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"The
**PHANTOM
MOTOR-BOAT!**"

MYSTERY, THRILLS, AND PERILS! THEY'RE ALL HERE—

The PHANTOM MOTOR-BOAT!

By *Martin Clifford*

Do you believe in ghosts? Tom Merry & Co. didn't—until they saw a Phantom Motor-boat pass
CLEAN THROUGH them without touching their boat—or themselves!

CHAPTER 1.

Declined!

"SORRY!"

Bernard Glyn's tone was emphatic—almost curt.

Tom Merry, from the doorway of Glyn's study, bestowed a frown on the inventor of St. Jim's.

"Sorry? I don't quite get you, Glyn."

"Quite easy, old chap! What I mean is that I should like to row for the Junior Eight, but I'm afraid I can't."

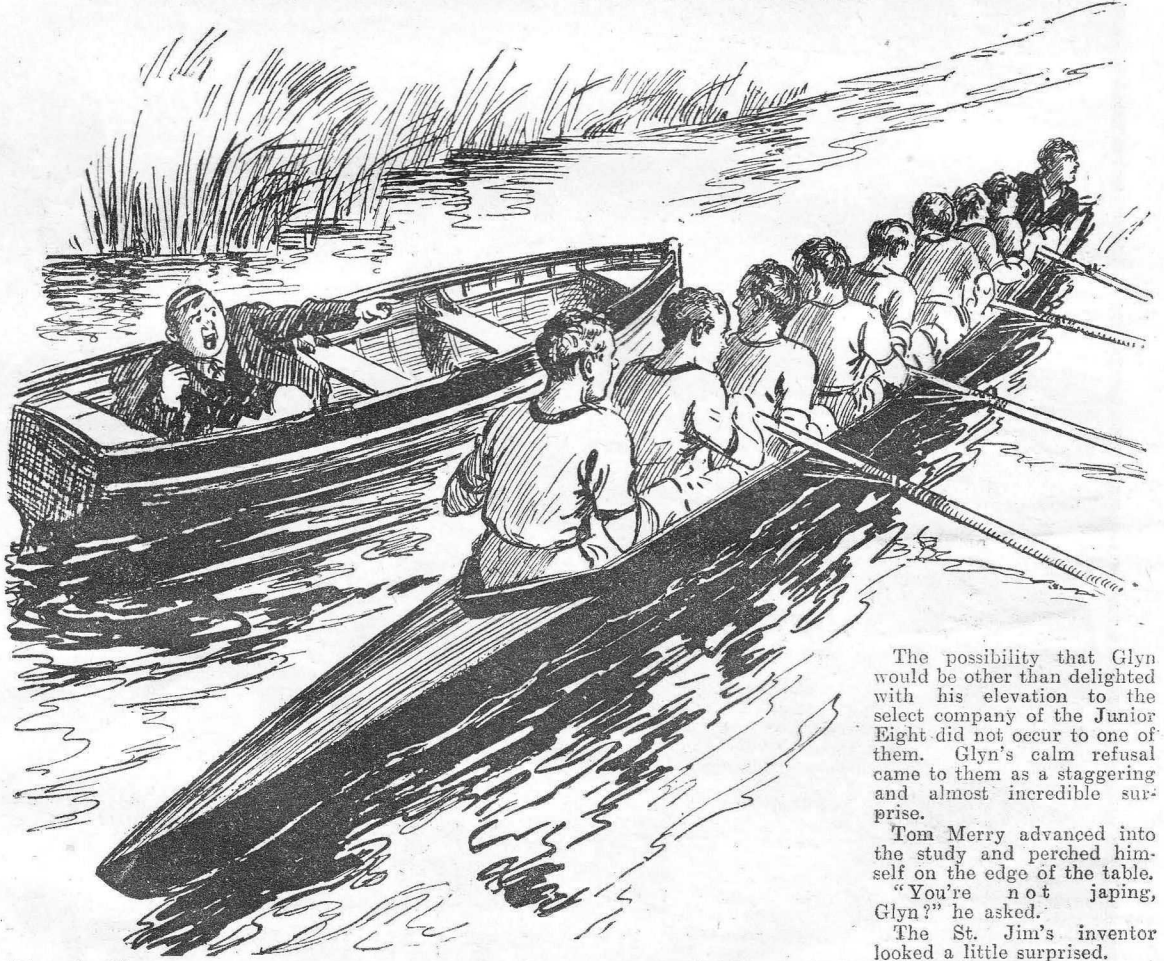
Tom Merry started a little, and there was a murmur of surprise from the crowd of fellows behind him.

"You mean you're turning down the chance of rowing for the St. Jim's Lower School against Greyfriars?" asked Tom Merry almost incredulously.

could expect to attain that honour, and the great majority who had to be passed over would, in most cases, have given a great deal to see their names on Tom Merry's list, particularly for an important event like the Greyfriars contest.

Bernard Glyn had never rowed for the Junior Eight before. He was, however, a keen oarsman, and was known to have improved wonderfully since the beginning of the season. When, therefore, Wilkins of the St. Jim's crew had sprained his arm in a dormitory rag that morning the rest of the crew had felt no surprise when Tom Merry confided that he intended to give Wilkins' place to Glyn.

After morning classes Tom and most of his crew had proceeded to Glyn's study to tell him the news and arrange for river practice after dinner.



The possibility that Glyn would be other than delighted with his elevation to the select company of the Junior Eight did not occur to one of them. Glyn's calm refusal came to them as a staggering and almost incredible surprise.

Tom Merry advanced into the study and perched himself on the edge of the table.

"You're not japing, Glyn?" he asked.

The St. Jim's inventor looked a little surprised.

"Japing! Why should I be japing?"

Tom shrugged.

"It's not exactly an everyday occurrence to be selected for the Junior Crew against Greyfriars. I should have thought you'd have been rather pleased."

"So I am."

"Well, you don't show it, anyway," said Tom Merry

"Just that!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors were astonished.

To row for the representative Junior Eight of St. Jim's was an honour to which many aspired. Few, naturally,

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—IN THIS FINE TALE OF TOM MERRY & CO., OF ST. JIM'S!

bluntly. "When I came in and told you you'd been chosen you didn't so much as flicker an eyelid."

"Didn't I? Well, I'm sorry," said Glyn, without displaying any particular emotion. "Anyway, I'm afraid I can't turn out for you."

"Which means, I suppose," said Tom, a little bitterly, "that you're so busy over some potty invention or other that you can't afford the time to row for your school?"

Bernard Glyn frowned.

"No need to be ratty over it, Tom Merry!"

"I don't want to be. But it's a little annoying to hear you turning down a chance, that most fellows would jump

"I hope not."

"Then what the thump's the idea?" roared Jack Blake excitedly. "Who are you to turn down a chance of rowing against Greyfriars without giving a reason?"

"Somethin' in that, deah boy!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a sage nod. "Pway give your weason, an' we may be satisfied."

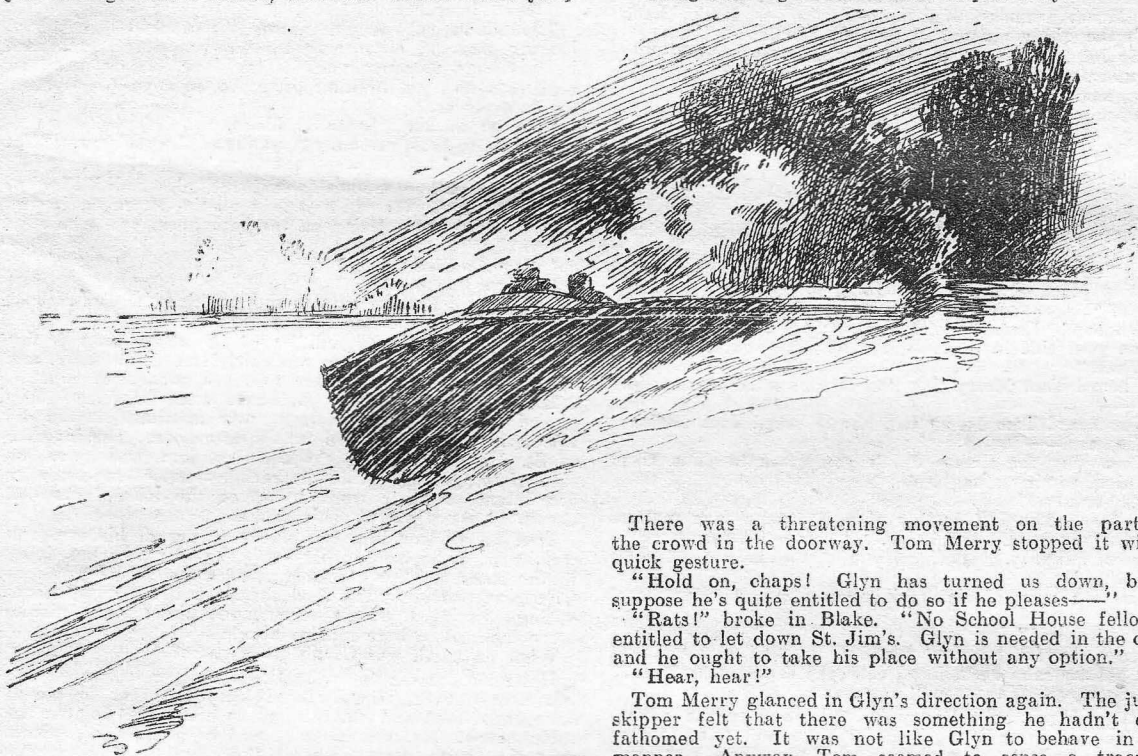
Glyn shook his head.

"Can't be done, old bean."

"You refuse to give a reason?" asked Tom Merry.

"Since you put it like that—yes."

"Scrag him!" growled Lowther sulphurously.



There was a threatening movement on the part of the crowd in the doorway. Tom Merry stopped it with a quick gesture.

"Hold on, chaps! Glyn has turned us down, but I suppose he's quite entitled to do so if he pleases—"

"Rats!" broke in Blake. "No School House fellow is entitled to let down St. Jim's. Glyn is needed in the crew, and he ought to take his place without any option."

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry glanced in Glyn's direction again. The junior skipper felt that there was something he hadn't quite fathomed yet. It was not like Glyn to behave in this manner. Anyway, Tom seemed to sense a trace of vexation in the inventor's voice which made him wonder whether Glyn's rejection of his offer was altogether what Glyn himself wanted. Perhaps there were other factors—factors which Glyn was not at liberty to reveal. It was a vague sort of idea and a little far-fetched, but the junior skipper couldn't help feeling that there might be something in it.

As if he read Tom's thoughts, Glyn returned his glance and half nodded.

Tom compressed his lips.

"That's final then, Glyn?" he asked.

"Yes. You see, the fact is—" began Glyn. Then he suddenly closed up again. "Well, anyway, I can't possibly turn out for you," he finished weakly.

"You'd jolly well have to if I were in Tom Merry's place!" grunted Herries. "I'd wallop you until you did!"

"Bai Jove! I weally fail to see, Hewwies, how that would convert an unwilling' weewuit into an efficient membah of the crew!"

"Exactly!" said Tom Merry. "For that reason, Glyn, I'll accept your decision; but it's disappointing. I suppose there's nothing on in which we can be of assistance?"

Bernard Glyn flushed slightly.

"I don't understand what you mean, Merry."

Tom shrugged.

"Don't want to poke my nose into your business, of course, but it's obvious to me that you're doing something jolly important from your point of view to lead to your acting like this."

Glyn shook his head.

"Nothing of the kind. What should I be doing?"

"That's your secret!"

"Well, there—there isn't a secret," said Glyn, with just the slightest hint of hesitancy in his manner. "Because I don't choose to row for the Junior crew, that doesn't imply that I've any blessed secrets, does it?"

at, in such an off-handed way. That is, of course"—Tom Merry hesitated—"unless there's some very good reason."

"Bai Jove! That's poss, of course," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, regarding Bernard Glyn thoughtfully through his celebrated monocle. "If there's a weason, Glyn, deah boy—"

"Have to be a pretty good one!" growled Jack Blake.

"Pwecisely! But if there is a weason, then natuwallly that weason must be taken into considewation. What weason do you offah, deah boy, for declinin' the honah of wovnin' for your school?"

Arthur Augustus waited for a reply. Tom Merry and the rest were also silent, their eyes fixed questioningly on the inventor of St. Jim's.

But no reply came.

Tom Merry and his henchmen plainly showed by their expressions that they felt resentment now, as well as surprise. But Tom exercised patience still—patience being a quality which his position as junior captain of St. Jim's had developed rather strongly.

"Perhaps you haven't quite gathered how important it is yet, Glyn," he said, as mildly as he could. "I know your mind is apt to wander a bit when you've got a bee in your bonnet about a new invention—"

"Bai Jove! That's twue!"

"So possibly you haven't quite got the hang of things. Just to make it quite clear, I'll say it over again: I want you to row for the Junior Eight against Greyfriars. Savvy?"

Glyn nodded.

"I quite understand."

"It's not a trial I'm offering you; it's a definite place in the crew. Get that?"

"All of it!" replied Glyn, with a faint smile. "But the answer's still the same. I'm sorry!"

"My hat!"

"Riding the high horse, Glyn, ain't you?" snorted Herries.

"Right-ho, then; I'll take your word for it!" said Tom Merry.

With that, he swung off the table and made for the door. Bernard Glyn bit his lip, and for a moment seemed inclined to call the visitors back. But he overcame the inclination and dropped back into his chair again.

There the juniors, not without several caustic, valedictory remarks, left him. Herries, who was the last to leave the study, slammed the door with a crash that echoed down the passage, and followed the rest in the direction of Tom Merry's study.

"The problem now is, who's next on the list?" asked Blake, as Tom Merry opened the door of Study No. 10.

"Redfern, I think," was Tom Merry's reply. "He's a New House bouncer, but he can row— Hallo, hallo! Who's the giddy visitor? Why, it's Trimble!"

"My hat! And he's wolfing the cake my aunt sent me this morning!" yelled Lowther furiously. "Gimme that stump, someone!"

"Whooop! Keepimoff!" roared Baggy Trimble, the Falstaff of the Fourth at St. Jim's. "I—I say, you chaps, I didn't come here to nab his cake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then why exactly did you come?" asked Talbot, with a grin.

"Keepimoff, and I'll tell you!" gasped Trimble, leaping half-way across the room as Lowther dived towards him. "The fact is, I came to offer myself for the Junior Eight in place of that rotter Glyn!"

"Eh?"

"Whoop! Lemme alone, you rotter! I say, you chaps, I'm on your side in this row with Glyn!" roared Trimble.

"What?"

"I heard Tom Merry tick him off down the passage just now—"

"You heard Tom Merry just now?" asked Jack Blake.

"Yes, and—"

"Then why the thump didn't you speak to him then, instead of coming along here?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I— The fact is, I prefer to discuss such matters in private!" babbled Trimble. "Some fellows have a sense of dignity. Perhaps you don't understand that, Blake?"

"Not if a sense of dignity involves pinching other chaps' cakes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold the fat burglar, Blake!" growled Lowther. "I can't get my cake back, but I can take it out of his hide!"

"Whoooooop! Yarooooop!"

Willing hands held Baggy Trimble, and to the accompaniment of ear-splitting yells of rage and pain, Monty Lowther administered correction with the aid of a stump.

Tom Merry's decision to offer the vacant oar to Redfern of the New House held good. Trimble's kind offer to help the St. Jim's crew was not accepted!

CHAPTER 2.

Prisoners on the Island!

"TOPPING!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And there was general agreement among the St. Jim's crew.

It really was a glorious afternoon. The sun shone from a cloudless sky. It was exceptionally warm for the time of the year, but the heat was nicely tempered by a cooling breeze. It was an ideal day for the river.

Tom Merry and his crew were just taking their places in the sliding-seat shell. The complete crew consisted of Tom Merry, Blake, Figgins, Lowther, Talbot, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, and Redfern, with young Wally D'Arcy of the Third as cox.

They were a fine, athletic-looking lot, and there was no question about their being keen. The St. Jim's fellows had high hopes that they would beat the strong Greyfriars crew in no uncertain fashion when the forthcoming race took place.

As the boat was being pushed out there was a sudden exclamation from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!"

"Keep your oar up, Gussy!" called out Tom Merry sharply. "We don't want to start practice by sinking!"

"I assuah you, deah boy, there will be no danjah of our sinkin' on my account!" retorted the swell of the Fourth warmly. "At that moment I was expressin' surprisew."

"Save it till after, then, and keep your eye on me!"

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"Yaas, wathah! But it is wathah surprisew, for all that! You see, Glyn—"

"Blow Glyn!"

"I quite agwce, deah boy. But I can't help bein' interested an' wathah surprisew to find him on the wivah this aftahnoon."

"What?"

"Fact! If you glance behind you, you will just be in time to see him."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, glancing behind him for a moment. "It's Glyn, right enough. Funny!"

"Pretty rotten, I'd prefer to call it!" snorted Herries. "If he can afford the time to scull that old tub up the river he ought to be with us."

"Hear, hear!"

"Sounds logical enough, anyway!" remarked Tom Merry, looking back at Glyn with knitted brows. "I imagined he was busy on some crackpot invention, but by the look of things he's got nothing better to do than to go on a picnic up-river."

"Rotten slacker!" grunted Blake.

"Points to that, certainly!" admitted Tom Merry. "Yet I can hardly believe it of old Glyn, somehow."

"But what else are we to believe?" demanded Figgins.

"Give it up! We can't sit here all the afternoon jawing about it, anyway. Hang on to those lines, young Wally! All ready?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Off we go, then!"

And with a flash of oars in the sunshine the Junior boat moved off from the boathouse.

There were quite a number of boats out on this fine spring day, but midstream was fairly free from traffic, and the Junior Eight were able to have a good clear run.

Half-way between the boathouse and the island they passed Bernard Glyn, pulling away manfully at the old tub he had commandeered for the afternoon. The inventor of St. Jim's stared straight ahead of him, and gave no sign of recognition, while the racing crew, of course, were too intent on their work to notice the fellow who had chosen to stand out of their ranks.

Tom Merry saw him out of the corner of his eye, and wondered, as he bent to his oar. The picnic basket, lying in the stern of Glyn's boat, was of a size to suggest that Glyn was providing the food for an entire Sunday-school outing. Yet Glyn wasn't a gourmand himself, and picnics were inclined to bore him as a rule.

What on earth was Glyn's little game?

If he had chosen to spend the afternoon in the physics laboratory at St. Jim's, Tom Merry felt that he would have understood and partly forgiven his refusal to join the racing crew. But that Glyn should be going for a picnic on the very river where the Junior Eight were practising—

There was mystery in it somewhere. Tom Merry felt sure of it. And the mystery, whatever it was, seemed likely to remain a mystery.

The Junior Eight continued to pull, their light craft skimming swiftly through the shimmering waters of the Rhyll, and their oars moving in perfect rhythm.

They passed to the right of the island and went a quarter of a mile beyond it before pulling up for a rest.

At a favourable spot they pulled in to the bank and disembarked to stretch their limbs on terra firma again and get "second breath" for the return journey.

A couple of roomy boats full of cheery juniors from Rylcombe Grammar School passed them as they rested on the bank. Gordon Gay and a crowd of his followers were evidently out for a picnic, either on the island or farther down the river. They rested on their oars for a minute or so to exchange greetings and badinage with their St. Jim's rivals, then passed on.

Tom Merry watched them round the bend of the river with a rather thoughtful expression on his face.

"Better watch out for those Grammar School chaps," he said. "Rather a lot of 'em to be all out together. Might be out for trouble."

"We can give 'em all they want!" said Blake confidently. "One St. Jim's chap is worth half a dozen Grammarians any day of the week!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And there the matter rested.

But it didn't rest there long.

Taking to the racing shell again, Tom Merry and his crew rowed at an easier pace back towards the island.

As they drew near the island there was a sudden exclamation from Wally D'Arcy, the cox, who was, of course, the only one in a position to see ahead.

"Grammar cads!"

"What are they doing?" asked Tom Merry.

"Rowing across our course. It's Gay and that mob that passed us. Ease up, or we'll crash!"

Tom Merry and his crew eased up. They didn't want harm to befall their rather valuable craft, and they weren't exacting pining for a bathe in the waters of the Rhyll, inviting as those waters might look.

Tom Merry looked over his shoulder, frowning.

"Want all the river, Gay?" he called out.

Gordon Gay stood up in his boat and waved cheerily.

careful handling as their rivals' boat, and Gordon Gay & Co. took advantage of the distinction.

As the remainder of the St. Jim's crew stepped on to the island the two Grammar School boats grounded almost simultaneously on the narrow strip of shelving beach near by.

"Rush 'em!" came a shout from Gordon Gay.

"What-ho!"

And the Grammarians, with ringing war-whoops, charged. Tom Merry glanced anxiously at his boat.

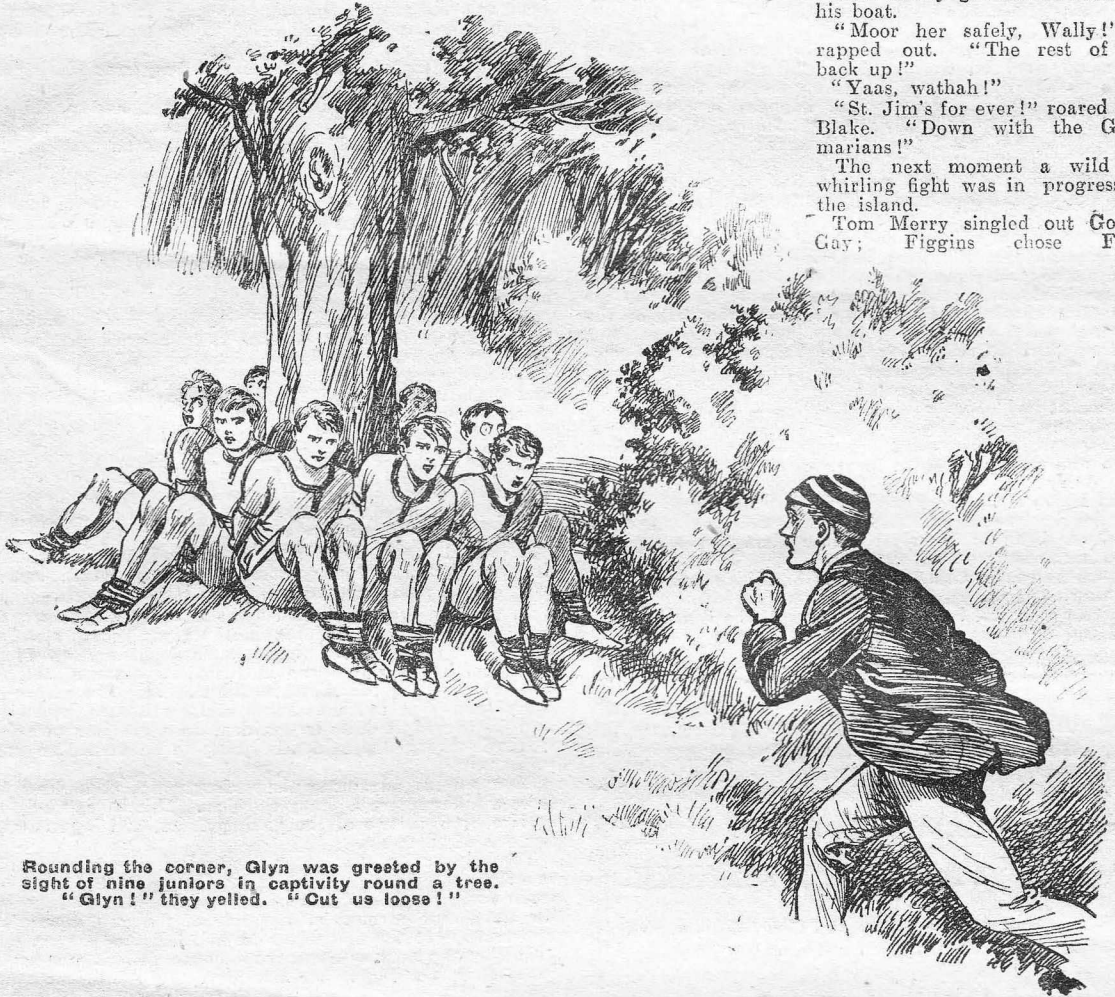
"Moor her safely, Wally!" he rapped out. "The rest of you back up!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"St. Jim's for ever!" roared Jack Blake. "Down with the Grammarians!"

The next moment a wild and whirling fight was in progress on the island.

Tom Merry singled out Gordon Gay; Figgins chose Frank



Rounding the corner, Glyn was greeted by the sight of nine juniors in captivity round a tree. "Glyn!" they yelled. "Cut us loose!"

"Hallo, hallo! If it's not Merry and his pals! This is an unexpected pleasure, isn't it, chaps?"

"Oh, rather!" came a mocking chorus from the crowded Grammar School boats.

"May as well stay for a cup of tea now you've arrived," went on Gordon Gay hospitably. "Your faces are rather a trial, of course, but we'll put up with them as long as we can!"

"Do our best, anyway!" chortled Frank Monk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

While Gordon Gay was talking, the two Grammar School boats were manœuvring about with the object of forcing back the racing-craft to the island. The St. Jim's juniors could see their aim, but hardly knew what to do to combat it.

"Going to make a fight of it, Tommy?" asked Jack Blake, sotto voce.

Tom Merry took stock of the situation.

"Bit difficult just here," he said reluctantly. "If we were in a more open part of the river where we could use our long oars we might tip them both over and survive ourselves. But that's impossible here. Better land before they do and try to upset them from the island."

The decision was quickly carried out. The junior racing-shell drew in towards the island, and Tom Merry leaped ashore followed by his chums.

But quick as the St. Jim's crew had been, the Grammarians were quicker. Their old tubs did not need such

Monk, and Blake selected Carboy. Nearly all the St. Jim's fellows, in fact, picked out separate individuals as the object of their attack.

The drawback was that as the enemy were at least double their strength in numbers, each of the St. Jim's juniors had the honour of being singled out by two and sometimes three Grammar School fellows.

The fight, in fact, was rather a one-sided sort of affair, and despite Jack Blake's confident assertion that one St. Jim's man was worth half a dozen Grammarians, Tom Merry and his men very quickly found themselves on the defensive.

"Back up!" came an encouraging roar from Tom Merry, as he sent Gordon Gay reeling with a stinging blow to the chin. "Two to one against is good enough for us!"

"Yaas, wathah! Fight like anythin', deah boys!" chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And the St. Jim's juniors did their best, even D'Arcy minor wading in with the rest.

But the task was a hopeless one. First Redfern went down, then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his minor; and as the St. Jim's casualties developed, the numerical superiority of the enemy told more than ever on the survivors.

The inevitable happened. Eventually Tom Merry and his followers were overwhelmed, and the fight came to an end with the victorious Grammarians sitting on the chests of their opponents.

"Quite hot while it lasted!" grinned Gordon Gay, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,158.

CHAPTER 3.

Enter Railton!

G LYN'S movements when he landed on the island that afternoon had been rather cautious.

To begin with, he had not attempted to make a landing until he was sure that he was not observed.

Having satisfied himself that nobody was in sight, he pulled in rapidly to a part of the island where, owing to the absence of good landing-places, very few boats called.

Here Glyn moored his boat, then climbed up the difficult bank to reconnoitre. Rapidly surveying the island from an elevated position, he soon came to the conclusion that he was, up till now, in sole possession.

The inventor of St. Jim's was a busy man during the next half-hour.

His activities were a little mysterious, and would certainly have puzzled his school colleagues. But Glyn's pre-occupied manner and determined expression showed that they meant a lot to him.

First he returned to his boat. There, he knotted up the end of a length of rope to one of the handles of his big hamper. After that he climbed on to the bank again, trailing the rope after him.

At the top of the bank he turned round, and, using the entire weight of his body in his efforts, began hauling the mysterious hamper.

It was hard work, and Glyn was soon panting and perspiring freely from his efforts. But he stuck it, and was at last rewarded by feeling the hamper beside him.

A brief pause for the purpose of recovering his breath and again reconnoitring, then Glyn's activities became even more peculiar.

Leaving the hamper on the top of the bank for a few moments, the schoolboy inventor plunged down the other side into a thick mass of bushes and undergrowth. Evidently this was not the first time he had visited this spot, for he found what he was after in that thick entanglement of vegetation without the slightest difficulty.

It was a small level area of ground, which, as Glyn dragged back the weedy growths that covered it, seemed to be paved with large, square, stone blocks.

In point of fact, it was a tiny cell, built into the ground, the last surviving trace of a building which had stood on the island in mediæval times. Archaeologists knew of its existence, but it was of no historical importance, and nobody ever visited the island to see it. Very few of the St. Jim's fellows so much as knew of its existence, and Glyn had discovered it quite by accident on a previous occasion.

His discovery was evidently going to be turned to some profit now.

Glyn rummaged among the undergrowth, then drew out from a hiding-place a heavy crowbar. This he applied to a crevice between two of the paving-stones, and began levering one of them up.

The stone came slowly up, then rolled over on one side, revealing the hidden cell beneath. Glyn produced a pocket-torch and peered inside. Satisfied that all was well, he left the torch still burning at the side of the gap, then went up the slope to the spot where he had left the hamper.

Getting the hamper down the slope to the cell was easier work than pulling it up the bank from the boat, and Bernard Glyn performed the task swiftly. He seemed anxious to complete his work now. Possibly the thought that time was passing and that picnicking parties might soon be about, induced him to speed things up.

In the space of a few minutes he got the hamper to the bottom of the slope and lowered it into the cell by the rope that still held it. Then, with a murmur of relief, he lowered himself through the hole after it.

Renewed activity followed—unpacking the hamper, distributing round the confined space of the cell the miscellaneous contents, and taking stock to see that everything he wanted was there.

As Glyn was finishing, the faint echo of distant cries and shouts penetrated the cold, silent air of the cell. The St. Jim's junior listened, then smiled faintly.

"St. Jim's for ever!"

"Up the Grammar School!"

For a moment Glyn hesitated, half inclined to abandon his work. Then he shook his head, and carried on, finishing off as quickly as he could.

Back in the open air again, he levered the stone into its gap once more then carefully hid the crowbar and went to seek the cause of all the shouting.

From the elevated spot where he had first surveyed the island that afternoon, he spotted two Grammar School boats pushing off. Glyn hurried down towards the little stretch of beach they had just left, and, rounding the corner, was greeted by the sight of nine St. Jim's juniors in captivity round a tree.

(Continued on page 8.)

mopping his perspiring brow. "As usual, of course, we won!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Bai Jove! But even with twice our numbah you had all your work cut out—"

"Just bang Gussy's head on the ground, Carboy!" interrupted the leader of the Grammarians.

"Certainly!"

"Whooooop! Yawoooooh!"

"Now arises the question what to do with 'em," grinned Gordon Gay. "As they've been so unfriendly we won't give 'em a cup of tea now!"

"No fear!"

"In fact, we won't stop here for grub as originally planned," went on Gordon Gay. "We'll leave these St. Jim's wasters here instead, all nicely tied up round a tree ready for the first explorer that happens to come along from their casual ward. By the way, Merry, St. Jim's is a casual ward, and not a prison, I believe?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn out all the cord you can find, chaps, and see if there's any spare rope in our boats!" went on Gordon Gay briskly.

Sundry lengths of cord and string were produced from sundry pockets, and quite an imposing quantity of rope was fished out of the Grammar School boats. With the aid of all this material Tom Merry and his crew were tied up in the form of a human chain round a tree at the side of the island.

"There!" said Gordon Gay, when the task had been completed. "Nobody can say they look handsome, but I must say they look rather striking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wottahs!"

"Sorry we can't stop, you men! Man the boats now, chaps, and we'll push down the river and have tea. Ta-ta, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry & Co. were not left in that unhappy condition very long. The Grammarians had scarcely disappeared round the bend of the river before there was a rustling sound in the undergrowth near by.

A moment later the figure of a St. Jim's junior came into view.

There was a yell from the prisoners of the island.

"Glyn!"

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Street, Shinye Row, Philadelphia; L. F. Larkbey, 219, Hook Road, Epsom, Surrey; A. Leigh, 33, Hectorage Road, Tonbridge, Kent; E. Lyons, 53, Surrey Street, Brighton; Edgar C. Masters, 85, Huntingfield Road, Roehampton, S.W.15; Gilbert Martin, 59, Burnmah Street, Ormeau Road, Belfast; Thomas Oldham, 21, Clyde Street, St. Helens, Lancs; R. A. Power, 256, Victoria Park Road, South Hackney, E.9; John Raimondo, 3a, Via Capucini, Calcara, Malta; George Robbins, 14, Belmont, Wantage, Berks; R. Schwaib, 53, Gore Road, South Hackney, E.9; J. T. Simms, 9, Whybourne Grove, Rotherham; K. Slade, 70, Osborne Square, Dagenham, Essex; A. Smith, Woodleigh, Stella Street, Mansfield, Notts; A. Sparrow, Runswick, Court Road, Eltham, S.E.9; Harry Taylor, 33, Greenhorpe Road, Bramley, Leeds; A. Treadwell, 72, Deansbrook Road, Burnt Oak, Edgware; D. Turner, 18, Market Street, Lewes, Sussex; W. Waggit, 37, Ruskin Walk, Herne Hill, S.E.24; Jack Wall, 11, Glamorgan Street, Pimlico, S.W.1; F. H. Webb, 42, Vincent Road, Wood Green, N.22; H. G. Willes, 39, Chevening Road, Queen's Park, N.W.6; R. Williamson, Willowsmere, St. Johns Avenue, Chaddesden, Derby; Sydney Willis, 53, St. Stephen's Road, Buckland, Portsmouth; William Wroth, 57, Linney Street, Wigan, Lancs.

All Claims must be submitted before Thursday, May 1st, after which date the Gifts claimed will be forwarded and no further claims can be recognised.

"GEM" FREE GIFT REGISTRATION Form.

PLEASE REGISTER MY NAME and address in your Free Gift Scheme.

NAME

ADDRESS

Age:

The Phantom Motor-Boat!

(Continued from page 6.)

"Glyn!" came a yell from the prisoners.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bernard Glyn.

"Hurry up and cut us loose, ass!" roared Jack Blake.

"Certainly! But—ha, ha, ha!—excuse my laughter—you ought to see yourselves! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bernard Glyn, unable to repress his mirth.

Tom Merry and his followers stared at Glyn with ferocious glares. They realised that they probably did present rather a humorous spectacle, but they were not in a position to appreciate the humorous side of the matter just then.

"Hurry up!" hooted Herries.

"And stop cackling!" added Figgins balefully.

"Yaas, wathah! I uttahly fail to see any weason for mirth in our pvesent pwedicament!"

"Oh, my hat! I'll get you free in half a jiffy; but you really do look funny!" grinned Glyn, getting out his pocket-knife.

In less than a minute the juniors were all free and stretching their limbs again.

"Thank goodness for that!" grunted Tom Merry. "I think now that it's up to us to go after those Grammar School bounders and get a little bit of our own back in the wider part of the river."

"Hear, hear!"

"By the way, Glyn, what the thump are you doing here?" demanded Herries bluntly. "Taken to indulging in picnics on your own?"

Glyn smiled.

"Not exactly. I just dropped in on the island."

"Pity you couldn't have joined the crew, as you've so much time to spare!"

Glyn glanced towards the river.

"Don't you think you'd better be getting after the Grammar School chaps?" he asked mildly.

"Bai Jove, yaas! We mustn't stay heah jawin' if we want to catch up with the wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Let's get into the boat again; huwwy, deah boys!"

And the subject of Glyn's unaccountable behaviour was dropped, as the St. Jim's crew made for their boat.

They were very quickly seated and away again. Glyn watched them off, then walked back to the other side of the island to his own boat, inwardly deciding to row after them as quickly as possible, in case he might be of use.

But long before Glyn had reached them, the battle between the rival boats was over, and the disaster had happened.

The disaster was the sudden and unexpected appearance of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's.

All would have been well but for that.

Tom Merry and his men did not take long to overhaul the Grammar School boats, and they were fortunate enough to strike them at the widest part of the river.

Gordon Gay & Co. were astonished and a little alarmed at the return of the fellows they had thought to be still trussed up on the island. They could see that at this particular spot the St. Jim's party had a decided advantage over them.

Both the Grammar School boats pulled towards the bank. But the St. Jim's boat, skimming along at racing speed, was on them before they could get anywhere near it.

Tom Merry's oar was the first to reach the enemy. One twist of it was enough to send two of the Grammarian oars flying out of the rowlocks.

Then Jack Blake managed to give Frank Monk a dig in the ribs that sent him reeling across the boat, and another judicious jab on Carboy's shoulders from Herries' oar completed the good work. Carboy staggered, yelling wildly, and the boat dipped alarmingly. Next moment it had submerged completely.

There was a cheer from the St. Jim's crew.

"No danger to anyone?" asked Tom Merry, a little anxious for a moment.

"O. K.! We're all in shallow water," replied Redfern.

"Now for the other boat!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors paddled along towards the other boat.

By the time they were near enough to attack, the other boat had almost reached the bank. And by sheer bad luck it was just as the juniors began lunging at it that Mr. Railton came round a hidden bend of the river.

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The Housemaster was in a light skiff, which he was sculling down river at a fair speed. In a way, as Blake pointed out afterwards, it was his fault for not looking where he was going. But in view of what happened, nobody felt like putting forward that argument to Mr. Railton afterwards.

"Sock it into 'em!" yelled Herries.

"Give the wottahs a duckin', deah boys!" cried Arthur Augustus excitedly.

Four oars swung round and waved threateningly in the direction of the Grammarians' boat.

Then Mr. Railton came skimming round the bend.

Crash!

Jack Blake felt something solid and weighty cannon into his upraised oar. Simultaneously, there was a wild yell, and an instant later a splash.

For a moment the juniors were too surprised to realise what had happened.

Then there was a groan from the St. Jim's men—a groan of utter dismay.

"Railton!"

"Oh, ye gods!" cried Blake faintly. "I've knocked Railton into the water!"

CHAPTER 4.

Something Like a Wheeze!

THESE are depths of tragedy where words seem inadequate and futile.

This was an occasion of that kind.

There was no danger to Mr. Railton! The water was shallow, and he was scrambling for the bank within a couple of seconds of his entering the water.

The point was that, as a result of what might certainly be described as horseplay on the river, a ducking had fallen to the lot of a St. Jim's Housemaster. And Tom Merry and his men couldn't hide from themselves the fact that they were the guilty parties.

They stared at Mr. Railton's dripping figure in fascinated horror.

Mr. Railton, safely back on terra firma, gougged water out of his eyes and shook himself like a terrier.

"Poof!" he remarked, at intervals.

That was all he seemed capable of saying for the time being.

"B-b-bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy faintly.

Nobody else in the St. Jim's boat uttered a word. The catastrophe had temporarily deprived them of their powers of speech.

Mr. Railton looked over at them at last. One or two of the St. Jim's crew winced as they caught his glance. Mr. Railton was ordinarily a mild-mannered and even-tempered man, but it could hardly be expected that he would preserve an unruffled serenity of demeanour in the unhappy circumstances.

Mr. Railton was, as a matter of fact, raging.

"You—you— How dare you!" he managed to blurt out at last.

Speech broke the spell. The juniors looked at each other, then looked back at Mr. Railton.

"Bai Jove! We're awfully sowwy, Mr. Wailton—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas; but I want you to undahstand that we weally are awfully sowwy!"

"Silence, I say!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Oh! Yaas!"

"Disgraceful!" said Mr. Railton, eyeing the unhappy juniors with a baleful and watery eye. "You are the representative Junior Eight of the school, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"For which reason alone you ought to be most particularly careful that your behaviour on the river is exemplary," went on the Housemaster icily. "Instead of that, I find you indulging in a wild melee, to the danger of everybody else on the river. I observe that one boat has already been submerged!"

Gordon Gay, who was also running with water, ventured a remark from a safe distance.

"I'm afraid it was partly our fault, sir—" he began. But Mr. Railton stopped him with an angry gesture.

"Silence! You are, I believe, a Grammar School boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I shall consider making a report about this matter to your headmaster. As to you—" said Mr. Railton, swinging round on the luckless St. Jim's juniors.

"We—we—we really are sorry, sir!" Tom Merry managed to stutter, in abject tones.

"Yaas, wathah! As I was sayin', sir—"

"Take a hundred lines, D'Arcy!"

"Oh! Yaas, sir!"

"Disgraceful!" fumed Mr. Railton. "Such behaviour might be expected from Second Form boys; coming from the Fourth and Shell, it is intolerable."

"Oh, sir!"

"There is only one thing for it," pursued Mr. Railton. "Since you cannot be trusted to behave yourselves on the river, then the river must be placed out of bounds for you."

The St. Jim's crew jumped in their sliding-seats.

"P-p-placed out of bounds?" stuttered Tom Merry, almost dazedly.

"That is what I said, Merry. Perhaps that will be the most fitting punishment, in the circumstances. For one week from now the river will be considered as strictly out of bounds for every one of you. You understand?"

The crew of the racing shell blinked at Mr. Railton, utter dismay on their faces.

"But—but—" said Tom Merry.

Tom Merry and his crew looked at each other, their faces a study in woe.

"Well, that's done it!" remarked Jack Blake.

"Absolutely put the tin-hat on it!" groaned Herries. "Ever see Railton in such a paddy before?"

"Never!"

"Hardly to be wondered at in the circles, of course," admitted Figgins. "But just imagine it! Barred from the river for a whole week! Ye gods!"

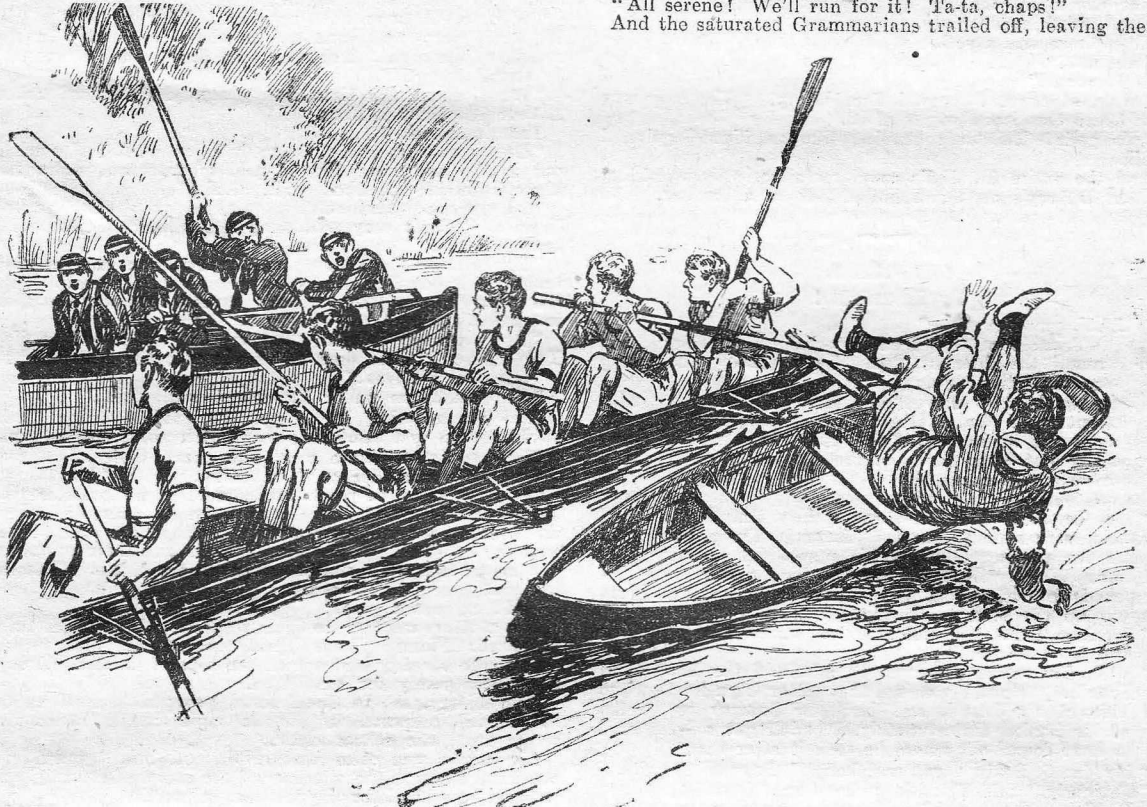
"Hopeless!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Sorry, you chaps!" called out Gordon Gay, from the bank. "I'll write to Railton if you think it'll do any good."

"'Fraid it would be useless, old bean!" said Tom Merry, with a shake of his head. "It was as much our fault as yours, anyway. And, by the way, you fellows had better run off and dry yourselves unless you want to catch your death of cold!"

"All serene! We'll run for it! Ta-ta, chaps!"

And the saturated Grammarians trailed off, leaving their



Crash! Blake felt something weighty cannon into his oar. There was a wild yell followed by a splash. "Oh, ye gods!" he cried faintly. "I've knocked Mr. Railton into the water!"

"Furthermore, those of you who belong to the School House will report to me after breakfast to-morrow for a caning. That is all. Now row back to the boathouse at once."

"But—but you can't mean it, sir!" gasped Tom Merry desperately.

Mr. Railton fixed on the Junior captain a look which at any other time might well have shrivelled him up.

"Can't mean it, Merry? Are you being impertinent?"

"Nunno, sir; but it's—it's impossible!"

"Impossible?" hooted Mr. Railton.

"We're in training for the race with Greyfriars, sir," explained Tom Merry unhappily. "Surely you're not going to put the river out of bounds just at the most critical period of our training?"

"That is precisely what I have done!" was Mr. Railton's grim answer. "You should have considered the possible consequences, Merry, before acting so riotously on the river."

"But—"

"I will listen to no argument. Return to the boathouse at once!"

And Mr. Railton, his lips set in a grim, straight line, turned on his heel and made off down the towpath at the double for St. Jim's and a much-needed towelling and change of clothing.

dry colleagues to the task of refloating the submerged boat.

Tom Merry and his crew, with feelings too deep for words, rowed their craft back to the boathouse.

It really was dreadful luck. To have their training stopped at one fell blow—at the most important time, too—was just about the worst punishment that could have befallen the St. Jim's Eight. They rowed back listlessly, and were silent as they carried in their boat—silent with the silence of despair.

"Hopeless!" repeated Tom Merry, as he led the way back across the footpath leading to St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy suddenly.

"May as well call the race off for all the chance we stand now!" said Blake, with a groan.

"Gweat Scott!"

"What's biting Gus?" asked Wally D'Arcy, with an interested glance at his major.

"Pway be silent, Wally! Look heah, you fellows, I've got a weally wippin' ideah!"

"Bury it!" begged Jack Blake. "We've quite enough trouble already, without any ripping ideas from you!"

"Weally, Blake! I'm sevvious, so pway don't wot! This ideah of mine offahs a weally wonderful way out of our difficulty. You are awah, of course, that the nights just

recently have been vewy mild, and, what is more important, bathed in bwilliant moonlight?"

"Eh?"

"What the thump have mild and moonlight nights to do with our problem?" asked Tom Merry, staring.

"Ewevythin', deah boy!"

"What the dickens—"

"Pway allow me to explain. The wivah has been placed out of bounds for us. Therefore, for us to pwactise at any time of the day is impos."

"Naturally it is, ass!"

"Undah those circs, we can get the pwactice we wequiah only in one way—"

"And what way is that, for goodness' sake?" asked Herries.

"By pwactisin' at night, by the light of the moon!" replied D'Arcy simply.

For a moment the rest of the crew stared at the swell of the Fourth speechlessly.

Then there was a yell.

"My hat!"

"Of course!"

"Why, of course!" roared Tom Merry. "The only way out! And Gus has thought of it!"

"Ye gods! This is something like an idea!" grinned Blake.

And the entire St. Jim's crew, metaphorically speaking, fell on D'Arcy's neck and hailed him as a brother.

CHAPTER 5.

By Moonlight!

"I SAY, you chaps—"

Trimble of the Fourth poked his podgy head round the door of Tom Merry's study after prep on the following day.

Study No. 10 was crowded, the entire Junior crew, with the exception of Wally D'Arcy, being there. Apparently they were not in need of Trimble's fascinating company, for at the first appearance of the fat junior there was a well-synchronised chorus of:

"Scat!"

"He, he, he! You can't spoof me; I'm deep!" said Trimble, with a podgy wink. "Anyway, I've got a brainy wheeze for putting Glyn in his place and teaching him a lesson. Which will be all for the good of the school. I happened to notice that Glyn took a whacking great hamper up the river yesterday afternoon—"

"Precious little you don't notice where other people's business is concerned!"

"Well, I'm rather observant!" admitted the Falstaff of the Fourth. "Now, I watched that rotter Glyn land on the far side of the island, and haul the hamper up to the top of the bank. Unfortunately, I hadn't got a boat, or I might have found out where he took it after that."

"My hat! Brain him, somebody!" begged Herries.

"Obviously," said Trimble, unheeding, "Glyn has hidden a whacking great store of grub on the island so that he can go there and gorge himself whenever he feels like it!"

"Bump him!" ordered Tom Merry, and made a dive for Trimble.

Bump!

"Whooop! Look here—"

Bump!

"Yarooooop!"

Six times, and then once more for luck, was Trimble deposited with a bump on the floor of Study No. 10. Then somebody opened the door, and Trimble described a graceful curve through the air, to alight with a final, terrific bump on the floor of the Shell passage.

Which exciting series of happenings entirely changed Trimble's attitude to Study No. 10. Tom Merry and his chums were not troubled by the Falstaff of the Fourth again that evening.

"Fat rotter!" remarked Herries, as he closed the door again and resumed his seat on the window-ledge. "Funny about that hamper of Glyn's, though, for all that."

"Just what I was thinking," nodded Tom Merry. "Surely it can't be grub, as Trimble assumes. Unless, of course, it's for someone else."

"Perhaps Glyn's helping an escaped convict to evade the police," suggested Figgins, who had recently been reading some rather sensational fiction.

"Perhaps rats!" laughed Tom Merry. "No bizney of ours, anyway. Let's get on with the meeting. The first problem is, are we all in favour of Gussy's brilliant wheeze for practising by moonlight?"

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"What-ho!"

"Nem, con!" grinned Redfern.

"Well, that's all right then. Of course, it will be risky—"

"No fun in life unless you take risks now and again!" said Figgins.

"Something in that. Still, it's as well to remember that it will be a jolly serious matter if we're found out."

"We'll manage it all right," declared Figgins confidently.

"I can answer for Reddy and myself, anyway."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I fancy we can all get away from the school without much risk. Of course, there's still the chance that we may be spotted on the river."

"Not much chance of that," remarked Blake. "We shall be using the loneliest part of the river, between the boathouse and the island. Nobody's likely to be anywhere near that part late at night."

"Well, we'll hope not, anyway. Now as to the kit. We can't very well turn out in shorts and vests in the middle of the night. I suggest grey flannels and sweaters."

"Good enough!"

"What about the time and place, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom pondered.

"Don't want to make it too late, or we'll feel washed out in the morning. Say a quarter past ten, under the big oak outside the school wall. O.K.?"

"All serene! Incidentally, what about a cox?" asked Herries. "Can't very well drag a kid like Gussy's young brother into it?"

"I'll turn out," volunteered Manners, who was the only tenant of Study No. 10 without a place in the crew. "By the way, Tommy, I suppose you haven't forgotten the most important thing of all—the boat?"

"Don't worry; I hold a key to the boathouse," smiled Tom Merry. "Well, does that make everything all right?"

"Right as a trivet!"

"Till ten-fifteen under the school wall, then!"

And the meeting broke up, the juniors going their various ways and discussing plans with great enthusiasm.

The conspirators were careful to guard their secret well during the remainder of the evening. It would not have done for a word to reach the ears of a tittle-tattler like Trimble. The yarn would have been all over the school in no time, and might well have reached the ears of the beaks by bed-time. So the Junior Eight and their volunteer cox kept their own counsel, not even the closest of chums being allowed into the secret.

Bed-time came.

The plotters went up to their respective dormitories fully prepared. Flannel "bags" and sweaters and rubber-soled shoes were already laid out on the tops of lockers. Everything was ready for ten-fifteen.

Tom Merry, in the Shell dorm, propped himself up on his pillow, prepared to keep a vigil till he heard ten strike from the school clock.

The night was calm and mild, and bright moonlight streamed through the windows of the room. Certainly, the weather was ideal for the business in hand.

Three-quarters chimed from the clock-tower of St. Jim's. Most of the fellows were already fast asleep.

Suddenly Tom Merry pricked up his ears.

A sound had broken the silence. It was the faint sound of somebody stirring in bed on the opposite side of the dormitory.

Tom peered across the room, trying to penetrate the shadows. Then he started slightly.

Someone had got out of bed and was dressing, swiftly and silently. At first Tom imagined that it must be one of his crew. Then he saw that it was not so.

It was Bernard Glyn.

For a moment the junior skipper felt inclined to call out to him. But wiser counsels prevailed. To have done that would, perhaps, have wakened others in the dormitory at the very time when he wanted quietness.

Anyway as Tom Merry himself was intending breaking bounds very shortly, it was hardly up to him to interfere with another fellow engaged in that felonious undertaking. But he couldn't help wondering and feeling a little uneasy over it.

Glyn's behaviour had been peculiar in more ways than one of late, and his getting up with the obvious intention of breaking bounds seemed to put the lid on it. Quite definitely there was some mystery surrounding Glyn just at present.

Tom Merry wondered.

Making hardly a sound, Bernard Glyn finished dressing, and tiptoed across to the door of the dorm.

Another instant, and he had gone.

Tom waited. The hour of ten boomed out.

After an interval of a couple of minutes or so, the

junior captain of St. Jim's sat up in bed and glanced around him. A faint rustling from other parts of the room indicated that other members of the crew were also on the move.

Tom Merry made out the faint outlines of Lowther and Manners and Talbot, and, satisfied that they were all getting up, he quietly slipped out of bed himself and started to dress.

In less than five minutes four juniors were silently creeping across to the door.

Luck was with them. The steady breathing of the rest of the Shell showed that they had awakened nobody.

Without exchanging a word the quartet quitted the dorm, Tom Merry quietly shutting the door behind them.

A breathless journey followed down the passage to a window that looked out on to the roof of an outhouse. A cautious trip across the roof, then a slide down the gutter-pipe, and the juniors found themselves on terra firma at the back of the House.

Keeping to the shadows, they scudded round the school buildings to the front of the School House, made a detour to avoid the open quadrangle, and eventually reached the school wall.

It was as they were drawing near the island, at this hour a weird-looking patchwork of silver-grey and deep black shadows, that the crew became conscious of a low, distant hum, like that of a dynamo. Almost unconsciously, as that faint sound continued, the juniors slackened speed, wondering what it could be.

Manners, the temporary cox, had his eyes towards the island.

Suddenly he uttered an exclamation:

"By Jove!"

"Anything wrong, Manners?" asked Blake.

"I'm not sure, but I think— Ease up, you chaps!" finished Manners, peering ahead.

The crew obeyed, and the boat slackened down till it was almost stationary.

"Is that something coming along from the island?" asked Tom Merry, staring over his shoulder up the river.

"I fancy it is—in fact, it is!" said Manners excitedly.

"It's a motor-boat!"

"G'wreat pip!"

"At this hour of the night?"

Manners nodded.

YOU MUSTN'T MISS THIS!



PRESENTS FROM THE EDITOR!

It doesn't matter whether you borrow a pen and ink or use your own. But what does matter is that you fill in the registration form on page 7. That's the most important thing!

Even if you've read all about our FREE GIFT SCHEME, read it all again. Then, when you've done that, do what I first mentioned—indulge in a spot of ink splashing.

ON THE WAY!

In a week or two's time I shall be telling you all about some grand changes that I am going to make in the programme of the old GEM. Don't get the wind-up, chaps. These changes are not going to be revolutionary. Oh dear no!

Variety is the spice of life, and by making a few variations, additions, and happy alterations I shall not miscalculate the wants of my many readers.

Space is very limited here, so I must cut short my remarks about these future attractions by saying that whatever I propose doing in a few weeks' time will be well received by all.

NEXT WEEK!

Now a few words about next week's programme.

There will be another rousing long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, entitled: "Skimpole the Super-Man!" We have heard of Skimpole the duffer, the bookworm, and the "softy." But the super-man, no! Sounds as though a miracle has happened—and that's very near the mark.

But Skimpole isn't the only one who comes in for a sudden change of character—there's someone else—a MASTER! But enough; don't miss this full-of-pep yarn next week.

Chick Chance and his merry adventurers are involved in further perils in next week's long instalment of our serial.

There will be another long list of Free Gift winners, and a batch of breezy and interesting answers to queries from the Oracle, to make up a very fine programme.

Cheerio until next Wednesday,

YOUR EDITOR.

At the first favourable spot they climbed over the wall, then walked to the meeting-place.

Figgins and Redfern were already there, and soon Blake and Herries and D'Arcy also put in an appearance.

"So far, so good!" remarked Tom Merry, with satisfaction. "And now for the work of the evening!"

CHAPTER 6.

The Phantom Motor-Boat!

THE boathouse was grey and shadowy in the pale light of the moon. Above, the trees rustled faintly, stirred by the slight breeze. Below, the waters of the Rhyl murmured and lapped softly up against the landing-stage supports.

It was a very different scene from that presented at the same place on a crowded summer's day. But it had the charm of novelty, and the hearts of the juniors beat a little more rapidly as they came through the trees to the front of the boathouse.

Tom Merry, as junior captain of boats, had a key to the boathouse. This he now produced and used. The main door of the boathouse swung back, and the juniors entered.

They had soon carried out the sliding-seat shell and armed themselves with oars. Then Tom locked up the boathouse again, and they launched the boat.

Practice commenced.

"I can see it now, very clearly. What shall we do, Tommy?"

"Only one thing to do—draw in to the bank and take cover in the shadows," answered Tom Merry. "We don't want to be spotted by anybody to-night; no telling who it may be. Guide her in, Manners!"

"All serene!"

One pull on Tom Merry's part was enough to send the St. Jim's boat floating into the shadows at the side of the river. Here the juniors rested on their oars and waited for the strange craft to pass.

"Bai Jove! Vewy quiet for a motah-boat, isn't she?" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"S-sh!"

The swell of the Fourth, for once, saw the wisdom of remaining quiet, and the nine juniors all waited in silence, watching for the motor-boat to make its appearance round the bend of the river.

It certainly was a peculiar circumstance that the motor-boat should be running so noiselessly. They had quite anticipated hearing the chug-chug of her engine growing louder and louder as she came down the river. Instead of which, the only sounds were the rustling of the trees, the lap of the waters against the St. Jim's boat, and that low, mysterious hum.

The juniors began to wonder whether all they had seen was a mirage, conjured out of the reflection of the moon on the river. But their growing doubts were soon dispelled.

Round the bend came a large motor-boat, ploughing a straight course in midstream down the river.

Two men were seated in it—one at the wheel, and the other standing by him, apparently smoking a cigarette. The St. Jim's juniors could see them both quite clearly, even to the extent of distinguishing their features. Yet there was a peculiarly unreal quality about them both—something unearthly, almost.

Every man in the St. Jim's boat stared, fascinated. What was it that affected them so strangely about this midnight voyager was the question uppermost in their minds.

It was a question which could have been answered immediately in the same light of day. But at midnight on a river illuminated by the ghostly moonlight, and full of weird shadows, ideas did not seem to be so well defined.

Subconsciously the juniors must have realised that the boat was running in dead silence, and that it was surrounded by a strange, phosphorescent glow. Consciously, they hardly knew what was peculiar about it.

Yet it was peculiar.

It was more than peculiar—it was unreal, unsubstantial, unearthly. Ghostly, in fact.

The thing was a phantom!

It was a startling, unnerving thought. But it occurred to the watching juniors simultaneously.

A phantom motor-boat!

Preposterous! Impossible! Each one of the St. Jim's crew would have laughed the idea to scorn a couple of hours before.

But laughter didn't seem to come very easily in these mysterious shadows. And they couldn't deny the evidence of their senses. The motor-boat was there before them, ploughing along through the water for all to see, silent as death, and glowing with that strange, faint light.

Tom Merry was no coward. But he couldn't repress a shudder.

"Ye gods!" muttered Figgins.

"Quiet!"

"What does it matter? I don't believe they can hear us. It's not a boat at all!"

"Then what is it?"

"A ghost of a boat, if you like!"

The juniors shivered.

They watched it out of sight; saw it glide round the bend heading to the St. Jim's boathouse.

The phantom motor-boat vanished.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Well, my hat!"

There was a buzz of excited comments from the startled St. Jim's crew.

"What does it mean?"

"What on earth can it be?"

"Give it up."

Tom Merry stared down the river at the bend round which the mysterious visitor had vanished, his brows contracted with thought.

"There must be an explanation—simply must!" he said.

"But what is it?" demanded Figgins. "I can't think of one myself. Except, as I say, that the thing was a phantom."

"Impossible!"

Figgins shrugged.

"I'd have said so myself, half an hour ago. But now——"

"You don't believe in ghosts, do you?"

"Well no; but——"

"Good enough then! If there are no such things as ghosts, that couldn't have been a phantom."

"Bai Jove! Aftah that expwience, I'm not so sure about not believin' in ghosts aftah all!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy soberly. "I trust I am not a coward, or a chap to be easily fwightedened. But I must admit that that boat made me feel a little queeah for a moment."

"Same here!"

"It beats the band!" confessed Tom Merry, shaking his head. "Anyway, we can't stay here all night talking about it. I suggest we push back."

"Hear hear!"

Nobody suggested staying for further practice now. Most of the juniors felt that they would be rather glad when they got back to St. Jim's again.

They swung round and paddled out to midstream, then dipped their oars and began the return journey.

Suddenly there was a sharp cry from Manners.

"It's coming again—coming back!"

"My hat!"

Eight startled oarsmen looked over their shoulders.

There was the mystery motor-boat again, advancing up the river towards them, bearing straight down on them, in fact.

Herries gave a shout of alarm.

"Quick, Manners! Turn! She'll run us down!"

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"Huwwy, deah boy!" panted Arthur Augustus.

Manners, who had been temporarily hant-dazed by the reappearance of the motor-boat, pulled desperately at his lines. But he could see, and the rest could see, that he was too late.

The phantom, or whatever it was, was already upon them.

Manners closed his eyes in the face of the impending disaster. The rest looked back dazedly.

Then a remarkable thing happened.

The mystery boat advanced on them—met them.

Then a weird glow seemed to be upon them for a couple of seconds.

But there was no crash; no tearing apart of timbers.

The St. Jim's boat rocked; but it was the movement of its crew that caused the rocking.

Nothing had happened to them!

Then there was a yell from Figgins.

"Look! It's the other side of us!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The entire crew stared dumbly. There was the motor-boat gliding silently up the river away from them.

It had passed clean through them.

"What did I tell you?" asked Figgins hoarsely.

"Ye gods!"

"Figgins is right!" declared Herries. "It's a phantom—a phantom motor-boat!"

CHAPTER 7.

A Desperate Affray!

"FEEL a bit better now, you men?" asked Tom Merry, as he locked up the boathouse ten minutes later.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Doesn't seem so bad when you're on land," observed Redfern. "Still, what a night!"

"My hat! Yes!"

"I'd give anything to know the explanation of that bizney," said Blake, frowning. "Even now, I still don't believe in ghosts."

"Bai Jove! Nor I, deah boy——"

"Thought you said just now you'd decided to believe in 'em, after all!"

"Pewwaps I did, deah boy; but I shall only believe in ghosts that are capable of scientific explanation."

"No others need apply!" murmured Lowther softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All Natuah, you see, deah boy," said the swell of the Fourth gravely, "is capable of explanation in the terms of science. I shall, therefore, wescolutely wefuse to admit the existence of ghosts which cannot be explained to my satisfaction as a scientist."

Blake groaned.

"Can it, Gus! Phantom motor-boats are bad enough, without lectures by you piled on top of 'em!"

"Weally, Blake! I am merely explainin' somethin' which should intwest any thinkin' person. Let me briefly enlighten you on the scientific point of view—whoooooop!" concluded Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"My hat! I always thought that was the Hottentot point of view!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoooooogh! Lowthah, you wottah, I believe you twod on my foot on purpose!"

"Great pip! Was that your foot? Thought it was a boulder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall wefuse to discuss the mattah any more!" declared the swell of the Fourth wrathfully. "I am weady, Tom Mewwy!"

"Good; we'll start, then. And for goodness' sake keep quiet. Remember, we're out of bounds!" said Tom Merry warningly, as he led the way down the footpath leading back to St. Jim's.

It was a timely warning, and the juniors took note of it. The journey across the fields was performed in silence.

The way they were taking led them through a tiny wood bordering on the road that led to St. Jim's. It was half-way through this wood that Manners, who was bringing up in the rear, stopped suddenly.

"Half a mo'. you chaps!" he said softly.

"What's wrong, Manners?"

"Nothing perhaps; but I think I can hear footsteps coming along behind us."

"Take cover, then!" said Tom Merry quickly. "Come behind this clump of bushes, you men!"

Tom Merry's eye had found an ideal hiding-place, big enough to shelter a dozen fellows at a time. The juniors all dropped on their knees, and were immediately hidden from the sight of anybody walking down the footpath.

Undoubtedly there were footsteps behind them. They

could be heard quite plainly now. The juniors waited breathlessly.

Nearer and nearer they came. Then a black figure became suddenly silhouetted against a gap in the trees.

Tom Merry, straining his eyes, made a faint murmur.

"It's Glyn!"

"Oh!"

"No need to hide, then—!" Herries was beginning, when Tom grasped his arm.

"Hist!"

Herries was silent again. He peered through the bushes at Glyn's oncoming figure, and saw what had caused Tom Merry to change his mind. At the same moment there was a faint gasp from one or two of the others as they also saw it.

Someone else was coming along behind Glyn—more than one person, in fact.

Three black shadows were flitting through the trees in the wake of the inventor of St. Jim's.

Glyn was being followed.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was obvious from Glyn's attitude that he was in blissful ignorance of the fact that anybody else was in the wood beside himself. The young inventor was walking slowly, his hands in his pockets, and his whole attitude suggestive of deep thought—an attitude by no means unusual in Glyn.

Glyn passed by, and was lost to sight among the trees.

Then the three dark figures of his pursuers drew level with the juniors. Tom Merry, staring at them from his place of concealment, gave a sudden start.

All three were carrying stout cudgels!

Simultaneously with that discovery, the leader of the St. Jim's juniors saw, with alarm, that the three mystery men were breaking into a run; and, as they ran, two of them raised their cudgels.

There was but one interpretation to be placed on those actions. The menacing angles at which those cudgels were being held left no doubt whatever about the matter.

They were about to attack Glyn—batter him into insensibility. Perhaps—Tom shivered at the thought—perhaps even kill him!

Why they should want to attack anyone so inoffensive as Glyn was a complete mystery. The motive was surely not robbery; thugs like this evil-looking trio would have been after bigger game than a schoolboy with possibly a few shillings in his pocket.

But there was no time to inquire into motives. Anyway, this was not the first mystery the juniors had encountered in this fateful midnight expedition.

Action was needed.

Tom Merry acted—acted almost instinctively.

As they drew level, he jumped to his feet. A fraction of a second later he was in the middle of the footpath, right in the way of these three menacing figures.

There was a gasp and a thud as one of the men cannoned into him.

A cudgel in the hand of one of the others flashed in the moonlight filtering through the trees.

"No, you don't!" came a sharp voice.

It was the voice of Figgins, of the New House. As he spoke, Figgins bounded into the open, his fists clenched. His left shot out like a flash of lightning straight to the point of the man's jaw.

The thud of the blow could be heard quite distinctly. The man's head jerked back, and the ugly weapon dropped from his nerveless hand before it could reach its objective.

"Good old Figgy!" muttered Jack Blake. "Back him up, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The rest of the juniors, grim and determined, tumbled out eagerly from their hiding-place, ready and anxious to get to grips with the ruffians.

The men were rather naturally taken unawares. An ambush in that quiet little wood at midnight must have been the last thing they expected.

Almost before they could collect their senses the remaining two had been dispossessed of their cudgels. Then, with a swarm of juniors pressing round them, they seemed to come to a realisation of what had happened.

A string of furious oaths burst from the lips of the one who had been leading. Oaths they must have been; the tone in which they were uttered made that quite clear. But they were foreign oaths, in a language which was unfamiliar to the juniors. French and German were both taught at St. Jim's, but the language these men spoke bore no resemblance to either of those.

The men were aliens. As Blake remarked afterwards, their behaviour wasn't exactly in accord with English traditions, so that was not surprising.

Snarling, the two ruffians hit out. The third, who had

fallen under Figgins' swift blow, also scrambled to his feet and joined in the melee.

For a full minute a fight was in progress—a fight in which no quarter was asked for or given. Tom Merry and his chums were one and all at home in a "scrap." But this was something rather new in their experience. The ruthlessness and ferocity with which the mysterious trio fought was amazing.

They fought like wildcats.

"Back up!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The St. Jim's chums piled in, hitting out desperately in an endeavour to "down" the ruffians.

It was not very easy. All three were powerfully-built men, and their behaviour showed that this was not the first affray of its kind in their experience.

There were no rules of fair play so far as they were concerned. They kicked and butted as freely as they hit out, and more than one of the juniors collapsed under a savage hacking of the shin.

"You rotters!" choked Figgins, as Redfern fell to a particularly brutal kick.

Weight of numbers, however, began to tell, and the blood of the juniors was up now. Another half-minute, and there could be no doubt that they would have made the men prisoners.

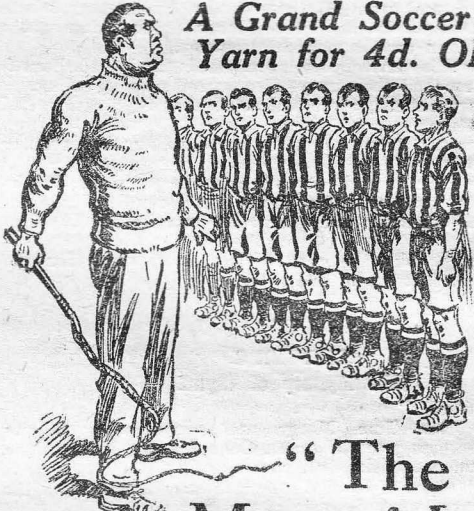
But the ruffians had foresight. As the tide of battle began to turn, one of them uttered a quick guttural remark.

It was evidently an order. A couple of seconds later, as if by a common impulse, all three turned on their heels and fled.

"After them!" yelled Figgins, as they vanished through the trees.

(Continued on next page.)

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But Tom Merry signalled otherwise.

"Hold on, you men! No good chasing them!"

"We've saved Glyn from a nasty accident, anyway!" remarked Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins glared through the wood, his eyes flashing fire.

"Why not chase the rotters? They ought to be handed over to the police!"

"Steady on, old bean; remember we're out of bounds. We don't want anything to do with the police to-night."

"I'd like to catch those scoundrels and give them a thrashing, anyway!" growled the leader of the New House juniors truculently.

"Perhaps so; but we've had quite enough trouble for one night."

"More than enough for my liking!" said Redfern, with a shaky laugh. "By the way, I notice Glyn didn't come back."

"Must have got too far ahead to hear; and anyway, he was miles away in his thoughts when he passed, by the look of him," said Lowther. "My opinion is that Glyn's a silly ass!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What beats me, though, is why they wanted to go for him," remarked Blake wonderingly. "The whole thing's a blessed mystery; Glyn declining to row for the Junior Eight, then breaking bounds, and finally being followed by a gang of foreign thugs."

"Not forgetting the phantom motor-boat!" added Manners. "I suppose that can't have any connection with it?"

"Don't see how it can. But let's get back. I'm for bed!"

"Same here!"

And the whole crowd turned their footsteps rather gladly in the direction of St. Jim's.

Figgins and Redfern parted from the School House section in the quad, and went off towards the New House, while the rest returned to the School House by the same route they had taken on the outward journey.

There were fortunately no more shocks, and both Fourth and Shell reached their respective dormitories in safety.

Tom Merry noticed, as he undressed, that Glyn was in bed and fast asleep.

What was the strange mystery surrounding the inventor of the Shell?

Tom turned in to bed puzzling over the problem. But he didn't puzzle it out very far, for within a couple of minutes of his head touching the pillow he was in the land of dreams.

Tom Merry, like the rest of his crew, slept for the remainder of that night like a top.

CHAPTER 8.

The Mystery of Glyn I

"YAW-AW!"

Thus Tom Merry and eight other fellows belonging to the Lower School at St. Jim's at the sound of rising-bell next morning.

"Feel all right, Tommy?" asked Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three went downstairs together.

Tom Merry laughed a little ruefully.

"So—so; not too good after that scrap in the wood. My chin feels as though it has been through a mangle."

"What about my eye?" groaned Manners, caressing a sadly blackened organ of vision, with great tenderness.

"And my nose; I'll swear it's double its normal size!" said Lowther. "Those blessed foreigners left a few mementos behind 'em!"

"Glyn hasn't spoken to you yet, I suppose, Tommy?" inquired Manners.

"Not yet; I don't think he has any idea what happened behind him last night. We'll see him after brekker and enlighten him."

After breakfast, the Terrible Three went along to Study No. 11, where they found Bernard Glyn alone, his study-mates, Harry Noble and Clifton Dane, being still in Hall.

The inventor of the Shell nodded cheerfully to the newcomers.

"Trot in, chaps. What can I do for you?"

Tom Merry eyed Glyn rather grimly.

"We've come for an explanation; I think it's due to us."

"Hear, hear!" from Lowther and Manners.

Glyn looked keenly at the Terrible Three.

"Fire away, then. If I can help you, I will."

"I think you can. It's about last night."

Glyn started slightly.

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"Oh!"

"Surprised, eh?" asked Tom Merry. "You thought nobody noticed you go out?"

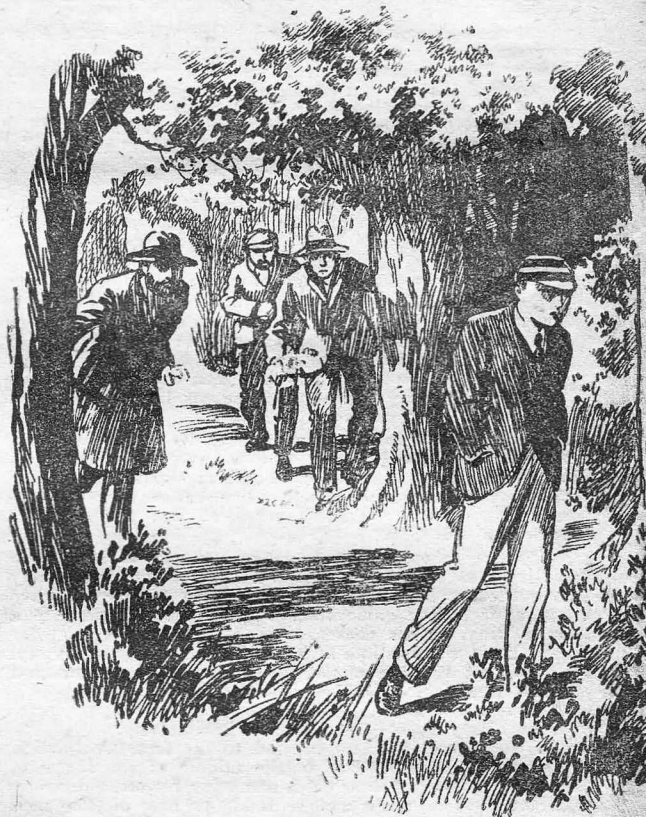
"I didn't know I'd been spotted, certainly," admitted Glyn. "Anyway, what of it? I haven't done anything I'm ashamed of."

"Didn't say you had, old bean. The point is that an explanation seems called for in view of the fact that you got us into rather serious trouble."

"Got you into trouble?" asked Glyn, staring.

"Just that! News to you, I suppose? Well, you'd have known all about it if you hadn't been so buried in thought while going through the wood to Rycombe Lane."

Glyn rose to his feet, astonishment in his face.



"What on earth do you mean? How do you know I was in the wood?"

"Because we saw you!"

"Well, my hat! Where the dickens were you, then?"

"About two feet away from you, hiding in the bushes. Rather lucky for you that we were, as it turned out!"

"I don't quite follow you."

"Perhaps you'll understand, then, when I tell you that at the time you were walking through the woods, you were being trailed by three foreigners who were out to waylay you."

The St. Jim's inventor jumped.

"Foreigners out to waylay me?"

"That's what I said."

"Pooty?" inquired Glyn.

"Not exactly. If you'll look us over, you'll see a certain amount of evidence that we've recently been in rather a thick sort of scrap. That scrap was on your account in the wood last night."

Bernard Glyn scratched his head, apparently hardly knowing whether to take the matter seriously or not.

"Blessed if I know whether you're leg-pulling or what you're getting at," he remarked at last. "But I must admit that I went through the wood last night. What on earth were you doing there?"

Tom explained. Bernard Glyn listened in astonishment. "Great Scott! Then—then you were on the river last night?" he exclaimed, when Tom had finished.

"We were."

"Did you see—" Glyn hesitated.

The Terrible Three looked at him sharply.

"We saw something rather extraordinary, if that's what

you're referring to," said Tom Merry. "A motor-boat—or at least, it appeared to be a motor-boat until we found that it was only a phantom. Did you see it?"

"I—what rot!" said Glyn sharply. "Phantom motor-boat? You must have been seeing things!"

"We were; but we all saw it—every man-jack of us. And we still don't know what it was."

"Probably a few shadows," should suggest," said Glyn, with a laugh that sounded rather forced. "Surprising how deceptive things can be in the moonlight—"

"Don't talk bosh, Glyn! Nine o. us wouldn't imagine the same thing at the same time. Strikes me you're looking a bit queer about this bizny. Know anything about it?"

"Why should I?"

Tom Merry & Co. crouched back in the bushes. Three black shadows were fitting through the trees in the wake of the inventor of St. Jim's.



Tom Merry frowned.

"That's no answer. If you do, I think you ought to tell us what you know. But that doesn't matter so much as the other affair. We were involved in a jolly serious scrap with ruffians because of you and on that subject, anyway, we ought to have an explanation."

Bernard Glyn hesitated, his brow corrugated with thought. "I—well, I'm afraid I can't give you one," he said, after a pause. "Of course, I'm grateful to you if you saved me from footpads—"

"They were not ordinary footpads."

"Well, whatever they were, I'm jolly grateful. You chaps know me well enough to be sure that I mean that."

"That's all very well, old man. But I think you ought to tell us something about it. If you're in danger, we'd like to know why. Probably we can help."

"It's very good of you. But—well, I can't very well say anything."

"Which means he won't!" grunted Lowther. "Best thing to do is to bump the silly ass! We shall get a bit of satisfaction that way!"

"Something in that!" grinned Manners. "Collar him!" Bernard Glyn backed away.

"Keep off, you chaps! Look here! I'd like to, but—"

"But you're not going to, I suppose!" snorted Lowther. "Up with him!"

And the Terrible Three, their patience exhausted, lifted him.

Bump!
"Yarooooogh!" roared Bernard Glyn, his mental troubles giving place suddenly to troubles of a definitely physical kind.

And by the time Tom Merry and his chums had bumped him six times, Bernard Glyn's emotions toward them were no longer of the kind that might be called conflicting.

The Terrible Three, having finished their task, snook the dust of Study No. 11 from their feet, and went off to morning classes, the bell for which had just begun to ring.

Bernard Glyn, groaning, dusted himself, and followed them.

CHAPTER 9.

The Phantom Again!

"HALF a minute, you chaps—" said Tom Merry, with a shake of his head. "We've got nothing to lend, no needs to give away, and we don't want to hear the latest heyhole gossip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Trimble snorted.

"Beast! Good mind not to go on, now. But I will, all the same. I know jolly well you'll be interested. That rotter Glyn—"

Tom Merry paused in the stroll he was taking round the quad with Lowther and Manners, and eyed Trimble with a baleful eye.

"Are you going to talk about that hamper again? Because, if you are—"

"Nunno! Not at all, old chap!" gasped Trimble. "The very last thing I was thinking about, as a matter of fact! I—I was merely going to tell you something, as a matter of interest. It's about Glyn. Glyn has got leave to stay at his pater's house to-night. There! What do you think of that?"

"Not much!" grinned Lowther. "What the thump does it matter to us where Glyn is going to stay to-night?"

"Well, it jolly well does matter, to my mind!" grunted Trimble. "Glyn's been queer just lately. You chaps know that he broke bounds the night before last, because you were out, too—"

"Why, you fat rotter—"

"How the thump did you find that out?" demanded Manners.

"I—I—one of my pals told me, old chap! But, anyway, perhaps you don't know that he broke bounds last night, too?"

"You—you—"

"There's something behind it all, depend on it!" said Trimble. "What's more, I know what it is!"

"Is there anything you don't know?" asked Tom Merry sarcastically.

"Well, there isn't much, I admit!" said Trimble, with a podgy grin. "Anyway, I'll tell you my theory. I think that Glyn's going to the island up the river every night so as to gorge away to his heart's content without having to hand anything out!"

"My hat!"

"Everything points to it; you can't get away from that. And if I'm not mistaken, Glyn has got leave to-night so that he can go and have his feed without taking any risks. There's bound to be plenty left still. If you'd seen that hamper—"

"That's enough; you've mentioned the hamper. Come on, chaps!" said Tom Merry, turning on his heel.

Trimble grunted.

"Half a mo! I've got a suggestion to make to you—"

"Make it to us while we're walking!"

"Right ho, then! Here it is! Here, don't walk so blessed fast; I can hardly kik-kik-keep up with you! Poof! Beasts!" yelled the Falstaff of the Fourth as the Terrible Three vanished round a corner of the School House.

After shaking a podgy fist after the three cheery Shell juniors, Trimble rolled off to expound his theory to more willing ears—if such could be found.

"Queer, though, about old Glyn," commented Tom Merry, as he and his chums returned to the House. "I didn't know he'd been out on the tiles again last night; but no doubt Trimble is right: he usually is."

"Funny about his staying at Glyn House for to-night, too," remarked Lowther. "Wonder if we shall run into him again in the wood, like we did on the last practice night?"

"And I wonder if we shall see anything of that blessed phantom boat," added Manners. "Funny bizney, that!"

Tom Merry nodded. "I've thought a lot about it, since. Can't say I feel very scared about it, now. I shall be glad to have an opportunity of quizzing at it, as a matter of fact!"

"Same here. Hallo, here's Glyn!" finished Monty Lowther, as they went up the School House steps.

Bernard Glyn nodded to the Terrible Three.

"How's practice?" he asked.

"Non est, at the moment!" replied Tom Merry, with a wry smile. "We're hoping to get away to-night and put in an hour; moon's rising later, and it will be impossible in a few days' time."

"Hard cheese, Railton putting the bar up like that," commented Glyn; then he added casually: "I suppose you'll keep away from the island after that—er—phantom business the other night?"

Tom Merry gave the inventor a sharp glance.

"I don't know that we shall. Why?"

"Oh, nothing! River's wider and not so shady lower down, and I should have thought it would have suited you better there, that's all."

"Having a night away to-night, I hear," remarked Manners.

Glyn nodded.

"Trotting over to see the pater, for once in a way. I'll be back for morning classes, of course."

"And if you take my tip, you'll stick tight to Glyn House," said Tom Merry gravely. "After that rumpus the other night, it's up to you to take no risks."

"Oh, I'll be all right!" said Glyn carelessly, preparing to leave them. "Don't overdo it to-night!"

And, with a nod, the inventor of the Shell went his way. That night, for the second time, the Junior Eight and Manners crept out of their dormitories and met, as before, under the old oak outside the school wall.

The juniors were all in high spirits. A good night's rest the night before had enabled them to recover fully from the effects of their previous adventures, and they were anxious to get to their oars again.

The interval had also given them time to forget such few superstitious fears as they had entertained regarding the mysterious river phantom. Indeed, most of them were with Tom Merry in rather hoping that they would again encounter it. The problem of that strange, immaterial craft was puzzling and intriguing to every fellow in the crew.

They were soon out on the river again. It was a slightly gloomier river than before, the moon being lower in the sky, and a little misty at that. But there was sufficient light to enable them to row at racing speed without danger.

An hour sped by. Nothing happened to interrupt them

at their work, and they made excellent progress. Tom Merry felt more than satisfied with his crew.

Possibly influenced unconsciously by Glyn's remarks, Tom went a little lower down the river on this occasion, and it was not until the full hour had passed that they returned anywhere near the island.

Approaching the bend where they had previously encountered the phantom motor-boat for the first time, Tom gave the order to "ease up."

It was just after he had given that order that the first untoward event of the evening happened.

A shout rang out suddenly on the still air, then another, ending up on a note of sheer terror.

"Help! Rescue! Help!"

Everybody in the St. Jim's boat stiffened at the sound of those desperate, terrified yells. Manners craned his neck, looking towards the island, from the direction of which the shouts seemed to be coming.

"What is it?" asked Redfern hoarsely.

"I can't see; pull her on a few more lengths."

Eight oars dipped, and the racing-shell moved lightly through the water towards the island. Then, as they rounded the bend, there was a shout from Manners:

"The phantom!"

"What?"

"It's the phantom again, and—and—"

"Anything else?"

"Yes; there's a fellow in a boat not far off the island. The phantom's making straight for him. By the look of the fellow he's scared."

"By the sound of him, too!" remarked Tom Merry, as another wild shriek rang out. "Guide her over, Manners; we're not scared of a blessed phantom this time!"

"No fear!"

The St. Jim's boat shot through the water towards the island. In a few seconds it had reached its objective.

"Ease up!" called out Manners sharply.

The crew lowered their oars in the water, and the racing-shell slackened down to stop only a few yards from the small skiff towards which Manners had steered.

Tom Merry looked round. Then he uttered a cry.

"Trimble!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Manners. "Of all people in the world—Trimble!"

"Ye gods!"

"Help! Help!" came a shriek from the Falstaff of the Fourth, as he cowered, trembling, at the bottom of his boat. "Rescue! It's coming! Look at it! Save me!"

"All right, fatty! We're here!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Nothing to be scared of, Trimble!"

"Look at it!" shrieked Trimble, pointing.

The crew of the St. Jim's boat looked, and in spite of themselves one or two of them could hardly repress a

(Continued on next page.)

Result of

"Who Kicked Them" Competition.

In our recent competition, no reader sent in an entirely correct solution to the four sets of puzzles. The SIX "MEAD" CYCLES are therefore won by the following six entrants whose efforts each contained only one error:

- J. E. Barnes, "Beech Hill," Higham Lane, Nuneaton.
- J. Barnett, 32, Spring Gardens, Shrewsbury.
- L. Harris, 297, Walworth Road, London, S.E.17.
- Miss P. Potter, 23, Brunswick Street, Garston, Liverpool.
- E. J. Staples, Castle Eaton, Cricklade, Wilts.
- P. A. Ward, 53, Lytton Road, Leicester.

Twenty-five readers qualified for THE TWELVE WEMBLEY CUP FINAL TICKETS, so the value of the tickets has been added together and the total amount divided among the following:

- W. Barton, 13, North Leys, Ashbourne, Derbys; G. Bessent, 76, Barnwell Road, Brixton, S.W.2; L. Bisby, 3, Fair View, Grant Street, Birmingham; R. Brindle, 52, Fairfield Street, Accrington;

- J. Burgess, 285, Thimble Mill Lane, Nechells, Birmingham;
- E. Canning, 171, Boundary Road, Leyton, E.; C. Day, 258, Marsh Hill, Erdington, Birmingham; H. Donaldson, 62, King's Ride, Camberley, Surrey; Alec Duff, 3, Hampden Place, Mt. Florida, Glasgow; Billy Ellis, Shore Street, Beaulieu; D. Goldhill, 161, Walm Lane, Cricklewood, N.W.2; H. Grove, 45, Bamville Road, Ward End, Birmingham; Alan Harvey, 18, Walthool Gardens, Tottenham, N.17; R. Herbert, 2, Middleton Road, Banbury, Oxon; Joseph Hewson, 1, Hall Lane, Cronton, near Widnes, Lancs; R. Housley, 5/4, Mitchell Street, Sheffield; D. Hughes, 53, Ash Road, Sutton, Surrey; J. Lennie, 28, Belleville Road, London, S.W.11; S. McCarroll, 62, Aldren's Lane, Lancaster; Gilbert Miller, St. James Street, Castle Hedingham, Essex; J. Mytton, 44, Lea Road, Wolverhampton; Desmond Payne, 44, Stone Street, Maidstone, Kent; A. A. Porter, Victoria Street, Wragby, Lincs; F. A. Skillin, 136, North View Road, Hornsey, N.8; H. Wilkins, 37, Peacock Street, Gravesend.

The Footballers' Names were:

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1. Cook | 9. Seed | 17. Walker | 25. Handley |
| 2. Jack | 10. England | 18. Puddetoot | 26. Clay |
| 3. Pearson | 11. Naylor | 19. Wilson | 27. Rocks |
| 4. Webster | 12. Earle | 20. Penn | 28. Keen |
| 5. Hallday | 13. James | 21. Castle | 29. Gibbins |
| 6. Dean | 14. Pierce | 22. Camsell | 30. Price |
| 7. Ball | 15. Dimmock | 23. Goodwin | 31. Keenor |
| 8. Miles | 16. Rouse | 24. Littlewood | 32. Taylor |

shudder. Once more, as on that other occasion, the phantom motor-boat was gliding eerily through the water towards them. Just as before, the same two men were in it; one at the wheel and the other sitting back, apparently smoking a cigarette.

"Help!" shrieked Trimble again.

The juniors stared at the advancing phantom fascinated. They were prepared now to experience that peculiar sensation of being covered with light for a couple of seconds, to find at the end that they had passed completely through it.

But this time it didn't happen.

Just as Trimble shrieked out his final "Help!" the weird glow surrounding the phenomenon seemed to diminish in intensity.

The phantom stopped—stopped dead.

At the same time that low humming noise which the juniors had previously noticed near the island also ceased.

"Hallo, hallo! Look!" yelled Figgins.

The juniors rubbed their eyes.

The phantom had vanished as completely as if the river had swallowed it up!

"Gone!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Oh, great pip!"

"There's not a sign of it anywhere!"

"Help! Help!" came a lusty roar from Trimble of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All serene, Baggy!" grinned Blake. "But what the thump are you doing out here at this hour?"

"Ow! I say, you chaps, is that you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, good! I say, you chaps, I wasn't scared; not a bit of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! I wasn't a bit frightened, you know; I was just yelling out to warn you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Matter of fact, I'm as brave as a lion. If that blessed thing came back—"

"Here it is again!" yelled Herries.

"Yarooogh! Help! Murder! Save me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Where is it? I—I say—" gasped Trimble.

"False alarm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble subsided at that.

"Beast! But I say, you chaps, I'm glad you turned up. You see," he explained, "I came out with the idea of having a look round the island to see just what Glyn did with that hamper—"

"My hat!"

"But I can't very well go on alone now. Some other chaps seem to have got wind of it as well."

Tom Merry stared across at Trimble in the greyish light.

"What do you mean, Trimble?"

Trimble pointed a podgy finger in the direction of the island.

"Why, three hefty-looking fellows have just rowed across there from the bank and landed on the far side."

Tom gave a convulsive start.

"Three fellows? Can you describe them?"

"Blessed if I know why you want me to describe them! They had dark, soft hats on, and coats pulled up to their chins—"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" exclaimed Figgins. "The thugs!"

The juniors stared at each other in silence.

CHAPTER 10.

Glyn's Visitor!

"H E'S here, pater?"

Bernard Glyn asked the question eagerly as he shook hands with his father in the latter's study at Glyn House.

Mr. Glyn smiled and nodded.

"I have just left him in the library, my boy. He is very anxious indeed to see your invention demonstrated."

"Oh, good! Don't mind if I leave you and trot along to see him, do you?"

And Bernard Glyn, without even waiting for an answer, quitted his father's study and fairly raced along to the library.

A visitor was waiting in that fine apartment—a tall, soldierly man, with keen, steely-grey eyes. As the St. Jim's junior burst into the room he rose from an armchair and greeted the newcomer with a nod and a faint, rather pleasant smile.

"Master Glyn, I suppose?"

"That is so, sir. And you, of course, are Major Fortescue from the War Office?"

"At your service, Master Glyn!" assented the visitor good-humouredly. "How are the experiments going?"

"O.K., and A.I at Lloyd's!" replied Glyn enthusiastically. "And everything's ready for the demonstration. I'm afraid it will mean a bit of a walk for you—"

"Well, I haven't quite lost the use of my legs yet, Glyn, so that will be all right!" laughed Major Fortescue. Then his expression became suddenly serious. "You have observed my instructions to keep everything quiet?"

"Absolutely."

"That is important. If your invention is anywhere near so remarkable as it sounds from such details as you have submitted to me, secrecy is essential. You believe that you have achieved a satisfactory stereoscopic effect?"

"I am certain of it, sir."

"And you think that the principle can be applied on a much bigger scale?"

"As big as you like. That's why I got the pater to get in touch with you," said Glyn. "With the apparatus I have designed it will be possible to project stereoscopic pictures of armies, battle-fleets, air-fleets, or anything else to any distance. An air-fleet, for instance, can be projected into the sky, seemingly advancing on a certain objective, and thereby drawing the defenders' barrage. While they are firing at the imitation, the real fleet can be advancing on them from a different direction altogether."

The major nodded.

"Ingenious, Glyn; if, as you think, it really does work, the idea could be worked to an unlimited extent in war. I am deeply interested."

"And I'm jolly glad you are, sir, for I'm confident that it's a practical proposition."

"You are sure that you have kept the matter completely quiet, that nobody else knows anything about it?"

Bernard Glyn frowned.

"Fraid I can't go so far as that. I have had to experiment, of course. At first I could carry on well enough at school, but for the final tests I had to find a bigger area to work in, and some of the fellows have seen the results."

"You mean your school chums?"

Glyn nodded.

"It was rather an unfortunate coincidence. At the very time when I broke bounds to carry out my night tests the Junior Eight's rowing crew started practice at night-time."

The man from the War Office stared.

"Do they usually practise rowing at night in this part of the globe?"

"Not exactly!" said Bernard Glyn, with a chuckle.

And he explained what had led to the Junior Eight's appearance on the river so late, Major Fortescue listening with an amused smile to the recital.

"And they saw you experimenting?" asked the major.

"No. As you know already, I have been experimenting from the top of a little hill on an island up the river, and the fellows didn't come near the island. What they saw was the motor-boat shape I was projecting."

"Did they believe it to be real?" asked Major Fortescue eagerly.

"They did, I think, until it got too close to them; then they saw for themselves that it didn't really exist."

"Your friends must surely have been surprised?"

"They were. The only explanation they could think of was that it was a ghostly phantom!" said Bernard Glyn, with a laugh. "It looks genuine enough, I can assure you, when I'm projecting it along the water."

"And yet it consists merely of a series of photographs of the original boat, pieced together and projected through the air by means of your apparatus?"

Bernard Glyn nodded.

"Just that. Including, by the way, my father at the wheel and a cousin of mine sitting behind him."

(Continued on next page.)

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"Most interesting," commented the major. He bestowed another keen glance on Glyn. "And you say you have said nothing to any of your friends?"

"Nothing whatever. So far as I know myself, the pater and you are the only people in the world who are aware of the existence of the invention. Oh, I was forgetting a queer little affair the other night—"

"What was that?" asked Major Fortescue sharply.

"Why, I'm told that on my way back to the school I was followed by three foreigners—"

"What!" exclaimed the major, the lines round his mouth suddenly becoming grim and hard.

"Funnily enough, I didn't know anything about it till afterwards. But the rowing crew spotted these merchants, it seems, just as they were going for me, and had a rare old tussle before they licked them. It made me wonder whether—"

"Whether it was anything to do with your invention?" broke in the man from the War Office. "Well, Glyn, there is no need for you to wonder further. Without a shadow of doubt that incident was connected with your invention!"

"My hat!"

"I have suspected for some time that secret agents of a foreign Power are in some way obtaining access to War Office correspondence; now I have proof of it. You remember, Glyn, the letter you wrote me in which you outlined your plans for breaking bounds and experimenting on the river?"

"I remember it, sir. It was the same letter in which I assured you that I always carried my plans and designs in my pocket."

"Exactly. That letter," said Major Fortescue impressively, "has disappeared."

"My hat! And you suspect that foreign spies have got it?"

"I feel sure of it."

"Then—then I suppose those rotters that followed me the other night were after my plans?"

"Undoubtedly they were," said Major Fortescue gravely. "It's a mercy your school chums were on the spot to act as they did. If I judge them rightly, they would have stopped at nothing to get those plans from you."

"Great Scott! I had no idea it was so bad as that, although I must say I rather wondered when I heard about this waylaying bizney—"

"Well, and how are you two getting along?" broke in Mr. Glyn, entering the library at that moment.

The major, probably guessing that Mr. Glyn would not have felt very happy to know that his son had been the intended victim of desperate foreign spies, signalled to Glyn to remain quiet, and turned to the newcomer with a smile.

"Very well indeed, thank you, Mr. Glyn," he replied. "I feel like congratulating you on your son; he is a boy to be proud of. This invention of his seems to me to be of the utmost importance, and I am very anxious indeed to see his demonstration."

"Well, there's no reason why we should postpone it any longer, sir," said Glyn. "If you're ready, we'll set out in a few minutes. Will you come, pater?"

"I'd like to, Bernard; but I've a lot of business papers to read before bed-time; so if you'll excuse me, major—"

"Pray don't mention it, my dear sir; it is good of you to have extended your hospitality to me as you have. Well, Glyn, I am ready as soon as you are," concluded the major, turning to the St. Jim's junior.

And a few minutes later the two set out on their walk to the Rhyl.

It was not far from Glyn House to the river, and the walk was a pleasant one in the moonlight. Not that the schoolboy inventor and his guest noticed such things as the moon. They were, as a matter of fact, too much engrossed in the technical details of Glyn's invention to notice their surroundings to any extent.

Had they been a little less engrossed, they might have noticed, as they drew near the river, three dark shadows flitting across a meadow adjoining the footpath they were traversing.

But neither Major Fortescue nor Bernard Glyn noticed those shadows, and they got into the boat, which Glyn had moored in readiness, without a suspicion that they were being followed.

CHAPTER 11.

Trapped!

"HERE we are!" Bernard Glyn dropped lightly down into his dugout on the island, and switched on an electric torch as he spoke.

Major Fortescue, following more slowly, glanced round the place, his keen eyes taking in everything.

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"You could hardly have chosen a better place for hiding your apparatus, Glyn," he remarked. "Casual visitors might walk over this spot hundreds of times without once suspecting the existence of anything like this underneath."

"Which is the very reason why I came here," chuckled Glyn. "Here's the apparatus. There's nothing in it I haven't already explained to you. As you see, it's a little crude in parts, and it can be improved a lot; but it's good enough to work, and that's the main thing."

The major ran his eye approvingly over the apparatus, which, despite the maker's faint praise, was put together in a very neat and workmanlike manner. It consisted principally of a large black box, surmounted by a kind of pyramid which gave the whole the appearance of an enormous press camera. At the side of the box were two dials, a handle, and half a dozen glass plates; and at the front, two projecting levers, apparently connected with leads of flex running from the box to a large battery resting beside it.

"Excellent!" pronounced Major Fortescue. "Now, I take it, we have to get the whole thing up on the slope outside?"

"That's the idea, sir. If you'd like to help, I'll disconnect the battery, and you can take that up to begin with."

"With pleasure."

Two pairs of hands halved the work that Bernard Glyn was accustomed to doing on his own, and in a very short space of time the apparatus had been moved completely up into the open air.

Glyn pointed out the spot from which he worked, and the major helped in erecting it there. The battery was reconnected, and then Glyn's hands worked like lightning on the levers and dials connected with his mysterious creation, while the major stood watching intently.

Glyn at last gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"O.K. now, I fancy. The only thing left to do is to adjust her for position."

"A question of where we want this motor-boat of yours to start—eh?" asked the man from the War Office.

"Just that. If you'll just point out a position, I'll fix the sights for you."

Major Fortescue looked down the river towards the little beach where Tom Merry and his crew had landed in the course of their encounter with Gordon Gay & Co. a few days before.

"That'll do," he said, indicating the river at that spot.

Glyn nodded, and turned the handle at the side of the box, an act which had the effect of slowly revolving the pyramid top. After a few turns he stopped, then pressed one of the levers and revolved both the dials.

A low-pitched, humming noise began to proceed from the box, increasing in intensity, until it had become a steady drone.

Major Fortescue looked towards the spot he had indicated, and brought out a pair of field-glasses.

Then he uttered a sharp exclamation:

"Good gad!"

His correspondence and conversation with Glyn had prepared him already for the phenomenon he had come to witness; but, notwithstanding all that, he experienced quite a shock to observe, for the first time, the gradual appearance of a very real-looking motor-boat from the thin air.

The phantom motor-boat was there, at the very spot he had himself selected—the same phantom that the Junior Eight had already seen in the course of their first nocturnal excursion.

"See it?" asked Bernard Glyn, unable to conceal the note of triumph in his voice.

"Good gad! It's wonderful!" breathed the man from the War Office, regarding the phantom motor-boat through his field-glasses. "I can even distinguish the features of your father quite distinctly."

"No reason why you shouldn't!" chuckled the inventor of St. Jim's. "Now I'll start her off down the river. It's just a question of directional control. Ready?"

And Bernard Glyn began to turn the handle with one hand, adjusting the other controls with his free hand.

The phantom motor-boat moved slowly off from the island down the river. The major followed its movements through his field-glasses with considerable interest.

Suddenly he started.

"Hallo, hallo! Somebody's on the river in a boat—a boy, I think."

"Has he spotted anything?" asked Glyn.

"Good gad, yes! He's standing up now, in a fearful state, by the look of him! In fact, the fellow's shouting!" And, by way of confirmation of the major's statements, a terrified yell suddenly floated up from the river.

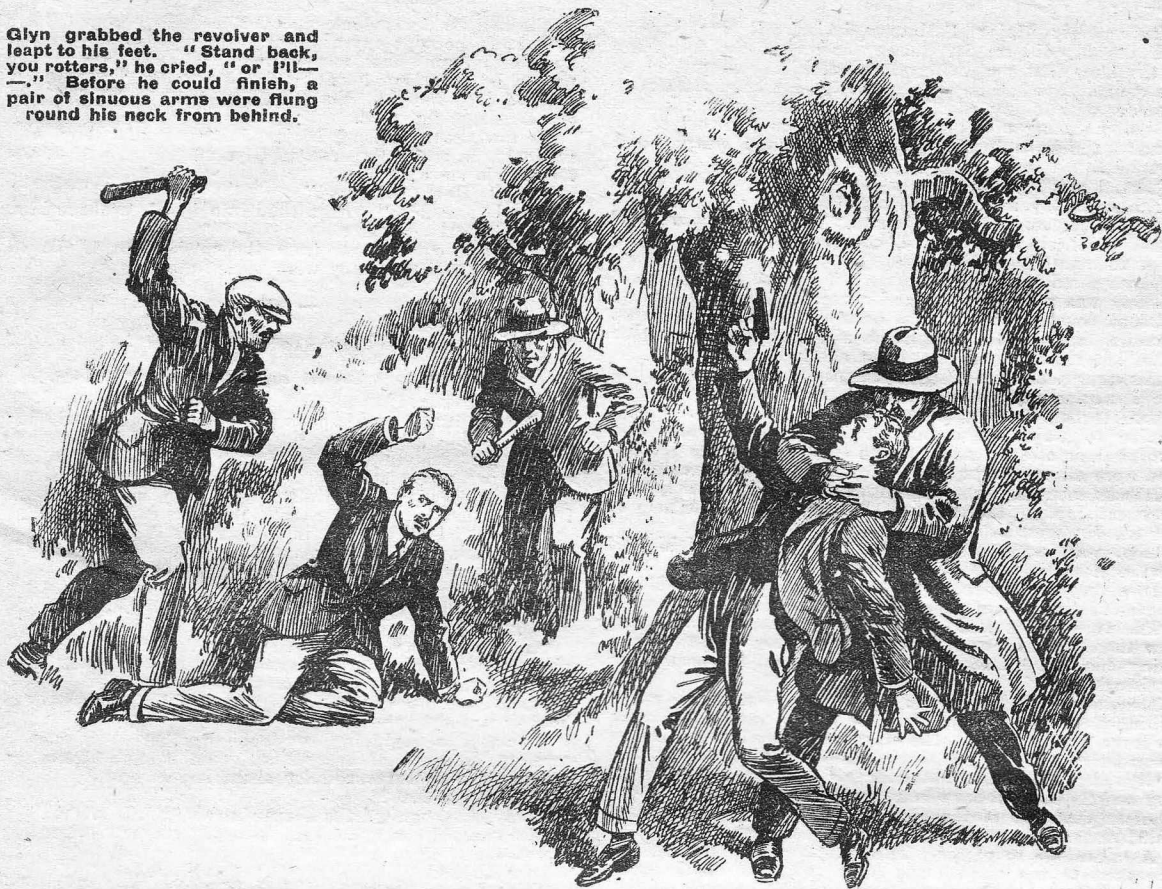
"Help! Help! Save me!"

Bernard Glyn jumped.

"Great pip! I recognise that voice!"

"Help! Murder! Police!"

Glyn grabbed the revolver and leapt to his feet. "Stand back, you rotters," he cried, "or I'll—." Before he could finish, a pair of sinuous arms were flung round his neck from behind.



"My only hat! It's Trimble, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Trimble?"

"A fellow belonging to the school," explained Glyn. "Perhaps we'd better switch off. Blessed nuisance, Trimble butting in like this! Just like the silly ass!"

Major Fortescue grunted.

"Our luck's out, Glyn. There's a racing-skiff coming round the bend now, heading straight for your friend Trimble."

"The Junior Eight, of course. Why the thump couldn't they keep lower down the river, as I asked them to?" demanded Glyn, with a frown. "I'll switch off."

He released his hold on the handle and depressed one of the levers.

When he glanced over to the spot where the Junior Eight and Trimble had met, all traces of the motor-boat had vanished.

"Perhaps your friends will go away now and leave the river clear for a good trial," suggested the major.

Glyn nodded.

"I hope so. Trimble, for one, won't be anxious to stay on the water much longer—Hallo! What the thump—"

The inventor of St. Jim's broke off suddenly, and wheeled sharply round.

A sharp sound had fallen on his ears. Bernard Glyn couldn't be sure, but he felt that that sound was suspiciously like the crackling of a twig being trodden under-foot.

Major Fortescue gripped him suddenly by the wrist.

"Someone's in that clump of bushes at the back of us, Glyn. Get the apparatus back to the dugout. Quietly does it!"

Bernard Glyn, without replying, lifted up the entire apparatus and cautiously began stepping down the slope leading to his dugout. The major remained behind, his tall figure alert and motionless.

His heart beating rapidly, the St. Jim's junior lowered his burden into the little chamber which he had made his headquarters on the island. Then he swung himself through the aperture, switched on the torch, and hurriedly began dismantling the apparatus.

In less than a minute he had reduced it to its component parts, and was packing them up in the hamper in which he

had brought them to the island—that same hamper which Trimble had thought and dreamt of ever since.

A cautious whisper floated into the dugout from above just as he finished packing.

"Put out that light, Glyn. You'd better come up, I think. They're closing in round us, and you don't want to be trapped down there."

"All serene; I'll come up."

And the inventor of St. Jim's joined his companion again.

Major Fortescue was crouching down in the shadow of some bushes as Glyn came out again. He motioned the St. Jim's junior to follow his example, and Glyn quickly did so.

They waited in silence.

A minute passed—two.

Glyn was almost beginning to wonder whether they had not been mistaken after all, when the sound of whispering came floating across from a shadowy clump of trees near by.

Major Fortescue listened intently for a few seconds. Then he put his lips close to Glyn's ear.

"Russians!" he whispered. "I recognise their language! Those fellows are spies of the Soviet!"

Glyn nodded his comprehension, and stared across the moonlit patch that separated them from the spot from which those whispered voices had come.

Spies of the Soviet!

It seemed almost incredible. Foreign spies, desperate men in all probability, waiting in those bushes on the island which St. Jim's had always associated with picnics and jolly rags!

But there was no doubt about the truth of it. Major Fortescue was no alarmist; he had been accustomed all his life to dealing with stern realities. Bernard Glyn did not doubt for one moment that the presence of spies in those bushes was a stern reality.

He crouched beside the motionless War Office man, his heart fairly palpitating with excitement.

There was a sudden movement in the bushes. At the same time came a rustling behind them.

Bernard Glyn turned his head slightly. Instantly a cry left his lips.

"Look out!"

Instinctively Major Fortescue ducked. It was just as well that he did so, for thereby he missed the full force of the blow that was being aimed at him. Nevertheless, the cudgel that had been intended for his head struck his shoulder with telling effect, temporarily paralyzing his arm.

Glyn, watching wide-eyed, saw a revolver jerk out of his hand. Quick as lightning, he grabbed the weapon and jumped to his feet.

"Stand back, you rotters, or—"

The schoolboy inventor did not finish the sentence. Ere he could do so, a pair of sinuous arms had been flung round his neck from behind, choking back the words he tried to utter.

Glyn pulled the trigger.

There was a flash of fire and a report, but his desperate attempt to win through had been ineffectual; the bullet travelled harmlessly through the air, and an instant later Glyn felt the revolver forced out of his hand.

He struggled wildly; but struggling was futile against the muscular man who held him. As he struggled, Glyn glared through the darkness, trying to see what was happening to Major Fortescue. To his dismay, he saw that two of their assailants had forced the major to the ground, and were already engaged in tying up his wrists and legs.

It was soon Glyn's turn. Having secured the major to their satisfaction, the two men rose and went to the help of the St. Jim's junior's captor.

Glyn still fought spasmodically, but he realised himself that it was a hopeless fight.

In a very short time he was in the same plight as Major Fortescue—a helpless prisoner, bound hand and foot.

The three spies had a hurried consultation, then Glyn saw them bending over the entrance to his dugout, examining the loose stone which he had rolled back into position.

Evidently they had watched him come out of his secret hiding-place, for without much hesitation they set to work to lever up the stone. The stone rolled back, then one of them switched on a pocket-torch and gazed inside.

Glyn heard the man muttering his satisfaction, then talking rapidly to his fellows in a foreign tongue.

After that two of them descended into the dugout, the third remaining at the top.

A minute or so passed. Then there was a movement on the part of the third man. Glyn groaned aloud as he saw a bulky shape emerge from the dugout and remain silhouetted against the sky for an instant before being moved against the dark shadows of the bushes.

They were taking the hamper, containing as it did every part of Glyn's amazing invention!

A short interval, followed by the reappearance of the pair who had been exploring the dugout. Then another whispered conference and—

Bernard Glyn was suddenly dazzled by the light of a torch being shone in his eyes.

Behind the glaring light he saw a grim, shadowy face eyeing him curiously.

"Monsieur Glyn, the young inventor—ha?" asked a harsh voice.

Glyn did not reply.

"You have in your pocket the design of this machine, is it not so?" went on the spy.

"I have some plans on me; but they're all wrong, and made out just to mislead you," said Glyn, lying desperately. "The real plans are hidden away somewhere where you'll never find them!"

Glyn's captor laughed.

"That is interesting, my friend; but you are not what you call the good liar, ha? We will take your plans—in case they might be useful!"

With a quick movement, the spy dived his hand into the inside pocket of Glyn's jacket and drew out the bundle of precious papers over which the schoolboy inventor had spent months of hard work.

Glyn, enraged almost to a point of madness, jerked forward his head to use his teeth on those marauding hands, and just succeeded in grazing the man's knuckles.

The spy muttered a curse. Then his fist clenched and he slammed home on Glyn's unprotected face a cruel blow that drew a cry of pain from the St. Jim's junior.

"Now you keep quiet, curse you!" came a snarl from the ruffian.

He rose, transferring Glyn's precious plans to his own pocket, and addressed his two companions rapidly.

Glyn suddenly felt himself seized by rough hands. For a moment he wondered where they were going to take him.

Then he knew.

They were going to put him and his companion back in the dugout, and there abandon them!

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Glyn's heart grew sick within him at the thought of it. To lie in that dark, dank chamber, helplessly bound, hour after hour, perhaps day after day—perhaps till hunger and madness brought final release in death! Surely that was not to be their fate? But he knew, as he felt himself lowered into the cell, that that was what these devils in human shape intended.

He saw them lowering Major Fortescue after him, and suddenly, in sheer desperation, Glyn started yelling at the top of his voice:

"Help! Help! Rescue!"

Then the stone fell with a thud into its place above him, and pitch darkness came.

They were cut off now from the outside world. To all intents and purposes they were buried alive!

CHAPTER 12.

To the Rescue I

"THE thugs!"

Tom Merry repeated Figgins' phrase slowly and thoughtfully.

"Simply must be!" said Jack Blake, resting on his oar and staring over his shoulder at the island. "Baggy's description is exact. And they're gone to the island at this hour of the night. What on earth for?"

"Bai Jove! I wondah if Glyn is on the island, deah boys?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's a suggestion, Gus. I—I wonder—"

"No need to wonder about it, old bean," said Figgins. "Sounds like the truth to me."

"Yes; but I was wondering, too, about that blessed phantom motor-boat. I was wondering again whether it has anything to do with this bizney."

"Don't see what connection there can be. That motor-boat is a mystery—"

"Well, I'm beginning to doubt whether it is such a mystery, in spite of everything," said Tom. "I noticed something very extraordinary about it just now."

"What was that?"

"Why, I recognised the chap who was at the wheel!"

"Recognised a blessed ghost?" asked Lowther incredulously.

Tom laughed.

"No; I mean the original. I could swear it was the image of Glyn's pater!"

"Bai Jove!"

"G-G-Glyn's pater!" stuttered Herries. "But—but how the thump could it be? We know jolly well that the whole thing was only an illusion."

"Agreed. But if it is some sort of scientific business—if, for instance, it's a sort of projected picture, the picture would have to be taken from life, and—"

"My hat! You're suggesting it's an invention of Glyn's?"

"Well, I suppose that's what I'm getting at!"

"Ye gods!"

The juniors were silent for a moment. Then there was quite a buzz.

"I wonder—"

"After all, what's more likely? We don't believe in phantoms—"

"No feah! I weally believe, Tom Mewwy, that you have stwuck the twuth!"

Trimble, who had for several seconds been trying to make his squeaky voice heard above the din, now attracted attention to himself by grabbing Tom Merry's oar, thereby almost capsizing the racing-shell.

"I say, you chaps—"

"Leggo, you fat ass! Want to tip us all over?" asked Tom Merry.

"Nunno; I say, Tom Merry, stop talking about that blessed ph-ph-phantom motor-boat, and listen to me!"

"Blow you!"

"Oh, really, Blake! This is important. What I want to know is, what are you going to do about me now?"

"Nothing!"

"Look here, you rotters, you're not going to leave me?" asked Trimble, in sudden alarm.

"We're not going to stay here all night to keep you company, anyway!"

"Ow! Look here, you'll have to tow me back to the boathouse, or something. Of course, I'm not afraid of a rotten phantom boat!"

"Of course not!" said Figgins sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, na!"

"But—but I want to see you fellows righted—that's the real reason," explained Trimble. "I don't think I want to go to the island now—"

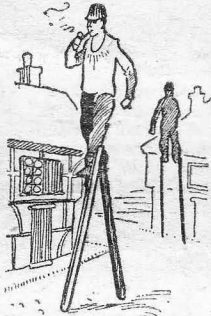
(Continued at foot of next page.)



Trip your pats with these tricky questions!

Q.—What is a Stilt?

A.—A stilt is a bird, "Flummoxed," found in South America, Australia, and New Zealand. It belongs to the Plover family, and has exceedingly long legs, which are red. I'm not sure whether half of a pair of stilts could be called a stilt, I mean the sort of stilts you walk about on. Talking of stilts, in the city of Namur, in Belgium, the natives are famous for stilt-walking, and even the soldiers use them. And that reminds me of a good story, chum. In about the year 1600 the Governor of Namur promised the Archduke Albert a company of soldiers that should neither ride nor walk, and he sent him a detachment on stilts. This amused the archduke, who exempted the town from the beer-tax.



Long legs? No—stilts!

Q.—How is Liquorice obtained?

A.—From the roots of a plant, George Gay. The plant is grown in the warmer parts of Europe, especially on the shores of the Mediterranean, and is called "Glyeyrrhiza." I don't know how it likes being called that, but it is. The word means "the sweet-root," and from that word we get "liquorice," which is easier to say. Stick liquorice is made by crushing and grinding the roots of this

plant to a pulp, which is then boiled in water, cooled and rolled. The preparation of the juice is an extensive industry along the Mediterranean coasts.

Q.—What is a Tarboosh?

A.—A kind of headgear, George King, like a "fez." It is close-fitting, flat-topped, and has no brim, and is worn in the East by Mohammedan men, sometimes alone and sometimes inside the turban.

Q.—Have I ever Swum the Channel?

A.—I may have, "Young Hopeful." I've done so many things in my long life, I can't remember every little detail. My Office Boy had a shot at it last summer. He was within fifty yards of the Dover coast when he had to turn back—to Dover. I've seen him doing the "crawl" up Fleet Street many times.

Q.—How are Chopsticks used?

A.—Chopsticks, Charley Woods, are held between the first two fingers to take up portions of food cut into small pieces. There are all sorts of rules of etiquette governing the use of chopsticks, one interesting custom in China being that they are not used during a time of mourning, fingers being used instead at such times. I am told by the Office Boy, whose aunt had a cousin in a Chinese laundry, that it is not considered the thing to use them for picking the teeth or for back-scratching, and to pick up grains of boiled rice with these things takes thousands of years of hard practice. The Chinese name for



Munch, munch, munch! Chinky busy with chopsticks.

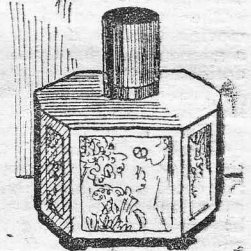
them is "Kwai-tse," which means "quick ones."

Q.—Do we get Catgut from Cats?

A.—We do not, Smith Minor. Catgut is prepared from the intestines of sheep, or occasionally from those of the horse, mule, or ass. The strings of gut, after being treated, are used for bow-strings and musical instruments, and the best strings for this purpose come from Italy.

Q.—Why is a Tea-caddy so called?

A.—Mary Stone sends me this interesting query. The word caddy is believed to come from a Chinese word, catty, which is the Chinese pound. The earliest tea-caddies came from China, and were made of Chinese porcelain. After a while they came to be made in England, in rosewood and mahogany. My Office Boy keeps the tea in a cigarette tin, which is probably what gives it such an original flavour.



Centuries old—the first tea-caddy from China.

Q.—What is Baldness a Sign of?

A.—In my case, P. Peters, it's a sign of brains. In most people, chum, it just shows a loss of hair. Kind GEM readers send me recipes for hair lotions from time to time, but I'm unable to make use of these. The fact is, I've been asked by the secretary of the Blue-bottles' and House-flies' Union to keep the old cranium completely bare, so that the young members will have a handy skating-rink for the summer. I'm only too glad to give these young bluebottles and so on a chance to enjoy themselves. My only grouse is that I can't see them at it. Ever tried looking at the top of your head, young 'un? It wants some doing!

"But we do," said Tom Merry. "Or, at least, I think we do. What do you chaps say?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What-ho!"

"I don't like the sound of this bizney," said Tom, looking towards the island, with frowning brows. "Those rotters meant business the other night, as we know. If they'd got hold of Glyn, there's no telling what they'd have done to him. Evidently they want to waylay him, for some unknown reason. And if they've landed on the island to-night, it's more than likely that Glyn's already there."

"Seems all very mysterious," remarked Redfern.

"So it has been from the beginning. We can't hope to know what it all means yet, and it doesn't matter a lot to me, anyway. The main thing is that Glyn may be in danger. And if he is—"

"Then we'll jolly well be there!" finished Blake grimly.

"Hear, hear!"

Bang!

The occupants of the St. Jim's racing-shell jumped. It was a sharp, explosive report from the direction of the island.

"A pistol-shot!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Bai Jove! Someone has just used a wovolah, by the sound of it, deah boys!"

"That's good enough for us!" said Tom Merry quickly. "Make for the island, chaps; we'll land on the little beach where we put in the other afternoon."

"Good egg!"

"But what about me?" came a howl from Trimble.

"Look here, you chaps—"

"Row back to the boathouse, tubby—that's your best plan."

"Ow! Beasts! Mean to say you're going to leave me to get back on my own? W-w-what about the phantom?" demanded Trimble, his teeth beginning to chatter at the bare thought of being left alone on a river which he undoubtedly considered, after his recent experiences, to be haunted. "L-look here—"

"Can't stop! Row to the bank and walk back if you're scared."

"Yarooooogh! Beasts! I say, you chaps, don't leave me; I'm beginning to feel faint—"

But the Junior Eight—like the celebrated gladiator—heard, but heeded not. Trimble at the best of times was not very important, but on this occasion he was of absolute importance whatever.

The Falstaff of the Fourth, seeing the racing-boat skimming through the water away from him, let out a final dismal howl; then, his podgy body quivering with fear, he seized the oars of his little craft and began pulling away for dear life to the nearest bank. The bank, with its shadows and general atmosphere of eeriness, was not exactly the best place in the world from Trimble's point of view just then; but he infinitely preferred it to a haunted river. Trimble made for terra firma as hard as he could.

Meanwhile, the St. Jim's crew covered the short intervening distance to the island in a matter of seconds, finally

Drawing up at the little beach where they had landed on the occasion of the Grammar School "rag."

Landing as hurriedly as safety permitted, they followed Tom Merry up the slope down which Bernard Glyn had come to release them on that memorable afternoon.

As they left the beach there was a sudden cry, coming, it seemed, from the other side of the island.

"Help! Help! Rescue!"

"Glyn's voice!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We were right!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hurry!"

They sprinted up the slope, heedless of brambles and nettles.

At the top they looked round.

Nothing unusual struck them for a moment. There was no sign of Glyn.

Then came a sudden cry from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! Those wuffians!"

"Oh, my hat! There they are, carrying a thundering great hamper down to that boat!"

"Glyn's hamper!" yelled Figgins. "The hamper we saw him taking up the river!"

The juniors looked down the slope at the three figures moving towards a little boat moored at the bottom. For a moment they hardly knew what to do. Then Tom Merry decided for them.

"Nab the rotters—if we can!" he said sharply. "We'll look for Glyn after."

"Yaas, wathah! Come on, deah boys!"

Grimly determined, the St. Jim's juniors rushed down the other side of the slope towards that waiting boat. In the quiet air of the night they made enough noise to call attention to themselves, and before they got to the bottom they could see the three fugitives looking round and talking to each other excitedly.

"After them!" panted Tom Merry. "Don't let them push off that boat!"

But the juniors were just too late. Only a few seconds before they reached the bottom of the slope the third man pushed off the boat, boarding it himself as it moved away from the island.

D'Arcy, who was first on the scene, almost precipitated himself into the water in his frantic anxiety to reach them in time.

But it couldn't be done. The boat was already a dozen yards away, and the juniors saw, to their chagrin, that there was no means of detaining it now.

"Any good going round to our own boat?" asked Jack Blake.

"No time, I'm afraid," answered Tom Merry. "By the time we got going again they'd have landed and vanished. Ten to one they've got a motor-car or something waiting on the other side."

"Wotten!"

"Anyway, there's Glyn to think of. There was that gunshot we heard—perhaps he's lying about somewhere, dangerously wounded or—or—"

"Bai Jove, it stwikes me we'd bettab search for Glyn at once, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus soberly. "Let's return to the top of the slope; that is evidently where those wottahs came fwom."

The little party, seriously perturbed by Tom Merry's suggestion, hastened back to the top of the slope, scanning the ground as they went.

"No trace of him," remarked Blake, as they gained the summit again.

"Yet he must be about; there was no doubt about that being his voice," said Figgins.

"Hark! What's that?"

Herries bent forward as he spoke, his head on one side.

Faintly, as from the bowels of the earth, came a cry.

"Help! Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Bai Jove!"

"That's Glyn, right enough. Then he must be safe."

"Thank goodness!"

"But—where is he?" demanded Redfern, in amazement. "I can hear Glyn all right, but blessed if I can tell where he's calling from. Sounds almost as if he's buried in the earth!"

"Quiet, for a moment!" said Tom Merry.

All talk ceased. Then they could hear the cries again.

"Rescue! Rescue, St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry suddenly struck the ground he was standing on with his foot. Then he whistled.

"Phew! It's hollow!"

"What!"

"There's something underneath us—and that's where Glyn is calling from!"

"Great pip!"

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Tom fell on his hands and knees, and started groping about. In a few seconds he uttered a shout.

"Here we are! Lend a hand, you chaps!"

The rest crowded round to help, and with their assistance Tom slowly levered back the great stone slab that gave access to Glyn's secret dugout. As he did so, there was a yell from below.

"Who's that? Is that Merry and the rest?"

"All of us! That you, Glyn?"

"Thank goodness!" came a choked cry from below.

"Come quickly and release us! This is luck!"

"Who else is down there?" asked Tom, as he descended into the little chamber.

"My name is Major Fortescue!" came the answer, in the deep voice of the major himself. "Do please hurry, my boy. Have you seen those villains who left us here?"

"Yes, sir. They've just rowed away from the island. We were too late to stop them."

Glyn groaned, and Major Fortescue muttered something to himself.

In a few seconds the two captives were free, and stretching their legs again.

"No time for detailed explanations, chaps," said Glyn briskly. "It's enough, for the moment, for you to know that those rotters have taken an invention of mine and the plans relating to it."

"The motor-boat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, almost by instinct.

"You've hit it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We must catch them at all costs," said Major Fortescue. "If you boys will lead the way and show us what direction the scoundrels took—"

"We'll do that, right enough, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah! And, I twust, assist in puttin' an end to the wottahs' little game!" added Arthur Augustus.

"You have a boat somewhere awound, Glyn?"

"It's moored near the little beach," nodded Glyn.

"Good. Then it's not fah fwom our own cwaft," said the swell of the Fourth. "This way to London, deah boys!"

And he led the way down the slope.

The chase had begun.

CHAPTER 13.

Trimble Turns up Trumps!

"BEASTS!"

Trimble of the Fourth fairly rolled the word over his tongue, as he stood on the river bank staring across at the island.

Trimble had been glad enough to feel solid earth under him again. But he still felt decidedly unhappy. He had faced the perils of the night with a very definite idea at the back of his podgy head that he was going to find Bernard Glyn's hidden hamper and indulge himself in the feed of his life. Unfortunately, that feed hadn't materialised, and it didn't look like materialising.

Trimble was disconsolate.

It was just like the beasts to go and desert him like this. The fact that Bernard Glyn might be in dire peril didn't strike Trimble as a very good explanation of the juniors' conduct. What, after all, did the safety of an unimportant fellow like Glyn matter in comparison with the comfort and peace of mind of Bagley Trimble? It didn't matter a lot, anyway, reflected Trimble.

In a way, he rather wished he had followed the Junior Eight to the island, now. He would, at any rate, have had company there, whereas here, he felt very much alone. That revolver shot had deterred him. If somebody on the island was handling a revolver, then Trimble didn't want to go there, even with the prospect of a feed.

Still, that shot hadn't been repeated. There might not have been any danger, after all. Perhaps—Trimble groaned as the thought suddenly occurred to him—perhaps it was all a conspiracy to keep him away while the beasts gorged themselves on the contents of Glyn's wonderful hamper.

What was that?

Trimble's little eyes suddenly began to goggle until they seemed in imminent danger of falling out of their sockets.

A small boat had come into his line of vision crossing from the far side of the island towards the bank where he was standing.

There were three men in it, and Trimble recognised them as the same trio he had seen making for the island a little earlier. But that was not what chiefly attracted his notice.

What intrigued Trimble was the circumstance that they carried with them something which had not been there on the outward journey.

It was something big and bulky—something that Trimble recognised in a flash.

It was Bernard Glyn's hamper! Trimble whistled. Then his heart began to beat a wild tattoo against his podgy breast.

So that was their little game, was it? That was the reason for their mysterious nocturnal trip to the island! They had been after the same prize as Trimble himself.

The Falstaff of the Fourth felt himself go hot with indignation.

"My hat! The—the robbers!" he gasped. Fairly bursting with moral indignation, Trimble bobbed down so that he would not be seen, and rolled along to the spot where the robbers seemed likely to land.

They landed.

Trimble took cover behind a tree. The felonious trio, carrying the hamper between them, left their boat to drift off with the stream, and hurried down the towpath.

Trimble followed them. He followed them when they left the towpath and went across a meadow. He felt like following them to the ends of the earth rather than let Glyn's hamper out of his sight.

grasped one of the handles of the hamper and began to drag it backwards to the bushes.

It seemed an eternity; but in reality it was only a matter of a few seconds before he was back in their welcome shelter.

Unable to contain himself any longer, Trimble wrenched open the top of the hamper and dived a pair of podgy hands into it.

At the same moment as he was doing that, a group of St. Jim's juniors, with a tall, military-looking figure in their midst, was speeding along the towpath towards the meadow where the aeroplane stood.

As they ran there was a sudden exclamation from Major Fortescue.

"Gad! A plane!"
"And just about to start by the look of it; we'll never



Creeping across the turf, Trimble grabbed the handle of the hamper and dragged it towards the bushes.

catch 'em!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Wun like anythin' deah boys!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"They've seen us! Down for your lives!" yelled the major.

The sharp crack of a revolver shot rang out on the midnight air. Then another, and another.

The juniors dodged, and took cover against whatever bit of rising ground offered themselves. Nobody was hit.

Then another short rush, and again the barking of the enemy's revolvers.

Major Fortescue produced his own automatic which the spies had left lying on the ground of the island after taking it from Glyn.

Bang!

There was a flash of fire, then a yelp of pain as one of the spies fell, wounded in the wrist. The other two retreated to the other side of the aeroplane. But the major and his followers, taking advantage of each opportunity to advance, were by this time only a few yards away, and as the men retreated they rose to a man and charged.

But even as they reached the foremost spy, one of the others leapt for the plane, and hurled himself into the cockpit. Tom Merry made a desperate effort to stop him, but with a roar the plane was off, and, lifting from the ground, was soon lost to sight.

The other two spies were speedily dealt with, the one with the wounded wrist putting up little resistance; but the capture of the two was but little compensation to Glyn, seeing that the hamper containing his invention had apparently disappeared with the plane. A hasty search produced the plans from the pocket of one of the prisoners.

"And that's that," said Tom Merry, as he mopped his perspiring brow. "But look here, Glyn, we have got to get that hamper—Hallo!"

Tom broke off with an exclamation at the sight of a portly figure which had suddenly rolled out of the shadows.

Suddenly Trimble jumped.

He had supposed, in the simplicity of his podgy heart, that the criminals were taking the hamper to some quiet spot where they could sit down in safety and "tuck in."

Trimble's surprise was great, therefore, when he saw that they were making straight for an aeroplane on the other side of the meadow!

Trimble's heart sank.

An aeroplane. This certainly was a blow. What chance did a fellow stand when grub-snatchers pursued their nefarious business with the aid of aeroplanes?

The Falstaff of the Fourth rolled across to the shelter of some bushes behind the silent plane and watched with curious eyes.

The men with the hamper reached the machine and dumped their burden on the ground. One of them climbed up into the cockpit, while another went round to the propeller. The third stood looking back towards the river for a moment, then, at a call from the man in the cockpit, climbed up beside him.

Trimble couldn't make out what was happening, and they were speaking a language which he didn't understand. But he gathered that something had gone wrong with the works, and he saw, with eyes that grew wider and wider each moment, that the men were paying more and more attention to the plane and less and less attention to the hamper.

Suddenly, the fat junior moved.

His move was in the direction of the hamper.

Hardly daring to breathe, Trimble tiptoed across the turf till he reached it. Then, his eyes on the plane, he

(Continued on page 28.)

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YOU GASP AS YOU READ IT! Start from this page!

**EXPLORING THE UNTRODDEN
WILDS OF CENTRAL AFRICA —
FROM THE AIR! Some Game for
Our Adventurous Trio!**

CHICK CHANCE

Adventurer!

Great News!

HORACE and Herbert hugged one another in silent delight, and followed hard at Chick's heels as he ran up the beach, and stared at the long, straggling line of huts, houses, and stores that faced the moonlit waters of Lakola Bay.

Turning to the left, Chick almost collided with a portly individual of somewhat erratic gait, who exuded an atmosphere of gin and stale tobacco.

"Where can I find Frank Barron's place?" asked Chick boldly.

"Keep—keep straight along," wheezed the fat man obligingly. "White-fronted house—got his name outside. You can't miss it."

Tucked in Chick's belt was the neat automatic pistol that he had not neglected to take from Burk Roscoe's hip-pocket. The huge tropical moon made the scene almost as light as day, and three hundred yards farther on they came to a substantial wooden building, with a veranda in front, and the name "Barron's Trading Store" painted boldly over the door.

Door and windows were wide open to catch every errant puff of the stagnant night air. The front room was lit by a hanging oil-lamp, that was surrounded by a buzzing cloud of gnats, mosquitoes, and moths, some as big as the palm of the hand.

Beneath the lamp sat a thin, wiry, grey-haired man, who was attired in a cotton singlet, flannel trousers, and once white canvas shoes. He looked sharply up from the old newspaper he was reading as Chick appeared in the doorway, with Horace and Herbert close behind him.

"I want to see Mr. Barron," said the young airman. "Take a good look," retorted the man. "That's me. Who are you?"

"My name's Charce. I think you've been expecting me?"

The grey-haired man scarcely appeared to move, but as if by magic a vicious-looking six-chamber revolver appeared in his right hand, and levelled itself unwaveringly at Chick's broad chest.

"Yes. I'm expecting you!" snapped Barron grimly. "The real Mr. Chance happened to mention that you might have the impudence to blow along. Stick up your paws. Mr. Burk Roscoe! You can't pull this sort of a bluff on me!"

Chick Chance almost laughed as he stared into the gaping muzzle of Barron's heavy six-shooter. His amazement was tempered with amusement at the thought that he should be mistaken for the very man who had until recently been impersonating Frank Barron himself.

He was puzzled to know why the trader had jumped to such a conclusion. It was evident that impersonations were a strong point with Burk Roscoe, and an inkling of the truth had already crept into Chick's mind.

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By
**ROBERT
MURRAY.**

(Opening chapters are retold in brief on page 25.)

"Barron, you can put that gun down," he said coolly, as he stood with his arms folded across his chest. "We're not here to cause trouble. We seem to be at cross purposes."

"We are!" agreed the trader grimly. There was a look of doubt in his eyes as he stared at his three visitors, and he allowed his gun-hand to drop to the newspaper that lay across his knees without relaxing his cautious attitude. "Step inside. Three of you, eh? Now, what's the game, Roscoe?"

"My name is Chance," corrected the young airman. "Where do you get the idea that I'm Burk Roscoe?"

"Because," explained Barron shortly, "I happen to know the real Chance. I was on the quay waiting to meet him when he landed from the boat yesterday morning. There was no doubt as to his identity. He even produced the original letter that I wrote to Howard Paige in the first place."

Chick thought swiftly. He started as he realised the truth. He had not missed the letter that Paige had given to him, but he knew now that it must have been stolen on the night when Burk Roscoe had broken into his cabin aboard the Arden Castle. Roscoe had played his cards well. There was no limit to the man's cunning and audacity.

"Chance warned me against you," continued the trader; "and so did Paige in other communications I have received from him. You can't bluff me, Roscoe!"

"Roscoe has already bluffed you. Look here, Barron, let's get this matter put right!" A hard note had crept into Chick's voice. "Did Paige supply you with a description of Roscoe?"

"No," Barron suddenly checked and frowned. "I'm wrong," he admitted a trifle tamely. "I remember now—Paige told me that I could identify Roscoe by a tattoo mark on his left hand—a coiled snake."

Chick stretched out his tanned hand, free of any scar, mark, or blemish. Barron stared hard and shook his head uncertainly.

"Well, let's hear what you've got to say," he invited. "You may not be Roscoe. But if you're Chance, how is it you didn't come ashore from the boat yesterday?"

"We did. We came ashore in Major Vigon's launch, thanks to Roscoe's cunning scheming and double-dealing!"

Chick didn't waste any words. He told the amazed trader exactly what had happened from the time the Arden Castle had dropped anchor in Lakola Bay, and he and his companions had been arrested on a trumped-up charge of attempting to smuggle guns and ammunition into the country. He told of their imprisonment; and, finally, of the manner in which Roscoe had arranged a "faked" escape, and tried to lure them aboard a boat that was lying in the bay.

Chick's voice carried conviction, and Horace and Herbert backed him up sturdily.

Frank Barron jumped to his feet, shoving his gun back into his pocket. He extended his hand in a warm, friendly clasp.

"By thunder, I believe I've been spoofed!" he admitted candidly. "I'm glad to meet you, Chance! You are certainly more the type of fellow I expected to see picked for this job. So Major Vigon is in league with Roscoe! That puts you in a bad way. You've got to act mighty quick if you're going to act at all."

"Act!" echoed Chick gloomily. "How the dickens can we act now that scoundrel Vigon has seized our plane and got it stowed away at the barracks?"

"Why, great snakes, what do you mean?" exclaimed Barron. "The plane's out on the field at the back of the town. I've been getting things ready for you fellows ever since I heard that you'd sailed from England! There's everything there—stores, kit, drums of oil and petrol, and everything I thought you'd need, in accordance with Paige's cabled instructions."

"What?" Chick stared incredulously.

"That was the first question I asked the man who introduced himself to me as Chance—'Where's the plane?'" declared Barron. "He told me the crates were being brought ashore in a lighter, and told me to get a lorry and pick them up later in the day. I found them stacked on the beach. Roscoe was there with his two mechanics—"

"His two mechanics?" interrupted Chick again.

"Sure! Roscoe had two men with him when he landed from the liner. He said they were his mechanics. And Howard Paige certainly notified me to expect three of you. That's why I didn't suspect anything. We carted the machine out to the field; and, to the best of my knowledge, the men have been busy all to-day assembling the plane."

Chick's eyes were blazing with excitement. "This was great news indeed. Roscoe had evidently left nothing to chance. He had laid his plans with an eye to every detail and contingency. Once he had dealt with Chick and his chums, it was probably his intention to disappear with the plane, and by some devious route make his way back to England."

Subsequently Frank Barron would have been forced to report to Howard Paige that there was no news of the missing airmen, and it would be taken for granted that Chick Chance and his brave assistants had perished in their attempt to find and rescue Eustace Latimer.

"Boys, we've got to get busy!" said Chick, turning to Horace and Herbert. "If our luck holds good it's not likely that Roscoe will be found until the morning. I trussed him up pretty tight, and I don't think he'll be able to break free. Where's the plane, Barron?"

"On a stretch of open ground two miles outside the town," informed the agent briskly. "It's the only suitable place you could take off from with a big crate like that. But, look here, boys, don't you forget the two men who are guarding the plane. They're ugly-looking customers, and they're both armed."

"By gosh, you leave 'em to us!" promised Horace, polishing his monocle industriously. "I don't care if they're armed with machine-guns and Mills' bombs. I only wish I could have a cut at that greasy Dago in the gold braid who shoved us in the local clink."

"So do I," agreed Herbert heartily. "I'd bust him wide open."

"It's our plane, and we mean to have it," declared Chick, examining the automatic he had taken from Burk Roscoe. "I don't care if there's a regiment of soldiers guarding it. There's one thing I'd almost forgotten, Barron. Where's Lobula, the native berron who brought you that message from Latimer?"

The trader bit his lip, and looked vaguely alarmed.

"I last saw him with Roscoe. I think he took him with him when he went out to examine the plane this morning."

"Let's hope we find him there. Roscoe tried to bluff us—he was dead. He's the only person who can give us the slightest idea where to find Latimer. Lead on, Barron. I only wish we had time to fetch Roscoe along with us."

Hunting for Lobula!

BARRON extinguished the hanging lamp, and led the way out to the yard at the rear of his trading store. Here, amid other debris, stood a very ancient and dilapidated Ford car, that set up a fiendish noise as Barron jerked the starting handle. There was no need for lamps. The huge, tropical moon was making things almost as light as day. From away off in the distance came the derisive bark of a jackal, followed by a harsh, coughing roar that echoed eerily on the night air.

"Lion," said Barron simply. "There's plenty of them about, but they don't trouble us much."

"Suffering cats, I'm glad to hear that!" muttered Herbert, in an awed voice. "The only lion I ever saw had bars in front of it. I shall be mighty glad when we're in the old bus, and up in the air."

Barron chuckled dryly. It struck him as queer that any man should think himself safer in the air than on the ground. He took the wheel, and sent the rickety old car bumping away along the rough, narrow road that had been cut through the dense forest at the back of Lakola. It was so dark here that he had to switch on the headlamps.

Chick's nerves were in a riot of impatience. The ups and downs of luck had balanced pretty evenly up to now; but the dawn was a long way off. There was much to be done, and much that might happen before the night was over.

Horace uttered a yell of alarm as a huge, horned, fiery-eyed shape suddenly loomed in the glare of the headlamps. Barron pressed the bulb of the horn, and, with a terrific snorting, the animal turned and crashed away through the forest.

"Gosh! What was that—an elephant?" jerked Horace, through his chattering teeth.

"Water buffalo," smiled Barron. "There are no elephants within hundreds of miles of here. See those lights through the trees? They're oil-flares. I'll bet those mechanics of Roscoe's are still working on the plane."

"Then they'll be expecting Roscoe?" hazarded Chick. "Probably he intended to join them once he'd smuggled us aboard that boat in the bay. We'll go on ahead and try to take them by surprise, Barron."

Reluctantly Horace and Herbert submitted to this arrangement. They were left with the car, screened by a big clump of thorn-bush, while the other two alighted and walked towards a wide, open expanse of level ground, where two shadowy figures moved in the ruddy glare of several oil-flares that hung suspended from bamboo posts.

Chick's heart leaped with excitement as he glimpsed the graceful shape of the huge winged monoplane that he had never expected to see again. Burk Roscoe's assistants evidently knew their job, for the great machine was almost completely assembled. One mechanic was testing the powerful motor. The engine was throttled down to a steady, sonorous purr, and the plane was pressing eagerly against the chocked wheels to the pull of the gleaming, circling prop.

"Ten to one Roscoe meant to make a move in the morning," whispered Barron. "You don't suppose he intended to try and find Latimer, do you?"

"I do not," replied Chick confidently. "He wouldn't risk his life in such an endeavour, when all he had to do—"

The dull roar of the motor suddenly ceased. The two mechanics wheeled and peered suspiciously into the gloom.

"Is that you, Roscoe?" came a hail.

"This is Barron," answered the trader, pretending not to notice the slip the man had made in addressing him as "Roscoe." "I've brought along a messenger from Mr. Chance."

Side by side he and Chick walked steadily towards the two mechanics. Recognising Barron, neither of them made any move to reach the guns that hung at their belts.

"What's that? Got a message from the gov'nor?" asked one gruffly.

"What is it?"

"That!" snapped Chick, moving his arm like a flash and jamming the muzzle of his automatic right into the man's unshaven face. "Grab the air, you thieving skunk, or, by thunder, I'll

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,158.

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

CHICK CHANCE, late Flight-Commander Chichester Chance, R.A.F., V.C., D.S.O., is rescued after a crash by Herbert and Horace, late air-mechanic and pilot-sergeant of Chick's old squadron. Later, they meet Howard Paige who asks Chick if he will fly to Central Africa to look for a Professor Latimer, who has come into a fortune of half a million pounds but does not know it. If Latimer does not return within three months the money is to go to Burk Roscoe, an arrant scoundrel. Chick agrees to go and to take Herbert and Horace with him. Reaching Lakola, the three chums are arrested on a trumped-up charge of gun-running by Major Vigon, an officer in charge of the town, who is in league with Roscoe. Fearing Frank Barron, a trader whom Chick & Co. are supposed to meet, might make inquiries, the cunning Roscoe tries to lure the boys aboard a boat lying in the bay. A coiled snake tattooed on Roscoe's hand proves his undoing, however, and he is promptly seized, bound hand and foot, and left in a shed while Chick and his chums set out to find the real trader.

(Now read on.)

blow your head off! This is Chick Chance speaking, and I never give the same order twice!"

In a thrice Barron had the second man covered. Both stood gaping and dumbfounded with astonishment. One obediently raised his hands, but the other was made of sterner stuff. With a snarl of desperation he flipped Chick's gun hand to one side, and lowered his head in a mad, bull-like rush that was designed to sweep his opponent clean off his feet.

But Chick was ready. He stepped lightly to one side, while his left fist came up in a rasping upper-cut that caught the fellow between the eyes with the force of a mule kick.

He was out to the wide, but the impetus of his rush carried him another couple of yards before his knees gave way, and he struck the ground face first, to the exceeding detriment of his none-too-handsome features.

His companion had made no resistance at all. Chick gave a hail that brought Horace and Herbert rushing to the spot.

"Grab those birds, and tie their hands behind them," instructed Chick, blowing on his bruised knuckles. "You can use that coil of wire over there by those petrol-drums."

"Jest our blessed luck! Another dust-up, and Chick goes and hogs all the fun hisself!" grumbled Horace disgustedly, as he surveyed the battered countenance of the one man who was just beginning to wake up and wonder what had hit him.

"You'll get your share of excitement and scrapping before we've finished this job," hinted Chick meaningly. "These fellows have done us a mighty good turn without knowing it. At least, they've saved us all the trouble of unpacking the plane and putting it together."

His eyes were blazing with excitement and delight as he made a hasty examination of the big monoplane. It was an amphibian, fitted with both floats and landing-wheels, and it appeared to have been expertly assembled by mechanics who knew their job thoroughly.

It was braced and strutted as tight as a new drum. The oil tanks were filled to their utmost capacity, and the engine had been tuned up to run as sweetly and regularly as a hundred-guinea chronometer. The controls, rudder, elevators, and ailerons, responded smoothly to every movement of the stick and rudder-bar.

But Chick was not satisfied. He was determined personally to examine every inch of the great machine before it was allowed to leave the ground. Assisted by Horace and Herbert, this was a task that would not take much more than a couple of hours.

The thoroughness with which Burk Roscoe had mapped out his programme now redounded to the benefit of Chick Chance and his companions. Their belongings were intact. Every bit of luggage and gear that had been brought ashore at Lakola was found stacked alongside the stores and other necessities that Frank Barron had been called upon to supply.

These included the two machine-guns, the rifles, and the ammunition that had formed the subject of the trumped-up charge Major Vigon had brought against them.

"If our luck doesn't break in the meantime, there's nothing to prevent us from starting our flight as soon as it's light enough for us to see," declared Chick, his jaw hardening at thought of the daring enterprise that was now so near at hand.

"It is a brave thing you are attempting, Chance," said Barron gravely. "Whether you find Latimer or not, I hope you plucky fellows come through with your lives."

"That depends mostly on the plane," said Chick. "We shall be carrying enough petrol to keep us in the air for roughly from thirty-five to forty hours, and give us a cruising range of about four thousand miles. If we're not back within a week, you can be pretty certain that something has come unstuck."

"I've got a map to give you before you start," informed the trader. "It was left with me by Eustace Latimer before he set out on his last expedition, and on it he had marked the probable route he intended to follow. It should enable you to— By thunder!" Barron suddenly started and peered uneasily in all directions. "Where's Lobula?" he jerked. "He was with Roscoe when he came out here this morning! If anything's happened to him—"

Chick's lips tightened. He knew what Barron meant. Without the assistance of Lobula, the native guide, they wouldn't stand a million to one chance of succeeding in their quest for the missing explorer. He turned and hastened to where Burk Roscoe's two assistants stood, their hands tied behind them, and sullen fury smouldering in their eyes.

"Where's that native Roscoe brought out here with him this morning?" Chick demanded in a voice as sharp and steely as a razor-blade. "He hasn't been seen since! You know where he is!"

It was a shot at venture, but it went home. The bigger of the two men started, and an uneasy, guilty look stole across his heavy face. Instinctively his eyes rolled towards the dark tangled depths of the surrounding forest.

"What d'you mean? I don't know anything about any nigger."

Chick knew that the fellow was lying. He grabbed him by one shoulder and thrust his clenched fist within an inch of his already bruised and swollen nose.

"You know, and you're going to tell me within five seconds!" he said, with grim ferocity. "Otherwise I'll give you such a drubbing with these hands of mine that you'll never be the same man again! Speak up!"

The man's face turned green with fear, and his legs wobbled beneath him.

"I—I don't know what Roscoe did with the black," he gulped. "It wasn't nothing to do with me. They went off into the forest together. Later on Roscoe came back—alone."

Chick and Barron stared at one another in silent horror and dismay. To each of them had occurred the same dread thought. Roscoe had already revealed himself as an unscrupulous, cold-blooded scoundrel who would stop at nothing to attain his ends, and he knew that Lobula was the only living soul who might be able to solve the mystery of Eustace Latimer's prolonged disappearance.

Roscoe and the native had gone into the forest together. And Roscoe had returned alone!

"Barron, we've got to find Lobula!" Chick's voice was a trifle shaky, but none the less determined. "And this fellow's going to show us which way he and Roscoe went. Herbert, you and Horace will remain behind to guard the plane and the other prisoner. If anything goes wrong fire three shots in the air!"

MISSING

—A Moonstone Worth A Small Fortune!

Several people are mighty keen to get possession of that moonstone, most prominent among them being a gang of crooks. And these stick-at-nothing merchants reckon that Harry Wharton, a schoolboy, can help them find it. Here's the beginning of a strong, virile narrative that will keep you enthralled.

No one should miss this superb Easter story of fun, thrills, and adventure, in this week's **MAGNET**, the Schoolboy story paper. Every Saturday, 2d.

Discarding the small, unreliable automatic pistol, Chick armed himself with a heavy .45 Colt, and stuffed a handful of cartridges in his pocket. Barron delved amid the pile of stores, and produced a couple of powerful electric torches that would burn continuously for ten hours on end.

Led by their reluctant guide they crossed the clearing to a narrow, beaten track that wound deeper and deeper into the dark, silent heart of the forest. The stagnant heat was sickeningly oppressive. There was a smell of rotting wood and dead vegetation.

"We're on the right trail. This is the way Roscoe came!" Chick pointed meaningfully to a betraying cigarette-end that lay embedded in the mud underfoot.

"And he came back alone!" Barron shook his head seriously. "I don't like the look of it, Chance. Without Lobula to guide you it would be hopeless for you to think of attempting to find Latimer."

To right and left they flashed the dazzling white beams of their electric torches. Unseen animals fled crashing through the dense undergrowth; startled birds flapped and floundered amid the branches overhead. Snakes hissed and glided through the long, dank grass.

"For Heaven's sake let's turn back!" pleaded the white-faced man, who stumbled along with Chick's gun joggling him in the ribs. "Roscoe couldn't have gone far. He wasn't away for more than half an hour."

Chick suddenly stopped dead, one hand raised in a warning gesture.

"Did you hear that?" he whispered. "Sounded like a groan to me!"

He parted the bushes to one side of the trail, and made half a dozen cautious steps, shining the light in front of him. The search was at an end. In a tiny clearing stood a solitary tree, and lashed to the massive trunk was the sagging figure of a powerfully-built black man. His head sagged on one shoulder, and he was evidently in the last stages of exhaustion!

"It's Lobula!" exclaimed Barron huskily; and then his voice rose to a cracked scream of horror. "Look out, Chance! By heavens, come back, man! Stand out of the way!"

Confused and bewildered, Chick had stepped nearer the tree. A harsh hiss, like a roar of escaping steam, dinned in his ears, and he was conscious of a musky, fetid odour that made him feel faint and nauseated.

The branch that jutted out above the helpless native's head suddenly seemed to have become alive! It moved, writhing in sagging loops and coils, and the wavering beam of his torch suddenly revealed a hideous, scaly head, set with eyes of green flame, and a yawning, blood-red mouth, from which flickered and stabbed a black, forked tongue!

It was a giant boa-constrictor that dangled within two feet of his face, disturbed and enraged in its stealthy descent on the pinioned native!

For what seemed hours, but which was really no more than a full second, Chick stood staring into the evil eyes of the hideous reptile. The head swung, poised for a blow that would have cracked his skull like an eggshell. Again Barron shouted, and this time Chick brought up the gun that was gripped in his right hand, and fired shot after shot into the gaping red jaws!

There was a terrific upheaval, a smashing of branches, and a thudding of writhing coils as thick round as a man's thigh. The serpent, with its head shattered to a pulp, unwound its great length, and flopped heavily to the ground!

"Phew, that was a close call, Barron!" said Chick shakily.



Chick brought up the gun that was gripped in his right hand, and fired shot after shot into the gaping wild jaws!

"Good job Horace wasn't here. He's scared stiff of snakes. Give me a hand with this poor fellow. He looks as though he's had a bad time of it."

Lobula was not unconscious. There was something more than gratitude in the black man's eyes as the tough vines that bound him to the tree were severed, and he stood swaying, and rubbing his cramped limbs and stiffened muscles. He spoke rapidly in his native tongue, and Barron answered him in the same language.

"Bit difficult to explain to Lobula exactly how things have worked round," said the trader. "But he knew something was wrong when that skunk Roscoe attacked him from behind, and socked him on the head with his revolver-butt. The treacherous dog! He meant to make certain that Latimer's appeal for help would never be answered. What's that?"

Crack, crack, crack! Faintly from a distance came three distinct, separate rifle-shots!

"The alarm-signal!" jerked Chick excitedly. "There's something gone wrong back there! By James, I thought our luck was too good to last!"

(It looks as if our brave adventurers are in for another packet of trouble, doesn't it, chums? And believe me, they are! Look out, then, for another rattling instalment of this powerful serial next week.)

The Phantom Motor-Boat!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Trimble!" yelled Herries.
 "Look here, you chaps, it's all a sell!" groaned Trimble.
 "An absolute wash-out, in fact!"
 "What on earth are you talking about, Fatty?"
 "The hamper! I pinched it from these rotters just as they were going to take it up in their blessed plane!"
 "M-m-my hat!" stammered Bernard Glyn.
 "And now that I've opened it, I find there isn't even a penny bun in it!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Dashed if I can see anything to laugh at!" declared Trimble lugubriously. "I'm ravenous—starving, in fact!"
 "Oh, ye gods!" almost sobbed Glyn. "Trimble's done it for us!"
 "Good old Trimble!"
 "Bwavo, deah boy! You've saved the mewvy situation!" Trimble stared.
 "Well, I suppose it's a question of getting in touch with the police, now," remarked Major Fortescue. "Where's the nearest telephone?"
 "Some distance away from here. Shall two of us go and get through to Wayland on the phone while the rest stay here?"
 "An excellent suggestion."
 And that was what was done.

Mr. Railton was waiting up for the juniors when they returned to St. Jim's, their absence having been discovered before he retired that night. The Housemaster of the School House was, of course, astonished to hear of the adventures that had befallen them, and deemed it advisable, taking all the circumstances into consideration, to postpone a detailed inquiry into the affair until the following day.

The inquiry was held in the presence of the Head and Mr. Railton, with Mr. Ratcliff representing the New House, and the three masters heard with amazement of Bernard Glyn's remarkable invention and the dramatic intervention of the Soviet spies.

Punishment seemed difficult to inflict, in the circumstances, though probably the cross-grained Mr. Ratcliff on his own would have found no insuperable difficulties. Eventually, the Head decided to let the juniors off with a warning, the effect of which was rather spoilt by his congratu-

lating them on their fine achievement in bringing to book the dangerous foreign spies!

Later, Mr. Railton summoned Tom Merry to his study. "So all this midnight bound-breaking is the result of my barring you from the river for a week?" he inquired, with a faint smile.

"Well, yes, sir."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"Perhaps, Merry, having regard to the coming race with Greyfriars, I was a little severe. You may consider the ban removed, forthwith—"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry delightedly. "And I hope you'll win the race," concluded the good-natured Housemaster graciously.

And Tom Merry quitted Mr. Railton's study, feeling as though he was walking on air.

The mystery of the phantom motor-boat, like the mystery of Bernard Glyn, was now a mystery no longer. And those who had seen that strange apparition were considerably relieved to know that it was nothing more than another of Glyn's inventions.

Likewise, everybody was glad to know that Glyn, in declining the honour of rowing in the Junior Eight, was only the victim of circumstances which at the time he had not been at liberty to reveal. Glyn's temporary unpopularity went like snow before the summer sun; in fact, Glyn, somewhat to his embarrassment, found that he had suddenly become the most popular fellow of the school.

The trial of the spies, which ended in their being sentenced to terms of imprisonment followed by deportation, was followed with keen interest by everybody at St. Jim's. With the end of the trial, however, interest in the affair died out, and the topic of the day became the boat race with Greyfriars.

Bernard Glyn rowed for the Junior Eight after all. Herries hurt himself in training, and was unable to row, so Glyn had to take his place.

It seemed only fitting, in all the circumstances, that St. Jim's should win a . . . length. And when the triumphant crew were . . . shoulder-high through the crowds at the winning-post, no member was cheered more heartily than the inventor of the Phantom Motor-Boat.

Glyn was indeed pleased by the victory, but it was a small thing compared with his joy on returning to the School House, for there he found a telegram from Major Fortescue waiting for him, which told him that the War Office had accepted his invention. Furthermore, they were prepared to pay him a very large sum for the purchase of it.

(Next week's GEM will contain another rousing long story of Tom Merry & Co.,

If you miss this fine yarn, chum, you'll feel like kicking yourself.)

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