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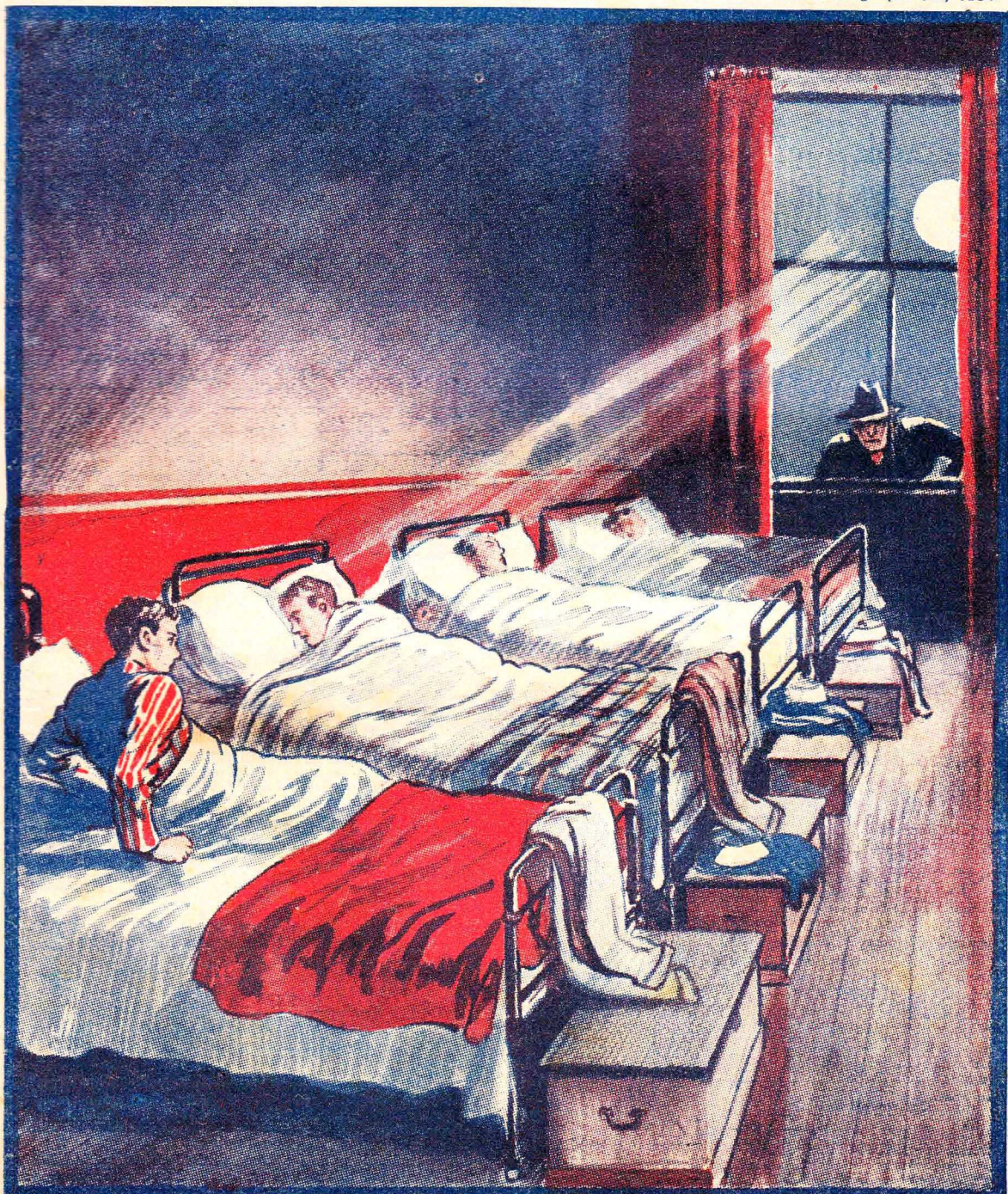
THE BEST PAPER FOR BRITISH BOYS

2d

No. 1,364. Vol. XLV.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending April 7th, 1934.



THE MIDNIGHT MARAUDER! See the Great Story "THE MENACE OF THE DWARF!" - WITHIN!

THE MENACE



When a chart to the hiding-place of pirates' gold in the Pacific comes into the hands of Tom Merry, the junior captain of St. Jim's little knows that it is but the start of a trail of peril and adventure—with a menacing Spanish dwarf ever lurking in the background like a sinister shadow!

CHAPTER 1.

The Spanish Dwarf!

SENORITO! Senorito." Tom Merry of the Shell Form at St. Jim's stopped in amazement.

He was sauntering along Rylcombe Lane, towards the school, when the voice called from the wood.

With his hands in his trousers pockets and his hat on the back of his head, Tom Merry looked a picture of happy and careless boyhood.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and there was plenty of fellows up the river-bank and in the glades of Rylcombe Wood, and Tom Merry would not have been surprised had he been hailed from the wood as he strolled towards the school. But to be hailed in a foreign tongue was a surprise to him.

"Senorito!"

Tom Merry looked round into the big, overhanging trees that bordered the lane. The voice came from the wood, but he could not see who called.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Who is it?"

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From the deep shadows of the wood a little, swarthy face with twinkling black eyes looked out, and Tom Merry started as he discerned it. For the face was the face of a man, yet from its height above the ground it appeared that it must be that of a boy.

"Senorito!"

The swarthy face came nearer to the edge of the wood, and the man it belonged to emerged from the cover of the thicket. Then Tom Merry understood. The man was a dwarf—with a large, dark face and massive shoulders and powerful arms; but his body seemed to shrivel away lower down, and his total height was not more than four feet six.

He nodded at Tom Merry with a peculiar grin—a grin in which there was expressed much more of malice than of humour.

"Senorito! Stop a minute!"

The man was a Spaniard evidently, but he spoke English very well.

Tom Merry stood in the sunny lane and looked at him.

"Yes," he said, "what do you want?"

"I am looking for someone, *senorito!*" said the little man. "A friend of mine—a dear comrade whom I have missed upon the road—a sailorman. Have you seen him?"

of the DWARF!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No," he replied.

"Ah, you are sure you have not seen him?"

"Quite sure," said Tom Merry. "There are not many sailormen about here. I am sure I should have noticed him if I had seen him on the road."

The little man contracted his heavy brows, and his black eyes looked piercingly at the St. Jim's junior.

"You are quite sure, seniorito?"

"Yes, I tell you!"

"But—you are you not lying to me?"

Tom Merry flushed.

The Spaniard had stepped out of the wood now, and he stood in the sunny lane in Tom Merry's path.

Tom, as he looked at him, could not help wondering what had brought the swarthy foreign dwarf to that quiet Sussex countryside. There was a seafaring look about the stranger, in his manner and his clothes; but St. Jim's was a good distance from the coast, and seafaring men seldom came so far.

"No," said Tom Merry quietly, "I am not lying; and in this country, my man, we don't say things like that to strangers. If you don't learn better manners you may have them taught to you free of charge."

The little man grinned.

"Ah, and perhaps you will teach me, seniorito!" he remarked.

"Yes, if you like!"

Tom Merry, boy as he was, was taller than the little Spaniard.

He had very little doubt of being able to toss the little man back into the wood if he wanted to; but even as he thought of it he dismissed the thought from his mind. One in the full flush of health and strength had no right to lose his temper with a man who was deformed; after all, what did it matter if the little foreigner was rude to him?

"Never mind!" he said. "I have not seen the man you asked me about. That's all. Good-day!"

But the little Spaniard was still standing in his path.

"Not so fast, little senior!" he said.

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry good-humouredly, "I want to get on! Will you stand out of the way?"

"I am not yet finished with you, little senior. If you wish to teach me manners, as you hinted, I am ready to learn, and then I will speak."

And the little Spaniard laughed maliciously.

"Will you let me pass?"

"No."

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

The best of good tempers would hardly have borne the strain that was put upon Tom Merry's. He did not want to hurt the dwarf, and he was not looking for trouble in any way; but his eyes were gleaming with anger now.

The hero of the Shell made a step towards the Spaniard.

"Stand out of my way!" he said.

"You have to answer me first, seniorito!"

"I have answered you."

"Listen to me," said the Spaniard, still barring Tom Merry's path. "I know that the man took this path, and I have been watching for him from the wood. He has not passed me. You must have seen him on the road from the way you came."

"I have told you I did not."

"But you must have seen him, seniorito. He may have gone into the wood before coming so far as this, and you have seen him."

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture.

"Once and for all, I tell you I have seen no sailorman upon the road," he said. "Now let me pass, or there will be trouble."

The Spaniard grinned mockingly.

"There will be trouble, as you call it, if you do not tell me the truth, little senior," he said. "What path did the sailorman take?"

Tom Merry did not reply to the question. He had had enough of bandying words with the swarthy stranger, and his anger was at boiling-point now. He made a stride towards the Spaniard and grasped him by the shoulders to swing him aside.

Then he had a surprise.

The Spaniard, dwarf as he was, stood like a rock, and Tom Merry's powerful swing did not move him an inch from where he stood.

He laughed in the boy's amazed face. Tom Merry was the finest athlete in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's, but he realised that his strength was as nothing to that of the little Spaniard.

"It is not so easy, seniorito!" grinned the dwarf.

"Get aside!" panted Tom Merry.

"Not yet."

Tom Merry made a movement to pass the man. Then the long arms grasped at him, and he was whirled round. He struck out in deadly earnest, and the Spaniard gasped as the boy's fist crashed into his dark face.

He relaxed his grasp for a moment, and Tom Merry made an effort to get away. But it was in vain.

The strong, hairy, sinewy hands closed upon him again, and he was swung off his feet, and the Spaniard carried him as easily as if he had been a baby into the wood and hurled him there upon the grass under the heavy branches.

The next moment he was kneeling beside Tom Merry, and his hand was upon the junior's throat. His fierce black eyes blazed down at the boy.

"Now, seniorito," he hissed—"now will you answer?"

Tom Merry panted.

"You scoundrel! Let me go!"

"Bah! I will throttle you unless—"

His grasp tightened. He looked savagely angry enough to carry out his threat.

Tom Merry made an effort, and sent a shout for help ringing through the wood.

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

The Spaniard gritted his teeth.

"Ah, will you?" he said.

And his grasp fastened tighter; the evil face above and the branches of the trees swam before the dizzy eyes of the St. Jim's junior.

But Tom Merry's cry had been heard.

There was a ringing shout from the wood.

"This way, deah boys! Wescue, St. Jim's!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth at St. Jim's, ran out of the trees, and the crashing in the thickets showed that others were following behind.

CHAPTER 2.

The Seaman's Fear!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY paused one second to jam his eyeglass into his eye.

He took in the scene at a glance; and then, allowing his famous monocle to drop to the end of its cord, he rushed at the Spaniard.

The dwarf looked up, his evil eyes glittering and his grasp relaxing upon Tom Merry. Before he could rise to his feet D'Arcy was upon him.

"You uttah wascal!"

The Spaniard went over in the deep grass, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rolling over him.

"Caramba!"

"Bai Jove! Help, deah boys—the beast is awfully stwong!"

Jack Blake and Digby and Herries of the Fourth ran out of the thickets. They had been strolling through the wood with D'Arcy, and all four of them had heard Tom Merry's desperate cry for help as the ruffian's grip closed on his throat.

Herries paused for a moment and looked back into the wood.

"Towser! Towsy!"

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"Come on, Towsy! Seize him!"

The Spaniard had leaped to his feet, throwing off D'Arcy as if he had been a child, much to the astonishment of the swell of St. Jim's.

He stood back, a strange, wild figure against the green of the thickets, his dusky face aglow, his breath coming fast through his thick lips.

"Caramba!"

"Collar him!" shouted Blake.

"Bai Jove——"

"Hold on!" said Herries. "Towser's got him!"

The bulldog leaped forward.

The Spaniard had not quailed from the crowd of boys, but at the sight of the bulldog's open jaws he turned and ran.

Crash!

Headlong through a thicket he went, and Towser, with a short, sharp growl, went after him, loudly encouraged by his master.

"Go it, Towser! Seize him!"

Meanwhile, Digby helped Tom Merry to his feet. The captain of the Shell was white and dazed, and his hands were shaking.

"Thanks!" he gasped.

"Who was it?" said Digby. "What's the row?"

"The—the hound! I'm after him!"

"Good!" said Blake. "I suppose he was going to rob you, the cad! Let's run him down."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry was not vindictive, but his blood was boiling now. He wanted to get to close quarters with the Spaniard again. He dashed off through the wood on the track of Towser, who clung to the track of the Spaniard.

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy followed him.

"It's all right!" Herries gasped. "No need to worry, you know. Towser won't lose that track; Towser's simply ripping at following a trail——"

"Wats, deah boy——"

"Look here, D'Arcy——"

"Buck up!" shouted Blake. "Don't jaw!"

"Look here——"

"Bai Jove! Towser's got somethin'!" D'Arcy exclaimed.

There was a sound of loud, fierce growling, and a voice raised in angry alarm. The juniors of St. Jim's burst out of the trees into a glade, where a man was backing against a tree, trying to keep the bulldog off with thrusts of a heavy cudgel.

"Got him!" roared Herries, rushing on to the attack.

"Stop!" gasped Tom Merry.

"What!"

"That's not the man!"

"My hat!"

Herries stopped just as he was about to hurl himself upon the stranger. So certain was he about Towser's unerring instinct that he had not thought of looking at the man to see that there was no mistake.

"Bai Jove! Towser's twacked down the wong man——"

"As usual!" grinned Blake.

The man was in seafaring garb. His face was tanned by tropical suns, and his eyes were deep-set and gleaming. There was a bundle tied in a red handkerchief in his hand.

The man bore no resemblance whatever to the Spanish dwarf, but Towser was evidently not the kind of dog to be troubled by making distinctions of that kind. So long as he ran somebody down he seemed to be satisfied.

And it would probably have gone very hard with the brown-faced sailorman, or with Towser, if Tom Merry & Co. had not arrived upon the scene.

Either Towser would have been brained by the cudgel or the sailorman would have felt the bulldog's teeth in his leg, but for their arrival.

"Call him off!" shrieked the sailorman. "If that there dog belongs to you, cail him off! I'll brain him!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Call him off!"

"You let that dog alone!" said Herries. "That's my bulldog!"

"Call him off!" said Blake.

"Towser! Towsy! Come off, old boy! Towsy!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Towser did not seem inclined to come off. He made another spring at the sailorman, and popped back just in time to escape a fierce slash of the oaken cudgel.

Herries gave a shout of wrath.

"Stop that, you ruffian!"

"Bai Jove! That's wathah cool, you know, Hewwies!"

"Oh, rats! Towser! Towsy!"

"Collar the beast!"

"If you're calling Towser a beast, Blake——"

"Collar him, you ass!"

Herries snorted and ran at Towser. He grasped the bulldog's collar and said soothing words, but Towser wanted a great deal of quietening. Towser had had some knocks with the cudgel, and Towser's blood was up.

He tried again and again to rush at the sailorman, and Herries was dragged to and fro by the dog as he shouted to him to "Lie down!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "This is jolly near as good as a circus! Go it, Herries! Go it, Towser!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Towser, old boy! You beast, be quiet! Lie down! Good dog! Good doggie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Towser's efforts relaxed at last. Perhaps he recognised his master's voice, or perhaps he was getting tired. The sailorman lowered the cudgel, which he had been holding in readiness in case the dog should get loose.

"Better take that brute away!" he said.

"Rot!" said Herries. "He's very quiet—you could trust him with a baby! I expect you're not much class, or Towser wouldn't go for you!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "Take the beast away! My hat! If I had a dog like that I'd borrow a gun for him!"

"Bosh!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, rot!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Come on, Towser; come on, old doggie!"

And Herries marched off with Towser with a great deal of dignity.

"We're awfully sorry," said Tom Merry to the panting sailorman—"very sorry indeed! We were looking for somebody else."

"Yaas, wathah! We beg to apologise most pwofoundly, sir!" said D'Arcy, taking off his hat, with a bow.

The sailorman grinned.

"No offence!" he said. "I ain't used to dogs. I guess there's no 'arm done, young gentlemen. It's all right."

"We were looking for a friend of yours, I think," said Tom Merry. "At all events, he has been inquiring for a sailorman on the road."

The seaman started, and a shade of pallor came into his mahogany face.

"A friend of mine," he said. "I ain't got no friends in these parts, I reckon. Wot was 'e like, young gentlemen?"

"Oh, a foreign chap, who was inquiring for a sailorman!" said Tom Merry.

"A foreign chap?"

"Yes."

"Not a Spaniard, by any chance?" asked the sailorman, and there was an inflection of strange eagerness in his voice.

"Yes; I took him for a Spaniard," said Tom Merry, wondering at the agitation in the tanned face of the seaman.

"Not a little ugly figure of a man," said the seaman in a shaking voice—"a little black-jowled demon as strong as a horse and the height of a boy—'bout so high?"

And he stretched out a tanned hand.

"A dwarf?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"Yes, that was what he was."

"Ah, it was Pablo, then!"

"Pablo?"

"Pablo Lopez," said the sailorman. "So he is here, is he? And all the way from Southampton I ain't seen him, and I reckoned he was right off my course by this time. And he's here, looking for a sailorman!"

He muttered the words in low, fearful tones, looking round into the sombre depths of the wood as if in terror of seeing the evil face of the Spaniard looking at him from the shadows there.

There was something in his terrified manner that had a strange effect upon the juniors.

They felt that there was something in this that they could not understand—something that hinted of tragedy and mystery. What were these two men doing in the quiet Sussex countryside?

Tom Merry understood now that the Spaniard had been speaking falsely when he said that he was looking for a friend.

It was evidently not as a friend that the sailorman regarded the man he called Pablo Lopez.

"Where is Lopez now, young gentlemen?" the sailorman asked, his glance returning to the astonished juniors.

"He's in the wood."

"In this wood—near here?"

"We were after him," Tom Merry explained. "We've had a row—he's a ruffian. We've lost him now, though."

"But he hasn't lost me," said the sailor.

"Is he an enemy of yours?" asked Blake.

"Ay, ay!"

"And he is after you?"

"Ay, ay!"

"I should think you could handle a little boulder like that."

The sailor looked at him queerly.

"It's more than my life's worth to meet Pablo Lopez, young gentlemen," he said. "I've got something that he wants. You see that?" He held out what appeared to be a piece of thick, crumpled paper. "He means to have it, too; but not while I'm alive—not much!"

He cast a quick look round into the wood.



The St. Jim's juniors burst from the trees into the glade, to see a man in seafaring garb backing against a tree, trying to keep off Towser with thrusts of a cudgel. "Call off this dog!" shrieked the sailorman. "Call him off, or I'll brain him!"

"I reckon I'll be getting on," he said. "If Lopez is here this ain't a place for me to drop my anchor."

And he tramped away into the wood, with his head sunk and his eyes gleaming on either side of him at the slightest sound in the trees.

The juniors stood silent, lost in amazement.

CHAPTER 3.

The Treasure Chart!

"**B**AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first to break the silence with that ejaculation.

"My hat!" said Digby.

"It's a giddy mystery of some sort," said Blake slowly. "That sailor chap looks as if he thought his life was in danger. Judging from the looks of the foreign bounder I think it may be."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I've got an idea!" said Tom Merry quickly. "The Spanish fellow is still in the wood, and he's looking for the sailor. If he finds him—"

"There'll be mischief—"

"Exactly! Let us follow the sailor."

"Follow him?"

"Yes; we've nothing to do, and we might as well see the man clear of the wood. We may drop on the Spanish chap again that way, too, and give him something to remember us by."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! We'll have Towsah, then."

"Herries—Towser!"

But Herries and Towser were gone. Tom Merry and Blake and D'Arcy and Digby cut sticks in the thickets in case they should need them, and followed on the track of the seaman. They could hear him tramping doggedly on some distance ahead through the thick wood.

"He'll come out on the Wayland road if he follows this path," Digby remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Listen!"

The juniors paused.

They had reached the edge of a broad, sunny glade, which the sailorman had crossed. He was about to plunge into the trees on the opposite side when a figure bounded into view from the fern.

It was the dwarf!

The sailorman saw him as the juniors did, and he sprang back against a tree, his right hand swinging up with the cudgel grasped in it. But the cudgel was shaking like a leaf from the trembling of his hand. It was evident that he was in deadly fear of the dwarf.

"Stand back, Pablo Lopez!" he exclaimed. "Stand back!"

The dwarf laughed—a low, ugly laugh.

"I have found you, Peter Raff," he said.

"Stand back!"

"Where is the chart?"

"I ain't got it."

The dwarf laughed again.

"You are lying, friend Peter," he said—"you are lying! You have the chart in your pocket, and you know you have! Give it me!"

Peter Raff set his lips desperately.

"I won't!" he said. "You shall kill me first!"

"It will not take me long to do that, Peter!"

"Look you here, Pablo," said the sailorman, his eyes watching wildly every sinuous motion of the dwarf, who seemed about to spring upon him every moment, "look you 'ere, belay! You ain't in the South Seas now—you're in England, my man, and there's a law 'ere to 'ang up men who use their knives—you see?"

"I am not afraid of your law, Peter!"

"Stand off!"

"Besides, I shall not use my knife," grinned the dwarf.

"My hands will choke the life out of you if you do not give up the chart!"

"I won't!"

"Hand it over!"

"No!"

"Caramba!"

The Spaniard leaped forward like a tiger.

Peter Raff brought the cudgel down with a swing, but his hand was shaking so that the Spaniard had no difficulty in avoiding the blow.

The cudgel missed its mark, and the next instant the dwarf's terrible grip was upon the sailorman.

Peter Raff, powerful fellow as he was, was borne back against the trees, and the next moment was rolling in the grass, with the dwarf upon him.

"Now," panted the dwarf—"now, hombre! The chart!"

"Never!"

"The chart—or your life first!"

"Help!"

The juniors were dashing across the grassy glade, and the sailor's rolling, despairing eyes had caught a glimpse of them. The dwarf's back was to them, and he saw nothing.

"You hound!"

Tom Merry sprang upon the Spaniard.

Pablo Lopez started up with a fierce cry.

"You! You, nino—you again!"

He whirled round upon the juniors. But they were ready for him. Four sticks were lashing out; they did not feel disposed to stand upon ceremony with the murderous ruffian.

Crash!

The dwarf reeled back from the crashing sticks with a yell of pain.

He made a savage spring forward, with murder in his black eyes; but the juniors of St. Jim's stood their ground, hitting out fiercely.

"Bai Joye! Down with the wottah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Give him socks!"

The Spaniard retreated, hissing like a spiteful cat.

"Caramba, I will—I will—"

"Get out!" said Tom Merry. "Buzz off, or you'll get worse than that, you scoundrel!"

Tom Merry made a motion with his stick, and the Spaniard retreated again. Strong as he was, he was no match for the four juniors.

He turned a savage look upon the sailorman, who had risen, gasping.

"I shall see you again, Peter Raff! You will not escape me!"

Then he disappeared into the wood, muttering Spanish oaths.

"Gweat Scott!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I vegard that fellow as a wank wottah! I twust you are not hurt, Mr. Waff?"

The sailorman was breathing hard, and the colour was ebbing in his tanned face.

"No," he said. "I've been near it, though. P'raps you gentlemen would—"

He paused.

"We'll do anything we can for you," said Tom Merry. "If you're afraid of that fellow, why not apply to the police for protection?"

The sailorman gave a hollow laugh.

"The police wouldn't be much use agin Pablo Lopez," he said. "You don't know him! I was with him in the South Seas. I've seen him—" He broke off abruptly.

"Young sir, you've saved my life just now—if Pablo Lopez had fastened his grip on my throat, I should have been a gone coon."

"I did no more than the others," said Tom Merry.

"You was the first," said the sailorman; "but I'm obliged to you all. I want you to do something more for me, and p'raps for yourself. What is your name, sir?"

"Tom Merry."

The sailorman was fumbling in his breast.

His hand came out with something in it—something that looked like a crumpled paper. But as the juniors looked at it, they saw that it was a kind of leather—a pale-coloured, delicate kind of leather they had never seen before. There were marks upon it in Indian ink, tattooed in the leather.

"Look at that!" said the sailorman.

He handed the fragment of leather, which was about four inches by six, to Tom Merry. Then, a sudden thought seeming to strike him, he closed his rough hand over it.

"No, don't look at it! Young gentleman—he came closer to Tom Merry, and looked sharply and searchingly into the junior's face—"young gentleman, I can trust you?"

"I hope so," said Tom Merry.

"You wouldn't go back on a poor sailorman?"

"Certainly not!"

"Wathah not," said D'Arcy. "I assuah you that you can wely entially upon Tom Mewwy, my deah fellow. He's all wight."

"You take that chart," said the sailorman, placing it in Tom Merry's hand. "Wrap it up and don't look at it."

"Do you want me to mind it for you?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Very well."

Tom Merry took out his handkerchief, and wrapped it round the oblong leather. The sailor watched him with anxious eyes.

"Now make a knot," he said.

Tom Merry smiled, and knotted the corners of the handkerchief.

"You won't open that and look at it while it is in your 'ands?" said the sailor.

"Certainly not!"

"Right you are," said the sailorman. "I can trust you—I know it in your face. Look you 'ere, then! I'm going, but if I live I'll come back agin, and ask you for that paper, or else let you know where to send it by post. You see?"

"Yes."

"If the Spaniard fights me agin—and I reckon he will—he can't get that chart now," said the sailor. "He won't suspect me of giving it away—not he. But he won't find it on me now. You savvy?"

"I understand."

"If I write to you within three days, you send me that chart in the post," said the sailorman. "You savvy that?"

"Yes."

"If you don't 'ear from me on the third morning," said the sailor, in low tones, "it will be because I can't write to you, because—well, because the chart won't be no use to me in Davy Jones' locker."

"My dear chap—"

"Ay, ay, I know what to expect," said the sailorman; "but Pablo Lopez will never have it—that's my comfort. Where can I write to you?"

"Tom Merry, School House, St. James', Rylcombe, Sussex."

"I reckon I shall remember that."

"Why not write it down?"

The sailorman shook his head.

"No, Pablo Lopez will find it, and guess. No; I'll bear it in mind. Mind, if I don't write you by the third morning, I shall never claim that chart—and it is yours."

"Mine?"

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"I reckon so," said the sailorman. "Mind, I came by it honest—I swear that. It's mine, and if I don't claim it within three days, I give it to you, and these young gent's are witnesses."

"Yaas, watah!"

"Maybe you'll have friends who can stand by you, and 'elp you to find what's written on that chart," said the sailorman. "P'r'aps you won't see Pablo Lopez again. He won't know you've got the chart. He may never even know that the treasure's been lifted at all."

"The treasure?" said Tom Merry, with a gasp.

Peter Raff nodded.

"Yes, the treasure," he said. "There's treasure enough on Skeleton Island to make a dozen men rich—rolling in money, I reckon. But it's got to be found, and Pablo Lopez means to find it. You steer clear of Pablo Lopez, and you're all right. Keep that chart out of sight."

"I will take care of it."

The sailorman looked round into the wood.

"I reckon I'll go now—"

"Shall we see you clear of the wood?" asked Blake.

"If you'll be so kind, young gent's."

The juniors walked with the sailorman as far as the Wayland road. They walked in silence. The circumstances were so peculiar that they did not know what to think. Was the man a dreamer, and did he imagine that the leather chart he had given to Tom Merry had the value assigned to it? That he was speaking in good faith, and believed every word he said, was evident.

But it was clear, too, that the Spaniard believed in the chart—else why his desperate effort to obtain possession of it?

And the dwarf did not look a dreamer!

The whole thing was amazing.

The sailorman walked with dogged steps, like a man who felt himself in the grip of a fate, from which there was no escape, but would not yield to fear. He marched on grimly, his eyes well about him, and he seemed to breathe more freely when they came out of the wood on the sunny Wayland road.

He held out a big, rough hand to Tom Merry.

"Good-bye, young gent!" he said. "And thank you kindly—thank you all kindly. I don't suppose I shall write for that there chart; but if I do, you'll send it to me?"

"Immediately!"

"And, remember, if you don't 'ear from me in three days, the chart's yours, to do what you like with—all yours," said the sailorman.

And he pressed Tom Merry's hand, and ducked his head to the other fellows, and went tramping away down the road towards Wayland.

CHAPTER 4.

The Eavesdropper!

TOM MERRY entered his study in the Shell passage at St. Jim's, threw his cap on the table, and sat down.

He wanted to think out what had happened.

The leather chart was still in his pocket, wrapped in the handkerchief; but it did not seem to Tom Merry that that was a safe place for it.

Suppose the Spaniard should get some clue as to where it was? Suppose he had been watching in the wood—it was unlikely, but possible.

The evil dark face of Pablo Lopez was before Tom Merry's eyes as he thought of it—the hard, cruel, unscrupulous face.

Tom Merry drew the knotted handkerchief from his pocket. His curiosity to see the chart was intense; but he would not look at it; the thought of breaking his word to the sailor never even crossed his mind.

If a letter came from Peter Raff within three days, Tom Merry would send the chart to him unlooked at.

If not, it might mean that Peter Raff was dead, or that he had fled far, and abandoned the thought of finding the supposed treasure.

Then, by his words, the chart would belong to Tom Merry. The junior trembled at the thought. A chart to a treasure buried upon an island—it seemed like a dream of romance.

Tom Merry had laid the wrapped handkerchief on the table, and his eyes rested upon it dreamily.

Where should he place it for safety?

There was a step in the passage, and the door was kicked open, and two fellows came into the study—Manners and Lowther of the Shell, Tom Merry's chums.

Tom Merry made a quick grasp at the chart.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "What have you got there?"

"What's the giddy secret?" demanded Manners. "Is it something new in grub?"

Tom Merry flushed, and laughed.

"No," he said. "It's a treasure chart."

"What!"

"A treasure chart," said Tom Merry calmly.

Manners stared, and Monty Lowther grinned.

"Try us with something a little less steep, my son," said Monty Lowther. "I'm afraid my swallowing capacity is not up to that."

"It's a fact."

"Gammon!"

"Honest Injun!"

Monty Lowther became grave.

"What on earth are you getting at, Tommy?" he demanded. "Explain yourself."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'll explain soon enough," he said. "Shut the door—I don't want all the School House to hear!"

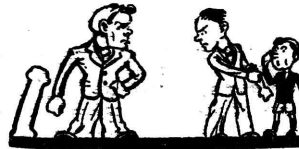
Monty Lowther kicked the door shut.

Tom Merry explained about the meeting with the sailorman and the Spaniard.

Monty Lowther and Manners listened with breathless interest.

"Well, my only summer hat!" exclaimed Lowther, in amazement. "If that doesn't take the giddy cake!"

CHANGED HIS TUNE!



Big Brother (advancing towards group of boys and rolling up sleeves): "Who hit my brother?"

Big Lout (stepping forward): "Me!"

Big Brother (rolling down sleeves hastily): "Oh, all right; he deserved it."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Thorpe, 81, Carlton Hill, Brighton.

"Blessed if I catch on to it, either," said Manners. "Treasure charts are all very well, but—but they don't happen, you know."

"This one has," said Tom Merry.

"The man must be dreaming."

"The Spanish chap wasn't dreaming—he meant business all the time."

"It's amazing!"

"And the chart is yours, if you don't get a letter in three days?" Monty Lowther asked, in a deep breath.

"That's it."

"By George! And if it becomes yours?"

"Then we shall see it."

"A giddy chart of a giddy treasure island," exclaimed Lowther. "My hat! Why wasn't I born a sailor? Fancy being bunged into a Public school, with a giddy treasure waiting on a giddy island all ready to be lifted."

"Rotten!" said Manners. "We might run away to sea, you know."

"H'm! We might get off in the vac," said Tom Merry. "The South Seas aren't so far away as they used to be—I mean, you can get there in next to no time in a fast steamer. The vac's quite long enough."

"My word! What a giddy holiday—South Seas, buried treasure, cannibals, and pirates!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I think the pirates will have to be marked off," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Also the cannibals. But I really think the treasure's there—that sailor chap had such an earnest way about him, and he looked honest all through. But if I should have the chart, and find the treasure, I should keep half of it for him if he ever turned up to claim it, although he gives me the chart."

"Quite right!"

"I think—Hallo! What on earth's that?"

There was a sudden terrific uproar in the passage. Something heavy bumped against the door, and there was a stifled yell. In the midst of the bumping and scuffling came the well known tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House.

"You uttah wottah! You feahfully mean beast!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"That's Mellish's voice!" grinned Manners. "What has the cad been doing?"

Tom Merry's brows contracted.

"Listening at the door, I expect, and Gussy has caught him."

Monty Lowther threw the door wide open.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, very flushed and wrathful, seemed to be waltzing in the passage with Mellish. The cad of the Fourth was struggling to get away. But D'Arcy, in spite of his elegant ways, was an athlete. He whirled Mellish round and round, and finally whirled him into the study.

"I was comin' along to speak to you, Tom Mewwy, about takin' care of that chart, you know," said D'Arcy, "and I found that howwid beast kneelin' at the door outside, with his beastly yah to the beastly keyhole, you know!"

"I wasn't!" roared Mellish. "I—I was just stooping down to tie my shoelace, when that rotter came and jumped on—"

"Wats! The beast had his yah glued to the beastly keyhole. Have you been talkin' over anythin' private?"

Tom Merry looked a little worried.

"I suppose Mellish has heard me talking about what's happened in the wood," he replied.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wathah weckless of you, Tom Mewwy. I should have thought you would be careful to say nothin' about the tweasuah chart."

"Eh?"

"You should not have mentioned the tweasuah—"

"You ass!" roared Manners. "You've mentioned it yourself, haven't you?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"I never heard anything," said Mellish. "It was quite an accident that I happened to stoop down close to your door, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry gave the cad of the Fourth a glance of contempt.

"Don't tell lies, Mellish!" he said scornfully. "I know vevy well that you were listening!"

"I tell you—"

"Get out of the study! No good keeping him here, Gussy; we can't make him forget what he's heard!"

"We can make him pwomise not to wepeat it."

"I don't suppose a promise would make much difference to Mellish."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

Monty Lowther stepped to the door, and held it open for Mellish to pass. He also held his right foot in readiness to help Mellish out when he started.

"This is your way, Mellish!" he remarked.

"I—I—"

"Get out!"

Mellish looked at the doorway and Lowther's ready boot. He made a movement to pass, and Lowther's boot swung up, and he started back again.

"Are you going, Mellish?"

"Look here—"

"Kick him out, Manners!"

"Certainly!" said Manners.

Mellish gave a snarl, and made a desperate rush through the doorway.

Quick as he was, he was not quick enough to escape Lowther's boot. Monty Lowther's long leg whipped out, and his boot came with a crash behind Mellish, and the cavedropper landed in the passage on his hands and knees, with a fearful yell.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther slammed the door after Mellish, and the cad of the Fourth was heard to tramp away down the passage, grunting.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wagged an admonitory finger at Tom Merry.

"You have been awfully weckless, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Mellish will tell Gore and Cwooke and Snipe, and all the set. They will talk of the mystewious document up and down the school."

"Can't be helped."

"Yaas, but—"

"Oh, don't croak, Gussy! It can't be helped now, any way."

"Oh, vevy well! I was only goin' to say—"

"Well, don't!"

"I came here to speak about that document, Tom Mewwy. It will be necessary for it to be kept vevy safe."

"I know that, Gussy."

"If you like, I will take charge of it."

"Eh?"

"You see, in a mattah of this kind, what you need is a fellow of tact and judgment!" D'Arcy explained. "I shall be vevy pleased to take the wespansibility of the mattah."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Thanks vevy much; but I really think I am able to look after the chart," he said. "You see, it was entrusted to me, and I can't vevy well give it to anybody else to take care of."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,364.

"Not to any ordinawy person, certainly," D'Arcy agreed. "But, in my case—"

"Of course, I am quite willing to admit that you are an extraordinary person—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!"

"But I think I had better look after the chart myself."

D'Arcy opened the door.

"Vevy well, Tom Mewwy; the wespansibility is yours, you know. I felt bound to make the offah, and I weally wash my hands of what may happen!"

And the swell of St. Jim's marched out of the study, leaving the Terrible Three laughing.

CHAPTER 5.

Towser's Find!

TOM MERRY thought a good deal about the mysterious document during the following day or two.

He had locked it up for safety in a secret drawer in his desk. There it reposed until he should hear from the sailorman, or until the lapse of three days should make it his own property.

Needless to say, the chums of the Shell were very keen to get sight of it, and to examine closely the tattooed lines on the leather, of which they had caught a passing glimpse when the sailorman handed the chart to Tom Merry.

But they did not think for a moment of breaking the compact with the sailor.

It is probable that, with the lapse of a day or two, Tom Merry, in the other interests he had, would have almost forgotten the chart that reposed in the secret drawer of his desk, still knotted up in his handkerchief.

But he was not allowed to forget it.

The chums of the School House had agreed, and intended, to say nothing of the chart to the school. It was nobody's business but their own, and they did not want to make it the talk of St. Jim's.

But the matter was out of their hands now. As Blake and Digby and D'Arcy and Herries and the Terrible Three themselves all maintained that they had not said a word, it was pretty clear that Mellish of the Fourth had heard the story, with his ear to Tom Merry's keyhole.

Undoubtedly he had told his friends, and they had chatted about it, for on the second day the story of the sailorman, the Spaniard, and the treasure chart was all over the school.

Fellows came up to Tom Merry and demanded to know the story. At first his answers were short and sharp.

"Mind your own bizney," or "go and eat coke," did not satisfy the inquirers, and they came again and again, and all sorts of stories were afloat.

Under the circumstances, Tom Merry related the facts, as it was better for the facts to be known than for all sorts of wild rumours to get about.

The story caused a great deal of excitement in the Lower School, and many fellows treated it more in the nature of a joke.

But Tom Merry was quite convinced himself of the genuineness of the sailorman's story, and of the chart; but the less attention others gave to the thing the better.

Tom Merry was already planning in his mind a voyage to the South Seas during the vacation, if the chart should be left to him.

But he sincerely hoped, too, that nothing had happened to the sailorman. He took a strangely deep interest in the fate of Peter Raff. Whenever he thought of the swarthy, cruel face of the Spaniard he felt a pang of anxiety for the brown-complexioned sailorman. Where was he now? Had he fled—or had he perished, as he so evidently feared, at the hands of the Spanish dwarf?

"I fancy he's all right," Monty Lowther remarked, when Tom Merry mentioned the fact at tea-time in the study on the second day. "If anything had happened to him in this neighbourhood we should have heard of it."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I suppose so," he assented. "But—well, whenever I think of that Spaniard chap, I feel scared about Raff. He was no match for Lopez."

"That Spanish chap was a demon," said Blake, who was in the study having tea with the Terrible Three. "He wasn't so tall as most of us, but he had the strength of three or four full-grown men. I'm sorry for the chap who got into his hands, with no help near. But if anything had happened to the sailor it would be the talk of the countryside. Things don't happen about Rylcombe every day, and anything like that would make a sensation."

"Yes, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"The woods are vevy thick," said Tom Merry, in a low voice, "and a man might lie there for weeks without being found. Or the river, where it flows through the wood—"

Blake shuddered a little.

"Hang it all, that's beastly!" he exclaimed. "But we

saw the sailor well on his way on the Wayland road before we left him."

"True!"

"I shouldn't wonder if you get a letter from him in the morning," said Manners.

"I hope so."

"But you don't think so?" said Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No," he said, "I don't! I can't help thinking that Lopez has been too much for him. I think—"

"Well?"

"Let's have a stroll out now," said Tom Merry. "We can get a pass out of gates, and we might have a stroll up the Rhyl."

"What about the footer?"

"Oh, we've done enough practice to-day!"

Figgins & Co. of the New House met them near the gates. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn drew up in a line directly in front of Tom Merry & Co.

"Halt!" said Figgins.

The chums of the School House halted.

"Where's the chart?" said Figgins.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, that's got as far as the New House, has it?" he asked.

"What ho!" said Figgins. "Is it a fact—honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun!"

"And now you're going treasure-hunting, I suppose, in the South Seas?" Kerr asked.

"Perhaps—in the vac."

"I'll come," said Figgins.

"Same here," said Kerr.



As the juniors threw open the door of Study No. 6 an astonishing scene met their eyes. Bound tightly to the armchair was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—but what a Gussy! His face had been richly ornamented with ink, and a fool's cap had been set on his head. "Gwoooogh!" was all the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's could say.

"Right you are!" said Manners. "After all, I can take my camera, and the light's good enough. We can get some snaps up the river."

And when tea was over, the four juniors walked out.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy met them at the doorway.

"Goin' out, deah boys?"

"Yes. Coming?"

The swell of St. Jim's shook his head.

"I've got a beastly impot to do," he said. "I wathah think that Mr. Lathom is wathah a beast, you know!"

"Poor old chap!" said Tom Merry. "Can't you cut it?"

"I've got to show it up by seven."

"Beastly! Never mind!" said Tom Merry. "You can keep your study door open, and keep an eye on the passage. I can't help thinking that some of the chaps who are curious about that chart may try to get at it."

"I will keep an eye open, deah boy."

And the juniors went out.

"So will I, if the grub's all right," Fatty Wynn remarked. "You'll have to be jolly careful about the provisions in a hot climate."

"Trust Fatty to think of that!" grinned Blake.

"Yes, and it's a jolly important thing to think of, too!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "Chap might find himself booked for a long holiday, without a proper arrangement about the grub. And then where would he be?"

"I suppose you'll call in the whole family to hear the will read—I mean, to see the chart, when you examine it?" asked Figgins.

"Yes, if you like. Are you coming out now?"

"Certainly! We'll come and see that you don't get into any trouble. Might be some giddy Spaniards knocking about in the wood."

And the juniors left St. Jim's together. It was a nice evening, and the banks of the Rhyl were very pleasant for a stroll. The juniors chatted cheerfully as they

walked on by the shining river. Only Tom Merry was silent. The hero of the Shell was thinking.

There was a sudden rustling in the wood, and Tom Merry swung round quickly. He had been thinking of Pablo Lopez, and he would not have been surprised to see the swarthy, grinning face of the dwarf.

But it was Herries of the Fourth who burst out of the thickets, on the track of Towser, who had something in his mouth.

"Towser! Towser! Stop, you beast!"

Towser stopped by the river. He did not seem inclined for a swim. Herries came panting across the towing-path and grasped the bulldog's collar.

"Towser! Towser!"

"What on earth has he got there?" asked Blake.

"Blessed if I know. Looks like a cap," said Herries. "I was walking along the Feeder with him when he picked it up."

Towser dropped the cap.

Tom Merry glanced at it, and gave a sudden start. He knew that peaked cap! He remembered with perfect clearness where he had seen it—on the head of the sailor-man in the wood!

CHAPTER 6.

A Tragic Mystery!

TOM Merry made a quick movement towards the cap. Towser growled, and Herries dragged him by the collar. The Shell fellow picked the peaked cap up and turned it over in his hands, looking at it.

The juniors could see by the expression on Tom Merry's face that startling thoughts were in his mind. They gathered round in silence.

"What is it?" Monty Lowther asked at last.

"It's Peter Raff's cap."

"By George!"

"Sure?"

"Quite sure."

The juniors looked at the cap with grim faces. How had Peter Raff's cap come to be lying beside the stream in the heart of Rylcombe Wood?

"He must have come back into the wood after we left him," Blake said slowly.

"Yes."

"Perhaps he found the Spaniard watching the road."

"Very likely. Lopez might easily have guessed that Raff would make for the nearest town where there was a railway station."

"But—but how came he to leave his cap in the wood?"

"If there was a fight, and he ran—"

"Or if—"

Tom Merry turned to Herries.

"Do you remember just where Towser picked this up, Herries?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" said Herries.

"Good! Let's go there!"

In silence the juniors followed Herries in the devious paths under the trees. The silence and shadow of the deep wood seemed fraught with tragedy to them. What had happened there in those green, shadowy depths?

The Feeder, a little stream that ran through the wood and emptied into the Rhyl, guided them as they went. The waters murmured and rippled under great, overhanging branches.

Herries stopped at last where the stream ran through a broad glade.

"That's where it was lying," said Herries.

It was a lonely spot. The thickets in this place grew down near the water, and the soil was damp and soft.

Tom Merry muttered an exclamation, as he stooped and picked up a red-spotted handkerchief that was caught on the thorns.

There was no doubt now.

That was the handkerchief the sailor-man had carried his sandwiches in. There were stains of grease clearly visible upon it.

Tom Merry searched the spot with a quiet, set face.

He had little doubt now of what had happened. The sailor-man had found the Spaniard watching for him on the road, and had turned back into the wood to avoid his relentless pursuer. Into the depths of the wood the Spaniard had tracked him, and there—

What had happened under those green boughs? What terrible tale could those gleaming waters have told?

In the soft soil of the water's brim there were deep footmarks—deep, thick, one blotting out another. There had been a struggle there—the most casual glance could ascertain as much.

And the result?

Tom Merry searched the shining waters with his eyes.

In this spot the Feeder ran wide and deep. The waters might have hidden anything.

"Good heavens!" muttered Blake.

There was an ejaculation from Lowther.

He came out of the thicket, holding up the cudgel the juniors had seen in the hands of the sailor-man.

"It was in the bush," he said.

"Poor chap!" said Blake huskily.

Had the fate of the sunburnt sailor-man been sealed under those green branches?

"It's horrible!" muttered Figgins.

"We're not sure yet," said Kerr, in his keen way. "It looks as if the man has been done for here, but—"

"But what, Kerr?" asked Tom Merry.

He knew how keen the judgment of the Scots junior was.

"But this might be a dodge; it looks as much like suicide as anything else," said Kerr. "Raff may have got this up to make the Spaniard think he had drowned himself, to throw him off the scent."

Tom Merry's face lighted a little.

"It's possible, Kerr."

"Not very likely, though," said Blake. "I suppose we shall have to tell the police about this, Tom Merry."

"Yes; they'll drag the Feeder for the—the body!" Tom Merry shuddered. "Poor old chap! But if they don't find him I shall hope that he is still alive. The wood will be searched from end to end."

In silence the juniors threaded their way through the wood, and came out into Rylcombe Lane. Then they turned into the village and visited the police station.

Inspector Skeat was rather inclined to scout the story at first, suspecting a schoolboy's jape. But he was soon convinced that the matter had to be looked into, at all events.

The chums of St. Jim's left the police station.

"No good giving up hope yet," said Kerr. "There is still to-morrow morning's post, Tom Merry. You may get a letter."

"I hope I shall get one."

"Saturday morning was to be the limit—that's the third morning," said Blake thoughtfully. "If you don't get a letter, Peter Raff will not claim the chart again."

"That was the arrangement."

"And that would mean—"

"That the poor fellow is dead."

Blake shivered.

"It seems awful," he said. "Still, it's always possible that he may think the chart too risky a thing for him to carry about, and he may prefer to be rid of it. He naturally would prefer anybody to have it rather than give it to that beast of a Spaniard."

"It's possible."

But Tom Merry did not think it likely.

He did not believe that he would ever look again upon the honest, sunburnt face of the sailor-man from the South Seas.

The juniors returned to the school.

After consulting his chums, Tom Merry decided that the Head had better be told about what had happened. He was certain to hear from the police, in any case.

The junior captain knocked at the door of Dr. Holmes' study, and was told to enter.

Dr. Holmes had only recently returned to the school, after being away for his health. The good old Head was still a little pale, but his smile was as kind as ever.

"Yes, Merry; what is it?" he asked.

"There's something I want to tell you, sir."

"Then sit down, my boy."

Tom Merry sat down and told the story of the sailor-man and the mysterious document.

Dr. Holmes listened with deep attention.

"That is a very strange story, Merry," he said, when the Shell fellow had finished. "You still have the document quite safe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pray take care of it, or, if you prefer, I will lock it up in my safe, along with the school plate," said Dr. Holmes. "Would you prefer it?"

"Certainly, sir; thank you very much! I have felt very uncomfortable about it," said Tom Merry. "I did not like to carry it about with me, in case I should lose it or be robbed, and my desk is a very flimsy one."

"Very good. Bring it to me whenever you like, then, Merry, and I will lock it up. I am very sorry to hear that harm has befallen the man who gave it to you. But, from your description, the police should easily be able to find so remarkable a character as the Spaniard."

"Yes, I hope so. I have given them a description of him. Will the document have to be handed to the police, do you think?"

"It is possible they may wish to see it, Merry; but it will undoubtedly remain your property," said the Head. "I

must caution you, however, against attaching too much importance to it. Whatever Raff may have believed the document was worth, it is hardly likely that it really contains a clue to the buried treasure. But certainly the document should be given the greatest care. Bring it to me at any time, and I will lock it up."

"Thank you, sir!"

Tom Merry quitted the Head's study.

Lowther and Manners and Blake were waiting in the passage. Figgins & Co. had gone to their own House.

"The Head is going to lock the chart up in his safe," Tom Merry explained. "I think I'll go and get it now."

"Right-ho!"

They ascended the stairs.

As they entered the Fourth Form passage there was a strange sound from Study No. 6—Blake's study, which he shared with D'Arcy and Digby and Herries.

Herries and Digby were out of doors, but the chums remembered that D'Arcy had stayed in to write out an imposition given him by his Form-master.

"What on earth's the matter there?" Blake exclaimed.

Bump, bump!

"Groogh!"

"My hat! There's something wrong with Gussy!"

"Let's look!"

Bump!

"Gwoooogh!"

Somewhat alarmed, the juniors threw open the door of Study No. 6. An astonishing scene met their gaze.

CHAPTER 7.

The Treasure Chart is Stolen!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was there. But he was not sitting at the table, grinding away at his imposition.

He was sitting in the armchair, and a rope, passed round his chest and round the chair, fastened him there.

Another rope fastened his legs to the front legs of the chair, and his wrists were tied behind him.

A silk muffler had been crammed into his mouth, and twine was wound round and round his head to keep it there.

The muffler was intended, evidently, to act as a gag. It stopped all D'Arcy's utterance except for a gurgling grunt.

The noise the juniors had heard from the passage was now explained.

D'Arcy could not move except to jerk the heavy armchair forward.

D'Arcy's face had been richly ornamented. Red ink was daubed upon it down as far as the mouth, and black ink from the mouth down over the chin. His partly coloured countenance presented an astonishing appearance.

To enhance the effect, white had been chalked on the end of his nose, and his eyebrows had been darkened with soot.

A fool's cap of paper was set on his head.

The chums of the School House stared at him. They had not been in a merry mood when they had entered. But the sight of D'Arcy's predicament was too much for them.

They burst into an irresistible roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoooogh!"

That was all the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's could say. The silk muffler choked any further utterances.

"Gwoooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake staggered forward, rocking with laughter, and opened his pocket-knife. He sawed across the twine and severed it, and jerked the muffler out of the mouth of the swell of the School House.

D'Arcy gasped for breath.

"Ow-w-w-w-w!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses! There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The thing is not comic at all, you feahful asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have been tweated with the gwossett diswespect."

"You have!" gasped Tom Merry, wiping his eyes.

"There's no doubt at all about that. You have! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"But who did it?" exclaimed Blake, gasping for breath.

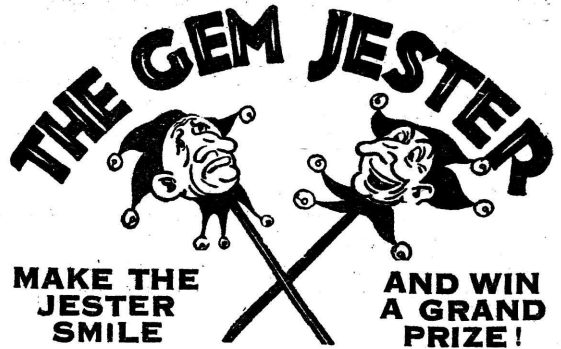
"Ha, ha, ha! Who has mucked up the one-and-only Gus like this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses!" roared D'Arcy. "Do you think I should let one chap tie me up like this? I should have given him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on the next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received and a half-a-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

ONE FOR THE BORE!

Big Game Hunter: "There I stood alone, weaponless, in the middle of four big lions!"

Bored Listener: "Where were you—Trafalgar Square?"
A football has been awarded to G. Dormon, 35, Burnfoot Avenue, Fulham, London, S.W.6.

NO PUNISHMENT!

Father: "Where's Bobby?"
Mother: "I locked him in the cupboard an hour ago for being naughty. I asked him just now if he would like to come out and he refused."

Father: "Gracious! I don't wonder. I stored some apples in there yesterday!"
A football has been awarded to N. Maris, 17, Sidmouth Road, Leyton, London, E.10.

THE TENDERFOOT.

Englishman (out West): "I would like a saddle, please."
Storekeeper: "Would you like one with a horn?"
Englishman: "No, I don't think I'll be riding in any traffic!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Whitton, 6, Kilgour Avenue, Pathhead, Kirkealdy, Fife.

BUNKERED!

Binks: "I wish you wouldn't keep harping on about your golf—it will drive me crazy."
Jinks: "That's not a drive—it's a short putt!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Scobbie, Gaberston Park, Hilton Road, Alloa.

HE WASN'T A SCOTSMAN!

Yank: "I guess I come from the finest country in the world!"
Scotsman: "Ye dinna speak like one who does!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 68, Harvest Lane, Neepsend, Sheffield, 3.

SIMPLE.

Jack: "Did you hear about the fellow who invented a device for looking through thick walls?"
John: "No; what does he call it?"
Jack: "A window!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Pelling, 49, Ashford Road, Preston, Brighton.

NOT A COMPLIMENT.

Artist's Friend: "There was only one painting at the exhibition that I could look at—it was yours."
Artist: "Thanks, old chap, for the compliment."
Artist's Friend: "There were so many people round the others."
Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Forward, Beams, South Street, Pennington, Hants.

RIGHT AND WRONG.

Green: "That suit you're wearing is certainly a credit to your tailor."
Brown: "Debit, old man, debit!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Smith, c/o Box 21, Ganmain, New South Wales, Australia.

"I suppose there were at least a hundred?" said Manners gravely.

Lowther shook his head.

"More like a thousand," he said. "I can't imagine Gussy letting a mere hundred handle him like this."

"Pway don't be a silly ass, Lowthah. There were four."

"Four thousand? Dear me!"

"No, you uttah ass—"

"Four hundred?" asked Manners.

"No!" yelled D'Arcy. "Four; you feahful ass!"

"But you didn't let four fellows tie you up like this, surely?"

"I couldn't help it, ass!"

"Why didn't you slay them with a stare? If you had looked at them as you are looking now they must have had a fit, and—"

"Welease me, Blake! Buck up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake cut through the rope. It took some time; the swell of St. Jim's had been well secured. D'Arcy made a movement to rise, with the intention of committing assault and battery upon Monty Lowther; but he sank back into the chair again with a gasp.

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"Yow! The cwamp! Pins and needles, deah boy!"

"Horrid!" said Lowther sympathetically. "Shall I rub you?"

"No, you chump!"

"My grandfather used to be rubbed for his rheumatism," said Lowther.

"Fathead!"

"But who did it?" asked Tom Merry, laughing. "Who were the four?"

"I was sittin' here witin' out my beastlay impot," said D'Arcy. "I wasn't thinkin' of dangah, of course. I had one eye on the passage, because you asked me to keep an eye open for anybody goin' to your study. I wasn't thinkin' of dangah, howevah. Then Mellish came cweepin' along, and as soon as he saw the study door was open, he cwept back. I called aftah him, and told him he was a spyin' beast. Then he wushed in, with Snipe, and Cwooke and Weilly."

"Reilly!" exclaimed Blake. "It's not like Reilly to mix up with those chaps. He's a decent sort."

"I wufuse to wegard him as a decent sort. He wposposed puttin' the ink on my beastly face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was taken by surpwise," D'Arcy explained. "Othah-wise I should have thwashed the lot of them and ejected them ffrom the study."

"Naturally," said Tom Merry, with great gravity.

"But I was bowled ovah before I had time to say 'Jack Wobinson,'" said D'Arcy. "They had me on the floor, and they tied me up and tweated me in that diswespectful mannah. I wegard it as an unpawalleled outwage—unpawalleled in the histowry of St. Jim's. I uttably fail to see what you fellows are laughin' at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look in the glass, old son," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You'd better go and get a wash!" grinned Blake. "Blessed if I see how you can have the check to sit like that in a respectable study, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I mean it, you know. I'm not a particular chap, as a rule, but I really don't like a fellow in that state in my study, and—"

"Ass!"

And the "pins and needles" having now subsided a little, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose and made a rush for the nearest bath-room.

The chums of the School House roared with laughter.

"All the same, we shall have to make an example of those chaps," said Blake. "A jape is a jape, when it's played off in somebody else's study; but in one's own study it's an altogether different matter."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Exactly so," he agreed. "And it was very rough on Gussy. I wonder—"

"You wonder what?"

"Whether Mellish was thinking of the chart in my study, and—and they tied up Gussy to get his eye off them," said Tom Merry musingly.

Blake whistled.

"I shouldn't be surprised," he said.

"But Reilly wouldn't enter into any scheme of spying on the chart," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "He's too decent for that."

"Yes, I know; but he may have been taken in by the others. As a matter of fact, he's the only one of the four

who'd have had pluck enough to tackle Gussy, if Gussy had had a chance of cutting up rough. I think I'll go and look at the chart and make sure."

"Good!"

The juniors hurried down the passage to Tom Merry's study round the corner. The door was closed, and when the Terrible Three and Blake looked in, the study wore its usual aspect.

Tom Merry's desk was standing in the corner, and did not seem to have been interfered with. Tom crossed to it at once.

The desk was a handsome one of oak, and had been presented to him on some birthday by his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. It had had some hard knocking about in Tom Merry's study, and it was not so strong as it once had been. Tom Merry opened the top. The secret drawer was situated under the inkstand, and was supposed to be very secret indeed; but, like most secret drawers, it was not of a kind to baffle a searcher.

Tom Merry, as a matter of fact, kept money in the secret drawer—when he had any—and more than once, going to the desk in a hurry, he had left it quite open. Secret as the drawer was supposed to be, probably a good many of the fellows in the School House knew all about it, or, at all events, knew it was there.

Tom Merry moved the inkstand from the desk, and pushed the little spring that controlled the lid of the secret drawer.

The lid sprang up.

Then he pulled out the drawer.

"My hat!"

It was a sharp exclamation from the Terrible Three simultaneously.

For the drawer was empty!

Empty!

The knotted handkerchief containing the chart was gone!

CHAPTER 8.

Reilly in a Rage.

"G ONE!"

"Stolen!"

"Great Scott!"

Tom Merry stared into the empty drawer.

The chart of the treasure island was gone. The handkerchief it had been knotted up in was gone, too. A thief had been there.

"Who the dickens—" began Blake.

Tom Merry's brows contracted.

"That's why Gussy was tied up in Study No. 6," he said.

"Those rotters were after the chart, and they wanted to get him out of the way."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"It's jolly certain," said Monty Lowther. "I'm surprised at Reilly being in it; but it looks pretty certain."

"And they've got it."

"Let's get after them," said Tom Merry abruptly.

He closed the secret drawer, and they ran down the passage. If the raiders had taken the chart, there was little chance of recovering it before it had been looked at; but Tom Merry meant to do his best. Reilly's study was nearest to them, and they kicked open the door and ran in without the slightest ceremony.

The boy from Belfast was seated at the table, alone in the study, working, when they rushed in, and he jumped up in amazement, spilling a shower of blots over his paper.

"Begorra!" he roared. "And what—"

He had no time for more.

The four juniors grasped him and whirled him away from the table, and bumped him up against the wall, and held him there.

"Now, then," shouted Tom Merry, "where is it?"

"Faith, and it's raving dotty ye are!" roared Reilly.

"Help! Help! Sure, Tom Merry's gone cranky! Help!"

"Where's the chart?"

"What?"

"The chart!" roared Tom Merry, shaking him. "You've raided my desk and taken the chart. You know what I mean. Where is it?"

Reilly struggled violently.

"Sure, and I'll smash ye entoirely!" he roared. "Do ye think I'd go to a fellow's desk and take a thing that belonged to him, ye spalpeen?"

"Look here—"

"Where's the chart?"

"Lemme get at him!" yelled Reilly. "I'll pulverise him! I'll teach him to call me a thafe! Lemme get at him!"

"Hold on," said Jack Blake. "Looks to me as if there's some mistake. You know I said all along Reilly wouldn't have had a hand in such a thing."

"Faith, and I—"

(Continued on page 14.)

COMING SOON—STIRRING NEW SERIAL OF THE ST. FRANK'S CHUMS!



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS! How do you like the first story of our treasure-seeking series? Great, isn't it? I expect you are all eager to get started on the next yarn. Let me tell you, it's more thrilling than the one in this number. The title of it is:

"HIDDEN GOLD!"

The Chums of St. Jim's set off in high spirits for Skeleton Island, in the Pacific, to seek the pirates' treasure. They are making the trip in Lord Conway's steam-yacht, the Silver Scud. They see nothing of Pablo Lopez—the Spanish dwarf who is after the treasure-chart Tom Merry has—until they reach Southampton, where they are to embark on their journey to southern seas. There the dwarf appears again, but gets away after overhearing where the treasure island is situated. This means that the Chums of St. Jim's will be up against Lopez when they reach their destination!

The story of their exciting trip to the Pacific, the discovery of the treasure island, and the nerve-tingling adventures there, will compel your interest from first line to last. Tell all your pals about this wonderful story, too, chums!

"TREASURE ISLE!"

Next Wednesday's grand chapters bring our popular serial to an exciting con-

clusion. Doc Haynes makes a last desperate but vain attempt to destroy the Sky Wanderer, after which the Chums of St. Frank's also go treasure hunting. Don't miss their final gripping adventures on Tao-Tao Island.

Next week I shall have something more to say about that super new serial, which starts in a fortnight's time, featuring the thrilling experiences of the St. Frank's chums out in the Wild West. So watch out next Wednesday for full details of Mr. E. S. Brooks' latest masterpiece.

Finally, there will be another ripping number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," a column of readers' prize-winning jokes, and your Editor will be with you once again.

MISSED DEATH BY A MIRACLE!

Two boys in California must be congratulating themselves on their wonderful luck recently at not being blown to pieces. Presented with a rifle they naturally sought a target to aim at. That the boys chose an isolated store-hut for their target indicates that they did not require a test of firing skill so much as the gratification of "plugging" an object with bullets. They fired bullet after bullet into the walls of the hut—little knowing the dangerous contents inside. For it contained no less than a huge stock of dynamite! The boys must have missed death by a miracle—and you can be sure

they will make more certain of the nature of their target next time they use a rifle—if they are ever permitted to do so again.

AMAZING CHICKENS.

You remember I told you last week about Joseph, the sheep, who follows his mistress about like a good dog? Well, Joseph has a rival for intelligence and obedience. His rival is a hen—Jean by name—who rides about on the steam-roller which her master drives. Jean also follows her master's daughter to school, and she is just as obedient to commands as a well-trained dog.

Chickens seem to be in the news this week. It is reported that a man in Iowa, U.S.A., sold a rooster to someone living forty-two miles away, and a few mornings later it returned home again—having walked and fluttered the long journey back. Apparently it preferred the old home.

But more amazing still is the story of the hen in a Yugoslavian village. It lays eggs that carry a number that is the same as the date on which the egg was laid! All that is required of the hen now, is to add the name of the month. Then some people, at least, will be able to tell whether they are getting fresh eggs or not—the date will be indisputable evidence.

THE RUNAWAY TRAIN!

For a driver and fireman to be chasing in a motor-car their runaway train seems more like an incident from a comic film than actual fact. But it happened the other day in France. The driver and fireman got down from their cab to adjust a defect which had brought the goods train to a halt. Next moment, the train started off on its own—leaving the amazed men behind! The driver and fireman quickly commandeered a car and gave chase for miles along a road that ran beside the railway track. But they failed to overtake the runaway train until it slowed down up a gradient through lack of steam pressure. Then the driver jumped aboard and stopped the train. It was fortunate for everyone concerned that the runaway slowed up, otherwise a serious accident would probably have been the outcome.

THE EDITOR.

Basil Smith, Barnards Cottage, Friday Bridge, nr. Wisbech, Cambs, wants a pen pal anywhere.

Miss A. Hughes, 610, Centre A Street, N.W. Calgary, Alberta, Canada, wants girl correspondents in the Empire; sports and art; ages 13-15.

Miss Violet May, 73, Redman Buildings, Bourne Estate, Holborn, London, E.C.1, wants girl correspondents; ages 15-17.

J. Fortey, 223, St. Saviour's Road, Saitley, Birmingham, wants to hear from model makers; model planes, suits of armour—anything.

Ernest A. Reader, Gowanlea, Pettycur Road, Kinghorn, Fife, Scotland, wants to hear from readers keen on the "School-boys' Own Library."

Eric Gray, 73, Barbara Avenue, Humberstone, Leicester, wants a pen pal in the States of Canada, interested in motors, aeroplanes, and sport; age 14-16.

Miss Betty Violet Lewis, 32, Gibbon Road, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey, wants girl correspondents, India preferred; ages 12-14.

H. W. G. Couch, 83, Clare Street, Portland, South Australia, wants correspondents in England, Canada, Germany and Holland, who are interested in stamp collecting and cycling.

K. J. Lynes, 35, Maudsley Road, Coventry, wants to correspond with someone interested in photography and French; age 14-15.

Billy Temple, 3512, Walkley Avenue, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada, wants a correspondent interested in stamp collecting; age 13-15.

Miss Irene Walker, 227, Kingston Road, Teddington, Middlesex, wants a girl correspondent who is interested in missionary work or sports; China, Japan, India, France.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,364.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Miss Peggy Jones, Stationmaster's House, Tidworth, Hants, wants a girl correspondent in Canada; age 15-16; interested in drawing.

F. Wood, St. Lawrence Terrace, Pudsey, Leeds, wants correspondents; electricity—any subject; ages 16-19.

T. Harpin, 42, Fern Street, Coppice, Oldham, Lancs, wants correspondents interested in forming a correspondence club.

Miss Emmie Rhodes, 106, Taunton Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs, wants a girl correspondent in Australia or New Zealand.

Albert D. Wickes, 36, Thornhill Square, Barnsbury, London, N.1, wants correspondents in U.S.A., Berlin, Africa, Australia, and Canada; ages 14-17.

Miss Evelyn A. Hemming, 3, Grove Road, Half Way Tree, Jamaica, West Indies, wants girl correspondents; ages 16-18.

Bill Hard, 13, Dalton Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants pen pals; age 13-15; interested in stamps, coins, films, etc.

Jack Dayble, 104, Kerford Road, Albert Park, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants pen pals keen on racing cars and bikes and planes.

The Menace of the Dwarf!

(Continued from page 12.)

The Terrible Three released the Irish junior. Reilly's excitement showed pretty plainly that he, at all events, was innocent.

Reilly clenched his fists and pranced up to Tom Merry.

"Put them up!" he roared.

"Look here—"

"Faith, and I'll dot ye on the boko!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "We haven't come here to look for trouble—"

"Sure, and it's a quare way ye have of not looking for trouble, then!"

"Somebody's raided my desk and taken the treasure chart. You've heard about that?"

"Sure and I have, but I—"

"They tied Gussy up in his study, because he was keeping an eye open while I was out," said Tom Merry. "Gussy told us you had a hand in that."

Reilly's angry face cleared and he burst into a chuckle.

"Faith, ye're right," he said. "Mellish looked in and said they were getting up a joke on Gussy, and asked me if I would lend a hand. Sure, and ye can't expect me to stand out of a jape!"

"You ass!" said Blake. "They were just making use of you. After Gussy had been tied up, what did you do?"

"Sure, I came back to my work."

"And the others?"

"I don't know."

"It's pretty clear," said Manners. "Reilly acted the giddy goat, and then came back, and the others raided our study, having made use of this chump to get the coast clear. I don't believe the three of them would have tackled Gussy without this blessed ass to back them up."

"Faith, and I niver suspected! And is it true that the chart is gone, Tom Merry?"

"Yes; it's been taken from the secret drawer in my desk."

"If it was a sayeret drawer—"

"Well, the chart could be found by looking for it, that's pretty clear. Anyway, it's gone, and Mellish and Snipe and Crooke have taken it."

Reilly's face grew crimson.

"Sure, and they used me to help them steal it, without telling me what the game was!" he exclaimed. "If I had known I should have walloped them entirely!"

"You've played the giddy ox, of course."

"Faith, but I'll make them sit up for it!"

Reilly rushed out of the study.

"Hold on!" shouted Blake. "What are you going to do?"

But Reilly did not reply. He dashed on, breathing vengeance. His ire was fully roused at having been made a party to what amounted to a theft. The raiders would pretend, of course, that taking the chart was only a "lark," but there was little doubt that they would keep it if they were not discovered. The character of the cads of the School House was only too well known to the Terrible Three.

The juniors were dashing after Reilly. The Belfast boy was already at Mellish's door, and he had found it locked. But Reilly was in no humour to stand upon ceremony.

Crash!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,364.



No. 8. Vol. 1 (New Series).

Tom Merry

Flying Squad Reports

FIGGINS SAVES FAG

George Figgins, returning from village, heard shriek. Rounding bend he saw Jameson of the Third in grasp of burly tramp. Heedless, Figgins flew to rescue. Tramp released Jameson to engage Figgy. Figgins, a nippy fighter, but tramp too heavy for him. Figgins crashed on his back, with tramp over him with cudgel. Figgins averted full force of blow by quick roll, cudgel glancing off his temple. Though half stunned, Figgy hooked ruffian's leg. Tramp stalled in ditch. Figgins about to re-engage him when Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of Flying Squad arrived on scene. At sight of supporters, ruffian attempted getaway. Tom Merry & Co. cornered and bombed life out of him. Tramp left gasping feebly. Figgins, dazed, conveyed with Jameson back to St. Jim's—the hero of the New House!

SQUAD'S "BAPTISM OF FIRE"

Flying Squad paraded in full dress to meet Cousin Ethel at Rylcombe. Approaching station, inferior force of Grammarians, led by Gordon Gay, pelted Squad with turfs. Flying Squad maintained discipline till a turf caught Blake in nape of neck. Blake nearly ran amok—but observed discipline under protest! Squad safely paraded on station platform when Gordon Gay hurled large turf at D'Arcy's "topper"—scoring a "bull"! Tom Merry, driven to action, ordered Grammarians to be deposited in ditch. Flying Squad obeyed with alacrity, Gay & Co.'s shouts of dismay ignored. Gussy hastily deputed to receive Cousin Ethel. As train rolled in, Gussy met her, immaculate but alone. Tom Merry & Co. reappeared in study at St. Jim's to meet Cousin Ethel—freshly washed and brushed! D'Arcy's cousin tactfully ignored swollen noses and thick ears! Three cheers for Cousin Ethel!

St. Jim's News Reel

Monsieur Morny, the French master, says French is the language of diplomacy. Tom Merry & Co. are coming to the conclusion that they are not born diplomats!

Herbert Skimpole asked Tom Merry to teach him how to become a fast bowler. Tom Merry was too "clean bowled" to make any reply to that!

Monty Lowther says Gore wears "number nines," which can be heard coming a quarter of a mile away! Gore says Lowther is a silly ass! Believe who you like!

George Figgins is very keen on boxing, and sometimes takes on both Kerr and Wynn in a friendly bout in the study. They have all they can do to "handle" Figgy!

Near Kerr's home in Scotland there is a lonely lighthouse which is relieved only once in three months—sometimes longer, in rough seas. Kerr says he wouldn't mind the three months—if he had a chum to play chess with. Help!



LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

GEORGE HERRIES SPEAKING

Hallo, you fellows! Now you can see just what I look like, if it's of any interest to you. Not that I want you to look at me. I'm holding up my dog, Towser, to the televisor, and I want you to look at him instead.

Fellows often chip me for taking too much trouble over old "Towsy," but believe me, he's worth every bit of it! A dog like old Towser brightens a chap's life just when he needs it. Just think. Perhaps you've had a rotten afternoon in Form—in trouble with first one master, then another. Nothing will go right. You come out of classes with a bunch of "lines" to write, feeling fit for nothing and ready to snap your pals' noses off! What happens? If you haven't a pet, you just slump into a chair and grind out your "impot" with a black and scowling face. But if you have got a pet—a real pal like Towser—you run down to the kennels before tea, and there he is, wagging his tail and barking cheerily at the sight of you. It's enough to make troubles slide off a fellow's shoulders like water off a duck's back!

I know when I've had the "mopes," old Towser has cheered me up and put a grin back on my face. After all, you reflect, you may be unpopular with masters, prefects, and all the giddy "beaks," but here's somebody who thinks a jolly lot of you every day and all the time—and isn't afraid to show it!

Gussy says Towser bites his "tuousahs" whenever he gets a chance, and for that reason as much as any my chums won't let me risk "lines" and bring Towsy into the study. I admit Towser has chewed up Gussy's hempen once or twice, but that's just his playful little way. He knows Gussy's touchy over his elegant "clobber," and he likes to tease him!

A dog's a good pal if you go in for long tramps alone, as I sometimes do. I remember a hefty ruffian threatening me once. I could probably have fought him off—but Towser didn't give me the chance. He gave one growl and went for that tramp like a shot out of a gun. He got a large piece of the man's nether garments—and the fellow streaked for dear life! I've still got that piece of tattered cloth, as a souvenir of Towser's devotion!

(Continued from previous column.)

Harry Manners is very keen on puzzles of all kinds, and will spend hours working out an abstruse problem, while his chums are quite content to remain "puzzled"!

Gerald Crooke was ordered to report to the school choir master for singing practice. Crooke tried to "cut"—but he was caught, and was forced to "face the music"!

Merry's Weekly



Week Ending April 7th, 1934.

'FRIARS BEATEN TO FRAZZLE

SAINTS SEVEN GOALS VICTORY

When Tom Merry announced that the Junior XI were playing Greyfriars, there was considerable astonishment. Fixtures with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, were the "plums" of the footer season; but the Saints had done battle with them only a week or two previously. What was the reason for this unexpected fixture?

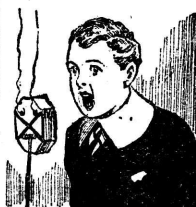
"A roar of laughter greeted Tom Merry's explanation. The Saints were well aware that Harry Wharton & Co., though representing Greyfriars, were younger than Cecil Reginald Temple & Co., of the Upper Fourth, and that Temple fondly imagined that his team ought to represent Greyfriars in junior matches. The fact that Temple's men were a collection of "rabbits" was one that Cecil Reginald could never realize.

Anyway, Temple had challenged Tom Merry & Co., and having a blank day, Tom had accepted. When Temple arrived with his elegant eleven, there were chuckles—politely concealed—among the Saints.

Temple won the toss, but gracefully allowed Tom Merry to kick with the wind—just to give him a chance, as Temple put it! The lofty Temple speedily regretted his gesture—though with the wind or not, his men would have stood no chance against the swift, insidious methods of the Saints! From the first kick Temple & Co. found themselves floundering about in mid-field, while the St. Jim's forward-line bore down ominously on the Upper Fourth goal. Scott, the custodian, was a good man—the only good man on Temple's side, to be exact. He saved from Tom Merry and Blake in succession—but a drive from D'Arcy caught him unawares, and St. Jim's were one up!

Temple was mopping his brow at half-time. His side were four down—and only Temple failed to realize that fozzling and footling was the cause of it! On the resumption, the Upper Fourth made an effort—and held their own for about ten minutes. Then they cracked up completely—and St. Jim's piled on another three goals! But for the gallant work of Scott in goal, the score would have been higher still. But all Scott got for his pains was a series of black looks from Temple, who somehow imagined that Scott was letting them through on purpose!

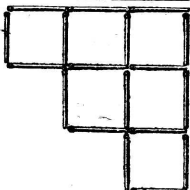
Temple had very little to say after the match—and Tom Merry & Co. dare not say much—for fear of laughing outright in front of the visitors. But Harry Wharton yelled when Tom Merry described the match over the phone—and it will be a long time before Temple is reckless enough to challenge the St. Jim's Junior eleven again!



MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everybody! A Scotsman found a fountain pen, but complained of his bad luck. There was no ink in it! "I'm suffering from loss of memory, doctor!" said the patient. "Can you give me something for it?" "Certainly!" smiled the doctor. "Here's my account for last quarter, to begin with!" Skimpole asked Tom Merry the other day why he sometimes found the blood rushing to his head. Tom Merry assured Skimmy that Nature abhors a vacuum! Mr. Rateliff was kept waiting in a Rylcombe cafe. "Your coffee is special from Brazil, sir," said the waiter, when he at last appeared. "So that's where you've been?" asked Rateliff. Here's a seasonable conundrum: What's the difference between a hiking holiday and a motor-car tour? You'll buy it? The hiker rides in somebody else's car! It is said that it will be another 3,000 years before scientists know enough about the planet Mars to make an extra subject of it in class. Thank heaven! As the explorer said when the camp was invaded by a ferocious tusker elephant: "Quick, Joe—the buns!" The Rylcombe fishmonger was yelling his wares: "Ere you are—eels, all alive!" "Are you quite sure they're fresh?" asked an old lady suspiciously. Asked by Mr. Linton what a thesaurus was, Gore brightly replied that it was a prehistoric animal. Stormy weather for Gore followed! Now one I heard about P.-c. Crump, bless his heart. He pulled up a lady driver the other day and told her sternly that she was doing sixty miles per hour. "Oh, how thrilling!" she exclaimed. "And I only learned to drive yesterday!" Oh, and can you see this one: A lighthouse-keeper was walking round and round the little platform at the top of his lighthouse. "Dash this lamp!" he said at length. "How do they expect me to read with a revolving light?" You'll be hearing from me!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER



On the right is a gangster's revolver, formed with 18 matches. Can you take away 5 matches, and with the remaining 13 (fateful number!) form the victim? Have a go at it now!

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

When Kerr replied: "No way, I'm sure," he was not saying the thing was impossible, but was really giving the actual route by which the problem is solved. Starting from the star, if you visit the towns in the order, NO WAY, I'M SURE, you will visit every town once, and only once, and end at E. So both Figgy and Kerr were correct; but did YOU spot Kerr's canny way of answering the question?

CHAPTER 9

Tricked!

THERE were three fellows in Mellish's study. Mellish and Snipe—Mellish's latest cronie—and Crooke of the Shell.

The three cads of the School House were gathered round the table, and on the table before them lay the leather chart.

Tom Merry's handkerchief, in which it had been knotted, was lying beside it. The raiders had locked themselves in the study to examine their plunder, little dreaming of the storm that was to burst upon them.

Mellish did not see any reason why his share of the raid should be suspected. His knowledge of the secret drawer in Tom Merry's desk had been gained by spying, and the hero of the Shell did not know that he knew of it. Knowing it, of course, Mellish had naturally thought of looking there for the chart.

The raiders had tied D'Arcy up in his study to get him out of the way; but they expected that to be regarded as a mere jape, especially as they had cunningly dragged Reilly into it. They were studying the chart now in the locked room, and Mellish had taken up a pen to make a copy of it.

"Blessed if I think there can be anything in it!" said Crooke of the Shell. "Tom Merry seems to believe that there is."

"Why not?" said Snipe. "I'm not usually very credulous, but I don't see why there shouldn't be something in this. Pirates have buried treasure. It was a common custom when there were pirates. A pirate who carried his plunder about with him would jolly well soon have been murdered for it, I should think. Well, a chap buries his loot and gets killed or hanged afterwards, and there lies the loot. Nobody knows about it, and it stays there. It must have happened in lots of cases."

Crooke nodded.

"Of course, it's possible," he said. "Besides, why was that Spanish chap we've heard about so jolly keen to get hold of it?" said Snipe. "He was willing to commit murder for it, so you say. That shows he thought it jolly valuable."

"Quite so!" "I believe it's all right," said Mellish, who was working away busily with his pen. "The chart's clear enough. I don't see why Tom Merry should have it. I dare say the sailor chap stole it in the first place. It might not even belong to that sailor chap. Findings keepings, and we found this."

The three rascals chuckled together.

"Good!" said Crooke. "Look here, you chaps, you know my pater is a millionaire?"

"You've told us often enough," agreed Snipe. "Oh, rats! What I mean is, he's quite rich enough to fit out a yacht for a holiday in the South Seas in the vac., and he'd do it if I asked him."

"What price searching for this giddy treasure?" asked Snipe.

"Oh, ripping!" said Mellish. "We should have to come, as the thing belongs equally to us."

"Shares of three, of course," said Crooke—"or, rather, shares of four, one for my pater. If there's anything in the chart it could be worked. But what's the good of copying it, Mellish? No good having copies about for people to see."

"Suppose Tom Merry guesses—"

"He won't!" "I don't know. Those chaps are very keen. They may raise a fearful storm to get the chart back, and if they do we want a copy," said Mellish with a grin. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,364.

"Of course, we shall keep the copy dark; not a word about it."

"Of course," agreed Snipe. "But we're going to keep the original if we can. The cream of the joke is, that Tom Merry himself hasn't seen it yet, as he promised the sailor not to look at it for three days."

Crooke sniffed.

"I expect he's seen it, all the same," he remarked. "I know I should."

"I dare say you would," said Snipe; "but Tom Merry wouldn't. I know him too well for that, though I don't like him."

Crash!

The three young rascals leaped up in a fright.

Crash!

The door of the study shook and trembled under the terrific shock.

"What on earth's that?" muttered Crooke, turning quite pale.

There was a roar from the passage.

"Open this door, ye thaves!"

"It's Reilly!"

"Don't let him in," said Mellish hastily.

"Right-ho! The door's locked."

Crash!

"He's bunging a chair against the lock," said Snipe un-
easily. "He'll alarm the whole blessed House!"

A DIFFERENT DIET.



Tramp: "Hexcuse me, sir, but could you 'elp a poor fellow wot ain't 'ad a bite since last night?"

Angler: "Good gracious, you want a change of bait! Try these worms!"

Halt-a-crown has been awarded to J. Bowyer, 2, The Square, Green Lane, Wolverhampton.

Snipe crossed to the door. A chair or a form was evidently being wielded by the boy from Belfast. The din was terrible.

"What do you want?" Snipe called through the keyhole.

"Don't make that row, Reilly. What is it you want?"

"I want the chart."

"The what?"

"The chart—the chart ye stole from Tom Merry's study!"

Mellish turned white.

"How does he know?" he muttered.

"We can deny it," whispered Crooke.

Mellish shook his head.

"They'll search us, and search the study."

Crash—crash!

"Hold on!" shouted Snipe. "We'll let you in."

"Faith, and be quick, then, ye thafe of the world!"

"Just a minute. I've lost the key."

Crash—crash!

"That's right, Reilly," came Tom Merry's voice from the passage. "He's lying. He hasn't lost the key. Lend me the stool. I'll biff the lock through!"

Crash—crash!

Snipe stepped quickly back to the table. The juniors outside were in deadly earnest, and they evidently did not care if they brought the whole House upon the scene. They meant to have the stolen chart back at any cost.

Mellish was white and trembling, and Crooke seemed stricken with dismay. But Snipe, savagely angry as he was, was cool and collected.

"You haven't finished the copy yet?" he whispered.

"N-no!"

"There's a chance, though."

Snipe thrust the unfinished copy into a drawer out of sight. Then he put the leather chart under a cushion on the armchair.

Mellish caught his arm.

"Don't be an idiot, Snipe! We shall have to give it up, I tell you. That lock will give in a minute."

Crash, crash, crash!

"I know what I'm doing," said Snipe coolly.

"But—b-b-but—"

"Shut up, and let me alone!"

Snipe picked up a boot—not one of his own—quickly opened a penknife, and sliced a piece of leather out about the size of the leather chart. That he proceeded to tie up in Tom Merry's handkerchief, precisely as the treasure chart had been tied up.

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He put it in his jacket pocket, as if by accident allowing the corner of the handkerchief to show.

Crooke grinned slightly. He understood, Mellish was too terrified to think at all.

Snipe went to the door again.

Crash—crash!

The lock cracked ominously.

"Oh, cheese that!" said Snipe. "It's like your cheek to come rowing at our door; but, of course, you can come in if you like. I've found the key."

"Open the door!"

The key turned in the lock and the door opened. The juniors rushed in from the passage.

"We know you've taken the chart from my desk," said Tom Merry, "and if it's given up at once we're willing to say no more about the matter."

"What's that sticking out of Snipe's pocket?" asked Blake.

"My handkerchief! By Jove!"

Tom Merry jerked at the handkerchief. It came out, and his face lighted up as he saw that it was still knotted, apparently just as he had left it when he placed it in the secret drawer of his desk.

"By Jove, it's all right!" he exclaimed. "The rotters haven't looked at it! I'm willing to pass this over, Snipe, but mind it doesn't happen again, that's all."

And the juniors left the study.

A moment later Snipe laid the leather chart and the unfinished copy before Mellish. Mellish was very quick with his pen, and drew very well. He sat down to his task again, with a gleam in his eyes.

Mellish's pen was soon working away at express speed, while Snipe and Crooke listened anxiously for the returning footsteps of the Terrible Three. How long would it be before they discovered the trick?

CHAPTER 10.

The Keeness of Kerr!

TOM MERRY was feeling greatly relieved when he returned to his study.

His pledge to the sailorman lay upon his conscience. He had promised Peter Raff that the chart should not be seen till the third day. He felt a keen relief to know that the raiders had not had time to look at what they had stolen. Snipe's trick did not even occur to Tom Merry's candid, unsuspecting mind.

"Jolly glad I've got it back!" he said, as he went into the study with Manners and Lowther and Blake. "And jolly glad, too, that the cads didn't have time to look at it."

"Hallo! What have you got there?"

It was Kerr's voice. Figgins & Co. were in the study. They had come in, and were waiting for the Terrible Three. Figgins had laid a roll of manuscript on the table. Across a page could be seen scrawled: "Tom Merry's Weekly." Figgins & Co. were over in the School House for their editorial duties. It was time to prepare the copy for the forthcoming number of the school magazine.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I hadn't forgotten the 'Weekly.' We've had rather an exciting time, so you'll excuse us. Some cads raided the chart in my desk."

"Is that it?" asked Figgins.

"Yes." Tom Merry held up the knotted handkerchief. "Sorry I can't show it to you, but I've promised not to open it till to-morrow."

Kerr looked at it.

"You say that's been raided?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Who did it?"

"Snipe and Crooke and Mellish."

"And it's been in their hands?"

"Of course."

"How long?"

"I don't know—quite half an hour, I should think."

"And they haven't looked at it?"

"What are you getting at, Kerr?"

"I'm getting at this—how the dickens do you know that the chart is in there at all unless you look?" demanded the Scots junior.

Tom Merry started.

"My hat! I didn't think—but it looks just exactly as I left it, and I can feel the leather inside the handkerchief," he said.

"How do you know it's the same?"

"Well, I took it for granted," said Tom Merry slowly.

Kerr grinned.

"When you're as old as I am, my son, you won't take things for granted," he said loftily.

"Why, you ass, you're younger than I am," said Tom Merry indignantly.

"I mean in experience and sense," said Kerr cheerfully. "As far as mere years go, I suppose you're the older of the two."

"Oh, rats!"

"Were you going to lock that up just as it is?"

"Of course!"

"Without looking at it?"

"I've promised not to open it."

"Then you'll be locking up something that's been palmed off on you, in my humble opinion, and leaving the real thing in Mellish's study," said Kerr.

"What shall I do, then?" said Tom Merry. "I've promised not to look at the chart, but I can't tell whether Snipe has tricked me unless I look at it."

"Snipe?" said Kerr. "Was it in Snipe's hands?"

"Yes. Blake saw the corner of the handkerchief sticking out of his pocket, and—"

"And it was nicely arranged to be seen, I've not doubt."

"My hat!" said Blake.

"Look here, you're jolly uncanny," said Manners, looking at Kerr. "Blessed if I should like to have a chap like you seeing right through me. I don't know how you think of these things."

Kerr laughed.

"I keep my eyes open," he said. "I really think a chap would have to get up very early in the morning to take me in. Look here, Tom Merry, if you locked that thing up in your desk you may be leaving the real article in Snipe's hands. Why should he have kept it for half an hour without opening it, when he must have taken it in the first place for the purpose of looking at it?"

That argument was a clincher.

"I'll tell you what you can do," said Kerr. "Let one of us open it and tell you whether it's the real thing or not. You needn't see it. You have had a glimpse at it, I understand, and can tell enough to know whether it's the real thing or not."

Tom Merry hesitated; but undoubtedly, as he realised, his promise to the sailorman should be construed according to the spirit of it. He would not be keeping his promise by running the risk of leaving the real chart in Snipe's hands if a cheat had been imposed upon him in the knotted handkerchief.

"I think you're right, Kerr," he said. "You open it, will you, and tell me whether it's a piece of pale-coloured leather, very soft, with a chart tattooed upon it."

"Right you are!" said Kerr.

He untied the handkerchief. The juniors stood round, waiting anxiously.

Kerr uttered a sharp exclamation.

"What is it?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Look!"

Kerr held up a fragment of boot leather. The juniors gazed at it blankly. They needed no further proof that Snipe had deceived them.

CHAPTER 11.

Recovering the Chart!

KERR grinned a little as he held up the worthless fragment of leather. Kerr meant to be of service to Tom Merry in the matter, and he was sorry to see the junior captain of St. Jim's had been taken in, but he could not help feeling just a little elated at his success in exposing the imposture.

But for his presence in the study, Tom Merry would certainly have locked the worthless fragment up in his desk in the full belief that it was the chart entrusted to him by the sailorman.

"My hat!" said Blake.

"It's a bit cut from a boot," said Fatty Wynn. "Blessed if Kerr oughtn't to be a detective! I shouldn't have thought of it myself."

Tom Merry's brow darkened with anger.

"The wretched cad!" he exclaimed. "He's got the real chart all the time, then, and they're laughing at us for not knowing that they were such rascals."

"The rotten outsiders!"

Tom Merry ran out of the study, with the juniors after him. The hero of the Shell reached Snipe's door. He caught up the stool from the passage and crashed it upon the lock.

There was a sharp exclamation within the study:

"Hallo! What's the row?"

Tom Merry did not reply.

Crash, crash!

He had no words to waste upon the rascals. He meant to smash the lock in, and then very nearly to smash the raiders when he got at close quarters with them. Tom Merry's blood was fairly up now.

Inside the study the three rascals were on their feet.

(Continued on next page.)

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Mellish had been working quickly, but he had not finished making a copy of the map yet. He had the outline of the island worked out and most of the names put in, but the interior had not been touched, and some of the most important markings of the map were in the interior of the island.

"It's no good!" muttered Snipe. "You can't finish! Give it to me."

Crash!

Snipe took the copy quickly and blotted it, and slipped it under a torn edge of the study carpet. It was safe there from any but a very close search. He put Mellish's pen in his pocket and pushed away the inkstand to conceal what had been done. Mellish was sitting terrified. Snipe dragged him from his seat and pushed him towards the window.

"Mind, not a word!" he muttered.

Crash!

The lock burst.

On the table, in full view, lay the leather chart of Skeleton Island. Snipe knew that it was useless to attempt to keep it now. If it were hidden the juniors would search for it, and they would find it, and probably the copy, too.

The door swung violently open, and Tom Merry dropped the stool and rushed in. His hands were up, but he dropped them as he caught sight of the chart lying in full view in the light upon the table.

He caught it up.

Without looking at it closely he knew that this was the original chart, and he wrapped the handkerchief round it at once.

"Sure you've got the right one now?" asked Kerr.

"Yes; quite sure."

"Good!"

"Thanks to you, Kerr," said Tom Merry. "I can't say how much I'm obliged to you for putting me up to this cad's trick."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Kerr.

Snipe gave the Scots junior a very unpleasant look.

"Oh, so it was you, Kerr?" he said.

Kerr nodded cheerfully.

"Yes; I saw through your rotten trick," he said. "It's quite possible for an honest chap to be as keen as a mean, dirty thief, you know!"

Snipe flushed with rage. But he had no time to talk to Kerr. Tom Merry had knotted up the handkerchief round the chart and placed it in his pocket. Then he pushed back his cuffs and turned to Snipe.

"You've seen this chart, you cad!" he said in a voice trembling with rage.

Snipe nodded coolly.

"Yes, I've seen it," he said. "You needn't cut up so rusty about it. It was only a lark, of course. I never meant to keep the thing."

"I don't believe you!"

Snipe shrugged his shoulders.

"You can please yourself about that," he said. "I never meant to keep it, all the same. Will you oblige by getting out of my study?"

"Not till you've put up your hands."

"I don't want to fight you."

Tom Merry laughed scornfully.

"I dare say you don't," he replied; "but you should have thought of that before you broke open my desk!"

"Look here——" began Crooke blusteringly.

Tom Merry turned on him in a flash.

"Your turn's coming," he said; "but you can have it first, if you like." And he advanced upon the cad of the Shell.

Crooke backed away.

"I—I don't want a row," he said. "It was only a lark, and I'm willing to apologise."

"S-s-so am I," stammered Mellish. "It was only a lark, and, in fact, it was Snipe's idea from first to last. He won't deny it."

Snipe burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Well, I don't deny it, and I'm willing to take all the credit," he said. "I don't apologise, either, and you can begin as soon as you like, Tom Merry: I know you can lick me, but I shall do my best. Come on!"

Tom Merry dropped his hands.

"If you don't want to fight I won't touch you," he said. "You're the least rotten of the three, I believe. Let's get out of this place, you chaps—they make me sick!"

"Better lick them," said Figgins. "It will be a lesson to them, you know. I can't have you neglecting your duties in this way, Tom Merry."

But Tom Merry left the study. He knew that Snipe was no match for him, and a fight under those circumstances did not appeal to his taste.

The chums of St. Jim's returned to Tom Merry's study.

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Tom Merry looked at his watch, and then locked up the chart in the desk.

"Going to leave it there?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"No; I'm going to take it to the Head to lock up in the safe, but he's at dinner now, and I can't disturb him till after. The chart will be safe while we're in the study, at least. Let's get on with the 'Weekly.'"

"Right-ho!"

And the editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" settled down to work.

A few minutes later they were joined by D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's had bathed in hot water and changed his clothing to the skin. But there was still a suspicion of red ink about his ears and the roots of his hair.

The juniors grinned as he came in. But D'Arcy himself was very far from grinning.

"Well, you look a little more respectable now," said Monty Lowther. "You can come in."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"We haven't got your article on the latest fashion in trousers yet," said the editor, looking up. "We can't have this delay in the copy, D'Arcy. If you can't get your stuff in to time, we shall really have to look for somebody else to do it."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Sit down and get it done!" said Tom Merry severely. "You can't expect the printers to wait for the copy."

"I was going to suggest——"

The editor waved his hand.

"Never mind making suggestions now—get on with your copy. The whole thing has got to go to press to-night."

"I was going to——"

"Silence, please!"

"Look here, you uttah ass, I was goin' to suggest waidin' those wottahs, and givin' them a feahful waggin' for their beastly impertinence."

"Rats!—Get on with the washing!"

"Oh, vevy well Undah the circs——"

"Exactly! Under the circs, dry up and get on!"

And all the staff dried up, and no sound was heard in the editorial office but the scratching of pens.

CHAPTER 12.

The Face at the Window!

AFTER Dr. Holmes had finished dinner that evening, Tom Merry took the knotted handkerchief with the chart in it to his study.

The Head took charge of it, and promised to lock it up in the safe. Perhaps he saw a momentary gleam in Tom Merry's eyes, for he rose from his seat and told Tom Merry to follow him into the library. There the chart was locked up in the safe, much to the Shell fellow's relief.

Tom Merry tried to bed that night feeling much more easy in his mind about the chart of the treasure island.

No one but an experienced burglar was likely to be able to get at the Head's safe, and the chart was therefore quite secure.

Tom Merry dreamed about the chart that night. It had taken a great hold upon his imagination. The story of buried treasure, and the terrible shadow of doubt that hung over the fate of Peter Raff, worked upon his mind, and he dreamed that he was hunting for the treasure upon an island where coconut palms grew in abundance, and black cannibals peered out from the jungle; and Pablo Lopez, the dwarfed Spaniard, was upon his track with a knife in his hand.

The dream was fearfully realistic, and Tom Merry murmured and moved in his sleep as the strange images chased one another through his mind.

All was dark and silent in the Shell dormitory.

To the excited mind of the sleeper, the dark, cruel face of the Spaniard was clear and threatening, and Tom Merry moved in his sleep spasmodically, as if trying to escape from the relentless pursuer.

Suddenly he awoke.

It was probably the stress of the feverish dream that awakened him. He started into wakefulness, a cold sweat breaking out upon him.

The dream had been so intense, so realistic, that he could hardly believe that he was in bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's—safe with friends round him, sleeping in the quiet night.

The dark face of the Spaniard danced yet before his eyes.

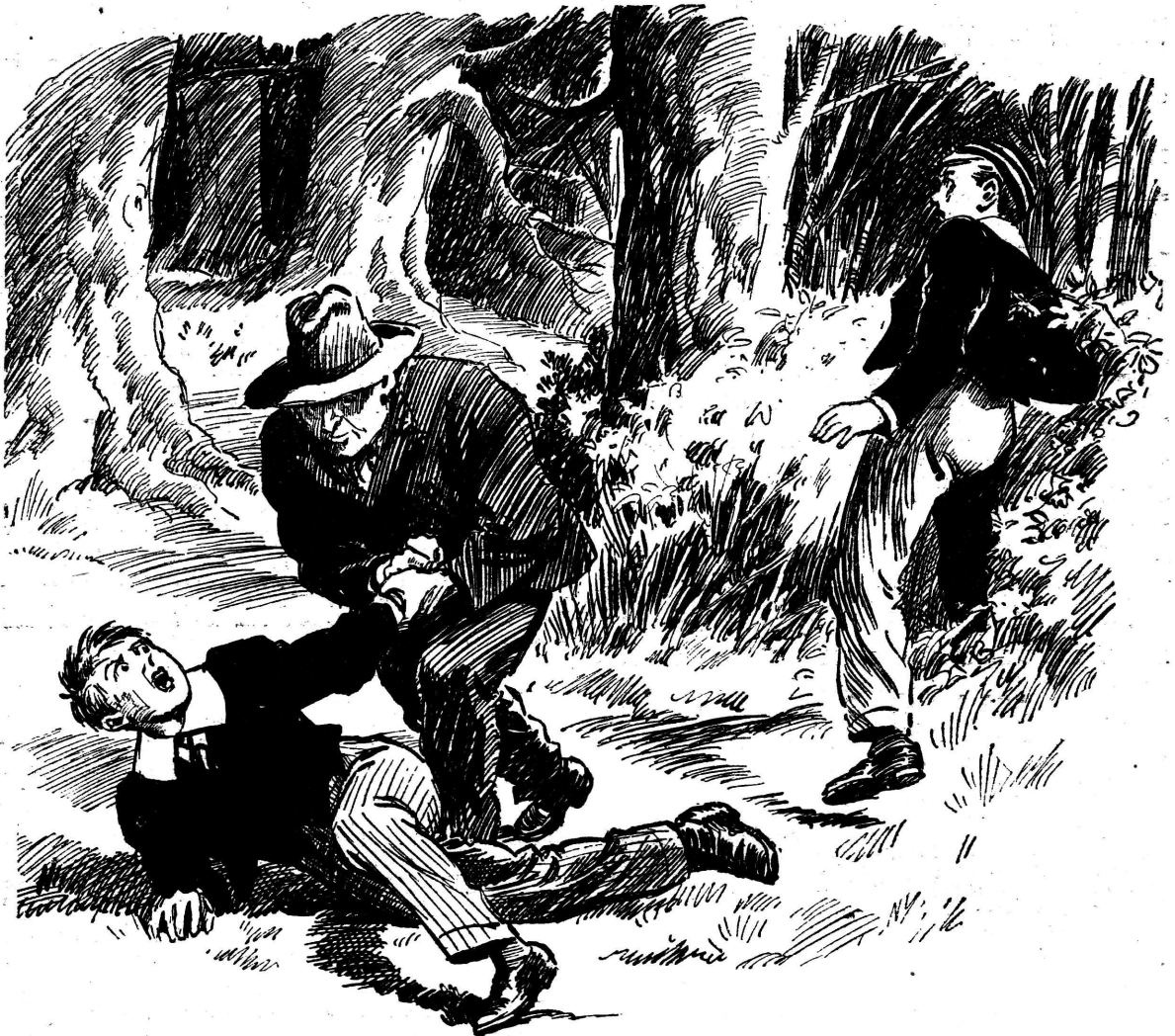
"By Jove!" he muttered. "I—I thought——"

The muttered words were unfinished upon his lips.

There was a sound in the dead silence of the dormitory; a sound that came like the crack of a pistol upon the stillness.

It was a sound from the window at the end,

Tom Merry peered towards it.



Hurling Snipe to earth, Pablo Lopez stooped over him and grasped his wrist. Crooke scuttled away into the bushes. He had heard too much of the Spanish dwarf to want to remain at close quarters with him! "Give me the chart!" hissed Lopez.

The dormitory was dark; but the moon glimmered through the window, making it stand out in the gloom.

Against the glass was an object—and Tom Merry did not need telling that it was a human head.

The boy sat up in bed shivering.

A face was looking into the Shell dormitory—the face of a man who must have climbed up the rainpipe by the window. That was a feat some of the more active of the juniors had sometimes performed; but it was dangerous, and doubly dangerous at night. A sailor used to dangerous climbing might do it—and Tom Merry knew, as by an inspiration, that it was a seafaring man who was there—he knew that it was the face of the Spaniard that was looking into the room.

Tom Merry sat silent.

He was too startled to know what to do for the moment. Like one fascinated, he watched the dark shadow on the window. It came higher, more plainly into view. The man was leaning upon the window-sill, holding on to the ivy.

That heavy, massive head, those powerful shoulders, Tom Merry knew them well. It was the Spanish dwarf.

Why was he there? Had he guessed, then, that the chart was at St. Jim's—had he seen, or learned, that Peter Raff had given it to Tom Merry? In the last terrible scene that Tom Merry suspected had taken place in the shadows of Rylcombe Wood, had Peter Raff, with the Spaniard's cruel grip upon him, gasped out what he had done with the chart?

The dwarf must know—else why was he there?

He could not know that this was Tom Merry's dormitory. The rainpipe and the ivy had afforded him an opportunity

of climbing into a window, which he could see by the moonlight was partly open.

Tom Merry sat and stared at the growing shadow on the window.

There was a sound again—a faint crack, which sounded strangely loud and echoing in the silence of the night.

The window was moving.

Tom Merry sprang from the bed.

If the Spaniard gained entrance, what would happen? The man was desperate; he was doubtless armed.

Tom Merry did not hesitate.

He picked up a boot and hurled it with unerring aim at the pane. With a loud crash the boot smashed through the glass, and struck the dark figure outside.

There was a yell from the Spaniard.

"Ah, caramba! Oh!"

The form disappeared from the window.

In the Shell dormitory there were shouts of alarm, too. Fellows started up in bed, shouting to know what was the matter. The crash of the breaking glass had rung with a deafening noise through the dormitory.

Tom Merry ran to the window.

He had done well. It was necessary to keep the desperate ruffian out of the House at any cost. But a terrible fear was tugging at Tom Merry's heart that the Spaniard might have fallen to the ground and broken his neck.

A fall from such a height might be a terrible one.

Tom Merry threw the window open.

Outside in the starlight he scanned the ivy. Below the window a dark form was clinging—it was that of Pablo Lopez.

The Spaniard was clinging to the ivy; but it was yielding under his weight. His fierce, dark face was turned upward, his eyes glittered at the boy.

"Ah!" he hissed. "You!"
 "You scoundrel!" said Tom Merry. "But I am glad that you are not killed."
 "I shall remember this, *senorito*."

"I hope you will remember it in prison, then," said Tom Merry. And he shouted: "Help! Help!"

The Spaniard showed his teeth like a snarling dog, and scrambled down the cracking ivy.

The dark, hunched figure disappeared in the darkness. The School House was alarmed by this time; lights flashed from several windows. Mr. Railton, the House-master, opened the dormitory door.

"What is it?" he exclaimed.
 "The Spaniard, sir—a burglar. I shied a boot at him as he was at the window!" Tom Merry gasped. "He's escaping!"

The Housemaster ran downstairs.
 Mr. Railton, with half a dozen prefects and seniors, ran out into the quadrangle. Taggles, the porter, joined them with his lantern. Search was made on all sides for the dwarf. But he was not to be found.

He had had only a few minutes, but he had made the most of them; he was gone. The searchers returned disappointed to the House.

There was great excitement the rest of that night—especially in the junior dormitories. Few of the fellows closed their eyes again. Tom Merry, naturally, did not feel inclined for sleep.

"The rotter is on the track of the chart, after all,"

Monty Lowther said, when they returned to bed. "He knows it's at St. Jim's."

"It looks like it."
 "He hasn't got it, anyway," said Manners, "and by to-morrow it will be sent away, Tom, or it will be yours."
 Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes," he said. "I should feel a great deal safer with it, though, if that Spanish scoundrel were in prison. But he's in the neighbourhood. We know that now, and Mr. Railton will let the police know at once. They will be looking for him, and if he's caught—"

"He will have to explain what has happened to Peter Raff."

"Yes."
 Tom Merry was glad when morning light streamed in at the dormitory windows. He was dressed and down long before rising-bell, and he waited at the school gates for the postman.

Blagg, the postman, came along at the usual time, and Tom Merry ran towards him eagerly.

"Letter for me, Blagg?"
 Blagg shook his head.

"Nothing for you this morning, Master Merry."

"You're quite sure, Blagg—not one?"

"Not one, sir."

And Blagg tramped on to the House.

Tom Merry stood in the morning sunlight, the colour coming and going in his face, his heart beating with a strange conflict of emotions.

There was no letter from Peter Raff.
 The chart was his. But had it cost the life of the sailor-man? With that dark and terrible thought in his mind, Tom Merry could not rejoice that the treasure chart had become his own.

CHAPTER 13.

What the Chart Revealed!

TOM MERRY waited for the Head that morning to speak to him after prayers. Dr. Holmes stopped and greeted him with a kindly nod.

"Have you had the letter you expected, Merry?"

"No, sir."
 "Ah! I am afraid that looks bad!" said Dr. Holmes gravely. "The police have been informed of the attempt made by Lopez to enter the school last night, and Inspector Skeat seems very hopeful of catching him. Nothing has been discovered of the sailor. The stream in the wood has been dragged, and the thickets searched, but no body has been found. Of course, it may have been safely hidden, but I hope most sincerely that the man has not met with a mishap in the wood. I do not think you should conclude that Peter Raff has fallen, unless some definite discovery is made."

"Yes, sir, I think so myself. But what about the chart? I suppose I may look at it?"

"Certainly, it is yours!"

"I would rather wait till this evening to give Raff every chance of writing," Tom Merry said. "He may have been delayed."

"Quite so!" said the Head approvingly. "Come to me for the chart this evening, and I will hand it to you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"No letter, Tommy!" whispered several voices as Tom Merry entered the Shell Form Room.

"No."

"Where's the chart?"

"In the Head's safe."

"Going to look at it after school?"

"This evening—yes."

"Ahem! Silence!" said Mr. Linton.

Tom Merry was thinking more about the chart than about the lessons that morning, as was only to be expected. He was called over the coals several times by Mr. Linton, and after morning lessons he was the richer by a hundred lines. Mr. Linton did not know or care anything about treasure islands or mysterious charts, and he would have had no sympathy on the subject.

Crooke looked at Tom Merry several times with his quiet, malicious grin. He wondered inwardly what Tom Merry would say if he knew that a copy of the chart had been made, and was safely reposing in Snipo's pocket-book.

Tom Merry evidently had no such suspicion.
 Twice again that day the postman came, and each time Tom Merry looked eagerly for a letter, but he was disappointed. From the sailorman there came no word.

After the last post Tom Merry asked the Head for the chart, and Dr. Holmes handed it to him. Tom Merry carried it off to his study, his hand trembling with excitement.



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Quite a number of fellows were waiting for him there. Monty Lowther and Manners, and Blake and D'Arcy, and Herries and Dig were there, of course, with Figgins & Co. from the New House. Kangaroo of the Shell had come in, and a dozen more would have come if there had been room. But Monty Lowther had gently but firmly declined to have the study packed like the inside of a sardine tin, and so a limit was placed upon the number.

There was a general exclamation as Tom Merry came in. "Got it?" "Yes." "Good!"

Lowther closed the door. The fellows all gathered eagerly round the table as Tom Merry laid down the knotted handkerchief.

"I've given the man every chance to write," said Tom Merry slowly. "He said I was to open it if I didn't get a letter this morning. There have been two posts since then, and I haven't had a line. It means that he isn't going to write. Either he wants me to have the chart, or he isn't able to write." The junior's voice faltered a little. "That Spanish villain has killed him! I don't want to think so—I hope it isn't so—but if he is living, it's clear that he wants me to have the chart, or he would have written. I suppose all you fellows think the same?"

"Yaas, wathah!" "Quite right, Tommy!" "You all agree that I ought to open it now?" "Yes!" "Yaas, wathah!" "Good!"

Tom Merry untied the handkerchief. Every eye was bent eagerly upon the leather chart as it rolled out. The leader of the Terrible Three spread it flat upon the table.

There was a deep-drawn breath from the crowded juniors. They gazed eagerly at the chart.

It was marked on the leather in tattoo, and the black marks showed up clearly against the pale colour of the leather.

There was the outline of an island, and outlined round it were coral reefs. The points and indentations of the coast were named, and in the interior were further indications.

The juniors, gazing at it with breathless curiosity, read out the names marked on the chart:

"Danger Point!" "Sharke Bay!" "Dingo Creek!" "Pirates' Mount!" "Look! 'Gold buried here.' By Jove!" A black spot was marked "Pirates' Mount," and at the foot of it was a cross with the words "Gold Buried Here." The words seemed to fascinate the juniors.

"Gold buried here," repeated Blake, with a deep breath.

"Bai Jove!" "My hat! And it only wants picking up!" said Herries. "If we were there, I bet that Towser would find that place in next to no time, and—"

"Wats!" "Oh, it's ripping!" said Blake. "What a find! Is the latitude marked?"

"Yes. Look at this in the corner." "Good egg!"

In the corner was scratched "Latitude of Sydney." "My hat!" said Kangaroo. "That's the latitude of Sydney, in Australia, of course. But the longitude isn't given."

"Easy enough to find it from the latitude, though," said Kerr shrewdly. "You only have to take the latitude of Sydney for a guide, and sail on that parallel till you come to the island."

"Might have to go right round the world," grinned Figgins.

"What's this?" said Tom Merry. He pointed to two dotted letters in the right-hand bottom corner of the chart. The letters were "W.L."

The juniors wrinkled their brows over them.

"W.L.," repeated Blake. "They can't be the initials of the owner. They would be 'P. R.' for Peter Raff."

"May have been some previous owner; this is a jolly old document," said Digby.

"I've got it!" said Kerr. "What asses you fellows are! It means 'West Longitude,' of course."

"By Jove, yes, of course! The longitude isn't given."

"W.L.—West Longitude," said Blake. "Of course. They don't give the degrees."

"No, that's unfortunate; but probably the chap who drew up the chart doesn't—or didn't know the exact longitude himself," said Kerr. "It's pretty certain that this island isn't marked on any map."

"Wathah not!"

"He's given us the West Longitude—that's longitude west of Greenwich—and the latitude of Sydney," said Kerr. "That ought to be quite enough to find the island by."

Tom Merry nodded. "Then—"

"Then we lift the giddy treasure." "Bai Jove!"

"My hat!" said Kangaroo. "The vacation's just on us, you know. Could we fix it to search for the treasure?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "Hurrah!"

"We'll all go. All you fellows are with me, of course?" "Hurrah!"

And the cheer that the juniors gave rang through the School House. There was no doubt that they were all with Tom Merry, heart and soul, in the scheme for searching the South Seas for the treasure island.

CHAPTER 14.

The Dwarf Again!

THE next day was Sunday, and with the exception of the two services the boys had the day mostly to themselves.

Tom Merry & Co. spent most of their leisure time in discussing the plans for seeking the pirate's treasure. That it was a pirate's treasure they had made up their minds—it seemed the most natural thing to think, under the circumstances. Upon reflection the vacation seemed too far off for them to wait, and they discussed the possibility of getting leave from the Head and from their people, to seek the treasure without waiting for that time to arrive.

Naturally enough, they were keen upon starting. Snipe and Mellish and Crooke had some discussion to go through on the same subject. They had the copy of the chart in their possession, and although the interior of it was not marked, Mellish had some recollection of how the indications had been put in.

But if they could find the island, the cads of the School House had little doubt of being able to find the treasure, too. And as Crooke's father was a millionaire, and denied him nothing, and was, moreover, the possessor of a steam-yacht, with which he sometimes cruised in southern waters, it really seemed as if Crooke would have a chance.

As for the baseness of having stolen the clue to the island, that did not seem to enter at all into the calculations of the precious trio. They were very little more scrupulous than Pablo Lopez in that matter.

But there was one thing they understood perfectly well, and that was, that it would not do to let Tom Merry get wind of the fact that they possessed a copy of the chart, imperfect as it was.

Snipe carried it in an envelope in his pocket-book, and the rascals did not venture even to look at it within the walls of St. Jim's.

"We'll stroll out of school this afternoon, after church, and look at it in the wood," Snipe said; and as he was the leading spirit of the precious Co., the others agreed.

And that afternoon they went out together. Tom Merry saw them go, but he little dreamed what their intentions were, or what Snipe carried in his pocket.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"Safe he—" grinned Snipe, throwing himself down in a grassy glade in the heart of Rylcombe Wood. "Got a fag, Crooke?"

"Yes, rather," said Crooke, producing a packet of cigarettes from his pocket. "Here you are! Got a match?"

The three young rascals lighted their cigarettes and puffed away with a great pretence of enjoyment. They would much rather have eaten toffee, but they would not admit that even to themselves.

"Now, then, we'll discuss the matter," said Snipe, taking out his pocket-book. "In the first place, Crooke, you think you can get your pater to take us on his steam-yacht in the vac?"

"Certainly!" said Crooke.

"That's ripping!" said Mellish. "It will be a jolly good holiday, anyway, whether we find the treasure or not. And I don't see why we shouldn't find it."

"Hush!" said Snipe suddenly.

"What's the matter?"

"I heard a sound in the wood," said Snipe, looking anxiously at the thick green bushes and trees.

"Oh, rats! A rabbit, I expect."

"If Tom Merry should come along—"

"Stuff! Tom Merry's at the school!"

"Well," said Snipe, his alarm subsiding as no further sound was heard, "it's agreed, then, if your pater takes us all three, Crooke, we divide the treasure into four equal shares if it's discovered, and take one each—your pater having one for his trouble?"

"Agreed!" said Crooke.

"Is he likely to ask many questions as to how we got the chart?" said Mellish, a little anxiously.

Crooke chuckled and winked.

"My pater's a business man," he said. "He doesn't ask awkward questions. If he thinks there's anything in the bisney, he'll take it up and not ask a word."

"The difficulty will be to convince him that there's something in it," Snipe said thoughtfully.

"Oh, I don't know. He'll take me for a cruise in the South Seas in the vac, if I ask him, without believing in the chart. Then we can look for the gold."

"Good! Jolly well wish I had a pater like that!" said Mellish enviously.

"Well, here's the map," said Snipe. "It's unlucky Mellish wasn't able to copy down the rest of the signs. But we've got the position of the island. We can search over it till we find the giddy treasure. The island can't be very large."

"Exactly!"

"Look at this," said Snipe. "I—"

"Senoritos!"

A man stepped from the thicket—a man with massive shoulders and a short figure that dwindled away to the feet; a man with a swarthy face, and black, scintillating eyes. The juniors had not seen him before, but they did not need telling who he was.

"The—the Spaniard!"

"Lopez!"

The dwarf grinned.

"Quite right, ninos," he said. "I will ask you to give me the chart."

Snipe sprang up, crumpling the paper in his hand. His eyes were gleaming fiercely.

"You jolly well won't have it!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you've been listening—"

The Spaniard grinned.

"Exactly, little senior!"

"You're not going to have this paper! It isn't the original—it's a copy—and it belongs to us!" said Snipe.

Crooke stood hesitating. Mellish was already scuttling away in the bushes. He had heard too much of the Spanish dwarf to want to remain at close quarters with him.

The dwarf held out his hand.

"Give me the chart!"

"I won't!"

"Be-etter give it to him, Snipe," muttered Crooke.

"We—we can't do anything else. It's no good."

Snipe gritted his teeth.

"Hang him, he shan't have it!"

He made a movement to dash into the wood. With the spring of a tiger, the Spaniard reached him. His powerful hands closed upon the junior, and he hurled him to the earth with a concussion that almost deprived Snipe of his senses.

The dwarf stooped over him and grasped his wrist.

"Give me the chart!"

"Hang you!"

Lopez twisted the junior's wrist. Snipe uttered a cry of agony, and the grasp of his fingers upon the paper unloosed. Pablo Lopez picked up the paper with a yell of triumph.

"Mine!" he shouted.

"Hang you!"

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Snipe staggered to his feet. He was about to spring upon Lopez, but the Spaniard turned upon him with a look that made him shrink back. The dwarf waved his hand towards the road.

"Go!" he said. "Caramba! Go, while you are safe!"

Crooke was gone already, after Mellish. Snipe clenched his hands, but he followed them. The Spaniard grinned, and plunged into the wood. Snipe joined Mellish and Crooke, who were waiting for him in the road.

"He's got it!" said Mellish.

"I believe he had a knife!" muttered Crooke.

Snipe burst into a harsh laugh.

"That's an end to our treasure hunt!" he said savagely.

"If you fellows had stood by me, I could have kept the paper."

"I believe he had a knife!" muttered Mellish.

"Bah!"

"Well, what are we going to do now?" snarled Crooke.

"I'm going to the police station," said Snipe. "Not a word at the school about the paper! We should have the whole crew of them down on us if they knew we'd a copy at all. If Tom Merry looks for the treasure, let him find that rotten Spaniard looking for it, too. Serve him right—hang him. But I'm going to the police, now, to tell them that the man's in the wood, who tried to break into the school last night. They may be able to lay the brute by the heels."

And Snipe ran all the way into the village, and gave his information breathlessly at the police station. He did not mention the chart. He simply said that he and his companions had seen the Spaniard in the wood. Search was made at once, but it was in vain. Pablo Lopez had disappeared.

CHAPTER 15.

Glorious Prospects!

TOM MERRY heard nothing of that adventure in the wood.

By the next day it was pretty clear that the Spaniard had left the neighbourhood. The police were searching for him far and wide, and it was found that a man answering to his description had been seen at a considerable distance, towards the coast.

There was no doubt that the Spaniard was gone, and Tom Merry & Co. believed that he had either given up the idea of stealing the chart, or that he did not really know that it was in Tom Merry's possession. Of the fact that he possessed a copy, complete enough to give him a full indication of the exact whereabouts of the island, though not of the treasure, Tom Merry had no knowledge, and Snipe & Co. did not mean to tell him. They were shut out of the matter now, but they found a spiteful satisfaction in knowing that Tom Merry would have a dangerous rival in the quest for the buried gold.

Nothing more was heard of the Spaniard, and nothing more of Peter Raff. Tom Merry hoped more and more that the sunburnt sailorman had not really fallen a victim to the dwarf. If he lived, it was clear that he intended Tom Merry to possess the chart, and Tom Merry fully resolved that if he discovered the treasure, half of it should go to the man who had given him the clue, if ever he should claim it.

Tom Merry was discussing the matter with his chums when Blake asked the question.

"What about going for the loot?" asked Blake. "We can't wait till the vac comes, you know. It's really too long."

"We may get leave—"

"Bai Jove! I weally think we ought to get leave," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I wathah think I can awwange the mattah!"

"Rats!"

"I could awwange it, I tell you," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You chaps know my brothah Conway—you wemembah—"

"What the dickens—"

"He's going on a cwuise in the South Seas. I heard ffrom him about it to-day. And he's comin' down here to-day to say good-bye to Wally and me."

"Good!"

"Let's wait till Lord Conway comes, then," said Tom Merry. "We'll make him agree. If he won't, we'll shut him up in the study, and start Gussy singing tenor solos to him."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

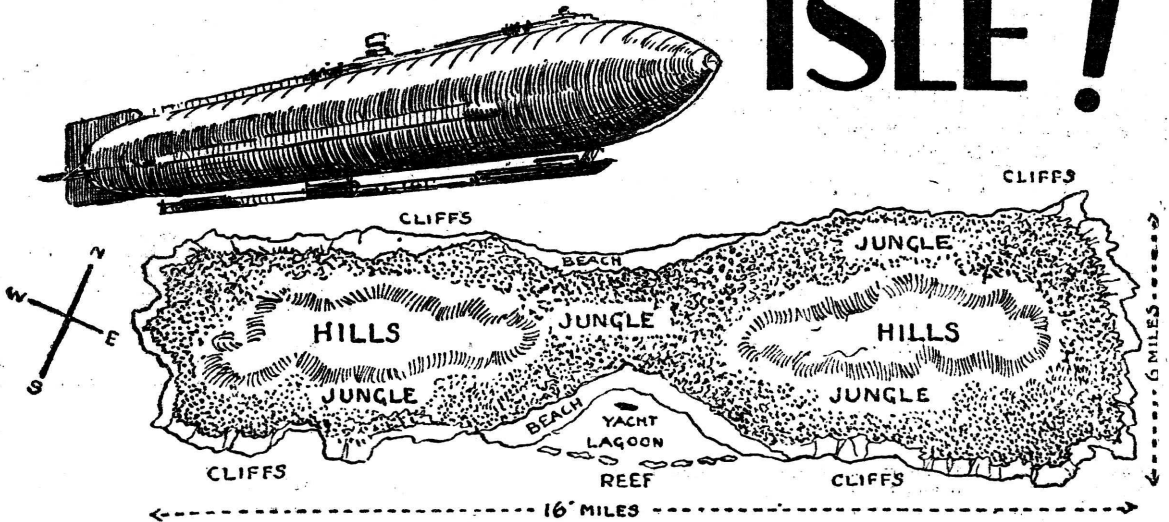
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Conway, who had the honour of being D'Arcy's elder brother, arrived later in the afternoon. The juniors, among whom was Wally D'Arcy, met him at the gates in a crowd, and marched him in triumph into D'Arcy's study—No. 6 in the Fourth.

(Continued on page 23.)

ST. FRANK'S AIRSHIP SCHOOL THREATENED WITH DESTRUCTION!

TREASURE ISLE!



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

The *Sky Wanderer*, the airship school of the St. Frank's chums, lands on *Tao-Tao Island*, in the Pacific, in response to a message for help from Mr. Beverton, an explorer treasure-seeking on the island. It transpires that *Doc Haynes* and most of the crew of the explorer's yacht have mutinied to seek the treasure. To ensure his own safety from the airship school, *Haynes*, who is friendly with the cannibals, captures twelve of the St. Frank's boys. But they are rescued by *Nelson Lee*. The party then recapture the *Corsair*, Mr. Beverton's yacht, from *Haynes*, who, now in danger of defeat, decides to destroy the *Sky Wanderer* by firing flaming arrows into it! The attackers are discovered by *Willy Handforth*, however, but he is at a loss how to prevent the catastrophe.

Neck-or-Nothing Willy!

ONE of *Willy Handforth's* characteristics was cool-headedness in an emergency.

In all truth, he would need a cool head now if he was to avert the threatened catastrophe to the *Sky Wanderer*! Right beneath him, in the little jungle clearing, *Red Harker* and several *Tao-Tao* blacks were preparing the giant bow which was to send forth its flaming arrow; and near at hand there were three more of these dangerous contrivances. They were practically ready.

The villainous *Harker* was busying himself with a can of petrol. Already the "arrow" was in position, with the bow tautly stretched. This arrow was a pointed wooden pole, ten feet in length, and the head of it was something like a mop—for a mass of cloth was wrapped tightly round the pole and secured with wire. At the other end of the pole there were crudely made fins, so that the arrow, after release, would keep its main direction.

In spite of the gloom, *Willy* saw exactly how it was to be worked.

"Boys, this is gonna be good!" chuckled *Red*, addressing the blacks—although it is doubtful if they understood him. "There'll be enough force behind this little matchstick to send it right into the innards of that blistering gasbag. And what then? Ask me! Even if this one misses, there are three more, and they can't all miss!"

He was waiting for the signal. The arrowhead was ready and *Harker* had matches in his hand.

Willy was thinking rapidly.

He stifled the horror which filled him; he mustn't let his mind dwell upon the terrible possibilities. Something had to be done, and he had to do it!

"But how? Seconds were precious.

In spite of his determination, he saw, in his mind's eye, the dreadful scene which would be enacted within the next few moments. The great flaming arrows hurtling out of the hidden clearing—crashing into the *Sky Wanderer's* fabric

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

body. Flames leaping up, roaring. Explosions. Death in its most terrible form to many of the schoolboys aboard.

Willy shuddered. This thing had to be stopped! It was up to him to do something.

Then inspiration came to *Willy*. His mind cleared, and he almost laughed. There was one chance, and the fact that it meant his almost inevitable capture by the enemy did not deter him. He was in the treetop, almost immediately above a wooden pole which served as a catch, or trigger, for the giant bow.

No sooner had the thought come to *Willy* than he acted. In a flash he had seen that the premature release of one of the giant arrows might serve as a warning. He swung himself down to an overhanging branch, and, as the monkeys chattered at the disturbance, *Willy* let himself drop.

He heard a curse from *Red Harker*, but the men could do nothing. Unerringly *Willy* landed on the trigger-pole, and the dead weight of his falling body had the desired effect.

Thud—twaaaaaaang!

With a terrific gun-like concussion the bow released its arrow—but the head of that arrow was unlighted and more or less harmless. *Willy*, bruised but as active as an eel, leapt to his feet.

"Thunder!" snarled *Red Harker*. "One o' them pesterin' kids!"

He made a grab at *Willy*, but *Willy* was like greased lightning. Prefects at St. Frank's knew how difficult it was to hold the slippery Third Form skipper; and *Red Harker* now made the same discovery. With a twisting, squirming action *Willy* wriggled out of the scoundrel's grasp. One second he seemed to be firmly held, and the next second he had gone. Like a rabbit he dived into the undergrowth, delighted at the success so far of his effort to thwart a disaster. Yet he was anxious, too. Would the warning serve?

Craaaaaaash!

Something unseen came hurtling out of the darkness, and it struck the outer fabric of the *Sky Wanderer's* hull just above the level of the central promenade deck, half burying itself—but prevented from penetrating fully by a cross girder which stayed its progress.

"Great Scott! What was that?" gasped *Stevens* of the Fifth.

He was leaning against the deck-rail, immediately below, with *Browne*. They had distinctly heard the ominous "twang!" from the jungle, and they had wondered what it

had meant. Then, right on its heels, had come the thudding crash over their heads.

"I hate to be pessimistic, Brother Horace, but this has all the earmarks of an enemy attack," said William Napoleon Browne. "But wait; we must make sure. Always trust a Browne to make sure."

In spite of his longwindedness, the Fifth Form skipper was essentially a fellow of action. He leapt recklessly to the top of the chromium rail, reached upwards, grabbed at the guttering, and hauled himself up. Stevens gasped with consternation, for a death drop yawned beneath the reckless Browne.

Hurried footsteps pattered on the deck; Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon came running up, breathless, anxious. Almost at their heels was Mr. Vickers, one of the officers.

"I say, what's happened?" panted Chubby. "What was that noise? What's Browne doing? Have you seen anything of Willy?"

"We've searched the ship and can't find him," said Juicy anxiously.

"Go away!" snapped Stevens. "Do you think I want to be bothered about Handforth minor—Whoa! Steady, Browne, you chump!"

William Napoleon had lowered his lanky length, and now, with an inward swing, he again reached the deck. But it was a greater effort than anybody realised, for Browne had pulled with him a heavy wooden pole.

"Grab!" he yelled.

The thing nearly overbalanced, owing to its weight, but Chubby and Juicy and Mr. Vickers just managed to save it.

"Great heavens! What's this smell?" asked Mr. Vickers harshly. "Petrol! Has somebody gone mad?"

The commotion had brought Sir Hobart Manners himself to the spot, and for a moment there was confusion. But Browne, a quick thinker like Willy, lost no time.

"This thing came from the jungle, sir," he said rapidly, dispensing with his usual elaborate phraseology. "Look at it! An enormous arrow, with the head soaked with petrol."

"An attempt to set us on fire!" exclaimed Sir Hobart, horrified.

"You have guessed it, sir," agreed Browne. "No doubt the petrol was alight when the arrow was sent off—but the rush through the air put it out. I hope you realise, brother, that there might be others on their way."

Browne's words were terribly significant. Sir Hobart and the others were staring at the black line of jungle, for the searchlight beam, at the moment, was sweeping westward. There had been no general alarm aboard the Sky Wanderer; the only people who knew of the possible danger were those present on the promenade deck amidships.

There could be no mistaking the horrid import of that giant arrow. By a miracle, it seemed, it had failed in its mission. But Browne was undoubtedly right. There might be others!

Sir Hobart Manners was almost choking with rage and anxiety. This could be no native attack, for the "arrow" was too ingenious; besides, the blacks would not use petrol. Doc Haynes himself was at the back of this villainous business.

During those first seconds, Sir Hobart was nearly stunned. He had never imagined that the modern buccaneer would go to such ruthless lengths to obtain his object. Somewhere in the jungle near at hand Haynes was lurking with his men. He had meant to spring a horrific surprise on the airship—and although the actual surprise had failed, he might yet succeed in his deadly purpose.

In a flash, Sir Hobart's brain cleared.

"Vickers—with me!" he shouted urgently.

He dashed like a madman towards the control-room, with Vickers at his heels. Little did they realise that they were given this opportunity of acting because of the sudden confusion in the enemy's ranks. For Doc Haynes was not quite ready with the other bows, and he had been further delayed by the arrival of the infuriated Harker.

"One of the kids—jumped down from a tree!" Harker had gasped. "Jumped right on the catch, and—"

"So that was what I heard!" snarled Haynes. "Did you get the kid?"

"Never had a chance," said Red. "He wriggled out of my hands like a wet fish!"

"You fool!" grated Haynes. "Quick! Go and help Button. We've got to get these things off immediately. No need for secrecy now."

He raised his voice.

"Button!" he thundered. "All ready, there?"

From a distance came the voice of Bill Button.

"Shan't be a minute, boss," called the mahogany-faced pirate. "Can't get the arser fixed right—"

"Fool!" snarled Haynes. "Here, Red, take this. Let go when I give the yell!"

"Just as you say, Doc," panted Red.

Haynes went stumbling off, and, meanwhile, those aboard

the airship had had those precious seconds in which to act. Sir Hobart reached the control-room. It was useless to telegraph to the engine gondolas, for none of the engineers was on duty. The motors were dead.

But without hesitation the Sky Wanderer's commander operated the lever which controlled the giant grappels. Automatically they released their grip, and with smooth precision they came telescoping back into the airship's body. She was free, and instantly, in place of her former rigidity, she swayed and veered in the light wind. And at the same moment she commenced rising perceptibly, drifting at the same time towards the jungle belt.

Twang-twang-twang!

In that critical moment there sounded in the jungle the triple twang of the other bows as they released their death messengers.

A lurid, flickering flare showed for a second; then the boys and men on the airship's starboard promenade deck were horrified to see three flaming comets shooting upwards and outwards—and coming straight at the Sky Wanderer's hull.

In the Hands of the Savages!

FLAMING comets!

The petrol-soaked arrows could be likened to nothing else as they whizzed towards the airship.

Doc Haynes' calculations had been accurate, too, for if the airship had remained at her moorings all three flaming arrows would have plunged through her fabric hull.

Even as it was, it was touch and go.

Browne and Stevens, leaning over the rail, saw two of the flaming comets coming, apparently, straight at them.

"We're done for!" yelled Stevens, aghast, and he instinctively shut his eyes.

"That was close, Brother Horace," said Browne evenly.

As though a kindly fate were in league with the Sky Wanderer, she had unexpectedly soared higher at the crucial moment. An air current, coming off the island, was undoubtedly the cause of her sudden lift. But that split second made all the difference. The flaming comets, instead of plunging into her hull, just scraped beneath her, to hurtle on harmlessly. But the third arrow, aimed at the bows, fouled the port grappel claws, which were telescoping. And there the arrow jammed, and flames from the petrol-soaked head leapt upwards, licking along the claw arm, reaching towards the under fabric.

The Sky Wanderer, quite at the mercy of the wind, for she was merely drifting, swung her stern round awkwardly. With nose dipping she veered out over the sea. By this time the alarm signal had sounded. Engineers were leaping into the gondolas.

The sentries on the entrance deck below were the only men at that dreadfully anxious moment to see the fire. Staring through a window, they beheld the flames from the jammed arrow licking up the grappel arm.

"Look!" yelled one of the men abruptly.

He pointed—not to the menacing flames, but to a thin rope which was dangling down from the airship's body—and at the end of the rope there was a small, active figure!

"Gosh! It's one of the kids!" exclaimed the second man.

He flung open the door of the entrance deck. A void yawned beneath him, but he could see better.

"Hold tight, boy!" he shouted.

"Keep your hair on!" came a shout in reply. "I'm all right. I'll be up this rope in two jiffs."

Willy Handforth was pleased with himself. He had managed to get clear of the jungle, and he had remembered the rope he had left dangling from a window. In the nick of time he had reached it—just as the airship was soaring upwards. Grabbing the rope, Willy had been carried free of the sands.

"Nothing to worry about!" he called. "The flames are dying down now, and they can't reach the hull."

His voice was heard on the promenade deck, and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon leaned precariously over the rail. But the bulk of the airship concealed Willy from their view.

"Willy!" they shrieked in chorus. "Where the dickens are you?"

"Coming up!" came Willy's voice. "Glad I was in time with my warning."

He was like a mere insect, dangling at the end of that thin rope. As though by magic the previously deserted beach had now become alive with blacks. Doc Haynes and his men were in evidence, too. They were furious at the failure of their elaborate plan. One boy—a mere fag—had frustrated them! Haynes, in that moment, was like a madman.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

He fired his automatic wildly, and the savages, taking their cue from him, flung their spears at random. It was a feeble enough attack—in fact, a mere exhibition of temper.

"So long, Doc!" yelled Willy.



"So long, Doc!" yelled Willy, as he clung to the trailing rope from the Sky Wanderer. Insane with rage, Haynes fired, and by the sheerest luck the bullet hit the rope above Willy's head. Strands parted, unravelled, and the rope snapped! Next moment Willy Handforth was dropping!

It was characteristic of him to shout like that—but rash. Haynes fired with insane rage, and by the sheerest luck one of his bullets hit the thin rope immediately above Willy's head.

The result was catastrophic. Strands parted, unravelled, and the next second the rope snapped. Willy Handforth dropped like a stone. "Poor kid!" muttered one of the sentries on the entrance deck.

He and his companion had seen. Lumps came into their throats as they saw the plucky youngster falling, turning over and over. It was he who had saved them all.

"Thunder! Look at that!" gasped one of the sentries.

Until that second they had not realised that the airship had now drifted over the sea, and Willy, instead of falling to the sands, had plunged into the water. The airship, owing to the wind currents which came off the island, had dropped again, and she was not very far up.

However, there seemed little enough chance for Willy. The only witnesses—the two men on the entrance deck—saw him plunge in, but they saw no more. For at that moment the airship's engines spluttered and sprang into life. They hummed powerfully, and a kind of quiver ran through the Sky Wanderer from stem to stern. She was under control in a moment.

The thrust of the great propellers was immediately felt. She swung her nose seawards, and moved forward steadily, now rising under perfect control. Sir Hobart Manners breathed a prayer of thankfulness, for a report had just come up to the control-room that the jammed arrow had burned itself out.

The Sky Wanderer was free, completely out of danger.

Mr. Vickers, with perspiration streaming from him, came into the control-room.

"That was a near shave, sir," he said, striving to keep his voice steady.

"Much too near for my liking," replied Sir Hobart. "As sure as there is justice in this world, I'll make that villain, Haynes, answer for his action! He tried to kill us all, Vickers."

"I'm afraid there's one life lost, sir," said the young officer, with sudden gravity.

Sir Hobart started.

"What do you mean?" he asked sharply.

"I've just heard, sir—young Handforth of the Third Form," said Vickers. "It was he who gave us the warning.

I don't know how he did it, but he must have released the first arrow prematurely—before the petrol was alight."

"Brave lad!" said the airship commander. "You mean, we had to leave him behind? He might not be dead—"

"He managed to get back to the airship and cling to a rope," said Mr. Vickers. "I imagine the youngster placed the rope there himself. Anyhow, the rope broke, and he fell. One of the men says that he dropped into the sea, but I doubt if there's any chance for him. Even if he wasn't killed by the fall, he'll be in Haynes' hands—and you can imagine what Haynes will do with him after what has just happened."

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, in another part of the airship, were madly excited—so were the rest of the St. Frank's schoolboys. Everybody knew by now that they owed their salvation to Willy; and they were anguished by the thought that Willy had been left behind. He had sacrificed himself for their sake.

Mr. Wilkes was particularly grieved. As the airship rose higher and higher, now flying perfectly, old Wilkey paced the promenade deck agitatedly with Barry Stokes. Now and again he went to the rail and stared down at the dark sea and the dimly visible beach.

"I'm horrified, Stokes—positively horrified!" he said, almost brokenly. "I can't help thinking that young Handforth went into the jungle because of my order that he should not make a pet of one of the forest monkeys. I believe he sneaked into the jungle to get that monkey back."

"Lucky for us he did," said Mr. Stokes. "For he must have stumbled upon Haynes—"

"Yes—yes, I agree," said Mr. Wilkes. "We are saved; but that plucky boy gave his life for us. Of course, it was for the best; no sensible man could say otherwise. But when I think of that youngster—Poor lad! He even got back to the airship, and might be with us now but for a chance bullet. Have you heard what happened?"

And so they discussed it—as St. Frank's seniors and St. Frank's juniors were discussing it. But they all knew that nothing could be done.

Meanwhile, Sir Hobart Manners, in the control-room, was in conference with his chief officers—Squadron-Leader Truscott and Mr. Vickers. Mr. Hunt, the chief engineer, was also there.

"Gentlemen, we must now keep in the air," Sir Hobart was saying. "It would be madness for us to land again,

for Haynes has shown us that he is ruthless, and if we give him another opportunity he will destroy us."

"That's clear enough, sir," said Truscott. "But for the quick-wittedness of that amazing youngster the airship would now be nothing but a tangled pile of twisted, red-hot wreckage. A few of us might have escaped, but even that is doubtful."

"Yet the gas we use is non-explosive," Sir Hobart reminded him.

"I am aware of that, sir," said the other. "While our gas compartments are intact, there can be no internal explosion, or even fire. To that extent we are safe. But this gas, like many another gas, whilst being safe enough in bulk—in its neat state, as it were, becomes dangerous when mixed with air."

"But I thought the gas was safe even in those circumstances?" asked Mr. Hunt. "This is news to me."

"A small percentage of air mixed with the gas does not really affect it," explained Truscott. "If those flaming torches had burst through the outer fabric into the gas containers, they would have caused immense rents. Gas would have rushed out, and air would have rushed in. Within a very few moments there would have been a greater proportion of air than gas—and it is then that the explosive mixture is formed. First, the flaming torches would have caused a great conflagration. I don't think there would have been any tremendous explosion, but there can be no doubt that we should have gone up in flames. It might be that only some of our gas compartments would have been affected. But does it really matter? The Sky Wanderer herself would have been destroyed, and in the general havoc there is little doubt that there would have been loss of life."

"Haynes has proved his cunning," said Sir Hobart grimly. "He chose the only certain way of wiping us out. Incendiary bullets fired from guns would not have done much harm, for in entering the fabric they would have made only small holes. But by using enormous wooden poles he made certain of tearing our fabric to shreds and tatters, and thus allowing the air to rush in, to form the explosive mixture with the gas. It only proves, gentlemen, that no precautions can be too great. Here we have this wonderful aircraft filled with non-explosive gas, yet, by taking certain measures, even that gas can be made highly dangerous and destructive."

"I'm not sure that Haynes is as cunning as you believe, sir," remarked Mr. Vickers. "He probably thought that we carried the ordinary explosive gas. Not that it makes much difference. The point is—what are we going to do now?"

"The die is cast," replied Sir Hobart. "We must remain in the air. We know that Haynes has some of our party in his power. How we can rescue them I cannot imagine. I am, in fact, almost in despair."

"At least, we can fly over to the other side of the island," said Truscott. "Luck might be with us. Perhaps we'll see something which will give us a clue. Again, I am not satisfied that Mr. Lee and Lord Dorrimore are dead. We have Haynes' word—but why should we believe the rascal?"

"We know, at least, that Mr. Lee and Lord Dorrimore left us—to attempt a desperate visit to the other side of the island in a pneumatic boat," said Sir Hobart. "We have not seen them since, or heard a word from them. Man alive! How can you doubt that they are dead—or, at least, in Haynes' hands?"

"That's the point, sir," said Squadron-Leader Truscott quickly. "Isn't it most likely that they are in Haynes' hands? If so, we must rescue them. We know that Haynes is on this side of the island now, and we can get to the lagoon within a few minutes. Why not try it?"

"We might as well try in that direction as in any other," agreed Sir Hobart, with a shrug. "In any case, I intend to keep the vessel fairly high in the air, with engines just ticking over, so that she keeps her head to the wind until morning. By daylight, perhaps, we might be able to see more."

The great craft, having gone some distance out to sea, had now circled round, and once again she was heading for

the coastline, over that narrow strip of sandy beach, with the dense jungle in the background. Her searchlight was blazing down, revealing the beach; but no living soul was within sight. The beach was barren, empty.

Yet, only a few minutes earlier, there had been many figures on the sands.

When the airship had first drifted away, safely out of range—before her engines were in operation—Doc Haynes and Red Harker and Bill Button and others were all on the beach, staring upwards at their lost prey. Tao-Tao blacks were much in evidence, too—all of them awed by the spectacle of that monstrous aircraft floating so serenely away.

"They've done us!" snarled Doc Haynes. "It was that kid what made all the difference, durn him!" He swung round, glaring at Red Harker. "You'd best explain, too, Red!" he went on ominously. "Seems like it was your fault!"

"My fault, Doc!" protested Red. "How come?" "I left you in charge of that bow and arrow, didn't I?" demanded Haynes aggressively.

"So what?" "So what?" yelled Haynes. "Ain't you got more sense than to let a school kid best you?"

"Darn it, Doc, it wasn't my fault!" protested Harker. "The kid jumped clean out of the treetop—right on to the trigger pole. The arer was away before I could even look round."

Haynes swallowed hard. "Well, it's no good talkin'," he said, forcing himself to be calm. "We've failed. And failure don't taste nice. Red. Look up there! See how she's cruising round now? Engines going, and everythin'! Out of our reach—and never likely to come within our reach agin."

"Ay, and it's odds they'll clear right off," said Bill Button heavily. "What then, boss? Next thing we know a blisterin' warship will be outside the reef. Seems like we'd best up-anchor and quit."

"Mebbe you'll tell me how we're to do that?" asked Haynes bitterly. "The airship's gone, and that swab, Lee, has grabbed the yacht. We're the ones who's marooned now—marooned good and proper!" His eyes blazed. "But they ain't got the yacht out of the lagoon," he went on. "That's our chance, boys! Instead of wastin' time here, we've got to get busy—and get the yacht back. It's our only chance."

The realisation that the tables were completely turned drove Haynes almost into a frenzy; but he realised the necessity of keeping a cool head. Everything had gone wrong; all in a moment, it seemed, he and his men were the under dogs.

"The nigs seem to have found something, boss," remarked Bill Button.

It was a fact that a number of the blacks had, a minute earlier, dashed down towards the surf. Now they were returning—and in their midst they held a wriggling prisoner.

It was Willy Handforth—and he knew that his luck was out. Having dived safely into the sea, he had hoped to avoid attention. The white men had not seen him, but the blacks, unfortunately, were more acute-eyed. However, Willy was thankful enough to be alive, and he was a cheerful, optimistic youngster.

"Blazin' Jupiter! It's the kid!" rapped out Haynes, as he strode forward. "I thought I'd plugged him!"

"You've got a rotten aim, Haynes!" said Willy coolly. "You only hit the rope by accident."

Doc seized him cruelly and jerked him forward.

"You'll be sorry you wasn't killed, kid!" he snarled. "As many lives as a cat, eh?" He glowered upon his victim. "I've got to thank you for my plans bein' messed up."

"I think there's one thing you didn't know, Haynes," said Willy. "The gas in the airship isn't explosive. Still, I knew your flaming arrows would have done a lot of damage—"

"Hold your lip!" interrupted Haynes. "I ought to fill you with lead! But I won't do that," he added evilly. "I tell you what I'll do!"

He turned to the Tao-Tao men, and spoke rapidly in their own language. Instantly a number of blacks, jabbering hard, sprang forward and grabbed Willy.

"Take him away!" panted Doc Haynes. "He's yours! Understand that, kid? I've given you to the blacks—and I reckon you'll know what that means soon enough!"

Inwardly Willy was startled, but he gave no sign of fear. In a moment he was whisked off his feet, and carried on high, he was taken into the depths of the jungle.

"Say, boss, that was a bit steep, wasn't it?" asked Bill Button uncomfortably. "Fightin' agin' men is one thing, but to give that kid to them murderin' cannibals—"

"Hold your lip!" interrupted Haynes. "I'm boss here, ain't I? The kid spoils all our plans. And if the blacks

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torture him before they kill him, so much the better. Let's be going, boys—the airship's coming back, and we don't want to be riddled with bullets, do we? Besides, we've got to get back to the other beach."

Like shadows they melted into the jungle.

Rescue from the Air!

LORD DORRIMORE cast a cigarette end into the sea and sighed.

"I'm disappointed," he said sadly. "We've been sweatin' like slaves all day, gettin' this old tub barricaded and protected against attack—and what happens? Nothin'! Everythin' as quiet as Brighton promenade on a wet Sunday afternoon!"

"It's too quiet, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee gruffly. "So quiet, in fact, that I am uneasy."

They were standing near the bridge, on the Corsair's deck. Not a light was showing on the sandy beach of Tao-Tao Island. The lagoon itself was murmuring its tranquil song, and the phosphorescent waves were breaking musically on the silvery sands.

"I'd give a thousand pounds to know what's happening on the other side of the island," continued Lee, clenching his fists. "Seldom in my life, Dorrie, have I felt so helpless. We cannot take the yacht out through the reef—and we cannot go ashore. The only thing left is for us to remain here."

"Think Haynes will have another shot at us?" asked Mitchell Beverton, who had joined them.

"He is certain to—and, knowing him to be a cunning rascal, it is equally certain that he will adopt tricky methods," replied Lee. "We must be very much on the alert. I don't like this quietness. It's ominous."

Farther along the deck, Nipper was standing with Handforth and a group of other juniors.

wind had dropped, and the air was sultry. Overhead the stars had become hazy, vague, and there was a feeling that a tropical storm was not far away.

"Listen!" said Nipper suddenly.

He stood rigid, both hands cupped behind his ears, and he stood directly facing the island.

"Begad! Can you hear somethin', dear old boy?" murmured Sir Montie.

"Fancy, I suppose," said Nipper. "A kind of throbbing. Can't you hear it? It seems to be far away—"

"A throbbing?" interrupted Handforth, with a jump. "What do you mean—aero engines? By George! Do you think—"

"Dry up, ass!" muttered Church. "Can't you listen?"

"Look here, my son—"

"Please, Handy," begged Church.

They all stood as silent as statues. And now, vaguely on the night air, they heard it—a faint, far-away, rhythmic throbbing.

"Guv'nor!" shouted Nipper. "Engines! Can't you hear?"

"Yes, I've heard," said Lee. "Aero engines, young 'un. But I hardly dare to think that the Sky Wanderer is safe and in the air—"

"Then don't think any longer, sir," roared Handforth, in a sudden burst of excitement. "Look there! It's her searchlight!"

They stared hard. Right over the island, where the dense jungle lay thickest, a white glow had suddenly appeared, and even as Handforth spoke it grew in strength.

Suddenly it ceased to be a glow, and became a vivid shaft of light; it swung round, the beam pointing downwards until, startlingly, the yacht was picked out. The watchers stared into a dazzling white eye. What had happened was quite simple and logical. The Sky Wanderer, gaining height and coming over the island, had appeared beyond the western peaks.

ON THE WAY

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"Did you hear the guv'nor just now?" murmured Nipper. "He's right, you chaps. This is only the calm before the storm."

"Well, I jolly well hope that the storm will soon break!" growled Handforth. "There's nothing worse than this giddy suspense. Here we are, all ready to defend the yacht, and nothing happens."

The preparations were, indeed, elaborate. Barricades had been erected everywhere. Hose pipes were in readiness, and there were other defensive weapons ready, too. Handforth was eager for a scrap, for he was convinced that the enemy could never gain a footing aboard the yacht.

Since darkness had fallen the hours had passed slowly. But not a sign had come from the shore. To all intents and purposes, the island was deserted—an uninhabited land.

What was happening to the Sky Wanderer? That was the question in every mind. The absence of Haynes and his men from the beach could mean only one thing. They had gone on an expedition to the northern shore—and that expedition meant trouble for the Sky Wanderer. Doc Haynes was up to some of his dastardly trickery, and he had probably taken a small army of the Tao-Tao men with him.

But the boys were comforted when they thought of the airship's defence. Men were constantly on the watch; these men were fully armed. Machine-guns were in position, too, and the airship's searchlight was never out during the night hours. How was it possible, then, for Doc Haynes to spring any surprise?

Yet the uncertainty of it all became more and more disturbing as the time dragged on. The boys found themselves talking in whispers, and when they moved they moved stealthily.

Over the yacht, over the lagoon, and apparently over the entire island, a brooding silence lay. Even the slight

"Hurrah! It's the airship!" shouted Handforth, his voice cracking.

"She's coming over this way!"

"Hurrah!"

"I feel like doin' a bit of cheerin' on my own account," said Dorrie, with a smile. "At the same time, it's a pity that we should have worked all day for nothin'. The ugly beggars might have made an attack, so that we should have the pleasure of drivin' 'em off!"

There was no longer any doubt that the Sky Wanderer herself, under perfect control, was crossing the island—and at a good height. For, as the searchlight beam was swung away, those aboard the Corsair could see the twinkling lights in the gondolas and the control-room, and along the promenade decks. It was a fine spectacle.

Nelson Lee's relief was intense. He knew now that Doc Haynes had failed. Somehow, Sir Hobart and his gallant men had become aware of their danger—and whatever Haynes had planned, they had escaped it.

"Come with me, Dorrie," said Lee rapidly. "We've got to get our own searchlight going."

"So that we can signal—eh?"

"Exactly," said the detective. "Our friends on the Sky Wanderer have no knowledge of our whereabouts. It's even possible that they think we are dead. Well, we'll relieve their minds. Things are beginning to look good."

"Gettin' near to the end of the adventure—eh?" said Dorrie, almost regretfully. "An' Haynes won't even put up a final show. From your point of view, I suppose, it's just as well; but I'm not denyin' that I'm a bit disappointed. I did want another scrap."

"Bloodthirsty heathen!" chuckled Nelson Lee.

He was feeling extraordinarily light-hearted. Things were coming right. He dashed to the yacht's searchlight, and a moment later the switch was down, and a white beam was pointing skywards. There was a shutter fixed to the

searchlight, which Lee easily operated. In—out. In—out. With long flashes and short flashes he morsed a message.

And those aboard the airship realised in a second what was taking place. The Sky Wanderer's own searchlight gave an answering signal. Then Lee briefly flashed the information that all were alive and well—and aboard the anchored Corsair.

Like lightning the news spread throughout the airship. It reached the excited seniors and juniors on the deck, and they cheered themselves hoarse as the aircraft swung, in stately fashion, right over the southern beach, and commenced a graceful descent.

Still mörising, Nelson Lee had advised Sir Hobart Manners to bring the airship down, for Nelson Lee's one aim now was to get Nipper and the other boys back aboard the school-ship. If only the transfer could be made quickly and in safety, the perils of Tao-Tao Island would be over.

Down came the Sky Wanderer, lower and lower. She hovered right over the Corsair, and warning shouts came from the airship's crew.

Crash! Crash!

THE MENACE OF THE DWARF!

(Continued from page 22.)

Lord Conway laughed.

"You're all very kind," he said. "I'm going to dine with the Head, so—"

"Bai Jove! You're goin' to have tea with us first, Conway?" said Arthur Augustus. "We shall weally take no wefusal."

"A very light one, then."

Over the tea the subject of the proposed excursion to the South Seas was delicately approached. The chart was shown to Conway and the story of how Tom Merry had obtained possession of it was related to him—most of the juniors speaking at once.

The young man was genuinely interested. He scanned the chart, and looked it over, and felt it in his hands.

"By Jove," he said, "this is human skin!"

"Good heavens!"

"How howwid!"

"Some grim old pirate drew up that chart," said Lord Conway. "It's genuine enough. I can see that it's a great deal more than a hundred years old. I wish I could take you all to the South-Seas with me to look for the island."

The juniors exchanged glances. Lord Conway's careless remark had brought them to the subject.

"That's it!" said Wally. "We're coming."

"Weally, Wally—"

Lord Conway stared.

"Well, I would take you," he said. "You would make the yacht lively enough, I've no doubt, and prevent the

The two forward grapnel claws telescoped downwards. One of them wrecked part of the bridge, but secured a hold. The other fastened its steel talons into the forward deck, and like lightning one of her metal ladders came down—just reaching the yacht's deck.

"Now, boys, up quickly!" ordered Nelson Lee.

During those tense moments he had his eye on the shore, and he had seen things which filled him with misgiving. Flaring torchlights had appeared; the beach had become black with natives and their canoes. Doc Haynes had arrived, and he was massing his men for a final attack.

Booom!

Suddenly, dramatically, a small gun boomed on the beach, and there came the screaming whining of a shell. It missed badly, dropping harmlessly into the sea.

Nelson Lee had not reckoned on any such weapon in Haynes' hands, or he would never have advised Sir Hobart to bring his airship down. However, it was too late now; the only course was to get everybody aboard. But it would be touch and go!

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cruise from being monotonous. But you could never get permission from your headmaster to leave school for so long a time."

"That's just it," Tom Merry explained. "We want you to get leave for us."

"Me?"

"Yaas, wathah! Our governah is a governah of the school, you know, Con., deah boy, and you are an old Saifit. You've got heaps of influence with the Head."

"Yes, rather!"

Lord Conway set down his teacup, and rose to his feet, smiling.

"I'll speak to Dr. Holmes," he said. "Mind, I don't promise anything. But I'll do my best for you."

"Hurrah!"

Lord Conway made his way to the Head's study, with a very dubious expression upon his face. The juniors waited for him in the passage, with the keenest anxiety.

The study door opened at last, and Lord Conway came out smiling.

The juniors gathered round him breathlessly.

"Bai Jove! What is the verdict, deah boy?"

"What does he say?"

"It's all right!" said Lord Conway, laughing. "You can come with me, you young rascals, on condition that you promise to behave yourselves."

"Hurrah!"

"Thanks—thanks awfully, old chap!"

"Bravo!"

And Tom Merry & Co. rejoiced.

And from that hour little was spoken among them but preparations for joining Lord Conway's yacht, and voyaging to the South Seas in quest of the treasure island.

THE END.

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