He started when he saw Tom.

"Hallo! Any luck up there?" inquired Tom cheerfully.

Figgins shook his head.

"Nothing doing!"

He was on the point of moving away along the corridor, when sudden running footsteps on the stairs caused both Figgins and Tom Merry to turn their heads quickly.

"Who's that?" muttered Figgins.

The next moment a slim figure had appeared in the dim light that fell through a window near by, and the two juniors saw that it was Ethel Cleveland.

The expression on her face caused each of them to give a quick exclamation.

"What's the matter, Ethel?" cried Tom, in a startled voice.

Ethel gave a little angry sob. She reached out a hand to an electric-light switch near her on the wall, and flooded the corridor with a blaze of light. Tom Merry and Figgins stared at her dumbly.

Her face was crimson, and her eyes were sparkling in a way that showed her to be burning with anger.

"What on earth—" stammered Figgins.

"Ethel, what's happened?" cried Tom.

She glanced from one to another of them with the high colour still flaming in her cheeks.

"Oh!" she cried breathlessly, and there was vexation and anger in her voice. "I'm furious! Somebody's been so—so rude and stupid—"

She broke off and stamped her foot.

"I was hiding in a box-room at the top of these stairs! Somebody found me—I don't know who it was—"

"Yes?" queried Tom in bewilderment, with a quick glance at Figgins.

"In the dark, whoever it was, he kissed me!"

"What?" cried Tom hotly.

"Somebody kissed me and ran away!" said Ethel. Her voice was calmer now, but she could not repress a little sob of vexation.

"My hat!" breathed Figgins.

CHAPTER 9.

The Shadow of Suspicion!

THERE was a very peculiar expression on Figgins' face.

"Who on earth can it have been?" he muttered.

He and Tom Merry looked at one another. Tom's face was very grim. Figgins glanced quickly up the stairs.

"Whoever it was, he may be up there still!" he exclaimed. "I'm going up to see if I can find the cad!"

But before he could turn to do so, there were footsteps along the corridor. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Blake, and Talbot appeared, evidently surprised at finding the light turned on. But as they caught sight of Ethel's face they looked thoroughly startled.

"Nothin' w'ong, deah gal?" cried the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yes, there jolly well is!" said Tom Merry hotly.

"Why, what—" began Talbot.

Tom Merry interrupted him. Briefly he explained. As Blake and Talbot and Arthur Augustus listened their faces went as grim as Tom Merry's own.

"The howling rotter!" roared Blake. "Who the dickens can it be?"

"He ought to be scragged!" said Talbot hotly.

"Heah, heah!"

"Well, let's see if we can find the chap," cut in Figgins. "I was up there a moment or two ago myself, but I didn't see anybody. But maybe he's still there, hiding—"

Leaving Talbot to take the thoroughly upset girl downstairs, Tom Merry, Blake, and Arthur Augustus hastened up the little flight of steps after Figgins.

There were several box-rooms up there. But though they searched thoroughly they found nothing. They returned to the floor below with grim faces.

"Funny that you never saw the chap, Figgy," put in Tom; as they stood in a baffled group. "You came down only a few moments before Ethel."

(Continued on next page.)

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Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and looked at Figgins rather hard. Figgins flushed.

"Who are you staring at, Gussy?" he demanded shortly.

"You!" retorted the swell of St. Jim's. "It seems vewy stwange to me that you were up there, and yet nevah saw a sign of anyone else! I pwesume you found Ethel, at any wate?"

"As a matter of fact, I didn't," answered Figgins. "I didn't look very thoroughly, I suppose. I certainly never saw her, till she came down the stairs after—after it had happened."

"And you never saw another chap up there?" cried Blake, in an almost incredulous tone.

"No."

"Bai Jove! How vewy stwange!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed in a very significant way. The colour flooded into Figgins' cheeks.

"Look here, Gussy! If you think I'm the chap who did it—"

"I nevah said I thought so!" snapped Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, it is certainly all vewy stwange."

"Look here—"

"Oh, chuck it!" growled Tom, stepping between the two. "I don't believe it was Figg for a moment, of course. The thing to do is to get downstairs and find out who's missing!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake.

The colour had died from Figgins' cheeks, and he was rather pale as he went down the stairs to the hall with the other three. His eyes were gleaming in a queer way. He did not look at Arthur Augustus.

In the hall, everybody had gathered. The turning up of the lights had brought them there under the impression that the game was over. Ethel was not there, having gone off with Doris and Lady Peggy, but all the St. Jim's fellows were present, including even Wally, Reggie, and Levison minor, who had been playing snakes-and-ladders in the morning-room, and had come out to find what the excitement was about.

Talbot's account of what had happened had set the other juniors agog. But at sight of Tom Merry, Blake, Arthur Augustus, and Figgins descending the stairs they broke off in their talk and watched the four with curious eyes.

"I say, this is a pretty rotten business!" said Manners as the four joined the rest.

"Whoever did it ought to be jolly well made to feel sorry for himself!" growled Herries.

"Rather!"

"Come in heah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a deep frown on his face, opening the door of the library and switching on the light.

The juniors followed the swell of St. Jim's into the big room.

Their faces were angry and grim.

Whichever one of their number had been the silly ass who had kissed Ethel in the darkness of the box-room, they all felt that he should be made to feel sorry for his action.

Tom Merry, glancing round the group, saw that everyone was present—even including Baggy Trimble, who was furtively wiping a trace of jam from his mouth as he entered the library. Baggy had evidently been "tucking-

THE GEM LIBRARY.—NO. 1,120.

in," but Tom Merry was too much troubled over the affair of Cousin Ethel to take much notice, though it seemed fairly clear that Baggy had taken the opportunity afforded him by the game to raid his host's larder.

Blake closed the door.

"Evevwybody heah?" inquired Arthur Augustus grimly.

"Yes, all of us," nodded Tom Merry.

"Well, somebody here must be the chap!" growled Blake, staring round from face to face.

There was a silence in the library. The juniors looked at one another. It was queer to know that one of them in that room was the culprit they were seeking!

"I considah that the silly fathead ought to make a clean



Bump, bump, bump! "Yow! Oh! Ooooh!" Wild yells came from the big trunk as it rolled down the stairs and a splintering sound, the trunk landed, and the next moment it had burst open. A fat, dishevelled, red-f-

bwest of it, and apologise to Ethel," said Arthur Augustus coldly at last.

"Of course!" cried Fatty Wynn.

"Well?" Arthur Augustus glanced from face to face.

"Is the chap goin' to have the decency to own up?"

No one moved. Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed.

"It's bad enough as it is!" he declared icily. "But by wufusin' to own up, the chap, whoever he is, is makin' it far worse, I considah!"

"Hear, hear!" nodded Tom Merry.

"I think the cad ought to be shown up, you fellows!" squeaked Baggy Trimble. "If you ask me—"

"Shut up, Trimble!"

"Oh, really, Lowther—"

Arthur Augustus turned his gleaming eyeglass upon the silent figure of Figgins. Figgins met his gaze squarely, but his face was rather pale. He guessed what was coming.

"I considah, since no one has owned up to bein' the culpwit, that Figgins ought to offah an explanation of his movements to-night!" said the swell of St. Jim's steadily. "Figgins was seen by Tom Mewwy comin' down the stairs from the box-room just aftah Ethel had been insulted. He declares that he had not found Ethel, and had seen no

ons in the box-woom. Which is stwange, to say the least of it!"

There was a hush in the big library. Figgins faced Arthur Augustus with gleaming eyes. His fists were clenched.

There was a sudden furious snort from Fatty Wynn. "If you're accusing Figgy—" he began hotly, pushing his way forward. But Figgins motioned his chum back.

"Leave this to me, old chap," he said quietly, in a strained voice.

Fatty Wynn, and Kerr, who had also pushed his way forward, with flushed face, stood silent. Figgins turned to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I take it, Gussy, that you are definitely accusing me of being the chap?" he muttered.

"I considah that the evidence stwongly points in that diwection," answered the swell of St. Jim's, with a quiver of anger in his voice.

"Say yes or no!" Figgins' face flamed suddenly, and he took a step towards D'Arcy as he spoke, the words seeming to come from between his teeth. "Do you accuse me? Yes or no?"

"Yaas! I do!" cried the swell of St. Jim's, his face pale.

"Then take that!"

"Wats! Figgins, I cannot vewy well thwash you in heah, undah this woof, since you are my guest. But if you will come out on to the cliffs, I will thwash you till you cannot stand!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, with fiercely gleaming eyes.

"Good!" said Figgins grimly. "Come on! Kerr, be my second, will you?"

"Rather!" growled Kerr, glaring at Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry almost groaned.

"You asses! You can't do it!" he burst out. "What would the girls think? For heaven's sake—"

"I insist upon goin' through with this," answered the swell of St. Jim's curtly. "We can go out by way of the french windows. Then no one will know."

He swung open one of the tall windows, and stepped out on to the terrace. Figgins followed him, and Kerr and Blake went quickly after them.

"If you're really set on this, I'll second you, Gussy."

"Thank you, Blake!"

The other juniors watched them go in consternation.

A fight between Figgins and Arthur Augustus! It was like a bolt from the blue to the cheery house-party of half an hour ago. But there was no preventing it now.

"Come on!" muttered Tom Merry miserably. "This is rotten! But we'd better go with them, I suppose."

In silence, the remaining juniors followed the first four into the garden.

Across the lawn they hurried, and out through a small gate on the grassy cliffs, to a spot well out of sight of the house.

Under the gathering storm-clouds, in the broken moonlight, with the waves crashing at the foot of the cliffs below, the two antagonists faced one another in the centre of the ring of silent juniors.

Both had removed their coats and rolled up their sleeves. And the face of each was set hard.

Baggy Trimble was the only fellow present who looked as though he were enjoying the situation. There was a grin on Baggy's face.

"Go it, Gussy!" he squeaked. "Smash the cad! He's the chap that kissed Ethel all right— Oh! Yow!"

Baggy yelled as Clive cuffed him angrily over the ear.

"Shut up, you fat toad!"

"Ow! Oh, really, Clive—"

Baggy caressed his ear, and glared at the South African junior. But even he forgot his grievance the next

moment as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and George Figgins began their fight!

Fiercely it waged.

By the end of a minute each had been down and risen again. The light was too bad for much science to be brought into things—it was simply a question of hard-hitting. With smashing fists, the two stood toe to toe. Figgins' nose was bleeding, and his enemy's lip was cut.

In grim silence the pair fought.

A stinging blow in the ribs staggered the swell of St. Jim's, and he missed his footing on the grass and went down. Figgins stood back with lowered hands till he had scrambled up. Next moment he reeled back before a deadly left to the jaw.

Panting and breathless, the two fought on.

Neither seemed to be getting much advantage over the other, though Arthur Augustus was beginning to look the more battered of the pair. But he was fighting as holly as ever. Tom Merry, watching, realised that Arthur Augustus was convinced that Figgins was the culprit regarding Ethel, and was out to exert his last ounce of strength in attempting to thrash the New House leader for it.



and the St. Jim's party on the platform below stared at it in blank astonishment. With a final crash the spinning figure came sprawling out at the feet of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "G-gweat Scott! Twimble!"

Tom Merry sprang forward. But he was too late. Figgins' fist had flashed out, straight from the shoulder.

Before that smashing blow, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reeled and dropped to the carpet in the centre of the ring of amazed and startled juniors.

CHAPTER 10.

The Fight!

WITH blazing eyes, Figgins stood staring down at the prone figure of his host.

Arthur Augustus rose slowly to his feet. Tom Merry stepped between the two, his face dark.

"Figgins, you fool!" he cried hoarsely.

"Rats!" snapped Figgins between his teeth. "I know he's my host, and all that sort of thing, but I'm hanged if I'll stand here and let him accuse me of being the cad who insulted Ethel!"

"Pway stand aside, Tom Mewwy!" panted Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to thwash the wottah! Stand aside!"

"Gussy, old man—"

But it did not look as though the swell of St. Jim's was capable of thrashing Figgins!

What the final result would have been was never known. A sudden footfall behind him caused Tom Merry to start a startled face.

"Ethel!"

Ethel Cleveland had come upon the scene, and was staring at the fighters with wide-eyed consternation in her pretty face.

Evidently the sudden absence of all the juniors from the house had aroused her suspicions, and she had come out alone to investigate. At sight of her the juniors watching the fight looked as though they wished the earth could open and swallow them.

"Stop!" cried Ethel breathlessly.

She pushed her way quickly through the ring of juniors. At sight of her Figgins' face went deadly white. His hands dropped to his sides, and he fell hastily back. Arthur Augustus gave a startled gasp.

"Ethel!"

The next moment Cousin Ethel was standing in the centre of the ring of startled juniors, confronting with blazing eyes the dishevelled pair!

CHAPTER 11.

Figgins Goes!

"OH, my hat!" muttered Blake in dismay. Figgins and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy faced Ethel with sheepish faces. The girl was breathing hard.

"What—what does this mean?" she demanded in a low voice.

It was Figgins who answered. His tone was bitter.

"D'Arcy has accused me of being the fellow who insulted you to-night," he explained. "And so I—I—"

"Oh!"

Ethel's exclamation was one of startled amazement.

"You?" she cried falteringly. "I can't believe it! I don't believe it!"

Figgins smiled a twisted smile.

"Thank you, Ethel!" he answered quietly. "I didn't do it, of course. It was some other fellow. I'm glad you believe that, even if D'Arcy doesn't."

"Weally, Ethel, there is nobody else it can have been!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, though very unhappily. "Natuwally, Figgins denies it—"

He broke off. Figgins' eyes blazed. But he controlled himself with an effort, and took his coat from Kerr, slipping it on.

"I'm sorry you came on the scene, Ethel," he said. "You were not meant to know about this fight, of course—"

"So I realise," answered the girl. She stamped her foot. "I think it is disgraceful. I won't believe it was Figgins." She turned upon Tom Merry. "Do you believe it?" she cried hotly.

"I don't know what to believe," Tom answered uncomfortably. "You see, somebody did it, and it would be as difficult to believe it of anyone!"

"Ethel, deah gal," put in Arthur Augustus pleadingly, "won't you go back to the house? This is not a mattah for you—"

"I think it is very much a matter for me!" she answered; and her pretty face was grim.

"Oh deah! But—"

"I'm not leaving this spot unless you all come back to the house with me," said Ethel quietly. "This fight shall not go on!"

It was clear that she was determined. With sheepish faces, the other juniors turned back to the house, following Figgins and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Ethel.

The big fight had been effectively interrupted. But from the looks on the faces of the swell of St. Jim's and George Figgins as they re-entered the house it was quite clear that it would be impossible now to make peace between them.

"What the dickens is going to happen?" muttered Manners to Tom Merry, looking thoroughly miserable!

The answer to his question was soon forthcoming!

Back in the big library Figgins turned a set face to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You understand that I can't possibly stay on in this house now?" said Figgins in a low voice.

Arthur Augustus did not answer.

"I believe there is a night train to London from Withiel," went on Figgins. "I'll catch it. I'll go and pack now."

No one spoke. Even Ethel remained silent as Figgins turned quietly towards the door. It was only too clear that Figgins was right. In the circumstances it was utterly impossible for him to remain a guest at Penperro House.

But there was a sudden movement among the group of silent juniors.

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Fatty Wynn had hurried to Figgins' side as the leader of the New House swung open the door. A moment later Kerr had joined him, too.

"Half a minute, Figgy, old chap!" said Fatty Wynn grimly. "I'm coming with you."

"And I!" said Kerr quietly.

"But—" began Figgins.

"No buts about it!" growled Fatty Wynn. "We stand by you!"

He gripped Figgins' hand. Figgins smiled unsteadily.

"No," he protested, "I can't let you—"

"Rats!" snapped Kerr. "We go with you, old man!"

Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., Talbot, Levison, and Clive and Baggy Trimble watched the three New House fellows vanish from the room. With a sudden little cry Ethel hurried out after the three. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned a miserable face to the others.

"I would have given anythin' for this not to have happened, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't you worry, old hoss," he said. "It's not your fault, anyway. You only acted as you had to."

"I weally cannot think that Figgins is innocent," went on the swell of St. Jim's, dabbing at his cut lip with a silk handkerchief. "It must have been he! The evidence is so stwing against him, that I considah—"

"I'd never have thought it of Figgy," broke out Levison. "But, hang it all, it does look like it! It can't have been anybody else. He was seen coming down from the box-rooms—"

"Oh, don't let's gas about it any more, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Blake impatiently. "Anyway, Figgy is clearing off, and Fatty and Kerr. It's pretty rotten, but seeing all that's happened it'll certainly clear the air a bit when they've gone."

"I'll go and ordah a car to take them to Withiel," said the swell of St. Jim's, with a sigh.

Arthur Augustus left the room, looking anything but happy.

He left very glum faces in the library.

Only an hour or so ago everything had been so cheery! But now a dark shadow seemed to have fallen over Penperro House. Figgins was under a cloud, and was going, together with his two chums, Kerr and Fatty Wynn. What had started off by being such a pleasant party in the house on the cliffs had ended after only a few days with a bitter quarrel!

"Oh, it's rotten!" muttered Monty Lowther.

And Lowther expressed the feelings of all his chums.

CHAPTER 12.

In Deadly Peril!

GEORGE FIGGINS glanced at his watch.

"Plenty of time for the train," he said gloomily.

He and his two chums were seated in the car that was speeding them along the cliff-road on their way to the distant railway station with their luggage.

Now that he had left Penperro House behind him Figgins' hot temper had died away. He felt only a great regret that what had promised to be a happy holiday in company with the other fellows, and, in particular, with Cousin Ethel, had met so unexpectedly with disaster when only a few days old.

He was troubled, too, by the fact that his chums had insisted upon coming with him. He was more deeply touched than he would have cared to say by the staunch way in which Kerr and Fatty Wynn had stood by him and shaken the dust of Penperro House from their feet for his sake. But he wished from the bottom of his heart that he had been able to persuade them to stay there.

But both his chums had been adamant.

"My dear chap," Kerr had said bluntly while packing, "I shouldn't enjoy staying on without you, anyway, so I might as well clear off! And I know Fatty feels the same."

So the three of them were together in the big car as it raced along the cliff-road in the broken moonlight.

The storm that had been threatening seemed ominously near now. Far out over the sea, where masses of black cloud were piled, flickering lightning could be seen. The roll of distant thunder came to their ears above the hum of the car.

As the car sped on, the three chums sat in silence. Figgins had no desire for talk, and his chums did not worry him with vain attempts to cheer him up. They knew what a blow it was to Figgins to be driving away from the house where Cousin Ethel was spending her holidays.

"Anyway, Ethel doesn't believe it was me," broke out Figgins suddenly, and a faint smile lit up his face for the first time during the journey.

"The puzzle is, who on earth did do it?" muttered Kerr.

"It must have been one of the fellows in that room to—"

night! I can hardly believe it of any of them—but it must have been!"

"And when you think that the rotter, whichever it was of them, kept mum and let Gussy think it was you, I feel I'd jolly well like to have him to myself for five minutes!" growled Fatty Wynn; and his hands clenched.

"It can't have been anyone of Tom Merry & Co., or Blake & Co., surely!" said Figgins, with a worried frown. "That leaves Levison and Clive and Talbot, but I can't think—"

His words went unfinished.

A sudden blinding glare of blue lightning had seemed to strike the very road in front of them, followed instantly by a splitting crash of thunder immediately over their heads. The chauffeur, startled and blinded for the moment, swerved the car. There was a sickening crash.

There was a startled cry from Fatty Wynn. He and Figgins and Kerr were thrown in a heap on to the floor of the car as it came to an abrupt standstill.

"What the thump—" gasped Kerr, struggling up.

The door swung open, and the face of the chauffeur stared in, white and anxious.

"You're not hurt?" he cried. He drew a deep breath of relief when he saw that they were not. "The lightning blinded me for a moment—we struck a rock beside the road, and the steering-gear's gone!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn tumbled out of the car, and with blank faces surveyed the buckled front wheel. With the steering-gear gone, it was obviously impossible for the car to proceed even with a changed wheel.

"This is rotten!" exclaimed Figgins. "We shall miss the train!"

"Don't you worry, sir," said the chauffeur quickly. "I'll hurry back to the house and bring another car along."

"Oh, good!"

"Will you wait here, sir?"

Figgins nodded. In the circumstances he and his chums certainly did not wish to return to Penperro House. They preferred the not very cheerful prospect of waiting on the cliff-road by the damaged car, despite the gathering storm, that looked like breaking in all its fury at any moment now.

"Very good, sir."

The man hurried away into the gloom.

"Just our luck!" grinned Figgins ruefully, seating himself on one of the scattered rocks that lined the road.

His two chums followed his example.

A wind was whining over the cliffs, strengthening into savage gusts from time to time. It was going to be a stormy night, without a doubt. The moon, appearing fitfully among the racing clouds, shone down on wildly lashing waves that rolled in from the Atlantic and boomed upon the rocks at the foot of the cliffs and around the dark base of Penperro Rock.

A glare of lightning came crackling over the sky, the echoes of the thunder dying away suddenly among the cliffs. The next moment the sky seemed to open. In a streaming torrent the rain came sweeping upon them, and with a rush the three juniors ran to the car and climbed into the shelter of its interior.

"My only aunt!" gasped Fatty Wynn, as a crashing peal of thunder followed another glare of lightning. "What a night!"

The rain beat upon the windows of the big car, with the wind rising to an eerie howl. Again and again the thunder crashed out deafeningly, and the flickering lightning played weirdly over the foaming sea.

"Phew!" breathed Figgins. "This is an A.1 storm all right!" He peered out through the rain-swept window at his side. "Look at the waves! My hat, I wouldn't like to be out there on the water."

Even as he spoke, something caught his eyes that caused the words to die on his lips.

Revealed by the fitful moonlight, that had streamed down with sudden brightness through a gap in the storm-clouds, a tiny yacht could be seen tossing perilously in the terrible rock-bound waters that foamed and crashed about the base of Penperro Rock!

"Look!" panted Figgins.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn stared out with startled eyes across the intervening channel to the little helpless vessel caught in the mad maelstrom by the mysterious island. Even as they watched, they saw the last ragged shred of sail torn away by the gale.

For a moment or two the yacht was lost to view among the giant waves that leapt around it. Then it appeared high on a foaming crest, whirled on towards the rocks.

Figgins' face had gone strangely white.

"Good heavens!" he muttered hoarsely. "Whoever is on board that boat is done for!"

"Looks like it!" breathed Fatty Wynn, in a voice oddly unlike his own.

(Continued on next page.)



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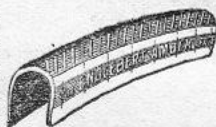
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The moon was swallowed up by the clouds again. But a sudden glare of lightning over sea and land again revealed to the straining eyes of the three St. Jim's juniors the little dark patch of the apparently doomed yacht among the foaming whiteness of the waves that had it in their grip.

The flickering lightning glare was followed by a gloom impenetrable to their eyes—a howling blackness of wind and rain and the muffled crash of waves.

Then the moonlight came again. For some moments they could see nothing of the storm-tossed little vessel. But after a while it appeared again, nearer yet to the jagged rocks at the base of the island. Figgins could not be sure, but he fancied he could make out a figure in the well of the boat.

Suddenly he gripped Kerr's arm.

"We can't stand by and watch that fellow drown!" he cried. "We must do something! It's not too late yet!"

"But what can we do?" breathed Kerr.

"Why, there was a boat on the beach of that little cove we visited yesterday! Do you remember? That cove must be just about underneath the cliffs where we are now. If we could find a path down—"

For a moment neither Kerr nor Fatty Wynn answered as Figgins broke off. The danger of attempting to row out to the distressed vessel at the foot of Penperro Rock was so terrible that they stared at Figgins, wondering if he could really mean it. But the look on his face told them that he did.

Already Figgins was opening the door. He sprang out into the driving rain.

"I'm going to try, anyway!" he cried eagerly.

That was enough for Kerr and Fatty Wynn. In another moment they, too, had leapt out on to the road.

Side by side the three chums of the New House raced with stumbling steps across the grass to the cliff edge. In the broken moonlight they soon found the top of a narrow path that vanished over the brink into the darkness.

With a last glance to where the little yacht was battling vainly with the churning seas, Figgins & Co. plunged over the edge of the cliff, down the dim wind-swept path that led to the beach below!

CHAPTER 13.

Through the Storm!

IT was not easy on the narrow, perilous path to keep a footing in the teeth of the wind. But at last the three juniors reached the beach, breathless and rain soaked.

"This way!" cried Figgins.

Across the sand he raced, to a sheltered spot above the level of the tides where a big old rowing-boat was drawn up—evidently kept there by some fisherman.

It was a stoutly-built craft, broad in the beam, and with two pairs of strong oars lying in the bottom of it. But, seaworthy though it looked, Kerr felt his heart sink for a moment as he glanced at the great waves that swept into the cove from Penperro Rock.

But he banished the momentary qualm, and began, with the others, to drag the heavy boat down towards the water's edge.

How they ever got it out past the breakers was a thing that Figgins & Co. themselves never quite knew. But after a while they found themselves plunging amid the giant waves beyond, struggling to turn their craft in the direction of the gaunt shape of Penperro Rock.

With Figgins at one pair of oars and Kerr with the other, Fatty Wynn began baling desperately with a pail that he had found under the stern seat. In getting the boat out, a number of waves had broken over them, drenching the juniors with sea-water and almost half filling their heavy craft. Foaming wave-crosts lifted high about them now, and at every moment more water was coming in.

Fatty Wynn baled desperately. Figgins and Kerr, straining on the oars with every ounce of strength they possessed, were finding it difficult enough to keep the boat moving against the waves. But they managed it somehow; and, with the wind howling round them, stinging their faces and hands with spray, Figgins & Co. moved out from the shadow of the cliffs into the moonlit surge of waters beyond.

Every wave seemed to threaten them with destruction. But their stout old boat rode the waves gallantly, fighting its way out from the cove with desperate plunges. Once it all but overturned, as it twisted sideways to a wave. But the skill of Figgins at the oars, and his muscular arms, saved them.

Fatty Wynn gave a sudden shout as he caught a glimpse far ahead of the little yacht, driving in under the black wall of the great rock.

"There she is!"

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He flung out a pointing hand, and Figgins and Kerr turned the boat a little.

They were well out now, but nearing the perilous race of surging waters that thundered among the rocks at the base of the island.

They rose high on the back of a giant wave, and again Fatty Wynn glimpsed the battered little yacht caught in the swirling seas in the lee of the rock. As he stared across the intervening chaos of foam towards it, he saw it flung high, and come down with a sickening blow with its stern splintered upon a jagged rock.

Fatty Wynn gave a breathless cry.

"It can't last long now!" he muttered.

With its stern held on the rock that pierced it, the yacht was receiving the full force of every wave that battered its frail planks. As Fatty Wynn had said, it could not be long before it broke up completely, and anyone on board flung to certain death among the waves and rocks.

"Can you see anybody?" panted Figgins hoarsely.

Fatty Wynn peered ahead through the spray and rain. The moon had been swallowed up for a moment among clouds; but it appeared again, and Fatty Wynn glimpsed a dark figure clinging to the broken stump of mast on the doomed yacht.

"Yes, there's a chap there—"

The rest of his words were carried away from Figgins' and Kerr's ears by the wind. But they had heard enough. They dragged savagely at the oars, and the plunging boat drew slowly nearer to the raging inferno of waters where the little yacht lay broken on the rocks.

The boom of breaking waves was once more in their ears. It grew louder.

"Look out!" screamed Fatty Wynn, half rising in his seat. "You're nearly there! You'll have to turn, or you'll never get out again!"

"Right!" answered Figgins, with set face. "We'll turn her! Get ready to swim for it—we may go over!"

But in his heart, even as he spoke, Figgins knew well enough that if once their boat were overturned they could never hope to swim long in that mad sea.

For a moment his eyes went to the cliffs behind. High upon them against the sky where the lightning played the dark shape of Penperro House could be seen, with lights gleaming golden in some of the windows.

A great wave crashed upon them out of the dark. It sent the boat spinning round like a cork, almost flinging the three juniors out. But it righted itself, and Figgins, wiping the spray from his smarting eyes, saw the broken shape of the little yacht close alongside. He glimpsed a white, staring face.

All around them the waves thundered amid the great rocks. A thrust of an oar sent the boat in nearer.

"Jump!" yelled Figgins.

The man hesitated. A wave swept the boat still closer the next moment—dangerously close! Figgins thrust the blade of his oar against the hull of the yacht, straining desperately to keep them from being flung against it.

"Jump!" he shouted again. "Quick, for Heaven's sake jump—"

The man on the doomed vessel probably failed to hear, with the thunder of the waves all around them. But he made a spring, and the juniors heard his cry as he fell short. He dropped into the foaming water, but one clutching hand gripped the side of the boat and clung on. Fatty Wynn and Kerr seized him and dragged him on board.

It was all like a nightmare to the three St. Jim's juniors. Whether they would ever be able to fight their way back from the deadly currents among the rocks was a grim question that might have any answer. The howling wind dazed them—they had to fight for breath. But somehow, foot by foot, they drew out from the worst of the danger zone. Figgins gave a sobbing gasp.

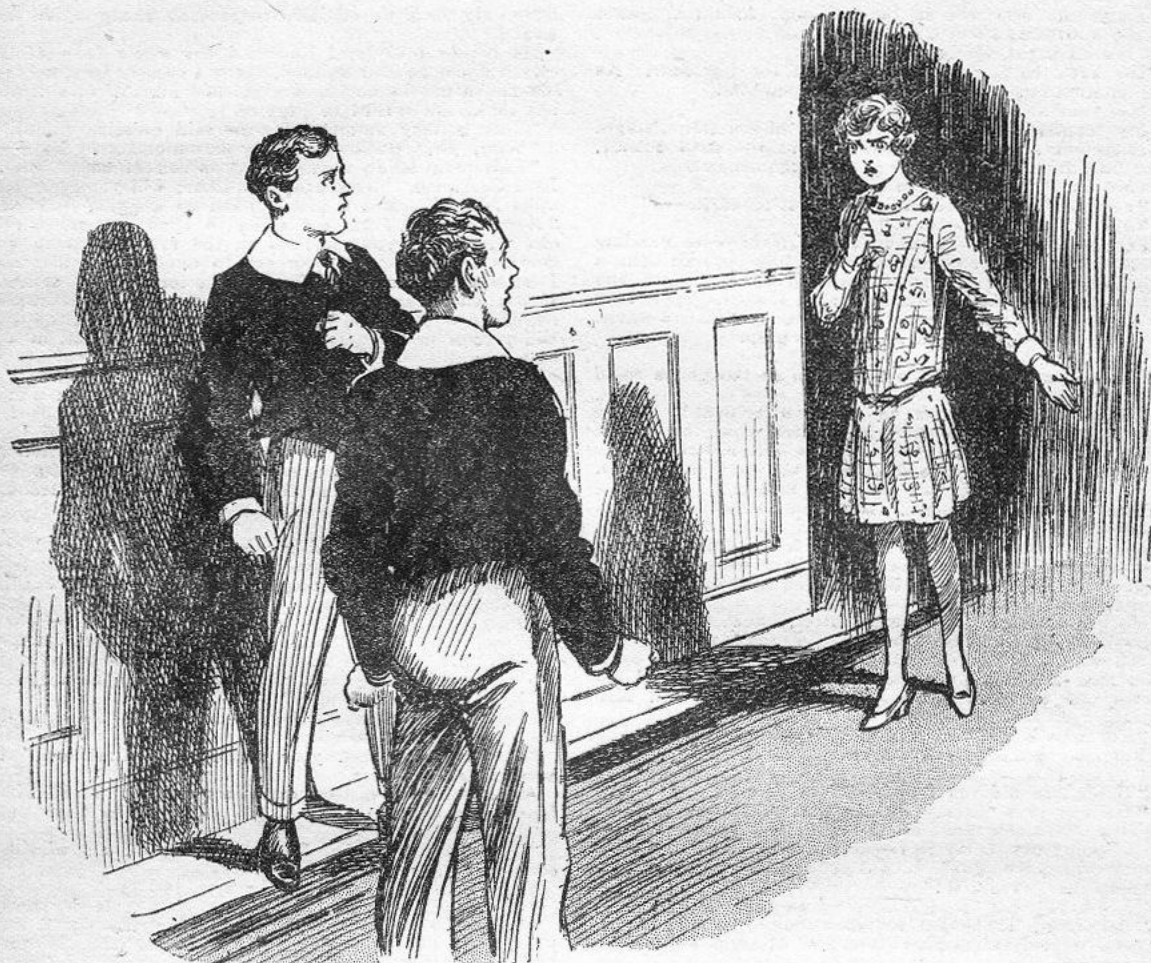
"We've done it!" His voice was a whisper.

But their danger was not over yet. They still had to fight their way back to the land across the seething channel that separated the cliffs from Penperro Rock. With every giant wave seeming to strive to bring doom upon them all, and with the extra weight of the man now lying in the bottom of the boat, apparently in a faint, their chances of winning through to safety seemed small.

But they came at last to the breakers by the edge of the sand. A great wave lifted them, flung them forward. The next moment the juniors found themselves struggling in the water, Figgins with a hand clutched fiercely at the collar of the man they had rescued from the jaws of death.

Like fellows waking from a horrible dream, Figgins & Co. dragged themselves and the unconscious man through the foam to the sand beyond. They laid him down, and went back wearily for the boat, dragging it to safety. The oars had gone.

"Yes, we've done it!" muttered Figgins.



Cousin Ethel stamped her foot with vexation. "Oh!" she cried breathlessly. "I'm furious! I was hiding in a box-room at the top of these stairs! Somebody found me—I don't know who it was—" "Yes?" queried Tom Merry in bewilderment. "In the dark," panted the girl, "whoever it was, he kissed me!" (See Chapter 8.)

He passed a hand across his eyes. He sat down heavily beside the still figure of the man they had rescued, and buried his head in his hands.

CHAPTER 14.

Figgins Comes Back!

"WHAT about bed, deah boys?"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who spoke.

The swell of St. Jim's, Blake & Co., Tom Merry & Co., Levison and Clive and Reginald Talbot, were in the library at Penperro House. It was late. The girls had gone to bed long ago, as had Baggy Trimble, who had turred in early complaining of pains under the waistcoat—a not infrequent complaint of Baggy's after a gorge! And ever since his arrival at Penperro House, Baggy had been gorging steadily.

The other juniors had sat up late, expecting the return of Lord Eastwood from St. Ives at any time. But Gussy's father had not returned, and it was past eleven o'clock. Tom Merry, glancing at the grandfather clock in the corner, gave an exclamation when he saw what the time was.

"Great pip! Yes, it's bed-time all right, Gussy!"

Most of the juniors rose to their feet, except Talbot and Manners, who were finishing a game of chess, and Digby, who was busy with a crossword puzzle.

"Time for shut-eye, you chaps!" sang out Monty Lowther in what was meant to be a cheery tone, but which somehow failed to sound natural.

For Monty Lowther, like the rest of the juniors, was not feeling cheery that night!

The departure of Figgins & Co. after that stormy scene in the library and the fight on the cliffs, had cast a deep shadow over Gussy's house-party.

Arthur Augustus himself had been very quiet for the rest of the evening. And though his guests tried hard to conceal their glum spirits, it had been impossible to do so with much success. There had been a very strained atmosphere in the house, and everyone had been relieved when the girls had

gone to bed early—Ethel with a face that seemed to show she had been crying a little.

Though she had not referred to the incident again, the departure of Figgins from Penperro House had been a great shock to Cousin Ethel.

Though he still believed in Figgins' guilt, since it seemed impossible for anyone else to have been the culprit, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was wishing very sincerely that he had been a little more tactful in dealing with George Figgins! It was clear that his cheery house-party would not be the same with the shadow of that miserable affair hanging over it.

"Checkmate!" said Manners.

He rose to his feet, and Talbot did the same. Their game was over. Digby, with a grunt, tossed aside the crossword puzzle unfinished—he had been thinking far more about Figgins & Co. than about clues and words of five letters!

"Well, I'm ready to turn in!" he announced.

With Arthur Augustus leading the way, the group of St. Jim's juniors strolled from the room.

As a rule, there was a good deal of cheery talk and chaff among them when they went up to bed. But to-night they crossed the hall towards the big stairs in silence.

Knock!

A loud knock on the front door caused them all to turn their heads. Arthur Augustus gave an exclamation.

"Bai Jove! Who on earth can that be at this time of the night?"

"Your pater back?" suggested Tom Merry.

"No; the patah has his own key, deah boy!"

Knock!

"Bai Jove! How vevy queeah!" murmured Arthur Augustus, staring across at the front door in great perplexity. "I wondah who that can be?"

"What about opening the door and finding out?" suggested Blake, with sarcasm. "There's an original idea for you, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake, I was just about to do so!"

The swell of St. Jim's hurried to the door. A young

footman had appeared in the hall, but Arthur Augustus waved him back.

"It's all wight, George!"

The swell of St. Jim's threw open the big door. An exclamation of utter astonishment escaped him.

"G-gweat Scott!"

The juniors, in a group by the foot of the stairs, stared past Arthur Augustus at the figures on the steps outside, and their faces took on looks of equal amazement.

"My hat!" breathed Tom Merry.

"Figgins!" ejaculated Blake. "What on earth—"

"Figgyl!" gasped Levison.

Figgins, Kerr, and David Llewellyn Wynn were standing there in the light of the porch, supporting between them a limp figure. Their own faces looked drawn and white, and though the rain had ceased they were soaked. Their caps had gone, their wet hair was clearly sticky with sea-water. All three looked just about at their last gasp.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stared out at them as though he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"We've not come back on our own account!" There was a faint note of defiance in Figgins' voice, husky and tired though it was. "This chap's all-in—we had to bring him somewhere, and this is the only place near. He's in a bad way. May we bring him in?"

Tom Merry and Talbot, their first astonishment over, grasped the situation in a moment. They hurried past the dazed swell of St. Jim's and took the limp figure of the young man from the supporting, weary arms of Figgins & Co. Carefully they carried him into the hall, and laid him on a couch.

He was conscious, but seemed utterly unable to support himself as they carried him in. He sank down on the couch with a little groan, and closed his eyes. His dark, thin face was deathly pale, and there was an ugly cut across one temple. His clothes were soaked with salt-water.

"But who is he?" cried Tom Merry.

Figgins, in the doorway, shook his head.

"Dunno!"

"But where did you find him?"

"He was in a little yacht, on the rocks," cut in Kerr quietly. "We saw him from the cliffs, and Figgins insisted on us going out to try to rescue the poor chap, in a boat we found on the beach. It was touch and go—but thanks to old Figgyl we did it!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove! That—that sounds amazin'ly bwave of you chaps!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, admiration shining in his face. "You mean to say you went out in a wowing-boat to a w'ecked yacht, though that tewwible storm?"

"We had to!" growled Figgins.

"You bwrought him back in the car, I suppose?" added Arthur Augustus. "But where is the chauffah?"

Figgins stared at him.

"That's what we want to know! We thought you would. After the smash on the cliff road, he went off to get another car, but never came back!"

"What smash?" asked Arthur Augustus in bewilderment.

"Hasn't the man come back then?" cried Fatty Wynn.

"Wathah not!"

Hastily Fatty Wynn explained what had happened, to the astonishment of the listening juniors. Arthur Augustus gave a gasp.

"Gweat pip! I fancy I can guess what has happened! The poor chap must have twied the short cut ovah the downs. It is full of sand-pits, and in the dark he must have fallen into one and hurt himself!" He turned quickly to the footman, who was waiting in the background. "George! You and Henwy had bettah go and look for him at once!"

The footman hurried away. The swell of St. Jim's turned again to Figgins.

"Er—won't you three chaps come in?"

A dogged look came into Figgins' eyes. Though circumstances had forced Figgins & Co. to swallow their pride and return to Penperro House for the sake of the unknown man from the yacht, it looked as though they had made up their minds not to enter it after they had handed over their charge to safe hands to be looked after.

But before Figgins could speak, there came the purr of a motor-car in the drive. A few moments later the tall figure of Lord Eastwood was ascending the steps, staring in some astonishment at the three soaked figures in the light of the porch, and the grave faces of the juniors.

"Gad!" ejaculated Lord Eastwood. "You three look soaked to the skin! What on earth has happened?"

Figgins went scarlet and did not answer. Arthur Augustus, too, looked thoroughly uncomfortable, and failed to reply. Tom Merry stepped quickly forward.

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Somebody had to explain, unpleasant though the task was!

He briefly told Lord Eastwood the whole facts of the case. When he had finished, Gussy's father, bending over the figure on the couch, straightened himself with frowning face. He turned to Figgins.

"This is very unfortunate," he said quietly.

"Very, sir," nodded Figgins uncomfortably. But—

"This poor fellow must be put to bed at once," cut in Lord Eastwood. "Tom Merry—Talbot; will you carry him upstairs?" He laid a kindly hand on Figgins' shoulder.

"Now, my boy, I am not going to allow any refusal. I can understand your feelings in the matter, but in any case it is too late now for you to catch the night train. I insist upon you three staying here for to-night at least. If you are determined to leave us, you will be at perfect liberty to do so in the morning. I hope, however, that you will reconsider your decision in that respect. But in any case, to-night you must stay here."

"That is very kind of you, sir," mumbled Figgins. "If you insist, we can't refuse, of course. But I am afraid that in the morning I should prefer to go."

"We can discuss that when the time comes," said Lord Eastwood quietly. He turned to his own son. "Arthur, see that these three are provided with dry clothes, and send somebody to fetch their luggage from the stranded car."

"Yaas, patah!"

Lord Eastwood hurried up the stairs after Tom Merry and Talbot, who had borne away the unknown man from the wrecked yacht. Arthur Augustus turned to Figgins and held out his hand.

"Figgyl, I should like to say how sowwy I am there has been this twouble," said the swell of St. Jim's frankly. "Aftah your bwavey to-night, I should like to considah the whole thing forgotten, and I trust that you will stay on here, as my patah says."

Figgins did not take the proffered hand. He eyed the swell of St. Jim's steadily.

"Do you take back your accusation against me?" he asked in a low voice.

A look of great distress came into the swell of St. Jim's face. He coloured.

"I—I—"

"You don't," nodded Figgins. "Then I am afraid I can't stay after to-night!"

Blake touched Figgins on the arm.

"Come on," he said. "We'll lend you some dry togs."

Blake, Herries and Digby turned to the stairs, and Figgins & Co. followed them. Manners and Lowther, Levison and Clive watched them go with puzzled faces.

Figgins' behaviour did not strike them as that of a guilty individual. And yet who could have been the culprit concerning Ethel if not the leader of the New House trio?

The same worrying thought was in the mind of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he slowly closed the door.

He had been too honest to pretend for the sake of peace that he did not believe in Figgins' guilt. But somehow he was feeling less convinced of it now, after that look in Figgins' eyes.

Yet which of them, if not Figgins, could have been the cad who had kissed Ethel in the darkness of the box-room?

CHAPTER 15.

In the Night!

ERNEST LEVISON turned over restlessly in bed. Outside, the last rumbles of the storm were dying away. The wind had dropped. But still the booming of the waves round the base of the great rock, where the old monks' treasure was said to lie, could be heard like muffled guns.

In the big room, the quiet breathing of Sidney Clive and the heavy snores of Baggy Trimble, with whom he and Clive shared their bed-room, came to his ears, showing that they, at any rate, were sleeping.

But Levison could not sleep.

The problem of Figgins was occupying his thoughts, keeping him awake and restless.

Figgins & Co. were sleeping in their own room that night after all! But in the morning they would go, without a doubt, leaving the dark shadow still hanging over what might have been such a cheery house-party, but which would be spoiled now for the rest of the St. Jim's party's stay.

Before the juniors had turned in finally, the missing chauffeur had been brought back to the house by the two footmen. As Arthur Augustus had surmised, the man had fallen into one of the deep sand-pits while taking a short cut on his way back to the house, and had strained his ankle. He was not badly hurt, but the damaged ankle

had been sufficient to prevent him from climbing the treacherous sides of the pit into which he had fallen, and he had been forced to wait there, fairly well sheltered from the storm, till his disappearance was noticed and help should come.

A doctor, brought from his distant bed by telephone, had announced that the man from the wreck was only exhausted, and dazed from the blow on the head he had received when jumping from the boat from which Figgins & Co. had rescued him. The stranger had fallen into a deep sleep immediately upon being put to bed, and so as yet, the juniors did not even know his name.

"About the bravest thing I've struck for a long while, the way Figgy & Co. went out to him in that boat," Levison told himself. "Poor old Figgins! Hang it, there must be a mistake somewhere!"

A sudden muttered exclamation from Baggy Trimble's bed caused Levison to turn his head, thinking for a moment that the Falstaff of the School House was awake. But he realised then that Baggy was simply walking in his sleep.

"The fat guzzler!" grunted Levison. "I don't wonder he's restless after the way he's been gorging. I believe he sneaked off to the larder to-night—"

"And a rabbit-pie!" Baggy's incoherent mutterings became suddenly more audible. In his sleep, Baggy was apparently living through past feeds again.

"And those tarts—I'll take them, too," mumbled Baggy quite loudly. "But I can't eat 'em here. The butler might come along—"

The words trailed off into inaudible mutterings. Levison grinned.

It was quite evident that he was right in thinking that Baggy had raided his host's larder that night. From Baggy's words, spoken in his sleep, the whole story was clear. Baggy had evidently found what he had sought, but, for fear of discovery, had smuggled his loot to some safe place where he could gorge undisturbed.

For a while Baggy's restless mutterings continued inaudibly, with only an occasional word that was recognisable. Levison meditated heaving something at the fat junior to shut him up, but was feeling too drowsy now to exert himself.

"The box-room's the place!" Baggy's words were quite clear that time. Levison opened his eyes, staring across curiously in the direction of Trimble's bed. In the dim light, he could see the fat figure under the blankets, and Baggy's face half-turned towards him.

"Funny, Ethel choosing the same place to hide in!" went on Baggy's mutterings. "She must have changed from some other hiding-place, I s'pose, or she'd have been there when I got there!"

Levison's face took on a strangely intent expression in the darkness. He was listening with keen attention now.

"Lucky you chaps never found that pie-dish where I hid it in that box," came from Baggy's bed. "They'd have known I'd been up there then."

"My hat!" breathed Levison. He slipped softly out of bed, and crossed quickly to Clive's. Clive grunted and sat up in answer to his chum's shake.

"What on earth—"

"Quiet!" whispered Levison. His face was grim, and



"Jump!" yelled Figgins. The man on the yacht hesitated. A wave swept the New House juniors' boat dangerously close, and Figgins thrust the blade of his oar against the hull of the yacht, straining desperately to keep them from being flung against it. (See Chapter 13.)

Clive stared at him in astonishment. "Listen! Baggy's talking in his sleep!"

"He's been over-eating, that's all."

"Of course. But listen!"

Baggy was at it again, after a brief period of grunts and groans.

"The chaps think it was Figgins!" Something like a sleepy chuckle came from Baggy's bed. "Lucky they never twigged the fire-escape outside the box-room window! They might have smelt a rat then, if they'd seen me come in out of the garden. But they think it was Figgy who kissed Ethel. He, he, he!"

"My hat!" gasped Clive.

He was wide awake now with a vengeance!

"So it was Baggy!" breathed Levison. "It was Baggy all the time!"

CHAPTER 16.

All Serene!

"GROOOOH! Wharrisit?" Baggy Trimble opened his eyes sleepily and sat up, to find Tom Merry's hand on his shoulder, shaking him roughly. But, to his surprise, Baggy found that it was not morning. The room was lit by electric light, and it was pitch dark outside the window.

Baggy stared round in great astonishment.

A number of pyjama-clad figures were standing round his bed. Tom Merry & Co. were there, and Blake & Co., and Reginald Talbot, as well as his own room-mates, Levison and Clive. Arthur Augustus alone was missing.

"I—I say, what's up?" gasped Baggy. "Th-the h-house isn't on f-f-fire?"

"No!" snapped Blake.

"Is it b-b-burglars?" panted Baggy Trimble, his hair standing on end at the very thought.

"No, it's not!" growled Tom Merry.

A look of relief came into Baggy's face.

"A midnight spread, then?" he inquired eagerly. "Good egg! Count me in!"

"Not exactly that, either," answered Tom Merry, with a grim smile. "It's simply that we want to talk to you, Baggy, about what happened in the box-room this evening!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The look of sudden consternation on Baggy's face was proof enough for the juniors that the words Levison and Clive had heard had been an admission of the truth, and not merely some fiction of Baggy's sleeping brain.

"Ye-e-es?" stammered Baggy. "Y-yes? What about it? I don't know anything about it."

"You deny being in the box-room this evening?" asked Tom Merry contemptuously.

"Rather—I mean, yes, of course!" gasped Baggy.

"Do you intend to persist in that rotten lie?"

"Yes, rather—at least, it—it isn't a lie!" stammered Baggy feebly.

"You fat little toad!"

"Oh, really, Lowther—"

"Half a sec, you chaps," cut in Tom Merry. "Apparently Trimble denies having been in the box-room. Perhaps Levison and Clive will tell him what he said in his sleep."

"What?" howled Baggy.

His fat face took on a very sickly expression indeed. But he tried to put on a careless grin.

"I—I may have talked any rot in my sleep, of course," he mumbled. "That's not evidence."

"Perhaps not," said Levison grimly. "But according to what you said, you raided the larder to-night, took your stolen grub to the box-room, and were eating it there when Ethel came in. You hid a pie-dish in a box when you heard her coming, and you were the silly little cad who kissed her! Then, unseen by her, you got away by the fire-escape, and let us think it must have been old Figgins!"

"It's not true!" hooted Baggy desperately. "I swear it's not!"

"Sure of that?" snapped Levison.

"Absolutely! I was dreaming, that's all," cried Baggy hotly.

The juniors looked at one another. Baggy's bold front, now that he had recovered from the shock of being accused, was so daringly brazen that for the moment some of them began to doubt his guilt.

"You deny the whole thing?" Levison inquired, in a quiet voice.

"I do," nodded Baggy. "I was dreaming, I suppose, and talked nonsense. I was never near the box-room, so there!"

Levison smiled. It was a very grim smile indeed.

"In that case, Trimble," he murmured, "perhaps you can explain how it is that before we woke the others, to tell 'em about this, Clive and I, when we went to the box-room, found this in a box there?"

And Levison produced from beneath the dressing-gown that he was wearing a dish in which clung the remains of a rabbit-pie.

Baggy Trimble goggled at it. Once again his face took on a sickly hue.

"You still deny you were in the box-room, Trimble?"

"Hem! Nunno! As a matter of fact, I did go there, but I never saw Ethel. I jolly well saw Figgins, though, so it must have been him! He was hurrying down the stairs to the corridor like anything, as if he wanted to escape before Ethel saw who it was."

"In that case, since Figgins met Tom Merry at the foot of the stairs, and no one else came down them, how did you vanish from the box-room?" cut in Levison remorselessly.

"Oh dear!" Baggy jumped. "I—I used the fire-escape!"

"You did, eh?" murmured Levison dryly. "Why?"

Baggy stared at Levison, with fallen jaw.

It had not occurred to him that he would need a good reason for having left the box-room by the fire-escape instead of coming down the stairs, if he were innocent.

"I—I was afraid of getting mixed up in that bizney of Figgys and Ethel—"

"You guessed what had happened, then?"

"Ye-e-es. I rather thought there might be something like that, knowing what a cad Figgins is—"

"Just now you said you never saw Ethel at all!" said Levison. "So how did you suspect anything at all?"

"Oh crumbs!"

Baggy Trimble's jaw fell.

Under Levison's cross-examination Baggy had become so twisted-up that he scarcely knew what he had said and what he had not. He gave a gasp.

"I—I—I— You see—"

"Did you see Ethel in the box-room, or not?"

"No! I mean, yes! I—I mean, no! The truth is—"

"The truth is," said Levison grimly, "that you're so mixed up with your various rotten fibs that you've given yourself away about a dozen times!"

"Oh, really, Levison! Surely you know me better than to imagine I could possibly stoop to telling such a thing as a whopper!" spluttered Trimble, blinking at Ernest Levison very nervously.

"Oh, cut out trying to bluff us, you fat worm!" broke in Tom Merry contemptuously. "It's proved that it was Trimble who insulted Ethel, as plain as daylight!"

"Rather!"

"Scrag him!"

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"Yaroooooh!"

Baggy gave a wild howl as a dozen hands seized him and dragged him out from the blankets. He met the floor with a terrific concussion.

Bump!

"Oh! Yow! Leggo, you rotters! It wasn't me, and if it was, I didn't mean to do it!"

But no one was listening to Baggy's frantic protestations. The room was a remote one, and it was far from the side of the house occupied by the girls or Lord Eastwood, and the juniors could punish Baggy in their own way for his misdoings without risk of his yells reaching other ears.

He was seized and whirled high into the air, and dropped. He yelled. Then he was lifted again, and dropped again, and then again, and again, till he was almost too breathless to squeal further.

"Now make the little beast run the gauntlet!" exclaimed Tom Merry grimly.

"Good wheeze!"

"Ow! Oh dear! You rotten bullies! Don't be beasts! Help!" squealed Baggy.

But there was no one to heed his yells. The juniors were determined to give the Falstaff of the School House the lesson of his life. When they had finished with Baggy they meant it to be quite clear to him that there were some things that he had better never dare to do, and that treating Cousin Ethel with anything but deep respect was one of them!

Baggy was dragged to his feet. He did not want to run down the length of the room between the two lines of grim-faced juniors, each of whom was armed with a knotted towel or a slipper by this time. But a shove from Talbot's foot set him going, and once he was under fire Baggy found that the best thing was to run for all he was worth to get it over!

Whack, whack, whack!

Baggy yelled and howled as the slippers and towels cut across his tight pyjamas. He reached the end at last, and was spun round by Manners and made to run all the way back again. When he was at last through, Baggy collapsed on the floor in a palpitating heap, groaning and gasping.

"Wow! Oh! Grooooh! I'm dying! My ribs are all broken, and I've got a compound fracture of the shoulder!" groaned Baggy. "Oh—"

"Shut up, you fat toad!" snapped Tom Merry. "You've behaved like a little cad, and you've only got what you deserved! I hope Gussy kicks you out of the house to-morrow!"

Blake glanced at the clock on the chimneypiece. It was after midnight.

"Still, I think we ought to wake old Figgins up and tell him about this," said Blake. "And let's tell Gussy, too. He and Gussy ought to know at once, don't you think?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rather!"

"Come on, then!"

The juniors trooped from the room in a body, leaving Baggy Trimble still sprawling on the floor. As the door closed behind them, the unhappy victim of their righteous wrath dragged himself painfully to his feet.

He was aching in every limb, sore and bruised and panting. He crawled miserably across to his bed and flopped on to it.

"Ow! Oh dear! I'm hurt! Grooooh!"

It was a sadder, but perhaps a wiser Baggy that sat on the bed nursing his aches and pains than the Baggy who had gone to bed that night with the gleeful knowledge that George Figgins was suffering for a caddish act that he had not committed.

When Baggy crawled downstairs next morning, with very dismal forebodings as to his fate, he found Figgins & Co. and Arthur Augustus on splendid good terms once again.

Evidently, now that the truth was out, all was well again between them. Figgins was the last fellow in the world to bear malice, and there was no thought now of his leaving Penperro House!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in very high spirits again. It was a wonderful relief to the swell of St. Jim's to know that he had misjudged Figgins. But when Arthur Augustus faced the quaking Baggy in the library before the assembled juniors, there was a gleam in his eyes that showed that in his pleasure over the clearing of Figgins, Gussy had by no means forgotten his hot indignation against the true culprit.

He told Baggy what he thought of him in terms that brought a shamed flush even to the cheeks of Baggy Trimble.

"I had ewevy intention of kickin' you out of the house, you howwid little wottah!" finished the swell of St. Jim's cuttingly. "But Ethel has been kind-hearted and forgivin' enough to request that you are allowed to stay heah on condition that you behave yourself in futuah!"

Baggy drew a deep breath of relief.

"Howevah, you will have to go and apologise to Ethel vewy humbly," added Arthur Augustus in grim tones. "And when you have done that, I fancy Figgay will want to see you!"

Ethel Cleveland accepted Baggy's almost tearful apology quietly, but there was a look in her eyes that made Baggy feel smaller than he had ever felt in his life before. He left her presence feeling really humbled for once.

His interview with Figgins was less painful mentally, but considerably more painful physically. In the privacy of a summer-house in the garden, George Figgins took the struggling figure of Bagley Trimble over his knees and thrashed him with a slipper till there was not the slightest doubt that Baggy had thoroughly repented of his misdeeds.

But as Tom Merry pointed out, there was one good result from it all.

It had taken Figgins & Co. out on to the cliff road that night. But for which fact, the young yachtsman would undoubtedly have perished in the foaming waters at the foot of Penperro Rock.

And there was a big surprise awaiting the juniors concerning the stranger whose life Figgins & Co. had so heroically saved.

Lord Eastwood told them soon after breakfast that the young man proved to be none other than the son of an old friend of his, named Renfrew, who was abroad, and that young Renfrew, already speedily recovering from his terrible ordeal, would remain for a while as a guest at Penperro House, and would doubtless form a very pleasant addition to the cheery little party.

"Whippin', bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy when he heard the news.

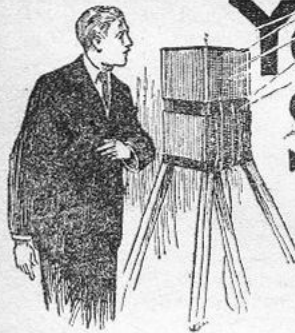
"Rather!" agreed Figgins and Tom Merry together.

They might have agreed less readily had they been able to read the future, however.

For strange things were destined to take place at Penperro House during the stay of Ethel & Co. and the St. Jim's juniors, as a result of the addition to the household of the stranger from the sea!

THE END.

(Don't miss the next yarn in this grand holiday series, entitled: "THE SECRET OF THE CAVE!" You'll enjoy every line of it, chums.)



YOUR EDITOR SAYS!

When writing to me, chums, address your letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



ON TOP AND BELOW THE SURFACE!

ALWAYS on top is the slogan of the Companion Papers. Yet, on occasion, they know what it is to sink a bit, as witness a letter from Devonport. The writer says he was serving on a submarine in China a couple of years ago and that was how he came to read his first "Magnet" Library. "It happened like this," he writes. "We were at sea doing exercise at the time and I found a copy of the "Magnet" when we submerged 80 ft. below the surface. I saw a copy of the paper between two pipes, tucked away. I took it out and read it later on. Out of our crew of twenty-seven there were twenty who read it, and we all liked it." From then onwards this reader became a loyal supporter of the "Magnet," and, of course, the good old GEM. Now you other fellows let me advise you to read the "Magnet" as well as the GEM. This week's issue, in particular, contains a strong programme and some very interesting information concerning a stupendous Free Gift! 'Nuff said!

HOLIDAYS!

They're here, and the holiday spirit is in the air! My post-bag is full of cheery letters and postcards from lucky chaps who are having the time of their lives by the briny, or else hiking it in the country—"far from the madding crowd" as the poet has it. Those messages, short though they were for the most part—"Cheerio, Ed! Having a grand time here!"—were very welcome. They helped to chase some of the stuffiness out of the Editorial sanctum, besides reviving in a hard-worked editor the feeling that his lot was not such a hard one after

all. In short, my holiday-making correspondents provided me with a real tonic, and I'm taking this opportunity to say to everyone of them here and now: "Thank you, chums!"

A NEAR THING!

One rather long letter from my holiday mail interested me considerably, inasmuch as it had a bearing on next week's story of the chums of St. Jim's. It was from a reader who is spending his annual fortnight with some pals in Wales, telling me of a very narrow escape they had had from being cut off by the tide without hope of rescue. "We'd gone for a long walk along the beach," he goes on, "thinking that when the tide came up all we should have to do would be to find some path up the cliffs. This would have been all right if we hadn't found our way barred by a sort of miniature landslide that stuck out into the sea and which forced us to turn back. The nearest cliff path was a good distance away and you can imagine what my chums and I felt like when we saw that the tide had come right up to it and cut us off. Luckily the water was only a foot or two deep and we dashed through it to safety without wasting a second, I can tell you." That was a jolly near thing, and no mistake. A few minutes more and the probability is that that letter would never have been written. Still, all's well that ends well, and my chum's narrow escape will have one good effect in making him more careful in the future. It's connection with next week's St. Jim's story, however, lies in the fact that a similar adventure, nearly ending in tragedy, befalls Tom

Merry & Co. Its amazing sequel forms the main plot of

"THE SECRET OF THE CAVE!"

—the second of the GEM's splendid series of holiday yarns. What that sequel is, and how it affects the members of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's house-party in Cornwall, I'll leave you to discover for yourselves. Without spoiling a good thing, it can be said that as a result of a startling discovery Penperro Rock and the legend of its hidden treasure looms more largely than ever in the minds of the juniors and their girl chums, when you've read

"THE SECRET OF THE CAVE!"

you'll agree with me that it is one of Martin Clifford's best yarns.

The GEM has a reputation for getting hold of the best in the way of serial stories, and, judging from the enthusiastic comments in a lot of my readers' letters, I need have no misgivings about its latest. Thrills and still more thrills would be a good description of THE ROBOT MAN, so that it's spilling a mouthful, as our American cousins would describe it, to say that next week's instalment is one of the best we've had yet.

NOW THEN, CHUMS!

And then there's our old friend the ORACLE. Frankly, something will have to be done for the poor chap. Thirty bob a week is his remuneration for acting in the capacity of walking encyclopædia to readers of the GEM, and heaven knows what he'd do without it. Apparently, however, no one seems to care whether he goes on the dole or what becomes of him. His job is to answer questions, and if there aren't any for him to answer he loses his thirty bob a week, to say nothing of his Rolls-Ford car, the mansion at Mudville-on-Sea and the rest of his small possessions. So it's up to you, chums, to rally round in a good cause.

Seriously enough, if you have any questions that are troubling you, don't hesitate to drop a line to the "Oracle," c/o The GEM, and you'll have them settled in our answer man's very best style.

Cheerio till next Wednesday!

YOUR EDITOR.
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The Robot Man!

By H. J. ALLINGHAM

(Introduction on page 25.)

"Throw in your lot with me and I will make you master of the world—defy me, and I will crush you as easily as I do my insect specimens!" This is the amazing proposal with which young Jack Carter is faced this week. What does he do?

The Warning!

JACK CARTER found himself in a well-lighted passage, and as he strode along it he could hear the soft tread of the mad scientist behind him.

It was an uncomfortable experience, for he could not get the thought out of his mind, but he knew that his only chance was to betray no sign of fear or anger.

Therefore he walked along the lighted passage with almost exaggerated carelessness.

"Now to your right," came the professor's smooth voice behind him.

Jack obeyed, and a moment later found himself, to his surprise, once more in the Round Tower, the scene of his recent act of violence on the professor.

He gave a swift, eager glance at the illuminated table with its marvellously clear picture of the scene outside.

To his surprise, the thing he looked for was not there. The rolling plain, the clump of trees, the distant forest, the rocky ledge—all were clearly visible, but the remains of the fallen Robot were nowhere to be seen. Every scrap of wreckage had been cleared away.

A momentary feeling of despair took possession of the boy as he considered the amazing uncanny power of the man into whose hands he had fallen.

The professor moved to his side.

"You are looking for my Robot!" he said, with a smile. "He is being repaired. You did more mischief than you dreamed of, young man. I rely on my Robot to keep the whole of the country within a ten-mile radius free from intruders. News travels very fast among the natives, and if it becomes known that the Devil Monster, as they call my poor toy, is dead, the people will come streaming back to reclaim their lands, and that would be very serious. However, my men are working hard, and in a week's time the Robot will walk again. Now I will show you something else."

During the hours which followed, Jack Carter almost forgot he was a prisoner or that his companion was a

creature to be feared, so marvellous were the wonders which the professor revealed to him.

From time to time brown-skinned servants brought them food, consisting mainly of fruits. The professor would not stop for meals.

He was as keen and eager as a young student, and he seemed delighted to explain everything to Jack.

Night came, and the picture on the table became blurred, and then faded away.

Still Professor Rollins continued to instruct his new pupil.

By the light of a small, movable electric lamp they were examining some diagrams, when one of the servants reminded the professor that he had something to do in another part of his many-chambered factory.

Excusing himself and declaring he would be back in five minutes, he went off.

Jack sat down and waited.

He waited for half an hour, and still the professor did not return.

"No doubt he has become absorbed in something and has forgotten all about me," thought Jack.

He rose and walked round the room, peering into the dark corners, and wondering whether those invisible eyes and that death ray the professor had spoken of were still directed at him.

He paused in front of the switchboard, and then his eyes turned to something standing on a small table near by.

Here his gaze became fixed, and at the same time an idea flashed across his mind that made his heart thump against his ribs.

The thing he was looking at was that queer telephone, by speaking into which the professor had made the voice of the Robot thunder across the hills.

"I wonder!" muttered Jack to himself. "I wonder!"

He moved to the door of the room and listened. Far down below in the bowels of the earth he seemed to hear the dull rumble of machinery, but there was no other sound.

In this isolated Round Tower he seemed quite alone.

Swiftly he came to a decision. Darting back across the room he bent over the telephone.

There was a rubber cap over the mouth. He tore this off, and then, in a voice thrilling with excitement and yet scarcely above a whisper, he spoke.

Far away in the valley on the other side of the hill Harry Frobisher and Teddy White were asleep in the old doctor's bungalow.

Harry was restless, and tossing about under the mosquito-net. Suddenly he awoke from a very vivid dream in which he had seen his chum Jack Carter and heard his voice.

He sat up in bed with a start, and then, realising that he had been dreaming, he was about to lie down again, when he was startled out of his wits by an awful and mysterious sound.

It was indescribable, and it seemed to come rumbling across the forest like a wave.

Harry scrambled out of bed and rushed to the window, and then he stood petrified with amazement, for out of the semi-darkness of the tropic night the sound came again, but this time it was no indistinct rumble. It had, so to speak, taken shape and formed into words.

"Harry! Harry Frobisher! Jack Carter speaking. Prisoner, but safe. Get back coast. Within a week Robot walks again. Look out. Beware Rollins. Mad! Means to kill—"

The words ended abruptly, with a shattering noise which sounded like a giant's angry snarl. And then there was silence.

"Old Jack will see us through!"

At the sound of that awful snarling roar, that was like the enraged yelp of a wild beast magnified a thousand times, Harry Frobisher fell back from the window in a shuddering terror.

As he staggered back he fell into the arms of Teddy White, who, aroused by the noise, had just come into the room.

For several moments they stood speechless, clinging to one another, sick with fear.

It was Teddy who at length broke the silence. "I can't stand no more, Mr. Harry; I'm done! I can't stand no more!" he whispered, and at the same time he collapsed on the bed in a quaking heap.

The helplessness of his friend acted as a tonic on Harry Frobisher. He had a sudden feeling that now everything depended upon him and that at all costs he must pull himself together.

The sense of responsibility brought back his courage and his wits.

He seated himself on the side of the bed, and when he spoke his voice was almost steady.

"It is all over now," he said. "Listen! You can't hear a sound!"

Teddy put out a hand, wet and clammy, and gripped Harry's arm in the darkness.

"You won't leave me, chummie? You won't leave me?" he implored hysterically.

"Of course not!" replied Harry soothingly. "We stick together. I am depending on you, old chap, to help us out of this."

"There ain't no way out, chummie—no way at all! We're cornered like rats in a 'ole!"

"Rot! Someone is trying to frighten us, that's all. If they wanted to kill us they could have done it long ago!"

"It's magic!" said Teddy, in a scared voice. "Are you thinking of Mr. Jack and the cap'n? D'ye think there's a chance of them coming back? Honour bright, d'ye think that? D'ye think there's a ghost of a chance of us all getting safe and sound out o' this 'orrible country? If I could only believe that, if I could only 'ope, I could bear up."

"I am pretty sure of it," replied Harry confidently. "I am more sure of it now than I was before—before that awful row scared me. I'll tell you why. Did you hear the voice? Did you hear what it said—the words, I mean? It called me by name, and, what's more, it was Jack's voice!"

"Jack? Mr. Carter?"

There was now no incredulity in Teddy White's voice, only an intense, eager curiosity.

After what had happened he was prepared to believe anything.

"Yes," said Harry solemnly, "it was Jack's voice. I'll swear to that, too. I have been trying to think what it was saying, but that awful howl that finished it has put everything out of my head. But Jack was talking to me and trying to tell me something; I know that. Don't you see how frightfully important that is? It means that Jack is not only alive, but that he is able to work the magic just the same as the natives themselves. Perhaps

he's a prisoner— By Jove, that reminds me! 'Prisoner, but safe!' That is what he said, and then—and then something about Rollins."

"Professor Rollins? The chap wot brought us out on this giddy adventure?"

"Yes. It seems queer, but that what I heard just before that frightful howl blotted everything out—'Beware Rollins! I'm sure it was that!'"

"But why?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Do you think this chap Professor Rollins is working the magic?" asked Teddy.

"Of course not, you idiot!" laughed Harry. "Why, the professor is a great English scientist. He wouldn't play monkey-tricks like this, even if he knew how. Besides, we came out here to rescue him."

"Then why have we got to beware of him?" persisted, Teddy.

"Perhaps the natives with their magic have driven the poor chap out of his wits, and he may be roaming round with a gun. Perhaps he is the chap who fired that shot at my hat," said Harry, who could usually find an explanation for anything if you only gave him time.

"Well, we've got enough to keep us lively, one way and anuvver, ain't we?" said Teddy. "Wot with clockwork giants, earthquakes in the night, and a potty professor roaming around with a gun we shan't be dull!"

"And it's my opinion the professor is the most dangerous of the lot," said Harry, after a pause. "That is, if he is really mad. All this other stuff is just play-acting only meant to put the wind up us. But an armed madman loose in the forest is more serious. We must look out for him. Jack knows what he is about, and he wouldn't have given us that warning if there wasn't some danger. I wish I could remember what else he said."

"You really think Jack Carter is safe?"

"You bet he is. The native magic workers have got hold of him, but he is learning their tricks, and when the time comes he'll boss the show. I know Jack. There's not a chap like him in the world!" said Harry enthusiastically.

"You're comforting. Master Harry—werry comforting!" said Teddy, with a sigh. "And I only 'opes as 'ow you are right. And now, as the show seems to be over for the night, wot about getting forty winks? But, if it's all the same to you, I'll stay here right by your side. I don't, somehow, fancy sleeping by myself."

They crept in under the mosquito-net and lay down side by side on the narrow bed.

Teddy was soon asleep, but Harry lay awake for a long time, thinking.

"Old Jack will see us through!" was the last thought in his mind before he, too, fell asleep.

"You are just the man I want!"

MEANWHILE exciting things were happening in the Round Tower which Professor Rollins had built in the rocky heights of the mountain which overlooked both forest and plain.

When Jack spoke into that queer-shaped telephone he came to a quick decision. He would not say much, but he would repeat the words again and again. He knew he was taking a desperate chance. The instrument might not be in working order, or again, for the voice to be magnified and heard out there in the plain, it might be necessary for the Robot man to be in action.

Again Harry Frobisher and Teddy White might be out of earshot or fast asleep.

There were a hundred chances against Jack's warning being heard by those for whom it was intended; but there was just one chance, and Jack seized upon it.

Carefully selecting his words so that the warning would be plain and unmistakable, he repeated them continuously in clear, deliberate tones.

He could hear nothing but his own quiet voice, but the mere thought that his words might at this moment be rolling over the forest far below in a voice of thunder gave him a curious thrill of exaltation and hope.

He was repeating the warning for perhaps the twentieth

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Captain Storm, a broad-shouldered man, in company with Teddy White, a middle-aged Cockney, and two youngsters named Jack Carter and Harry Frobisher, set off in search of Professor Rollins, a missing scientist who is reputed to be held in captivity somewhere within the vicinity of the regions through which the mighty Amazon flows. Headless of the dangers ahead, the four plucky adventurers push on into the unknown regions until they reach a cave in the hillside where they make camp. Before very long, however, a huge steel monster, formed like a man, suddenly appears, seizes Captain Storm by the waist, and carries him away. Almost immediately following, his, Jack Carter comes face to face with Professor Rollins, the inventor of the strange monstrosity known as the Robot. The professor insists on the youngster accompanying him to his quarters in the rocks. Convinced that the professor must be mad, Jack deems it wise to humour him, and enters a brilliantly-lit chamber fitted with the finest electrical plant in the world. Once inside this strange apartment the scientist informs Jack that he is about to destroy his companions by means of the Robot. Before he can carry out his murderous intentions, however, Jack succeeds in wrecking the huge monster, and in consequence, is seized by natives and placed in a cell where he again meets Captain Storm. Much to Jack's astonishment, however, the mad scientist informs him that he has resolved to make him his colleague and successor.

"I am most fortunate to have found such an apt pupil," he says. "Come with me."

(Now read on.)

time when there came a sudden and violent end to the performance.

He heard behind a snarl like that of an infuriated wild beast, and at the same instant he received a blow on the side of his head that sent him flying.

He rolled over on the floor and sat up blinking, to find Professor Rollins glaring down at him.

The man's face wore an expression of diabolical rage, but in spite of this and in spite of his aching head, Jack could not restrain a grin of triumph.

"So the thing is in working order!" he said pleasantly, as he rubbed the side of his face where the other's fist had struck him.

The professor gave a curious grunt, and in a flash his expression changed.

The rage vanished from his face, and into his strange eyes there came that penetrating look of scientific curiosity. "Why do you say that?" he asked quietly.

"If it was not working you would not be so excited, would you?" said Jack. "You would be laughing at me. And you are not laughing now, you know. You are frightfully angry."

Jack's tone was calm, almost argumentative, and the look of curiosity deepened in the man's eyes.

"Boy, do you know I could kill you with a movement of my hand?" he said softly.

A dreamy look came into Jack's strong, intelligent face as he replied.

"It must be wonderful to have such power!" he said thoughtfully.

The professor gave a quick, jerky movement of his head, but whether it was due to surprise or impatience it was hard to say.

"And that power could be yours," he said, with sudden impetuosity. "I have offered to make you as great as myself—greater than myself. For what could not a man achieve with your years and my knowledge? I have offered you this priceless gift, and you flung it away like a child playing with broken toys. Are you quite mad?"

Jack, still sitting on the floor, looked up at the stern face above him and wondered what would be the best way to tackle this surprising old gentleman.

Jack's brain always worked best in a crisis, and he quickly decided to answer the professor according to his folly.

"You ask me if I am mad, sir," he said placidly. "Don't you think every genius has a touch of madness in him? If I were quite sane—quite ordinary, I mean—should I be of any use to you?"

A curious expression passed over the professor's bronzed face. It could scarcely be called a smile, and yet it wiped out every trace of anger and impatience that had been there before.

"You are not a genius," he said coldly, "but simply a healthy, intelligent youth who has the kind of brain that I think I could train to be of service to me in my work. But if you will not obey me you are more trouble than you are worth and I shall destroy you."

Jack nodded thoughtfully.

"I see that, of course," he said coolly, "and I would rather not be destroyed. Can't we come to terms?"

"Terms?" The man's face darkened again. "You talk to me of terms?"

Jack was sitting with his knees drawn up and his arms locked round them. He leaned forward.

"That's it exactly," he replied simply. "I will work for you and obey you on certain conditions."

Professor Rollins looked into the frank, fearless face of the boy in silence for two or three seconds, and then he laughed.

It was the first time Jack had heard him laugh, and it was not a pleasant sound.

"You have much to learn, boy," he said; and now his voice was calm and icily cold. "First of all learn this. You are of no more importance to me than any other creature on which I may have occasion to experiment from time to time—a bird, a rat, a lizard! I should as soon think of making conditions with you as with a mosquito with a broken wing. You are just as helpless, just as insignificant as that!"

"Pardon me, sir, but this is nonsense!" said Jack, with his engaging smile. "Why have you taken all this trouble with me? Why are you talking to me now? You would not do that if I were a lizard or a mosquito with a broken wing. Let us be serious."

The professor showed no resentment at this boldness, but when he spoke his voice remained cold with that undertone of cruelty in it.

"Perhaps I talk to you because it amuses me."

"No, it is not that."

"Why then?"

"Because you want me," replied Jack coolly. "You want me badly."

"Why should I want you?"

"I don't know, but you do. I have found out that much. If you did not want me you would have killed me long ago. Consider what you did just now. You were in an awful rage, and yet you only struck me with your fist. The fist is not a weapon you are in the habit of using, I fancy. Why did you do that? Why didn't you blot me out or shrivel me up? The answer is plain. You are saving me for something big."

Jack concluded with the triumphant note of one who has made a convincing argumentative point in a school debating society.

"Your childish fancies amuse me; go on," said the professor. "What is this something big for which I am saving you?"

Jack knitted his brow like one who wrestles with a profound mental problem.

"I can't be sure," he said slowly; "but I fancy you are engaged upon some new and perhaps dangerous experiment. You require someone to help you and undertake the risky part of the job. Your ordinary servants or slaves, or whatever you call them, are no good. But you think I am just the chap for your purpose. Now, honestly, as man to man, isn't that pretty near the truth?"

Again the look of cold, scientific curiosity came into the professor's piercing grey eyes. It was clear that never had he examined a living specimen, human or animal, with keener interest.

"And if it were the truth," he said, "why should I parley with you? You are in my power. I can make what use of you I choose. If I command you must obey. You have no option. Isn't that so?"

"Not on your life, professor," replied Jack bluntly. "You can kill me by torture, but you can't make me work. If I play the passive-resister stunt you are done. I am willing to work for you. I will undertake any job however risky; I will do anything you want me to do short of murder; but only on conditions. If you will agree to those conditions we can get to business. If you won't, you may as well turn that Death Ray on to me right away, for you won't get anything out of me!"

Then it was that Jack Carter rose to his feet and looked squarely into those cold, pitiless eyes that had been watching him so attentively.

Professor Rollins replied at once, and what he said was surprising.

"In one thing you are right, Carter. You are just the man I want, and I will hear your conditions."

Jack expressed no surprise at this sudden change of attitude, for the simple reason that he felt none. It seemed to him quite natural that the professor should yield to such sensible arguments.

"In the first place, I want a private interview with my friend, Captain Storm, who is a prisoner here," he began.

"And then?" said the professor dryly.

"Then you must give Captain Storm his liberty, after apologising to him for the way you have treated him."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. Finally, you must undertake not to injure any of my friends in any way, or prevent them from returning to the coast."

"Is that all?" inquired the professor.

"That is all."

"And if I agree to your conditions, you will serve me faithfully, and perform any task I demand of you?"

"I will."

"Even at the risk of your life."

"Even at the risk of my life."

For some seconds Professor Rollins stood gazing at the boy in moody silence.

He was angry, not with Jack, but with himself. He was angry because he had come up against something which he could not understand. Searchingly as he peered into the boy's face, he could see no glint of fear, no sign of wavering in those clear grey eyes. Suddenly he made a sound that was almost a sigh.

"Very well," he said abruptly, "I will think it over and give you my decision to-morrow. Now you had better get some rest."

He put out his right hand in the direction of the wall behind him. Jack did not see the hand touch anything, but almost instantly a tall, dark-complexioned man, wearing a blouse, was standing by the professor's side.

"Take this gentleman to my own bed-room, Gonzales," said the professor. "Treat him well; he is my guest. Then return to me here."

The man bowed, and then pushed open a sliding door which until then had been invisible.

"Good-night, professor!" said Jack, seeing that he was expected to follow the man.

"Good-night!" replied the professor curtly.

His head was bowed, and he did not look up as he spoke. Jack was conducted to a small but astonishingly up-to-date bedroom, plainly but comfortably furnished.

Everything was spotlessly clean, and Gonzales supplied him with a suit of pyjamas only a trifle too small for him.

A real bed was a luxury which Jack had not enjoyed for months, and he was hardly between the sheets before he was fast asleep.

Professor Rollins was still sitting motionless in the Round Tower, with bowed head, when Gonzales returned to him.

He looked up as the man entered.

"He is resting?" he asked.

"Yes, master."

"Will he sleep, do you think?"

"He sleeps now."

"Already?"

"Yes, master."

The professor frowned, as though vexed by his own thoughts.

Then suddenly he rose to his feet, and put his hand on the man's shoulder, which was about as high as his own head.

"Gonzales," he said, "what is the greatest power in the world?"

"Electricity, my master, when guided and controlled by you. By its means you have torn treasures from the bowels of the earth; you have rid the land of your enemies; you have made the Robot walk; and you have made me, the proud Gonzales, your willing slave. There is no greater power than electricity."

"This day I have found a greater," said the professor quietly.

The dark eyes of the other flashed with excitement.

"A new power, master?" he cried eagerly.

"No, my good Gonzales, not new," said the professor gloomily. "As old as mankind, but I had forgotten it. It is a cursed power, for it cannot be controlled or destroyed. It is irrational, and cannot be measured or dealt with by any scientific process. It is evil, for it conquers fear in the heart of man, and so it conquers me—even me! For if I cannot inspire fear, how can I become master of the world?"

He was silent, staring in front of him at the complicated and intricate machinery in the room with that dreamy, mystic look which sometimes came into his keen, alert grey eyes.

Gonzales leaned towards him deferentially.

"What is the name of this strange power, master?" said the man, in an awestruck voice.

The professor turned his head and looked at his servant. "Friendship," he said simply. "It appears that men are still prepared to die for their friends, and that makes me afraid."

The Bargain!

JACK awoke greatly refreshed, and was surprised to find himself in darkness.

He had a feeling that he had slept well, and that it must now surely be day.

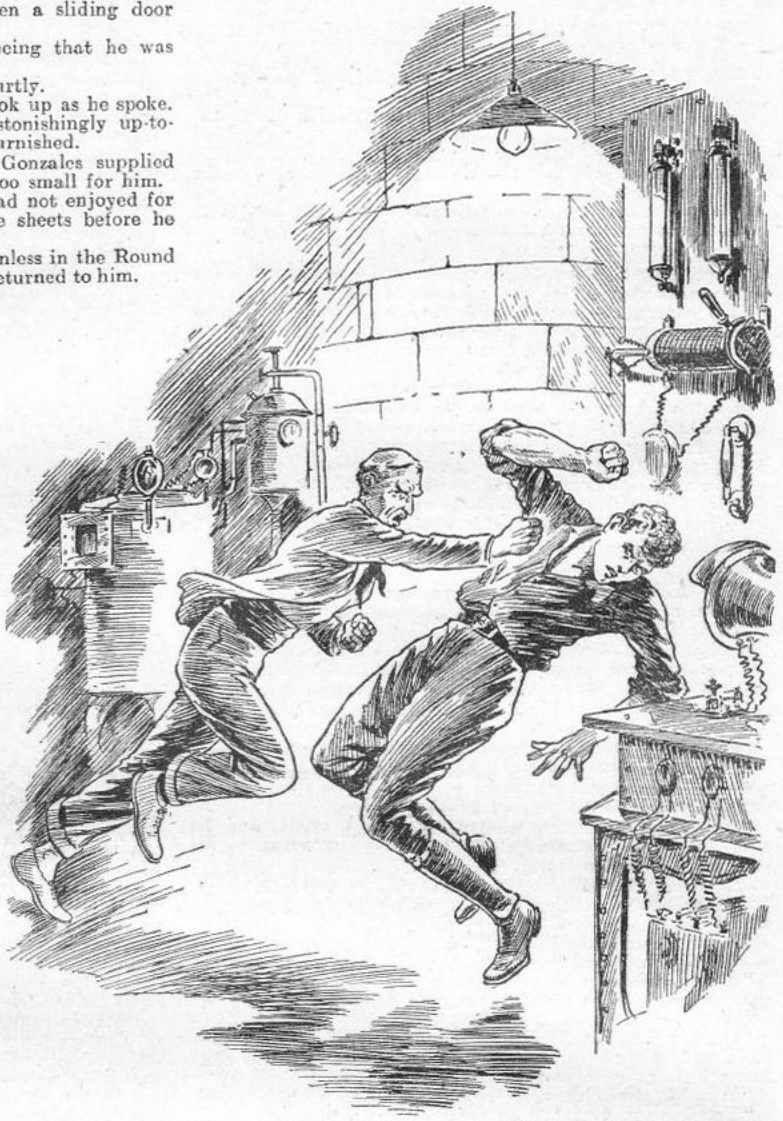
He slid out of bed to investigate, but as soon as his feet touched the thick carpet on the floor the room was flooded with light.

He then perceived that there were no windows in the room, and that the light was artificial. In a corner he perceived a doorless archway leading into another apartment, which was in darkness. As soon as he entered, however, this also was lighted up, and he discovered it to be a well-appointed bath-room.

There was a good bath, hot and cold water, warm towels hanging on heated metal rails, and every convenience.

"Well," muttered Jack, as he looked about him, "the old scoundrel may be mad, but he knows how to make himself comfortable."

A plunge in the river had been the nearest approach to a bath Jack had had for a long time, and he revelled in the opportunity now afforded him.



Jack was repeating the warning through the phone-piece for the twentieth time when there came a sudden and violent end to the performance. He heard behind a snarl like that of an infuriated wild beast, and at the same instant he received a blow on the side of the head that sent him flying! (See page 25.)

When he had rubbed himself down he returned to the bed-room. Here he found that his dusty, travel-stained clothes had been taken away. In their place, however, was an excellent suit of white ducks which fitted him tolerably well.

He had scarcely finished dressing when Gonzales appeared.

"The master will be glad of your company at breakfast, if you are ready, sir," said the man respectfully.

Jack could not restrain a grin. This excessive politeness struck him somehow as comic, and he wondered how long it would last.

"I am quite ready," he said cheerfully, and followed his guide.

He was conducted to a large room cut out of the mountain-side. It had one window, from which could be seen the plain far below.

In the centre of the room was a table laden with fruits of every kind, and bread, biscuits, and cakes made from various sorts of grain.

Jack had only just time to notice these particulars when Professor Rollins made his appearance.

He greeted the boy in friendly, familiar fashion, and they sat down to breakfast.

Gonzales served them with coffee, and then withdrew. Jack ate heartily, and little was said until he had satisfied his hunger. Then the professor came promptly to business.

"I have been thinking over what you said."

"Yes, sir?"

"And I agree to your terms."

"That's splendid, sir!" exclaimed Jack, his face lighting up.

"With one modification," added the professor quietly.

"Oh!" said Jack, and waited.

"You can have your private interview with the man Storm."

"Yes."

"And then I will set him at liberty and he can rejoin your other—er—friends."

The professor boggled over the last word, but he got it out without too obvious a sneer.

"Yes, sir."

"It is your final condition that must be modified," went on the professor. "On consideration, I think you will see that I cannot run any risk of the information you have acquired being conveyed to the outside world just at present. At all costs I must guard the secrecy of my investigations until they are completed and I am ready to make them public. This is what I propose. For one month you will work for me, obeying any instructions I may give you. During that period your three companions will be safe. I will not injure them in any way. Furthermore, I will protect them. For that month, however, they must remain within a five-mile radius of this spot. Within that radius they will be at perfect liberty to go where they like, and to spend their time in whatever way they please."

"And at the end of the month, what is to happen then?" asked Jack.

"At the end of the month we can discuss the whole situation afresh," replied the professor coolly.

For several seconds Jack remained silent, thinking hard. Something told him that he would get no better terms from this terrible, cold-blooded creature. And, after all, it was a great thing to secure Captain Storm's immediate release.

"One doubt assailed him. Would the professor play fair? Would he keep his word?"

With this thought in his mind he spoke.

"Excuse me, sir, but if I agree how do I know you will play the game straight?"

The professor raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"You don't know," he said calmly, "and you would be very foolish to trust me. Of course, you will take precautions. I shall certainly have no hesitation in resorting to treachery if it suits my purpose. Why should I? It is your business to render that impossible or not worth my while."

"You wicked old blighter!" said Jack to himself; but when he spoke aloud he was less frank.

"Then I don't see what I can do, sir. If I can't rely on you to keep your word, how can we make a bargain? I am in your power, and I am helpless."

"On the contrary, Carter, you are in a very strong position," said the professor, leaning across the table and fixing his strange eyes upon the boy.

"How do you make that out, sir?" asked Jack.

"You have no fear."

"Well?"

"And I want to use you."

"Yes, but—"

"Listen! It is quite simple," interrupted the man. "Presently you will see the man Storm. Then he will go,

and you, standing at this window, will see him passing over the plain till he disappears behind that clump of trees yonder. In less than an hour he will join the other two members of your party. As soon as he meets them let them give you a signal that they are safe. Every day for a month let them give you a similar signal. If any harm comes to any of them let the survivors give you a different signal. Then you will know that I have betrayed you."

"What signal?" asked Jack, rather impressed by the other's ingenuity.

The professor gave a wintry smile.

"I had better not know that, had I? You can arrange it with the man Storm."

"When can I see him?" asked Jack.

"Now," replied the professor; and at the same time he rose from the table.

"Very well, sir," said Jack.

When Professor Rollins passed out of the room he made his way to the Round Tower. Arrived there, he waited a moment; and then pressed a knob on the floor with his foot.

Almost instantly Gonzales appeared.

The professor glanced at him.

"You have taken the man Storm in to the boy?"

"Yes, master."

"Very well, we have twenty minutes. Sit down, I want to talk."

The Spaniard seated himself.

"What of the Radium Tunnel?" said the professor curtly. A look of real distress came into the other's face.

"I implore you, master, to turn your mighty mind away from that evil thing, and devote it to more profitable matters," he said humbly, but very earnestly.

"Gonzales," said the professor gravely, "don't you understand that for the carrying out of my work I must have money—much money? Don't you know that beneath our feet there lies a deposit of radium worth untold millions? With these eyes I have seen it!"

"What of that, master, if we cannot reach it?"

"Have I not bored a tunnel into the very heart of it?"

"That is true, my master, and wonderful is your power and your knowledge. But an evil gas has now flooded the tunnel, and the more we pump out the more comes in. At times I think some evil monster is there guarding the treasure."

"Don't be foolish, my good Gonzales," said the professor patiently. "Remember, I do not need much. Just one skepful of the rubbish which lies at the end of that tunnel will be enough. From that I can extract radium which, when sent down to the coast and sold, will keep me going for a year. Just one skepful!"

"And you cannot get it, master. Not while the gas is there. Eight men have made the attempt, and eight dead bodies have been dragged out of that vile hole."

Professor Rollins smiled his wintry smile.

"Those eight men, Gonzales, who failed so miserably were half-breeds," he said quietly. "For a job like this a white man is required—white all through—a man of courage, a man without fear. Such a man I have found! When you drag him out of the tunnel he may be dead, but his hands will not be empty."

(How would you like to be in Jack Carter's shoes, chums? Nothing doing, eh? Anyway, you'll thoroughly enjoy reading all about this youngster's thrilling experiences in next week's instalment of this powerful serial.)

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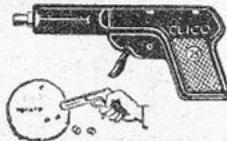
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