

WONDERFUL NEW STORY OF WILD WEST ADVENTURE STARTS TO-DAY!
STARRING THE CHUMS OF ST. FRANK'S.



The GEM

THE BEST PAPER FOR BRITISH BOYS

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LOST in the PACIFIC!

A Dramatic Scene from "THE ST. JIM'S CASTAWAYS!"—The Grand Long Yarn Within.



The trail of treasure has led the Chums of St. Jim's through many exciting adventures, but the climax comes when, with the treasure in their hands, they are shipwrecked and cast away on a cannibal island in the Pacific.

CHAPTER 1.
Sunk at Sea!

CRASH! Crash!
Tom Merry started and awoke. He was lying in his bunk aboard the Silver Scud. He had been dreaming of home—of St. Jim's and the fellows there—and as he started into sudden wakefulness it seemed to him for the moment that he was back at the school, and that he was in his bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's.

There was a sound of creaking and straining, and of rushing water, of excited voices and hurrying feet.

Tom Merry sat up in bed.

What had happened?

His brain cleared immediately from the mists of sleep. He remembered where he was—on board Lord Conway's yacht, gliding through the moonlit waters of the Southern Pacific, homeward bound for England after a holiday cruise in the South Seas.

"Look out!"

"She's struck!"

The engines were throbbing still; the yacht was trembling and shivering like a frightened animal. Tom Merry put his legs over the side of his bunk, and there was a yell from below him. Jack Blake had put his head out of the bunk beneath Tom Merry's, and Tom Merry's feet had come in violent contact with it.

"Ow!" roared Blake. "What's the little game? Ow!"

"Sorry!"

"You ass!"

"Bai Jove!" came the voice of Arthur Augustus from the darkness. "Bai Jove, deah boys, there's somethin' up, you know!"

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"She's struck!"

The shout came again hoarsely from the deck. The juniors turned out in hot haste, scrambling into their clothes. It was pretty clear that an accident had happened to the yacht. Tom Merry, in trousers and shirt, bareheaded, dashed up on deck.

Wild confusion reigned there.

The full moon sailed high in a cloudless sky. Round the yacht glimmered the wide rolling Pacific. There was no sight of land. The yacht was solitary in the midst of the great southern ocean.

The engines had stopped now. The yacht was heeling over drunkenly. Lord Conway, the skipper, was on deck with Mr. Dodds, the mate, and both were perfectly cool, but their faces were pale.

"What is it, sir?" Tom Merry panted.

"An accident," said Lord Conway quietly. "We have struck upon a coral reef, I think, a reef not laid down on my chart."

"Good heavens!"

Lord Conway turned away. He had plenty to do at that moment. He was rapping out orders quickly, and the well-trained seamen were obeying them. Everyone was on deck now, some with clothes in their hands.

The yacht was filling.

There was no doubt about it—the Silver Scud, the handsomest yacht that was Lord Conway's pride, was a hopeless wreck. She had crashed upon the treacherous reef fair and square. Her bows had ground upon the reef concealed under the surface of the water, and the stout hull of the yacht had been crushed in by the violent impact.

The Silver Scud was sinking.

The terrible reality rushed upon the minds of the juniors of St. Jim's with stunning force. Ten minutes ago they had been sleeping safe and sound in their bunks, homeward

—THRILL FOLLOWS THRILL FOR THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

CASTAWAYS!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

bound, rich with the treasure they had found upon Skeleton Island.

Now the vessel that had been between them and death was filling and sinking.

It was well that, in that terrible moment, captain and crew kept their heads. Lord Conway's orders were given sharply and concisely, and obeyed instantly. The two boats were lowered, and water and provisions conveyed into them. Some of the juniors helped; some of them were too dazed.

There were twelve fellows in the party from St. Jim's—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther and Kangaroo of the Shell; Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy and Figgins and Kerr and Fatty Wynn of the Fourth; and Wally D'Arcy of the Third. They belonged to different Houses at St. Jim's, and at school were generally on fighting terms; but they had enjoyed the holiday together wonderfully well.

They had come to the South Seas in search of treasure, and they had found it. The great oaken chest, crammed with gold in bars and ingots and coins, was on board, being conveyed in triumph home. Pablo Lopez, the Spaniard, their rival in the quest, had been defeated and put to flight. All had seemed plain sailing now, when the Silver Scud ran upon the sunken reef, and all was changed in the twinkling of an eye.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping wildly for his eyeglass, which was hanging on its cord down the back of his neck. "Bai Jove, you know, it's howwible! But keep your heads, deah boys—keep your heads!"

"Keep yours, ass, and don't be as excited as a giddy old hen!" said Monty Lowther. "Keep your head! There's nothing in it, but keep it!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Get into the boats!"

"Bai Jove! I shall have to get my luggage—"

"There is no room for luggage, Arthur," said Lord Conway. "Not even a hatbox. Tumble in!"

"But weally—"

Jack Blake and Digby seized the swell of St. Jim's by the arms and hurried him to the side. He was rushed into a boat, and Blake and Digby followed him.

Monty Lowther and Manners jumped in, Manners not having forgotten to sling on his camera.

"What about the chest, sir?" Tom Merry asked.

Lord Conway nodded.

"It is going into the boat, Tom."

Sturdy seamen were already dragging the chest out upon the deck. It was slung over the side with ropes, and bumped down into the boat. Even in that hour of terrible peril not one of the voyagers thought of abandoning the great treasure for which they had run so many risks.

Suddenly the yacht gave a lurch. There was a shout from the few remaining men aboard.

"She's sinking!"

"Look out!"

"Stand by, there."

Men tumbled into the boats. Lord Conway's voice rang out:

"Pull—pull!"

Oars were put out and the oarsmen pulled. The boats glided from the lurching, shaking yacht. They were in danger of being drawn down into the vortex caused by the sinking vessel.

With a last plunge the Silver Scud disappeared from sight. Bubbles rose and broke, and the sea rolled where the yacht had been, and nothing but a few fragments of floating wreckage remained to show the place.

Upon the wide, wide waters, under the soaring moon,

two boats, crammed with men and boys, floated—alone in the heart of the Pacific.

CHAPTER 2.

In An Open Boat!

TOM MERRY drew a deep breath. It seemed like a dream. It was but twenty minutes since the crash of the yacht upon the hidden reef had awakened him in his bunk. He shivered. The night was not warm, and the junior was but half dressed.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in a low, awed voice. "Bai Jove, it's tewwible, you know!"

Tom Merry looked round him.

The embarkation in the boats had been hasty, and he did not know who was with him, or who was in command. In Tom Merry's boat, the smaller of the two, was the chest of gold, and most of the juniors of St. Jim's were there.

Tom Merry found Manners and Lowther sitting beside him, and Digby and D'Arcy and Jack Blake were in the boat. Wally, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were also there. Then there was Peter Raff, the sunburnt sailorman, who had given the treasure chart to Tom Merry in Rylcombe Wood, and first caused this strange adventure in the South Seas. Kangaroo, the sturdy Cornstalk, was there, too, quite cool and collected.

There were no men of the Silver Scud in the boat; the seamen had tumbled into the other, the juniors' boat being pretty full already. Herries was in the other boat, and so were Mr. Dodds and Lord Conway.

The moon glided behind a mass of clouds, and a deep shadow fell over the ocean. Lord Conway's voice hailed the juniors:

"Tom Merry!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Keep close to us!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Peter Raff, who had seated himself at the tiller. "We'll keep company, sir, never fear!"

"Burn a light," said Lord Conway. "I will do the same. We must not risk parting company. It will be daylight soon, and then we will make a new arrangement of the crews of the boats. We had better wait till then."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

The sea was rolling a little. It would not have been safe for the two boats to approach too closely in the darkness.

"My hat!" said Blake, as the boat rocked on the deep. "Who'd have thought this?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of it, you know!"

"It's a risky business, sailing in unknown seas," said Tom Merry. "But we're lucky to have had time to get into the boats."

"Yes, rather!"

"It will be an awful blow to Lord Conway, losing the yacht," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! Poor old Conway!"

"If we save the treasure," said Tom Merry, "we shall have a new Silver Scud built out of it before it is divided. That's the least we can do."

"Good egg!"

"If we save it," said Kerr, with a rueful grin. "Yes, and if we are saved ourselves. We're hundreds of miles out of the track of ships—in open boats."

"Hallo, it's beginning to blow!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

A cold, sharp wind swept over the boat, and the sea was beginning to curl round them.

The juniors looked anxiously at the water. In the yacht

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they could have scarcely noticed the wind; but in an open boat they were terribly close to the water. The curling waves seemed as if they would leap the gunwale.

"It's all right, young gentlemen," said Peter Raff. "There ain't no danger—it won't be a blow."

"It seems to make the watah wuff, Waff," said Arthur Augustus.

"But the boat's safe enough, sir."

"Ahoy, there!"

It was a hail from Lord Conway's boat.

"Ay, ay, sir!" shouted back Peter Raff.

"Keep company if you can! If you should miss us, we are heading due north."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

It was the last word heard from Lord Conway's boat. With the wind came great banks of clouds that hid the moon, and for a time the light of the other boat twinkled above the black waters, but at last it disappeared.

Lord Conway's boat was swallowed up in the darkness.

Peter Raff kept upon the course to the north, but in his heart he knew—though he did not say so to the juniors—that it was not likely that the other boat would be in sight at dawn.

And he was right.

When dawn came up in silver light over the eastern seas the juniors stood up in the boat and scanned the ocean in all directions. But Lord Conway's boat was not in sight.

East and west and south and north the juniors searched the seas. D'Arcy had slung on his binoculars before entering the boat, and the juniors used them in turn now to scan the ocean for their friends.

But the other boat was not to be seen.

They were alone upon the ocean.

CHAPTER 3.

A Sail is Sighted!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at one another in dismay. They had not expected this, though the old sailor-man could have told them.

Each of the boats was under sail, and, hidden from each other's sight as they had been in the darkness, it was pretty certain that they would part company. If they had not had their canvas out the result must have been the same—the rough wind and the rolling waters would have drifted them apart. The boats had parted company, and there was little hope of their rejoining each other.

With the morning came calmness of wind and wave. There was still breeze enough to fill out the sail, and the boat glided on to the northward. Northward lay the only chance of the shipwrecked. If the boats came into the regular track of steamers before their provisions gave out, or before rough weather overwhelmed them in the sea, they had a chance of rescue.

But every hour was precious. Leagues upon leagues of desert ocean lay to be traversed before they had the remotest chance of being picked up. In that lonely sea, perhaps, a sealer or a whaler might chance upon them; but it was a very remote chance.

"They're gone, bai Jove!" D'Arcy said, dropping his glasses.

"Gone!"

"They're as safe as we are, young gentlemen," said Peter Raff. "It wasn't likely that the boats would keep company when the wind got up."

"Watah not! But—"

"It may be all for the best," said Kerr. "If the boats are apart one of them stands a better chance of being picked up; and if one is picked up search can be made for the other."

"True enough!"

"And the water and provisions are pretty equally divided, I believe," said Tom Merry. "We've got all the gold here; but that's less valuable than a loaf of bread would be."

Peter Raff looked at the heavy chest lying in the bottom of the boat.

"It might be better to pitch it into the sea and done with it," he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"Why?" asked Tom Merry.

Peter Raff scanned the sea with his keen eyes before replying.

"Because if we're picked up it may mean death to all of us," he said. "Traders in these waters ain't over particular, and they'd cut our throats for that treasure as soon as look at us."

"Bai Jove!"

"There are enough of us to take care of ourselves, and we're not unarmed," said Tom Merry. "We'll save the treasure as long as we can, at all events."

"Ay, ay, Master Tom!"

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The sun was rising high in the heavens. It gave promise of a blazing day—a day of tropical, shadeless heat.

The prospect was very different from what it would have been on the trim yacht. There the juniors had spent lazy hours of tropical heat under wide awnings, with iced drinks to help them out. Here they were exposed to the blazing sun, unsheltered, and water was more precious than gold. With the strictest economy it might not last them till they were picked up.

"We shall have to allowance ourselves with food and water," Tom Merry said.

"Oh dear!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Poor old Fatty!" said Figgins sympathetically. "I know it's hard on you!"

"I don't mind the allowancing of the water," said Fatty Wynn, with real pathos in his voice. "But the grub! You see, I've got a good appetite. I always have a bit of an extra appetite at this time of the year, somehow. And then the sea air gives it an edge. Of course, I shall have to stand it, but—"

"Never mind, Fatty," said Kerr. "Bear up!"

The boat glided along under the sail, with a keen wind behind, while the sun climbed higher and higher into the cloudless blue.

High overhead at last, it blazed down pitilessly upon the defenceless boat.

The juniors crowded as well as they could in the shadow of the sail, but it afforded them little shelter.

Of all the party in the boat, D'Arcy was the only one who had dressed himself fully before leaving the Silver Scud. The swell of St. Jim's had brought on deck the clothes he could not put on in the cabin, and had finished dressing there.

But the juniors, half-dressed as they were, began to discard clothing as the rays of the sun grew more powerful. D'Arcy was the last to yield.

For a long time—till past noon—the swell of St. Jim's sat tight, in a stiff collar, and with his silk hat on. For D'Arcy had not forgotten his silk topper. He had a cap in his pocket in case of necessity, and his first surrender to the heat was the changing of the silk hat for a cap.

Then, after an interval, he removed his jacket. His waistcoat followed. After an hour or so he took his collar and tie off.

His boots followed. By that time he was in a state of deshabille pretty nearly as complete as the others.

The tropical heat seemed to sap away the strength of the juniors. They sat or lay about the boat in listless attitudes, longing for sundown.

But the pitiless blaze continued overhead.

The sea showed no sign of life. No sail—no smoke on the horizon. Occasionally a flying fish gleaming in the sun glanced upon their view—or a wide-winged albatross sailed by on giant pinions.

That was all. Round them the great ocean heaved, sunny, smiling, pitiless. Over them was the arch of the blue sky blazing with heat.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last, as he drew his hand from the blistering woodwork of the boat. "Bai Jove, I'm thirsty!"

"So are we all," said Tom Merry.

"Don't you think you're being a little too stwict with the watah, deah boy?"

"There's only enough for four days at the present rate," he said. "Goodness knows whether we shall see a sail in four days' time!"

There was a sudden shout from Wally. He was sitting in the bows, watching the shining sea with glassy eyes. He sprang to his feet, waving his cap, and yelling.

The juniors turned round upon him in alarm, the fear in every mind that the heat and glare had turned his brain. But Wally was sane enough; only wildly excited.

"A sail—a sail!"

"Bai Jove!"

"A sail!" yelled Wally. "Look! A sail! We're saved!"

And a shout burst from all the juniors—a shout of joy and relief.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, pip, hurrah!"

CHAPTER 4.

The Felucca!

WHITE against the blue of sea and sky, the strange sail glanced and glimmered.

It was standing westward, clear across the course of the gliding boat. Only the glimmer of a great sheet of canvas could be seen, and the juniors could not yet make out the form of the vessel. But it was a sail that was seen there. If they could attract the attention of the vessel, they were saved!



Suddenly the *Silver Scud* gave a lurch and there came a shout from the remaining men on board. "Look out! She's sinking!" "Stand by, there!" Oars were put out, ready to push the boat off. The shipwrecked schoolboys were in danger of being drawn down into the vortex caused by the sinking vessel!

The thought was almost enough to turn them giddy. The vessel was far, far away—a glancing patch of white on the blue. But she was drawing towards the course of the boat, and, by changing their course a little to the west, the castaways might hope to intercept her; or, at least, get near enough to be seen and heard.

Peter Raff trimmed the sail, and the boat glided on; the strange vessel rose more and more clearly into view.

"What vessel can it be, I wonder?" Tom Merry said. "Not a sealer or a whaler, Peter?"

Peter Raff shook his head.

"No, Master Tom. It's not the build. It's some small trader, I should say—perhaps a blackbirder."

"Bai Jove! A what?" asked D'Arcy.

"Blackbirder," said Peter Raff. "A vessel employed to kidnap natives off the islands. That trade ain't extinct yet, whatever they may say about it. I've seen—" The sailorman paused, and changed the subject. "If it's a blackbirder, they'll pick us up, I make no doubt; but they'll murder us for that chest!"

Tom Merry glanced thoughtfully at the treasure-chest.

"If it's a suspicious vessel, when we get nearer we'll pitch the chest overboard," he said. "It would be madness to take it with us among a crew of lawless ruffians."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Whatever that vessel is, we can't lose this chance of being picked up. If they're white men, they must be humane enough to take us in, and we can pay them afterwards."

"Ay, ay!"

The boat glided on. Larger and larger the strange vessel rose over the waters till the juniors could make out great lateen sails.

Peter Raff gave a groan.

"It's all over!"

"What do you mean, Peter?"

"That's a felucca."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's Pablo Lopez's vessel."

"Oh!"

The juniors gazed with fixed, startled eyes at the sail. Tom Merry wondered he had not thought of it before,

Pablo Lopez, the dwarf Spaniard, whom they had defeated on the treasure island in the fight for the buried gold, had come there in a felucca from Valparaiso, and had fled in that vessel after his defeat. It was not likely that there was another vessel of the same rig in this lonely waste of waters.

If the felucca was the Spaniard's craft, anything was better than falling in with it. With or without the chest of gold in the boat, they had only savage ferocity to expect from the Spaniard.

Peter Raff stepped towards the sheet.

"Better change the course, Master Tom," he said.

"Hold on!"

"Lopez will murder every soul in the boat if he discovers us," said Peter Raff. "We'd have no chance agin him!"

"He had only four blacks on the felucca when he was at the island," said Tom Merry. "We are enough to protect ourselves."

"The felucca will run the boat down."

"Bai Jove!"

"But it mayn't be Lopez's felucca," said Blake. "There may be another sail in these waters. Even if the felucca isn't a common rig in these seas, there may be more than one of them."

Peter Raff shook his head.

"I vote we make sure," said Figgins.

"Ay, ay, sir! Have your way, then!"

The boat kept on its course.

The felucca was now quite clearly in view, and she had not altered her course, though the boat must have been visible from her deck. If she had wished to pick up the castaways, a shift of the great lateen sails would have brought her swooping down towards the boat. But she did not alter her course, and unless she did so, it was plain that she would sweep on to the westward before the boat could reach her.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "They're not going to try to pick us up."

"Bai Jove! The wascals!"

Tom Merry put the binoculars up to his eyes.

As he brought the glasses into line, the distant vessel

rushed, as it were, into clear and close view, and it almost seemed as if he could tread upon the deck.

He could make out the deck, dirty and uncared for, the dull, rusting paint, and the black faces of her crew. On the deck, looking towards the boat, was a white man—a man with a massive head—a man Tom Merry knew.

It was Pablo Lopez.

He was looking towards the boat, but he had no glasses. Perhaps he had none on the felucca, or perhaps he did not care to take the trouble of examining the castaway craft. His glance towards the boat was indifferent and careless, and he turned away carelessly, and rolled a cigarette.

Tom Merry lowered his glasses.

The felucca fell into distance again, and the Spaniard became a blur against the sail.

"It's Lopez!" said Tom Merry.

"Sure?"

"Look yourself!"

"Bai Jove! It's Lopez wight enough."

"And he's not going to pick us up," said Figgins. "He can't make out who we are, without glasses—and he doesn't care. He knows there's an open boat here, with people in it, and he's going straight on his way."

"The villain!"

"The awful scoundrel!"

Villain undoubtedly the Spaniard was, but there was no doubt of his intention. The felucca did not alter her course an iota.

There were shipwrecked sailormen in the boat, and the Spaniard was passing on, callously leaving them to their doom.

The juniors made no further effort to reach her. They had only the bitterest enmity to expect from the Spaniard; and if they reached the felucca, it would only be a case of jumping from the frying-pan into the fire.

Peter Raff, at a sign from Tom Merry, changed the course of the boat. It was better to steer clear of the felucca now.

The lateen sails still loomed up white against the blue, but they faded more and more into the sea, till they disappeared at last.

Once more the boat rocked alone upon the waste of the Pacific.

Hope had animated the juniors for a time; but hope destroyed left sickness and despair in their hearts.

They fought against the despondency, but it would not be shaken off, and the boys sat about in the boat in deep dejection.

The only sail they had seen through that endless day was a foe—and would they see another?

The sun sank down at last, sinking red and flaming into a sea of gold. Darkness came on with the suddenness of the tropics.

"The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out; at one stride comes the dark," as the poet sings. Darkness rolled over the face of the ocean—welcome to the juniors.

For if it lessened the chance of the boat being seen and picked up, it saved them, at least, from the pitiless blaze of the sun.

With the night came shade and coolness.

But there was little sleep for the castaways. Their anxiety was too keen, and hunger and thirst were gnawing them.

How was this adventure to end?

CHAPTER 5.

The Last Hope!

DAY gleamed upon the boundless Pacific.

But with the rising of the day came no gleam of hope.

Supplies were running low. Two or three of the boys lay in a state that was almost comatose.

Tom Merry scanned the sea.

The boat was not moving; there was no cloud in the sky of burning blue—no cloud, no wind, no promise of rain.

Burning blue, and burning sun, that burnt into the very eyeballs and scorched them, and made the castaways dizzy and sick.

High soared the sun over the rolling sea, and over the floating boat with its suffering crew.

The treasure-chest lay unheeded, unnoticed. How gladly the boys would have given that mass of gold for a deep drink of pure water.

Gold!

What was gold to them now? It was a mockery. Water—water was the crying need. And there was water, water all around, and not a drop to drink.

Weary eyes scanned the sea. Would the smoke of a steamer ever come into sight? It seemed not.

The burning day passed, and another night descended—a night of suffering and of unrefreshing slumber.

Then another day.

It was the fourth day, and the rations were near their end. At midday Tom Merry served out the last precious drops of water. Food there was, on short commons, for some time longer, but the water was at an end. It was useless to parch and save the last drops; they drank them, and lay down in the boat, weary to death.

Burning sky and gleaming seas! Their dizzy eyes turned from the scene.

Digby started to his feet in the blazing afternoon. He made for the gunwale, and Tom Merry caught him in time.

"Dig! Dig, old man," said Tom huskily. "Sit down!"

Digby struggled in his grasp. The junior's face was white and strained, and there was a wild light in his eyes.

"Let me go!" he cried hoarsely.

"What are you going to do?"

Digby laughed wildly.

"Drink!" he said.

"Dig!"

"I must drink—I'm dying with thirst! Let me go!"

"Dig, old man, chuck it!" said Arthur Augustus feebly.

"Chuck it, old fellow! You can't dwink salt watah!"

"I must drink!"

The boy was not himself. He struggled to plunge his head over the gunwale into the water that surged temptingly by.

Tom Merry dragged him back.

It was death to drink, he knew that, though Dig had forgotten it. He dragged the junior back to his seat.

"Hang you!" yelled Digby. "Let me go, I say!"

"You can't drink, Dig!"

"I will—I will!"

"It's salt water, old man—you've forgotten!"

"I don't care—let me go!"

He made an effort to tear himself away. Blake came to Tom Merry's aid, and the feverish junior was held down on the thwart.

Then the fit passed, and Dig sank into their arms, white and sick and fainting. They laid him in the bottom of the boat.

Tom Merry and Blake exchanged hopeless glances.

"How long is this going to last?" muttered Blake.

"Heaven knows!"

Blake groaned.

"The sooner it's ended the better, I think."

"I—I say, I'm sorry I brought you here," said Tom in a

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strained voice. "It was all my fault; but for me you might all be safe and sound at St. Jim's. It's all my fault."

And he groaned aloud.

"Rats!" said Blake. "We came of our own accord, didn't we? Rot!"

"Yaas, wathah—wot!" said D'Arcy faintly. "You are talkin' dweadful wubbish, Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry sat on a thwart, and covered his face with his hands.

His self-reproach was deep. He was not to be blamed; but it seemed to him at that moment that he had brought doom to his friends—his chums, whom he would have given his life to save.

Was there no help?

Peter Raff was standing up in the boat, shading his eyes with his hand, straining his glance to the blazing west.

What was he looking at?

Many and many a time, to the dizzy eyes of the juniors, a white sail had seemed to glance into sight, only to fade into the blue.

Tom Merry looked up, and as he saw Peter Raff's attitude, he staggered towards the sailorman.

He grasped him by the shoulder, but Peter Raff did not turn his head. His eyes were fixed upon the west.

"What is it?" asked Tom Merry.

The sailorman did not reply. His glance was fixed and wild. Tom Merry looked into the west, but he could see nothing but the glowing sunset, red as a furnace.

"A cloud!" muttered Peter Raff.

"A cloud! Does that mean wind?"

"Perhaps."

"What else?"

"Rain."

"Oh heavens!"

The word electrified the juniors.

"Rain."

No greater boon could have befallen them, save rescue. Rain! The word thrilled through their hearts like newborn hope.

They watched the west. Truly enough a dark cloud was rising from the horizon, and blotting out the coppery sun.

For the first time, as it seemed for ages, there was a stir on the face of the waters.

A ripple ran past the boats; the canvas moved and shook on the mast. The boat rocked and surged through the water.

The wind was upon them. But it was not a refreshing wind.

It was a wind laden with burning heat, that fanned and scorched their faces like the breath of a furnace.

They gasped for breath. The cloud was larger and larger now, blacker and blacker, and a deep, dense shadow had overspread the burning sky. The hot wind dropped, and a cold blast succeeded it—a cold blast that was inexpressibly relieving to the scorched and blistered faces of the castaways.

And what was that?

A cool, refreshing drop fell upon Tom Merry's upturned face, and he cried aloud in joy:

"Rain!"

CHAPTER 6.

Cast Ashore!

"RAIN!"

Rain at first in large drops, and then in sheets. Rain pouring down upon the sea, drenching the juniors, drenching the boat, flooding them and soaking them, to their utmost delirious delight.

They opened their mouths to it; they drank it from their caps, from their pannikins; they lay down in the boat and drank it as it swamped about them. It seemed as if their terrible thirst would never be satisfied.

But satisfied it was at last.

The rain was coming down in blinding sheets, and the wind was tearing at the boat. Round them the sea rolled.

The storm was rising. In their delight at the rain the juniors did not notice, or care, for the new danger. But as their thirst was slaked they saw it only too clearly. The rain was flooding the boat, and the juniors set to work to bale it out.

They filled the kegs with the rain for future use. That was Tom Merry's first thought. Then they baled out the boat.

Harder and fiercer the rain drenched down. The juniors were soaked to the skin, wet and drenched, but they enjoyed it. After the long baking under the tropical sun, it was the greatest pleasure they could have had.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is wippin'! But if it goes on like this we shall be swamped, you know."

"Bale away!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

They baled away heroically.

It was several hours before the rain slackened, and the juniors were hard at work all the time.

But the downpour slackened off at last. The boat was flooded, but as soon as it was safe they ceased to bale. The wind was rising all the time, and the boat, without the sail, was plunging swiftly through the water.

"Stand clear!" Tom Merry shouted suddenly.

"Bai Jove! Look out!"

The mast was whipped out of the boat like a stick, and tossed away upon the waves. With the torn canvas dragging upon it, it raced on the waves for a few moments like a wounded bird, then vanished.

The boat raced on.

Round the little craft now the waters were roaring. It seemed marvellous that the boat was not engulfed every moment. Yet it lived amid the roaring seas.

Peter Raff was steady at the tiller. The juniors began to bale again as the water swamped over the gunwale. It was no longer rain, but salt water that flooded the boat.

With weary and aching limbs they worked, baling, and ever baling.

Darkness as black as pitch was on the waters. It was night now—deep, dark night, unrelieved by a single star.

Where were they? Whither were they rushing? They

A DIFFERENT TUNE!



Small Man (at half-time of football match): "Playing rottenly, aren't they?"

Tough-looking Man (threateningly): "Who are?"

Small Man: "Oh—er—the band, of course!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Smith, 28, Old Hall Lane, Longsight, Manchester.

did not know, and they had no time to think. They needed all their energies to escape instant destruction in the midst of the boiling seas.

Suddenly, from the black darkness, there came a glimpse of a sheet of curling, white foam, and Tom Merry shouted:

"Rocks ahead!"

It was land—land of some sort—perhaps a solitary island of coral rock in the heart of the Pacific. They did not know—they had no time to think. They could make no effort to save themselves. They could only rush on blindly in the boat, and trust to Providence.

In the darkness the foam of the breakers glimmered to right and left. As if by a miracle the boat glided between the reefs.

A black mass glimmered for a moment in the darkness ahead—whether a rock, or a mass of trees, or a mountain, they did not know. The boat was rushing on, and they knew that it was rushing upon the shore.

"Look out!" shouted Tom Merry.

Crash!

It was a big shock, and the juniors were thrown off their feet. But the boat had not struck upon hard rocks as they had feared. It was in deep, soft sand that the bows had crashed, and for a moment the little craft was held there, with the waters bubbling and boiling round it.

From the sea came a great wave, smashing upon the boat, and sweeping the juniors landward as it rolled on.

Tom Merry felt himself caught up and dashed from the boat; he felt shifting sand under his feet, and he clawed it wildly. He was thrown down at last, and the wave, its force expended, receded to the sea, and sucked at him; but he dug feet and hands in the sand, and held his own.

The water swept back, and Tom Merry staggered to his feet. He was breathless, dizzy, exhausted, but his thoughts were for his friends.

His eyes were used to the darkness now, and he could see. The boat was still jammed in the yielding sand, and the successive crashing billows seemed to drive her more firmly there.

He could see three or four fellows struggling in the water, and he dashed to their assistance. He dragged D'Arcy ashore, and then Digby, and then Blake. Kangaroo was already on the land, and he had Wally in his grasp.

"Come and help!"

Another and another of the juniors was dragged out. Manners was still clinging to the boat, and Peter Raff and

Tom Merry plunged in together and brought him off. The thundering waves chased them up the beach, and they sank down exhausted.

"How many are here?" gasped Tom Merry, striving to rise and sinking down again with the effort.

"All, I believe," said Kangaroo.

"Call over the names."

Kangaroo called the names over. To his name each junior answered "Adsum!" as if it were calling-over at St. Jim's.

All answered. Last of all came Peter Raff's deep:

"Ay, ay!"

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of relief.

"We're all here! Thank Heaven!"

"But where are we?" said Blake.

"Goodness knows!"

"The boat's done for."

"Never mind the boat."

"And the gold?" said Blake. "The treasure chest?"

"Never mind the treasure."

And the juniors agreed with Tom Merry. They were alive, at all events, and on firm land. And the treasure was a light price to pay for their safety.

CHAPTER 7.

Just Like Gussy!

TOM MERRY & CO. lay on the wet sand, exhausted—too exhausted to move.

The heavy waves were beating upon the boat, beating it to pieces, but they had no strength left to attempt to save it. They could only lie and gasp on the wet sand just out of reach of the breakers.

For long hours they lay, hardly speaking, till the light of dawn flushed in the sky. And with the dawn the wind fell. The sea was still rolling heavily, the waves bursting upon the beach with a sullen roaring, and churning up the sand.

Tom Merry sat up at last.

He was wet and cold, and the earliest rays of the sun were welcome.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "It's rising-bell, you fellows!"

And there was a feeble laugh. This was very different from a morning's awakening at St. Jim's, when Taggles rang the rising-bell. One after another the juniors staggered up.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping among his wet clothes for his eyeglass. "Bai Jove! I wogard that as a wotten experience!"

"Better than floating on in the open boat," said Tom Merry. "We had about reached the end of our tether. This is dry land, at all events—and there must be water here, and some grub of some sort."

"Plenty of water, at all events," said Blake, shaking the heavy drops out of his clothes.

"I mean fresh water. And there will be coconuts, I suppose, so we shan't starve. Pictures of coral islands always have coconut-trees."

"And savages!"

"H'm!"

"Bai Jove! It wouldn't be vewy wippin' to wun into a gang of cannibals, dear boys!"

"We shall have to keep our eyes open, that's all," said Figgins, "and the first thing we'd better do is to get hold of some sort of weapons. The cartridges are in a tin case in the boat's locker, and we may be able to save it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The sun rose higher, and the warm, bright beams were very welcome to the shivering juniors. As the light strengthened they looked about them. They were standing upon the sandy shore of a wide bay open to the Pacific. At the mouth of the bay long lines of foam showed where the sea was breaking on sunken reefs.

Behind the juniors was a gentle slope, crowned with thick, dark woods. A stream ran into the bay within a hundred yards of them.

Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened as he looked towards the trees.

"Coconuts!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah—heaps of 'em, too!"

"I'm awfully hungry."

"Wait a bit, Fatty!" said Tom Merry. "You remember the trouble you got into on the Treasure Island through going after coconuts! Wait a bit till we've got hold of the firearms, and we'll go in a party."

"I'm fearfully hungry!"

"Pull in your belt, and grin and bear it," said Kerr.

"I'm famished, you see!"

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"Well, famish quietly," said Blake.

Fatty Wynn grunted, but Figgins linked arms with him and did not allow him to start for the woods. The coconuts in their graceful clusters looked tempting enough, but the juniors knew perfectly well that tattooed savages might be lurking in the groves, with war clubs and bows and arrows ready for mischief.

They were evidently upon an island, and it was certainly of some extent, and therefore it was not likely to be uninhabited.

The boat had been smashed to fragments by the pounding of the waves, and most of the pieces had been driven high upon the beach and lay half-embedded in the sand. The canister of cartridges was discovered unbroken, and the juniors seized upon it gladly.

There was only one rifle in the boat, and several revolvers, and all of them were saved. They required careful cleaning before they would be of any use, and to that task the juniors addressed themselves first.

Fatty Wynn was chafing with impatience. He was, as he had said, fearfully hungry, and the coconuts were growing in sight. The danger of savages under the trees appeared to Fatty Wynn quite mythical under the circumstances. But Figgins kept a tight hold upon the fat Fourth Former's arm.

"Look here! I'll just cut across and get a couple of them—one for you, and one for me, Figgy!" said Fatty Wynn persuasively.

Figgins chuckled.

"You just won't do anything of the sort," he replied.

"You'll just sit here with me till we're all ready, Fatty."

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah—wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking severely at the fat Fourth Former. "Wats, deah boy! Pway keep your feahful appetite in contwol, or you will make me feel quite nervous. When you were in the boat you looked at me once or twice in a way that threw me into quite a fluttah."

"You ass!" said Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

"I wefuse to be called an ass! Besides, I think we ought to make ourselves as respectable as possible before leavin' this spot, in case we meet any of the inhabitants. There may possibly be white people here, and, anyway, even niggalls are entitled to some respect. I twust you fellows will put up as decent an appeawance as possible."

The juniors laughed.

Their clothes, soaked with sea water, and drying in the blaze of the sun, shrunken and stained and shapeless, did not look very respectable. They were ragged, and unkempt, and untidy all over. But that was really the least of their troubles.

But D'Arcy was always D'Arcy!

While the other fellows were rescuing the fragments of the wreck, and cleaning the firearms, D'Arcy was rescuing what remained of his silk hat, and cleaning himself. The silk topper had come ashore with other things, and was lying on the sand, woefully battered, soaked, apparently ruined.

But there is a great deal of life in a silk hat; they have been known to survive the roughest handling and come up smiling, as it were, after care had been taken with them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dried his hat and smoothed it, and pushed out the concavities in it, and generally tended it as if it were a favourite and very delicate infant. And it was amazing to see what an improvement he made in it.

It bore little resemblance, it is true, to the glossy topper that the swell of St. Jim's was in the habit of wearing in the old quad. But it was a silk topper of not unrespectable appearance, and it afforded the elegant junior much satisfaction.

With the topper on his head, and his eyeglass in his eye, D'Arcy felt that he was prepared to face fortune. D'Arcy's clothes were in a most unhappy state. But wringing out, and drying, and pinning up made them look much better, and presently the swell of St. Jim's was the most respectable looking of the party.

From a leather case which he carried upon his person, and which was waterproof, he produced a clean collar and tie, and donned them with lively satisfaction.

Monty Lowther looked at him with great admiration, shading his eyes with his hand, as if the sight were almost too glorious for him.

"I must say that your ripping, Gussy," he said. "I'm sure that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Weally, Lowthah, you rrs—"

"Only I really think it's a bit dangerous," said Lowther.

"I don't think Gussy ought to add to our dangers in this way."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the humorist of the Shell.

"I fail to see how my dwessin' respectably can add to our dangah, Lowthah," he said.

"I was thinking of the cannibal girls," Lowther explained blandly. "If they see you they certainly won't be willing to let you leave the island. We can't go without you, and so—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!"

"I say, I'm fearfully hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "Ain't it time we made a start for the coconuts?"

"Yes, come on," said Kangaroo. "I must say I've got a

CHAPTER 8.

The Savage!

FATTY WYNN paused under a coconut-tree and looked up. Fatty Wynn's girth had been reduced a little during the days in the open boat, and his belt was drawn tighter than of yore.

But the palm-tree's trunk was difficult to negotiate, and Fatty Wynn felt that he was not the fellow for the task. He turned a persuasive smile upon the other fellows.

"I suppose you're going to climb up, Gussy?" he said.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I'm sowwy I can't oblige you, Wynn, deah boy. My twousahs are already in a wuinous state, and I'm afwaid I can't wisk makin' them worse."



"Look out!" shouted Blake. As Friday made a rush at Tom Merry, the savages moved forward simultaneously to the attack. "Shoot!" shouted Peter Raff. It was no time to stand on ceremony. The St. Jim's castaways had to fight for their lives!

healthy appetite, too. I could almost eat Gussy, he looks so nice."

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

Tom Merry loaded the rifle and slung it on his arm with the muzzle up.

"Ready!" he said. "Keep your eyes open for natives."

D'Arcy looked round through his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove! You surely don't expect to find any here, Tom Mewwy?"

"I think it's very likely."

"Where, deah boy? If we could find any, they would be much neiah to eat than coconuts."

The juniors stared at him.

"Well, you blessed cannibal!" exclaimed Manners.

"You ass! I am vevy fond of natives, and I fail to see any harm whatever in eatin' oystahs, so long as you're sure they're all wight."

"Oysters, you ass!" roared Tom Merry. "The natives I was referring to are niggers, not oysters, you champion chump—niggers with war-clubs!"

"Oh, I see!"

"Come on!" said Fatty Wynn. "We're wasting time while Gussy's jawing. It's no good waiting for him to leave off."

"Weally, Wynn—"

But Fatty Wynn was starting, and the rest followed. Five minutes later they were among the coconuts.

"Figgy, old man—"

"Oh, I'll look on!" said Figgins cheerfully. "I'll watch anybody climb with pleasure."

"Wally!"

"Rats!" said the hero of the Third.

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"Look here, I suppose we're going to have some of those blessed coconuts!" he exclaimed. "They've got to be got down."

"What price chucking up stones?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Good! Run down to the beach and fetch some stones."

"Rats! You fetch the stones, and I'll chuck them."

"H'm! Perhaps we could bring them down with the rifle," Fatty Wynn suggested.

Tom Merry laughed.

"As a matter of fact, there must be a good many blown down in the wind last night," he said. "Suppose we look for them?"

"By George, yes!"

Fatty Wynn hunted for the fallen nuts. There were dozens of them farther on, and the fat Fourth Former picked up one and cracked it against a tree. The inside was beautifully white and creamy.

Fatty Wynn started upon it.

There was a sound as of an army of rats gnawing at a beam. Fatty Wynn's jaws were going as if by machinery.

"Is it nice, Fatty?"

Gnaw!

"Do you like it?"

Gn-aw!

Fatty Wynn was too busy to speak.

"Bai Jove! I think I'll tivy onc."

D'Arcy picked up a fat coconut. He regarded it doubtfully, and jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded it again.

"You have to crack it in your teeth, you know," said Monty Lowther.

D'Arcy took no notice of the suggestion. He cracked the nut by slamming it against a tree-trunk, and gave a little yelp as the juice spurted up his sleeve.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, there's nothin' whatevah to gwain at. I can see that if I stay here long I shall uttably wuin what is left of my clothes."

D'Arcy looked into the cracked nut. The inside was as black as the ace of spades.

He regarded it very dubiously.

"Is this nut quite wight, Lowthah?" he asked.

Lowther shook his head.

"No; it's black," he said.

"You uttah ass!"

"It's all right," said Kangaroo cheerfully. "Black coconuts are a special variety, with a flavour of their own. Try it."

"Oh, vevy well!"

D'Arcy took a bite at the coconut, and then he started spluttering and spluttering, spitting and gasping. The black coconut certainly had a flavour of its own—and not a very pleasant one.

"Ow! Oh! Gwoogh! Yawooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo.

"Bai Jove! Ow! It's wotten!"

"Well, you ass," said Tom Merry, "did you expect it to be good when it's that colour? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kangawoo said—"

"I said it had a flavour of its own," said the Cornstalk.

"Hasn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an ass!"

"Try this one," said Kerr, passing the swell of St. Jim's another nut.

And D'Arcy tried it, and found that it was good, and he was soon gnawing away as busily as Fatty Wynn.

The coconuts were good and plentiful. They made a very good meal; and the juniors were hungry enough to eat anything.

In their eager meal they had forgotten all about the possible dangers of natives. They cracked nuts after nuts and devoured them.

Suddenly there was a rustle in the underwood, and Tom Merry dropped his coconut and grasped his rifle.

Peter Raff caught a revolver from his belt.

A black face looked out of the bushes at the juniors—a startled, but not hostile face.

Tom Merry levelled his rifle.

"Don't shoot, sir!" said Peter Raff hurriedly. "Don't begin it, sir!"

Tom Merry smiled.

"I don't mean to begin it," he said, "but one can't be too careful."

He made a sign to the black to come out.

A little man with a blackish-brown skin came out of the bushes; he was clad in a loincloth, and his skin was dark and shining.

He glanced at the juniors in wonder, and did not seem at all alarmed by the levelled rifle. It was pretty clear that he had never seen a firearm before.

The juniors left off eating coconuts and looked at the savage. A savage he certainly was, but he did not look unfriendly. The sight of him quite banished their vague thoughts of raging, ferocious cannibals.

Tom Merry lowered his rifle.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle a little tighter and surveying the stranger. "Who may you be, deah boy?"

The black fellow stared at him blankly.

"Are you alone here?" asked D'Arcy.

Another stare.

"Weally, deah boy, it's wathah wude not to answah a gentleman when he asks you a question," said D'Arcy, colouring a little. "Pway what is your name?"

Stony stare, and nothing more.

"I wegard you as a wude beast!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "I wegard you as an ass, sir! Why can't you answah question, you boundah?"

No reply.

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"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "You ass, Gussy! Do you think the chap speaks English?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know!"

The native grinned.

"He looks friendly enough," said Manners; "but you can't trust these chaps. I've read a lot about them; they're like kids—friendly one minute, and ready to go for you the next. Keep an eye on him. Look at that blessed spear he's got! It would puncture you right through if he jabbed at you!"

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

The savage was looking steadily at D'Arcy. He seemed to take no notice of the other fellows. Suddenly he advanced towards the swell of St. Jim's. He dropped his spear to the ground, and fell upon his knees before the elegant junior, touching the earth with his forehead.

D'Arcy was amazed.

"Gweat Scott! Is he off his silly wockah?"

"My hat!"

"What is he up to?"

The native remained in the same attitude of veneration, tapping the ground with his nose and forehead. The juniors looked on in amazement. Monty Lowther burst into a sudden roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Lowther!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Lowther. "It's the topper that's done it, and the monocle. The chap takes Gussy for a king, at least—perhaps a god! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled at the idea.

D'Arcy turned very red.

"You uttah ass, Lowthah! I suppose he wecognises my supewiowity, but that only shows that he's an intelligent chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I refuse to allow this uttably wibald mewwiment! It is not respectful to the stwangah within the gates!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep it up!" yelled Blake. "If the giddy nigger takes D'Arcy for an idol—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"If he takes Gussy for an idol, let's keep it up. We may be able to impress the niggers that way, by taking our idol around with us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse—"

"Come on!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "All together!"

"I tell you, I wefuse—"

"All together, kids!"

And the juniors fell upon their knees round Arthur Augustus in a circle, touching the earth with their foreheads in imitation of the stranger.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not appear to enjoy the veneration. His aristocratic visage became red with annoyance.

"You uttah asses!" he shouted. "You feahful chumps! Get up!"

"Hail!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hail!"

"Ave, Cæsar!"

"You feahful asses! If you don't get up and stop playin' the giddy goat, I'll give you all a feahful thwashin'!"

"Hail!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

D'Arcy rushed at the kneeling juniors, boxing their ears right and left. Monty Lowther caught the first box, and rolled over with a howl, and Manners rolled over him. Blake was sent spinning, and then Wally.

They jumped up then, and crowded away, and the black gentleman accompanied them, howling with affright. There was no doubt whatever that he took D'Arcy for a god or an idol—at least a high priest—and he was terrified at the show of anger on the part of the strange deity.

"You uttah asses! Bai Jove! I—"

"Pax!" gasped Tom Merry.

"I wegard you—"

"Pax!"

"Hold on, Lowther!" said Tom Merry, catching Lowther back as he was rushing vengefully at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Don't go for the idol! Don't commit sacrilege!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I wefuse to be wegard as an idol!"

"You can't help it, Gussy. The black chap has settled it in his own mind, and we're going to keep it up!" said Blake, grinning. "Besides, it will be a lot of good to us. It isn't every party of shipwrecked mariners that brings its own idol ashore!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The savage rose to his feet, trembling.

But as D'Arcy's face cleared more calm. As a matter of fact, it occurred to D'Arcy that the spontaneous

worship of the innocent savage was something of a compliment to him. The black fellow evidently recognised him as something superior to the common ruck, and D'Arcy was not at all inclined to attribute it solely to the eyeglass and the top hat. The swell of St. Jim's bestowed a gracious smile upon his worshipper.

The smile encouraged the stranger. He came nearer to D'Arcy, and passed a large black hand over him.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "What on earth is he gettin' at?"

"Mind he doesn't pick your pocket!" said Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"He's trying to make out if it's real!" said Monty Lowther. "Gussy looks as if he's just got off a Christmas card, you know, and—"

"Weally, Lowthah— Bai Jove! Mind my hat, deah boy!"

The savage was feeling over the top hat. The nap of that hat had suffered considerably from wear and tear in the last few days, and D'Arcy was very nervous about it. But he did not like to offend the stranger by stopping him.

The islander felt over the hat. Top hats were evidently as strange to him as firearms were. Suddenly the hat toppled off under his pressure, and he started back in alarm. He uttered a loud cry, and prostrated himself upon the earth.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther, almost in hysterics. "He didn't know it came off! He thought it was part of the idol!"

The juniors shrieked.

Arthur Augustus, with a very red face, replaced the silk hat. It was some minutes before the savage ventured to raise his face from the earth. When he saw the silk topper in its place again he calmed down, and rose to his feet, and continued his investigations.

He felt over the eyeglass that was jammed in D'Arcy's eye. D'Arcy involuntarily let it drop to the end of its cord, and again the savage jumped away in alarm.

"He thinks you take to pieces now, like a mechanical toy!" grinned Lowther.

"You uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy replaced the eyeglass. He was beginning to get a little fed-up with the investigations of the islander.

But the stranger had apparently finished now. He began to make signs with his hand, pointing to the interior of the island, and indicating that the juniors should follow him.

"He wants us to go to his village," said Manners. "I think we might as well. I should like to get some photographs of a cannibal village."

Tom Merry looked very dubious.

"I don't know about risking it," he said. "This chap is very friendly, but his friends mayn't take the same view, and if we got among a crowd of them there might be ructions. We don't want trouble."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We can't speak his blessed lingo, or we could tell him that if he wants to worship our idol he'll have to come with us," said Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young wascal—"

The savage was growing excited in his gesticulations. But Tom Merry shook his head, and pointed back towards the beach. It would have been the height of imprudence to risk themselves in the interior of the island on the faith of a savage.

"We can't come, deah boy, but we shall be pleased to see you if you call again," said Arthur Augustus.

The savage knelt and touched the ground with his forehead. Then, with many backward glances at the juniors, he disappeared among the trees.

CHAPTER 9.

A Sudden Attack!

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the islander had disappeared. "I regard that as a most remarkable experience!"

"Yes, very remarkable," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Hail!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!"

The juniors gathered up armfuls of coconuts, and carried them back to the beach. Close by the spot where the stream ran into the bay were several high rocks, and there the castaways pitched their camp in the shade. The sun was high in the heavens now, and the heat of the tropical day was pouring upon the island.

"We shall have to wait a bit and see more what the natives are like before we explore the place at all," said Tom Merry. "The other fellows may not be friendly, and

(Continued on 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.

TOO FUNNY!

"Boys," said the schoolmaster to his class, "I want you to write an essay on 'The Funniest Thing I Ever Saw.'"

The class commenced, but one small boy finished very quickly.

"Let me see your effort," said the teacher.

The boy produced his paper, on which was written: "The funniest thing I ever saw was too funny for words!"

A football has been awarded to R. Yeomans, 165, Mackintosh Place, Roath Park, Cardiff.

ENTICEMENT.

Tommy Jones was given a small drum for his birthday. Two days later he said to his father:

"I think my drumming must annoy the man next door, dad."

"Why?" asked his father.

"He gave me this pocket-knife," answered Tommy, "and asked me if I knew what was inside my drum!"

A football has been awarded to G. Scarsbrook, 37, Driffield Road, Roman Road, Bow, London, E.3.

DONE IN A DAY.

Lazy Workman: "Rome wasn't built in a day."

Foreman: "No; but it was fired in a day—and so are you!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. West, 139, Boultham Park Road, Lincoln.

REST AND CHANGE.

First Holidaymaker: "Jolly good hotel, this. A fine place for a rest and a change."

Second Holidaymaker: "Yes, you're right. The servants get the change and the manager gets the rest!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Lloyd, 24, Greville Road, Southville, Bristol 3.

PAT'S PROBLEM.

Pat was buying a clock.

"This," said the shop-assistant, "is an eight-day clock."

"And what might that be?" asked Pat.

"One that will go for eight days without winding."

"Begorra!" exclaimed Pat. "And how long will it go if you wind it?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to I. Hamilton, 4, Barelay Terrace, Edinburgh, Scotland.

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT!

Office-boy: "A man called just now who wanted to see you."

Boss: "What was he like—tall or short?"

Office-boy: "Both—he was tall and he wanted to borrow ten shillings!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Foster, 28, Ashford Road, Brighton, Sussex.

OBVIOUS ANSWER.

Old Lady: "If you're hungry, why don't you work?"

Tramp: "I've tried that, mum, but it only makes me hungrier!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. James, 8, Canterbury Avenue, Ilford, Essex.

PUTTING IT PLAIN.

Magistrate: "Did the prisoner hit you with malice aforethought?"

Victim: "No, 'e 'it me with a blinkin' brick!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," Uffculme, Lindsay Road, Kettering, Northants.

there may be more than one tribe, too. And we don't want to leave the shore, either. We want to have what chance there is of seeing a sail."

"Not much chance, I'm afraid," Blake remarked.

"It's our only chance of ever getting off the island," said Tom Merry.

"That's true."

"The boat is stove to pieces, and we could never rebuild it from the fragments," said Tom Merry. "Besides, we have no provisions to put to sea with. We couldn't sail away with a cargo of coconuts and water enough for only four days. That's all the kegs will hold."

"Wathah not."

The juniors looked very serious. They had been so overjoyed at escaping from the horrors of the open boat, and finding themselves on firm land with food and drink in abundance, that they had not considered their prospects further. Now they had to consider them. They had been fortunate—there was no doubt about that. But the prospect was that they would remain a long time, perhaps years, perhaps for life, on that lonely island, and the thought of it made their faces grave.

"Bai Jove, it's wotten!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Might have been worse," said Blake, who always took the optimistic view. "We might have died of hunger and thirst in the boat."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No good giving up hope," said Tom Merry. "We're alive and well, that's one comfort, and we're altogether. I wish we knew what had become of the other boat."

"Yes, rather!"

"Old Herries was in it," said Blake. "It would be frightfully rotten if anything happened to Herries. Of course, it would be rotten if anything happened to the other chaps, too."

"They had a better chance than we had," Manners remarked. "It was a larger boat, and better supplied with provisions and water. If they're still at sea in it they haven't run out of water and grub yet, by a long way. Lord Conway intended the two boats to remain together, and in the morning they'd have passed more grub into our boat, only we got separated; but they're better off than we were."

"Yes, that's a comfort."

The sun was at the zenith now, blazing down upon the island. There was no sign of the savages. The sea, calmer and calmer every hour, was now rolling in gentle ripples on the shore, curling in white lines of foam on the golden sands.

In the blaze of noon the juniors lay and rested in the shadow of the big rock. But always two or three were awake to watch for a possible visit of the natives, and the firearms were kept ready.

But the islanders did not appear. If the man they had seen had carried the news to his friends, they had not come yet to see the strangers. It might mean that the savages were seeking to lull the castaways into a sense of security, with the intention of taking them by surprise. The juniors were very much on their guard.

In the cool of the afternoon Tom Merry went down to the beach to look for the treasure chest. It lay where it had fallen from the boat, half buried in the sand, with the waves of the Pacific curling over it. One iron-bound corner stuck up into view from the water and glistened in the sun.

The schoolboys' gold was safe so far, but it was not in a safe position. Tom Merry suggested dragging it ashore with the ropes that had been saved from the boat.

"If we get off, we want to take the gold with us," he said. "We can bury it in the sand, and come for it whenever we please."

"Jolly good idea," said Digby.

The rope was passed round the sunken chest, and it was dragged with great efforts through the soft sand, and above high-water mark. Then the sand was scooped out into a hollow, and the chest was rolled in and covered up.

The juniors stamped down the sand round and over it. "We ought to make some indication of where it is, to remember it," Manners suggested.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry paced the distance from the buried chest to the big rock in whose shade they had camped.

"Twenty paces," he said, turning and pacing back, "and as you come from the rock you keep exactly in a line with that bunch of palm-trees yonder."

"Good!"

"Let's write it down in case of accidents," Digby suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No fear! If Pablo Lopez comes, and he may, we don't want to have any written clue he might get hold of."

"True."

"We shall remember that, if we need to dig up the chest

again," said Tom Merry. "Twenty paces from the big rock, in a line with the bunch of palms."

"Good!"

"Look out!" shouted Blake suddenly.

The juniors rose upon their feet in a moment.

From the trees a crowd of tattooed savages had suddenly burst, yelling and waving their spears in the air.

They rushed straight at the juniors.

"My hat! There's our old friend at their head, too," said Monty Lowther, in surprise. "But they're on the warpath now, and no mistake."

The early acquaintance of the juniors was coming on at the head of the rushing savages. He was waving a spear like the rest.

"My hat! Look out!"

"Man Friday seems to be as excited as the rest," Blake remarked. "It looks like a tussle."

The juniors gathered together, close against the big rock. Tom Merry levelled the rifle, and Peter Raff and Lowther and Blake and Figgins, who had a revolver each, raised their weapons. The others had nothing but sticks and bathhooks, but they were prepared to put up a good fight. It looked like trouble.

Yet they hesitated to fire.

The savages rushed right on, yelling and gesticulating, till they were quite close. Then they suddenly halted, and Man Friday, as Blake had named the savage, after Robinson Crusoe's old friend, came forward alone.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Don't shoot till you have to," he muttered.

"Right-ho!"

Man Friday, to give him that name—he probably had one of his own, but the juniors did not know what it was—stepped towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He knelt at D'Arcy's feet, and touched the sand with his forehead, and at the same time the rest of the natives knelt down before Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove, they mean well enough, aftah all!" said the swell of St. Jim's, in great relief.

"Good old Friday!" murmured Lowther.

Friday rose to his feet and gesticulated, and pointed to his friends, and then with his spear to the interior of the island. His meaning evidently was that D'Arcy should go with him. Of the others he took no notice.

"They want you, Gussy," said Manners.

"Bai Jove!"

"They want our giddy idol!" grinned Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Gussy's not going," said Tom Merry. "There may be a cooking-pot at the end of the journey. Here, you, Friday, buzz off!"

He laid his hand on the savage's shoulder.

Friday turned upon him, with a sudden ferocious glare in his face, and made a savage thrust with his spear. Tom Merry just saved himself by leaping aside.

"Look out!" shouted Blake.

Friday made a rush at Tom Merry, thrusting again. The savages made a simultaneous move forward. Tom Merry countered with his rifle-barrel, and knocked the spear aside.

The savages were closing up.

"Shoot!" shouted Peter Raff.

It was no time to stand on ceremony. They had to fight for their lives. D'Arcy was evidently sacred in the eyes of the savages, but they were prepared to murder the others with the peculiar irresponsibility of the savage nature.

"Shoot! Shoot!"

Tom Merry threw his rifle up.

Crack!

Man Friday gave a terrific yell, leaped into the air, and dropped flat upon his face.

CHAPTER 10.

The Spaniard.

THE report of the rifle rang in a thousand echoes along the beach, and reverberated back from the wood. The savages stopped dead, as if thunderstruck.

For one moment they stood paralysed, and then, with loud cries of fear, they took to their heels and ran.

It was like the change of a kaleidoscope. One moment a yelling horde surrounded the juniors, and the next the beach was clear, save for themselves and the fallen savage. The blacks had vanished into the trees.

Friday lay motionless where he had fallen.

Tom Merry was very pale.

"Good heavens!" muttered Blake.

"Is he dead?" whispered Wally.

"Heaven forbid!" said Tom.

"It was his own look-out, Master Tom," said Peter Raff. "He tried to kill you with his spear."

(Continued on page 14.)



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! Following on the grand treasure-seeking series which concludes in this number, another powerful series commences next week, featuring, of course, the chums of St. Jim's, and also a newcomer to the school, an amazing boy named Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. The title of the first great story is:

"THE BOY WHO COULDN'T BE SACKED!"

Lumley-Lumley is the son of a millionaire, but before his father made his fortune he was brought up in the toughest part of New York. He comes to St. Jim's with all the habits and customs he learned there, and he soon discovers that these are very far removed from those in vogue at an English Public school. His brazen manner, his utter disregard for the truth, and his caddish ways make him disliked by all, and he becomes known as "the outsider." The general opinion is that he is heading for the "sack"—but the truth is, Lumley-Lumley cannot be sacked! Why? That you will learn when

you read this magnificent yarn next week.

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!"

How do you like the new serial? Don't forget to write and let me know your candid opinions. Next Wednesday there will be another rousing instalment of the nerve-tingling adventures of Nipper & Co. in the Wild West. And another ripping attraction in this tip-top programme will be a special Cup Final number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," and in addition to another column of readers' prize-winning jokes, your Editor will be with you again with more notes and news.

THE BIG BAD BULL!

"Like a bull in a china shop" is a saying that is well known, but whether a bull has ever run amok in a china shop is open to question. But there is no doubt about the story of the bull that ran amok recently in a shop in Warsaw. The animal was being led along the street when

it spotted its own reflection in a large mirror in the shop window. Apparently, however, the bull didn't like the look of itself, for, with a bellow of rage, it straight-way charged at the window, smashed it to smithereens, and wrecked the contents on show. Then; having very successfully disposed of the offending mirror, the bull calmly returned to its master, who, I venture to add, is feeling none too happy about the bill for damages the "playfulness" of his bull must have brought down on his head!

JUMBO'S TUCK IN!

A bull is not the only animal that is partial to shops, apparently. Three zoo elephants caused quite a commotion in Cheltenham the other day. They were being led through the town when they suddenly made for a corn-chandler's shop. Whether the elephants were hungry or not, they had scented food, and that was enough. One got through the doorway and promptly proceeded to help himself to whatever he fancied—and that was considerable! But his companions were not so fortunate, for the second elephant stuck in the doorway and spoilt the chance of the other of having a feed. Eventually, after Jumbo inside the shop had had a good tuck in of meal, dog's biscuits, and seed potatoes, the keepers succeeded in shifting them from the premises.

TAILPIECE.

I cannot end this chat without telling you this joke the GEM Jester told me to-day.

"Why don't you look round for work," said the lady of the house to the begging tramp.

"I can't, mum," the tramp replied.

"I've got a stiff neck!"

Cheerio till next week!

THE EDITOR.



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.

Alan Freeman, 105, Selsey Road, Birmingham, 17, wants correspondents in the British Empire; interested in stamps, cycling, football, and cricket; ages 13-15.

J. W. Mitchell, 63, Egerton Road South, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, wants to hear from keen collectors of the "Magnet," "Schoolboys' Own," etc.

J. A. P. Scott, Thornbury Hotel, Salmons Lane, Whyteleafe, Surrey, wants correspondents in the British Empire and U.S.A.

J. Fortey, 223, St. Saviour's Road, Saltley, Birmingham, 8, wants to hear from model makers in the Birmingham district who will help in the formation of a wing of the Tom Merry Flying Squad in Birmingham. The club will promote competitions and give displays.

J. Scott, Suite A, Hull Block, Third Avenue, South Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, wants a pen pal in Scotland, interested in football or ice hockey; age 12-14.

Miss Elaine Potts, Woodside, Fartown, Huddersfield, wants girl correspondents interested in aviation and sports; ages 13-15.

Thomas G. Davies, Mission Cottage, 61, Duffryn Road, Caerai, Bridgend, Glam., S. Wales, wants correspondents; ages 12-14.

Miss Joan Hanlin, Endyon, Handborough, Oxford, wants a girl correspondent interested in sport and aeroplanes; age 15-16.

Desmond Bourke, Byron Street, Inverell, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents in England, U.S.A., South Africa, and New Zealand, interested in pets, hunting, boxing, meccano, and cigarette cards.

Harry A. J. Double, 81, Bury Street, Stowmarket, Suffolk, wants members for the overseas section of the Universal Films Correspondence Club.

Jack De Leen, 1743, Robson Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wants pen pals; ages 14-18.

Terry Wilson, 73, Belgrave Street, Manly, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents; ages 12-15.

Cyril Smith, Box 21, Ganmain, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents; photography, cinema.

Raymond J. Kelly, Box 87, Lameroo, South Australia, wants a correspondent in England; interested in aeroplanes and engines.

Russell Waugh, Chez-Nous, Sturt Road, Cronulla, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents; ages 13-19.

William Foster, 79, Bostall Lane, Abbey Wood, London, S.E.2, wants correspondents anywhere, especially Germany, France, and China; interested in photography and films; ages 13-15.

S. J. Du Toit, Rochelle, P.O. Box 36, Boshuf, South Africa, wants pen pals in England, Germany, Holland, U.S.A.; ages 13-16; interested in chemistry, electricity, real and miniature trains and aeroplanes.

Miss G. Hopkinson, 32, Albany Road, Reading, desires to hear from those who are keen on back numbers of "Nelson Lee" and GEM.

Chas. H. Swain, 69, Stanton Street, Derby, wants to hear from collectors of the "Schoolboys' Own Library."

Ivan Eames, 1, Rose Cottages, Tyttenhanger Green, near St. Albans, Herts, wants correspondents interested in stamp collecting, swimming, and cycling; ages 14-15.

W. Hewitt, 6, Moran Street, Boulder City, Western Australia, wants correspondents to exchange snaps; interested in sports; age 14-17.

James Cooper, Wingfield, 9, Beech Street, Luton, Bedfordshire, wants correspondents; interested in draughts and football.

Buster Merryfield, 61, Mallinson Road, Battersea, London, S.W., wants correspondents interested in boxing, in Hollywood, Germany, and West Indies. Also keen on puzzles, pets, and cigarette cards; age 11-13.

Jack Sproule, 846, Carlaw Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants correspondents in Japan, China, India, Spain, Russia, and Greece; age 13-15.

J. H. C. Penn, 20, Eton Avenue, North Finchley, London, N.12, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Harry Craber, 26, Newman Street, Newtown, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents in the Empire; New Zealand, Canada, South Africa; stamps and views of London, etc.

Billie Lloyd, Albemarle Hotel, Brighton, wants to hear from stamp collectors; age 13-15.

The St. Jim's Castaways!

(Continued from page 12.)

"I know; but I did not fire to kill," said Tom Merry. "I think he is more frightened than hurt. I wanted the bullet to graze his head, and I think it did not go too close."

He stepped towards the fallen savage. Friday lay motionless. There was a trickle of blood from his ear, where the bullet had carried away a fragment of skin. The wound was trifling, but the savage did not move. He seemed to be frightened to a comatose state by the report of the rifle.

Tom Merry caught up his spear, and passed it away to Kangaroo. It was safer to disarm the savage. Then he touched the man, and he stirred and moaned.

"It's all right," said Tom Merry. "You're not hurt. By George, I wish I could speak his language! Don't you know any of the lingo, Kangy?"

"I know some black fellows' talk," said Kangaroo. "I don't suppose this chap talks the Australian bush language, though. I'll try."

He spoke a few sentences in a strange tongue, but the savage did not move.

"He doesn't savvy," said Blake. "I expect he'll come round," said Tom Merry. "Poor chap! I'm sorry to scare him like this, but those beggars meant murder."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They're coming back, sir," said Peter Raff.

On the edge of the wood the black-brown faces were reappearing. The savages, evidently frightened, were peering out from the trees in dread and wonder.

Friday sat up at last. His face was full of pitiful terror. He shuddered as he looked at the rifle in Tom Merry's hand, and crawled towards it on his hands and knees, and touched the sand with his forehead before it.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "He thinks the thing's alive, you know. He must take it for an idol, too."

Friday rose to his feet at last, and backed away from the rifle. His aspect had lost all its ferocity. His brown face expressed nothing but humility and fear.

"It's all wight, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "We're not going to hurt you."

Friday prostrated himself before D'Arcy. Then he wriggled away into the wood and disappeared.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the Dutch!" said Kangaroo.

"It's a vewy remarkable expewience."

"Poor wretches!" said Figgins. "They've never seen a firearm before, you can see that. I fancy we shall be safe from them after this."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Man Friday having rejoined his comrades, the whole party of them disappeared. The juniors remained very much shaken up by the strange adventure. It might have ended very much worse for them, they knew that. But for the terror inspired by the firearms they would have had little chance in a struggle with a horde of armed savages. The spears and clubs would have done deadly work.

But the sudden glancing of a white sail on the sea caught the attention of the juniors, and in a moment the savages were forgotten. Kerr was the first to see it, and he shouted:

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,366.



No. 10. Vol. 1 (New Series).



MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everybody! The masters had a solemn conclave yesterday. Seems they're

going to the pow-wows! Another well-known cricketer is taking up journalism. The pen is mightier than the sword! "Certain fish," writes a naturalist, "harm their enemies by ejecting an inky fluid." How like some St. Jim's fags we have seen using squirts! Wally D'Arcy has long grown out of playing with a hoop, but on breaking-up day he gallantly offered to "troll" Gussy's hat-box to the station! Yes—Gussy refused, with haughty dignity! Now, have you heard this one? "I must warn you that feeding the animals is strictly forbidden!" said the zoo keeper as the visitor ventured well within the alligator's reach. Here's a headline from a local paper: "FAMOUS FILM STAR IN £100,000 SUIT!" It does not state whether this includes an extra pair of trousers. Just a friendly warning to Skimpole. A fellow who goes about wrapped up in his thoughts is liable to catch a chill! Now, hold this one: What made Tom "Merry"? Because he saw Fatty "Wynn"! Gore tried to catch Mr. Linton in class by saying that he had read that the only English word in which the letter "s" was pronounced "sh" was "sugar." "Are you certain of this, Gore?" asked Mr. Linton. "Sure!" answered Gore. See it? Linton did—and Gore got his! "When a fellow snores," says Herries, "he is sleeping like a log." Quite right—like a log that is being sawn! As I told Herries, I love dumb animals. The trouble is, Towser will bark! Buck Finn was watching one of Farmer Blunt's cows chewing the cud. "Say," he remarked at length, "how much does it cost you to keep her in chewing-gum?" Dame Taggles has a very soft heart. The other day she startled the fireman on duty in the Wayland Fire Station by walking in and demanding: "There's a cat up in a tree close by. What are you going to do about it?"

Chin-chin till next time!

St. Jim's News Reel

Herbert Skimpole suggests that St. Jim's should have its own broadcasting station, and he offers to do all the talking. Don't all cheer at once, chaps!

On Herries' birthday his study-mates presented him with a banjulele—hoping to get a rest from his cornet! Herries now plays the banjulele so much that Blake & Co. wish they had never thought of it!

Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, boasts that he has never visited a cinema in his life. It might widen his outlook a bit if he did!

During the football season Tom Merry netted 49 goals—a record for St. Jim's. As Lowther puts it, Tom has a bolt in each boot!

ST. JIM'S ANNUAL SPORTS

KEEN CONTESTS

Eric Kildare's Running Commentary

Competition is pretty keen this year. I hear Figgins has sworn to put the New House on top or die in the attempt! Tom Merry replies by saying that School House are ready for anything!

Entrants for the Hundred Yards. New House pin their hopes on Figgins' long legs. School House hope D'Arcy or Digby will prove faster. Get ready—go! Gosh, what a race! Figgins—no, Digby—D'Arcy spurts. Who was that just threw himself at the tape? Figgins wins! Well run, Figgins!

Now the Hurdles. Figgins is in this, too—no stopping him! Tom Merry is holding himself in reserve for the longer events. Harry Noble is fancied for School House. They're off—Figgins leading slightly. Noble is coming up, though—the Kangaroo can jump all right! Here they come—all out at the finish! Noble has it by a head. Well done, "Aussie"!

The Mile is being run now. Pretty gruelling race. Tom Merry slipped at the start, and has had a job to make up leeway, with Kerr and Blake putting up a strong challenge. Figgins is resting this time. Merry is pounding along now—by Jove, he's caught Kerr, who had just taken the lead from Blake! Merry and Kerr are fighting it out now, neck and neck. Into the straight—Kerr spurts, Merry holds back—Kerr home. No, Merry flings himself forward in a great last-minute effort—and wins by inches. Well run, Merry!

Throwing the Cricket Ball comes next. Noble, with a good throw, manages 80 yards. Blake beats it—86 yards. Figgins throws 89 yards 7 inches! That'll take some beating. Tom Merry throws now—and what a throw! Measured, it records 90 yards 1 inch dead! Merry wins!

Now for the Tug-of-War—School House vs. New House. New House have the weight. Fatty Wynn wants a bit of pulling over the line! School House rely on Merry, Noble, Gore, and Blake. New House have Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Digges. First pull—New House wins! Second pull—School House just get it! Third and final pull. Now the strain tells. Digges is a weak link in the New House team. School House, with a fine pull, snatch a victory!

As a School House man I'm pleased, but as School captain I must congratulate Figgins on the very gallant showing his House has made.

(Continued from column 1)

Last summer St. Jim's had to avoid wasting water owing to the drought. Figgins says he wishes there would be a "hot air" shortage to keep Ratcliff quiet!

Harry Manners, who is statistically minded, says Monty Lowther has cracked 10,727 jokes this term to date! Lowther says what's a joke more or less between friends?

Glad asked n man, I there's even re pictures That I've an St. Jim than in agree. outdoor favouri School I have checker To the nothing we both likely to think o enough world c Don't my tim partner captain born N old Fa Fatty i like to flabby in goal proof t Scots have b —to sa St. Jim be elev ments: course, tain, a cricket to resig few H be a lo Bert the jo and pr quad Skimm times: One come Lowth was to that h

Merry's Weekly



Week Ending April 21st, 1934.

SPORTS



LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

GEORGE KERR SPEAKING

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Glad to meet you fellows! Tom Merry has asked me to say a few words. Being a Scotsman, I must start by saying that I do feel there's no country in the world to compare even remotely with Bonnie Scotland, with its picturesque glens and dales.

That doesn't mean to say, however, that I've any fault to find with Sussex, in which St. Jim's is situated. On the contrary, I really think we do get a bit more sun down South than in Scotland, though many Scots do not agree. I naturally prefer the sun, being an outdoor man, excepting when engaged in my favourite game of chess. Manners, of the School House, is a giant at chess, and he and I have had many an exciting duel over the chequered board—exciting, that is, to us. To the casual onlooker, as Figgins remarks, nothing appears to be happening at all, and we both seem to be lost in thought and never likely to make another move! Well, you must think over chess. Some day, if I'm ever good enough, I'd like to have a go at some of the world champions.

Don't think I like "frowsting" indoors all my time, though. I play full-back at footer, partnering Figgins, the best partner and captain a fellow could desire, though he wasn't born North of the Tweed! Behind us we have old Fatty Wynn, safe and sound in goal. Fatty is as fat as Figgy is lean, but I should like to point out that it's healthy fat—not the flabby kind, but firm flesh. Fatty's prowess in goal and as a bowler on the cricket field is proof that he is fit enough!

Scotsmen being proverbially keen-witted, I have been asked—in a japing spirit, I can see—to say what improvements I would make at St. Jim's if I had full sway. I don't claim to be clever, but I'm too clever to make statements regarding matters above my head. Of course, I should appoint Figgy junior captain, and play more New House men in the cricket eleven, and possibly ask old "Ratty" to resign; but those are the dreams of every few House man, and you can't do better than be a loyal supporter of the New House.

(Continued from column 2)

Herbert Skimpde complains of stiffness in the joints. Tom Merry diagnosed rheumatism, and prescribed trotting six times round the quad every morning before "brekker"! Skimmy's record to date is one and a half times round—and a long "breather"!

One of D'Arcy's ancestors is reputed to have come over with William the Conqueror. Howther says the first thing he did on landing was to see that his helmet was on straight and that his sword was carried at the correct angle!

Flying Squad Reports

D'ARCY FACES FLAMES

Gussy offered to "stand down" from match with Grammarians. Under pressure, he admitted romantic interest in girl in Rylcombe bunshop. Laughed to scorn, he agreed to line up as usual with rest of Flying Squad. Heading in cycle formation for Rylcombe Grammar School, St. Jim's XI. startled by villager yelling: "Fire!" Bunshop ablaze! Squad succeeded in approaching bunshop, flames leaping high. D'Arcy, breaking through crowd, performed solo by diving head-first through flames to rescue girl trapped inside. D'Arcy staggered out, half dragging girl—unconscious—but safe! Meanwhile, Chief Air Marshal Merry phoned Wayland for ambulance. Ambulance took bunshop girl; severe shock. D'Arcy firmly refused aid—flying with Squad to the Grammar School, where he bombed the Grammarian goal three times!

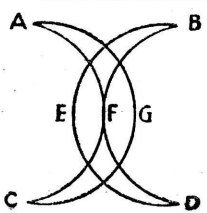
NIGHT FLYER SAVED

Noise of aero engine popping awoke Tom Merry at midnight. Merry aroused Flying Squad, who dashed to school playing field. Plane could be heard circling overhead, engine giving trouble. Landing imminent—crash probable in dark. Squad ignited torches of brushwood, marking out Little Side as landing ground. Plane made safe landing, thanks to lights. Pilot thanked Chief Air Marshal Merry warmly. Dr. Holmes put in appearance, astonished. Pilot accommodated at St. Jim's for night. Squad specially complimented on swift and successful action!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Farmer Blunt, near St. Jim's, had with eighteen hurdles at his disposal enclosed two spaces, one just twice as large as the other, as in diagram. He was puzzled to know if he could change them to two four-sided spaces, one exactly three times as large as the other, using only the same eighteen hurdles. So he sought Kerr's aid. After a little thought, Kerr obliged Farmer Blunt by rearranging the hurdles as required. The hurdles are represented by matches; all the matches must be fairly used, and the two spaces must be quite detached, with no loose ends or duplicate matches.

Can you solve the problem as Kerr did?



Solution of Last Week's Puzzle

Start at A and draw AGC, CFB, BED, and DFA.

"A sail!"
Tom Merry caught in the binoculars, and turned them upon the sail, which had glanced up like a white bird's wing from the blue of the sea.
Then he uttered an exclamation of disappointment.
"The felucca!"
"Lopez again!"
The felucca was coming into the bay, The dwarf figure of the Spaniard could be seen at the helm.
"The felucca!"
"And the Spaniard!"
"Cover!" said Tom Merry quickly.

The juniors gathered behind the big rocks. So far, the Spaniard could not have seen them. It was as well to keep their presence from his knowledge, if possible.

The felucca came closer in. The four blacks who formed the crew could be seen on the deck, and the voice of the Spaniard rapping out orders came on the wind, though the juniors could not understand the words.

"He's going to anchor here," said Tom Merry.
"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what is he doing here?" Blake exclaimed in amazement. "Can he know anything about the yacht being wrecked?"

Tom Merry nodded quickly.
"That's it! He's found some of the wreckage, or—or perhaps Lord Conway's boat."

"Bai Jove!"
"And he knows the treasure is still in the South Seas," said Tom Merry. "He's searching for it and us."

The juniors looked grave. It was only too likely. It meant another fight with the Spaniard if he found them on the island. Not that they were afraid; there were too many of them for the Spaniard if it came to open warfare. But there would be bloodshed; there was little doubt of that.

Tom Merry watched the felucca as it swept closer in under its lateen sails. The Spaniard at the helm was in full view now.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as an idea flashed into his brain.

"My hat!"
"What are you thinking of?" Blake asked.

"We might capture the felucca."
"What?"

"The rascal's going to anchor in the bay here," said Tom Merry. "He will leave the felucca some time, if only to search for us. He can't fail to see the fragments of the boat on the beach. Well, when he is in the woods we can have a try for the felucca. I don't think the niggers will stop us."

"No fear!"

"It's a ripping idea!" exclaimed Kerr. "We can take the felucca. The rascal's declared war himself, and we're entitled to capture his craft if we can. We can maroon the brute on the island here, where he can't do any damage, and sail away with the treasure chest in the felucca."

"I suppose we could handle that craft," Figgins said, with a dubious glance at the great lateen sails, which the negroes were now lowering.

"We could learn," said Tom Merry. "After all, most of us can sail a boat at home, and we could soon get in the way of handling the felucca. Better than building a raft to get away from the island upon, and that's what we thought of at first."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"And there will be provisions on the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,366.

felucca, too," observed Fatty Wynn. "We shall have plenty of grub for the voyage, and—"

"Hallo! Hold on, Peter Raff!"

The sailorman had suddenly dragged the revolver from his belt, and levelled it at the Spaniard on the felucca. Tom Merry dragged his arm down just in time.

"Stop it!" he shouted.

The sailorman looked sullen.

"It's the safest way," he muttered.

"It's murder!"

"It's what he means for us, Master Tom."

"We can protect ourselves. I tell you you shall not shoot," said Tom Merry, and he jerked the revolver away from Peter Raff. "Now—"

The sailorman nodded.

"I give in to you, Master Tom; but you'll be sorry for not letting me shoot the villain down while we had the chance."

"I don't think so."

The great sails were down now, and the felucca floated gently in the bay. The anchor slipped into the water, and the handsome craft rocked on the waves a score of yards from the shore. A little skiff dropped into the water, and the Spaniard rowed himself ashore. The blacks remained on board the felucca. They were close enough for the juniors to see their faces, and it was easy to see that they were simple black sailors, with none of the ruffianly characteristics of the Spaniard about them.

Probably Lopez dared not sail in company with scoundrels like himself, for if a gang of his own kidney had helped him win the treasure they would certainly have murdered him for the possession of it. He preferred to rely upon himself, and have nothing to fear, at all events, upon his own vessel.

The skiff grounded on the sand, and the Spaniard stepped ashore. The juniors drew closer into the cover of the rocks, watching him.

That the Spaniard was suspicious was evident. He stood scanning the shore and watching the woods, with a keen, gleaming eye. It was very clear that, out at sea, he had heard the report of the shot Tom Merry had fired at Man Friday, and that it had warned him that there were whites on the island. And in these lonely seas it was not hard for him to conclude that they were the party he sought.

He uttered an exclamation in Spanish as he caught sight of a broken oar lying on the sand. He picked it up, and looked at it, and then searched along the beach. He came upon many fragments of wreckage and the bows of the broken boat still embedded in the sand. Again his voice was heard on the silent shore:

"Caramba!"

Tom Merry held his rifle ready. The Spaniard was on the track now with a vengeance. The footprints in the sand caught the man's eye, and he followed them, his eye scanning the sand eagerly. He came striding towards the big rocks behind which the juniors were concealed, and they drew back closer into cover.

His heavy boots could be heard grinding the sand as he came on, closer and closer. In a few seconds he would be round the rocks and in full view of the castaways.

Tom Merry raised his rifle, ready, his finger on the trigger.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "Look out!"

A shadow fell at their feet. The Spaniard came swinging on, round the big rock. He started back, his hand flying to his belt as he caught sight of the juniors. But he had no time to draw a weapon. The muzzle of the rifle was at his breast.

Tom Merry's voice rang out:

"Halt!"

CHAPTER 11.

The Dwarf Comes to Stay.

PABLO LOPEZ halted.

He had no choice in the matter, for the muzzle of the rifle was within a foot of him, and Tom Merry's finger was on the trigger, Tom Merry's steady eye glancing along the barrel.

"Caramba!"

"Halt, you scoundrel!"

The Spaniard stood with his hands clenching and unclenching, his features working with passion.

But his rage was nothing to the juniors.

He was at their mercy now.

"Don't try to touch your pistol," said Tom Merry quietly.

"I shall send a bullet right through you if you do."

"Caramba!"

"I don't know what caramba means," said D'Arcy, "but from the way the wotahh uttahn it I should take it as a swear word, and I object to it. I insist upon the wascal usin' more respectful language."

"Disarm him, Peter," said Tom Merry. "I'll keep him covered, and shoot him if he resists."

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The Spaniard was trembling with passion. Peter Raff was trembling, too, but it was with dread of the man he feared so much. Yet at other times Peter Raff had shown himself to be a brave man.

But the sailorman obeyed Tom's order. He stepped towards the Spaniard, and took the pistol and the knife from his belt, and unslung the rifle from his shoulder, and then took off his bandolier.

"Oh, but you shall pay for this yet, all of you," said the Spaniard between his teeth.

Tom Merry made a gesture of contempt.

"We are not afraid of you," he said. "You will be wise to keep clear of us from this moment. I warn you that we shall not show any mercy if you attack us."

Lopez ground his teeth.

"Why not make him a prisoner now?" Blake exclaimed. "If we tie the cad up he will be unable to do us any harm."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Spaniard sprang back.

"You will not make me a prisoner, senioritos," he said, in a voice choking with passion, "You may kill me, but you will not make me a prisoner!"

"We'll see about that!" Blake exclaimed. "Collar him!"

The juniors rushed forward.

Lopez sprang away.

It would have been easy for Tom Merry to shoot him down, but that the cunning rascal knew very well the juniors would not do, excepting in self-defence.

Lopez sprang away round the rocks and dashed across the sand towards the felucca.

"After him!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Collah the cad!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors entered into the chase with zest. Strung out in line, the fleetest ahead and the slower ones behind, they raced over the sand after the Spaniard.

But Lopez reached his skiff first.

He leaped into it and pushed off, and the skiff went rocking away towards the felucca, the Spaniard standing up in it, oar in hand, ready to strike down any of the juniors who should pursue him farther.

But that they did not do.

They halted on the shore, baffled, while the boat rocked away towards the anchored craft.

"Bai Jove! The wascal's gone!"

The Spaniard glared at them from the boat.

"Oh, but wait a little, senioritos!" he exclaimed. "You have not seen the last of Pablo Lopez."

Peter Raff gritted his teeth.

"There's time yet, Master Tom!" he muttered. "Put a bullet through the scoundrel."

Tom Merry shook his head.

The Spaniard steadied the boat with the oar, and stood looking back at the juniors. There was hate in his face—hate and rage and bitter chagrin.

It was not the first time he had been defeated by the juniors of St. Jim's. Upon his dark skin showed more than one deep scar that he had received in conflict with Tom Merry far away upon the island of the treasure.

"Listen to me, senioritos!" he exclaimed. "I have found you again, and I shall find the treasure. Give it up to me, and I will leave you in peace, and I swear I will give word at a New Zealand port for help to be sent to you."

Tom Merry's lip curled, and he did not reply. He knew how much reliance was to be placed on the word of the Spaniard.

"You cannot keep the treasure from me," said Lopez. "I will have it, if I have to kill every soul on the island."

"How do you know the treasure is here?" said Kangaroo, with a grin.

The Spaniard started.

"It must be here. You would not let it go down in the yacht!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"How do you know the yacht has gone down?"

The Spaniard laughed.

"That is simple. I have found floating wreckage with her name upon it—that is how I know. Do you say that it is not true?"

Tom Merry breathed a deep sigh of relief. The Spaniard had not fallen in, after all, with Lord Conway's boat. Doubtless he did not even know that there had been two boats from the sunken yacht, and that Lord Conway and his men were not with Tom Merry & Co. on this island.

"It is true enough," said Tom Merry. "The Silver Scud is at the bottom of the sea."

"And the treasure—that has been saved?"

"Find out!"

The Spaniard gritted his teeth.

"Bah! You need not fence with me with words!" he cried. "I know that you would not abandon the treasure. You have it upon this isle, and I will take it from you if I kill you all, one by one."

"We are ready for you, you scoundrel; and it will not be safe for you to come within range of this rifle again."

Lopez laughed scoffingly.
"You shall see that you have not done with me!" he said.
"Once more, hand over the treasure to me—and I leave you in peace."

"Rats!"
"What do you say?" asked Lopez, to whom the significance of that word did not seem to be familiar.

Tom Merry laughed.
"Rats!" he replied. "That means no!"
"Very well; your blood be upon your own heads!" said the Spaniard.

And he dipped the oar into the water and sculled away to the felucca, and the juniors saw him jump aboard.

"Will he go now?" Blake muttered.
"I should say not."

Tom Merry was right.
The Spaniard had disappeared on board the vessel, but the great lateen sails were not raised, and the craft did not move from her anchorage.

Pablo Lopez had come to stay.

CHAPTER 12.

In the Hands of Savages!

THE juniors returned to their camp behind the rocks. The situation on the island was growing curious. On the one side were the brown-skinned natives, whose ferocious enmity might break out again at any moment. On the other was the Spaniard. It was pretty certain that Pablo Lopez was waiting on the felucca for the fall of night, with the intention of trying his luck a second time under cover of darkness.

And without being timid, the juniors looked forward to nightfall with some uneasiness.

"I can tell you what his little game is, young gentlemen," Peter Raff said moodily. "He intends to hang about us in the dark and kill us one by one, if he can. He has more firearms aboard the felucca, for a certainty, and he will get ashore in the dark and pick us off whenever he gets the chance of sniping."

"If he shoots we shall shoot," Tom Merry said.
Peter Raff shook his head.

"You won't have another chance, Master Tom."
"Bai Jove, I must remark that you're an awful ewoakah, Petah!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed. "I wathah think that we shall be a match for the wuffian!"

"And what about the black fellows?" Kangaroo exclaimed. "I don't believe they will give up the game, either."

Tom Merry smiled.
"If they both come after dark we shall have a lively time," he said. "We can only sit tight and hope for the best."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"We'd better get some more grub here in case of accidents," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "If the niggers start on us we shan't be able to go to the wood."
"Quite wight, deah boy!"

"It will be awful to have to live on coconuts," Fatty Wynn remarked despondently. "What price a good rich beefsteak, Figgy, with onions and—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Figgins. "You make me feel famished—"

"What price a nice juicy pork pie—"

"Shut up!" roared the juniors.

And Fatty Wynn sighed and shut up.

But his suggestion was good, and as the sun went down the juniors gathered armfuls of coconuts and carried them back to the camp in the rocks.

A change of diet was very desirable, but coconuts were better than nothing. As for hunting some of the wild goats they had seen in the distance, Tom Merry decided that it would be too imprudent.

The savages were still probably lurking in the woods. After all, as Kerr remarked very thoughtfully, they were lucky to have plenty of coconuts.

The sun sank in the west.

With the quick nightfall the juniors became more watchful and anxious. Fatty Wynn sat munching endless coconuts and dreaming with deep yearning of beefsteaks, onions, fried potatoes, and pork pies. The other fellows waited and watched while they rested.

"We'll see about building some shelter to-morrow," Tom Merry remarked. "This would be a pretty open spot if it rained again. It's all right for to-night though."

"We ought to have a stockade, you know," said D'Arcy,

(Continued on the next page.)

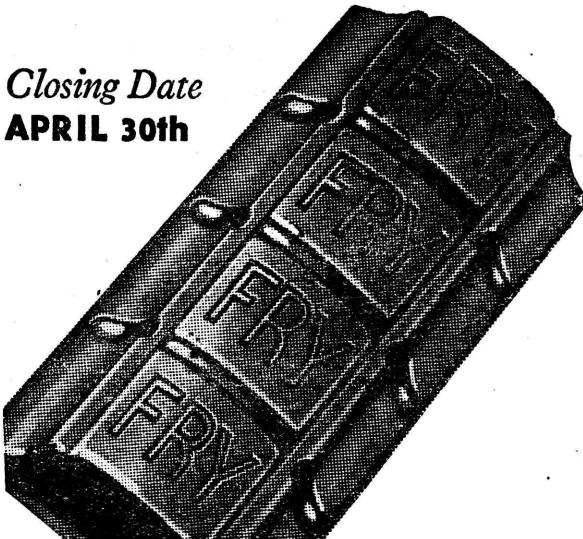
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with a dim remembrance of some treasure story. "A stockade and a blockhouse, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't know where we shall get them," he said, "but we'll see what we can do in the morning. We shall have to look for some grub a bit more solid than coconuts."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn emphatically.

"Listen!" said Jack Blake.

He held up his hand.

It was very dark now, and the juniors, as they listened, could hear a sound of rustling from the distant trees.

They had no doubt as to what caused it.

Man Friday and his friends were reappearing on the scene, encouraged by the fact that the darkness made them invisible to the castaways.

"Hark!"

It was a splash from the sea.

"Lopez!"

"Both together!" said Figgins. "We are booked for a warm time. Look here, let's climb up on top of these rocks. The moon will be up soon, and we could hold the rocks for a long time against those blessed niggers, and without shooting any of them. I should be sorry to have to pot Man Friday."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a good idea!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors clambered up the rocks. The rugged slopes below them did not favour a rushing attack, such as the savages were most likely to make. Among the rocks the castaways had no doubt of being able to hold their own by using their firearms; but that, of course, they were very reluctant to do. But if the savages pushed them hard they had no other recourse.

From the darkness of the beach came faint sounds of bare feet crunching on sand, of men stumbling over stones and over the fragments of the wrecked boat.

The islanders were coming on.

Suddenly the sound of advance ceased. The juniors strained their ears, but they could hear nothing.

Not a sound not a motion from the darkness.

What did it mean? What were the islanders doing? What was the meaning of the sudden halt? The juniors strained their eyes in the darkness in vain, and listened and waited with beating hearts.

In the black sky an edge of silver appeared. The moon was about to emerge from behind the banks of clouds.

The silver glimmer danced on the seas, and threw a shimmer back from the forest. The moon came slowly out.

Suddenly, from the darkness of the shore, came a terrific uproar. A crack, crack, crack! of a revolver; wild, savage yells of pain and fury; the hoarse voice of a white man; sounds of a desperate struggle, of wrestling forms and trampling feet and crunching sand.

The juniors started and listened in horror.

What was happening there in the darkness?

One word was on all lips:

"Lopez!"

Was it the Spaniard?

They could see nothing; they could hear only the sounds of wild-beast-like conflict, growing fainter now.

A sheet of silver danced on the Pacific, the moon came ghaently out from the clouds, and light descended upon the scene.

The fighting, struggling forms leaped into sudden view. On the sandy shore Pablo Lopez was struggling, with failing strength, in the grasp of the savages. A dozen or more of the islanders were piling on him, and even the great strength of the dwarf was giving way.

Several of the savages showed wounds, and blood was on the face of Man Friday, whom the juniors recognised in the midst of the conflict. What had happened was very clear. The Spaniard, stealing upon the camp in the darkness, had blundered into the savages, not knowing that they were there. And the islanders had seized upon him instantly.

The dwarf's struggles ceased, and he lay helpless under the shrieking savages.

Tom Merry had raised his rifle, and lowered it again.

He had no right to shoot in defence of the Spaniard. Lopez's life was of no more value than the life of any savage there.

The savages, with yells of triumph, dragged their prisoner away towards the wood. With the curious irresponsibility of the savage mind, they had forgotten or abandoned their original intentions in approaching the camp.

With the gasping, feebly struggling Spaniard in their midst, they swarmed away into the forest and disappeared, but for a long time their savage yells rang in the ears of the juniors.

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CHAPTER 13.

To the Rescue!

"BAI Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, breaking a long silence. "Bai Jove, deah boys!"

Tom Merry shivered.

"It was Lopez's own fault," he said. "He came here looking for trouble—and he's found it, though not the sort he was looking for."

"What will they do with him?" muttered Lowther.

"Goodness knows!"

"He's wounded some of them. They may——"

"Kill him, perhaps!"

Tom Merry made a restless gesture.

"He must face the music himself," said the hero of the Shell. "He's brought this upon himself; it's his own look-out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Suppose——" began Digby, and he paused.

"Well, suppose what?" said Tom Merry, almost irritably.

"Suppose they're cannibals?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I don't see that we need suppose that," said Tom Merry gloomily. "They looked friendly enough at first—or Man Friday did, anyway. And they weren't going to attack us, either, this afternoon; they only wanted Gussy for an idol."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"But they attacked us afterwards," said Blake, "and that chap Friday, quiet as he was at first, tried to stick you with a spear. You can't trust savages."

"Quite wight, Blake!"

"If they're cannibals——"

"Well, I don't see what we can do," said Tom Merry. "It would be madness to risk our lives to save such a brute as Pablo Lopez—especially when he would return the favour by cutting our throats if he could."

"Well, that's right, too."

"Besides, we shouldn't have the right to shoot down those poor wretches to save such a man," said Tom Merry.

"Let him go," said Peter Raff. "Let him go! If they eat him, I wish them joy of him. Do you think he would trouble his head about us?"

"Are the niggers in these parts cannibals, Peter?" asked Kerr.

The sailorman grinned.

"I guess they are," he said. "They're pretty sure to be, sir. Those black fellows will eat their prisoners, as a matter of fact. It's their way."

Tom Merry shuddered.

"We cannot be sure," he said.

"Ay, ay, sir; it's sure enough!"

Tom Merry did not reply. The thought of it was heavy and painful to his mind. If the islanders were savages—if they were going to murder their prisoner and devour him—could the juniors abstain from interference? The Spaniard was their bitter foe, but—

A red glare from the distance lighted up the sky, and cast a strange reflection upon the moonlit heavens. The red flame light danced on the branches of the trees; the flare came from beyond the forest, in the direction the islanders had taken.

"What on earth's that?" Figgins exclaimed.

"The forest on fire!"

"It ain't," said Peter Raff. "It's a fire in the village—the place where those brown devils hang out."

"Some celebration, I suppose?"

The sailorman grinned.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Tom Merry sharply. "Do you think the fire has anything to do with their having captured Lopez?"

"I'd better not say, sir."

"Tell me!"

"Well, I reckon the fire's lighted to cook him, sir," said Peter Raff. "But what matter? It was his own business; he should have kept to the felucca. He landed to murder some of us in the dark."

"Very likely; but——"

"Look here, Raff," said Blake abruptly. "I suppose you know the customs of these horrible brutes! If they eat their prisoners——"

"They do that, sir."

"Do they torture them?"

Peter Raff was silent.

"What do you say, Peter?"

"Well, sir, the man might be dead before they cook him, or—or he mightn't," said the sailorman reluctantly.

"There's no telling."

Tom Merry gave a horrified start.

"Do you mean that they might roast him alive?" he cried.

"I s'pose they might."

"Gwreat Scott!" muttered D'Arcy, with the perspiration



Crack, crack, crack! "Charge!" shouted Tom Merry. The juniors rushed towards the fire, blazing away with their revolvers. With yells of terror, the savages dropped Pablo Lopez instantly as some of them fell from the bullets of the determined attackers.

running down his face. "The howwid wottahs! I—I say, Tom Mewwy, we can't stand this."

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally. "We shall have to chip in."

"We must," said Tom Merry. "If the brutes treat their prisoners like that, they ought to be shot down like mad dogs. It's all rot to say that their training doesn't teach them any better; they must know perfectly well that they are wicked beasts. If Lopez were ten times as bad as he is, I wouldn't stand by and allow that."

"Wathah not!"

"Hold on, sir!" said Peter Raff. "There's one thing that you've forgotten, Master Tom."

"What's that?"

"There are a dozen of us," said Peter, with a troubled look. "But there may be hundreds of the cannibals, sir. And if they get the better of us, we shan't save that Spanish brute, sir; but we shall get served the same as him."

The juniors exchanged glances. The danger was terrible—the price of failure was enough to give them pause—death, perhaps the most terrible of deaths. But to the credit of the St. Jim's juniors, be it said, the pause was but momentary.

"I don't care," said Tom Merry determinedly. "I believe we shall be more than a match for them, with the firearms; anyway, we're going to try."

"Yes, rather!"

"March on, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "I suppose I had bettah take the lead, deah boys—"

"I suppose you hadn't," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on," said Tom Merry, and he started off with his rifle under his arm. And the juniors followed him fast.

The red glare in the sky was growing redder, brighter. It was evident that a tremendous fire must have been lighted at the savage village.

The red glare lighted up the wood as the juniors plunged into it, and it guided them on their way. They had no other indication of the direction of the savages' town, but the glare over the trees was sufficient.

For a great distance they threaded their way through the dusty aisles of the forest. The trees gave place to a wide clearing at last—a level glade, with trees in the distance beyond the green level.

In the glade was a collection of rude huts, and on the open ground outside the village a huge fire was blazing away, fed by logs and branches. Round the fire wild, dark figures danced amid unearthly, unmusical yells.

It was a strange and terrible scene, and the juniors, gazing at it from the edge of the wood, stood spellbound.

CHAPTER 14.

Saved From the Cannibals!

JACK BLAKE grasped Tom Merry's arm with one hand and pointed with the other.

"Look!" he muttered.

It was the Spaniard.

Close by the fire—so close that the sweat was running down his dark skin from the heat of it—lay the dwarf.

The juniors were near enough to see his features, and to make out the play of emotion in the dark and savage face.

Lopez lay upon the ground, his hands and feet tied tightly with hide—so tightly that the bonds evidently caused him pain.

His face was deadly white through the dusk of the skin, and his black eyes gleamed with horrible fear.

It was clear that he knew that he was doomed; that he had no hope of rescue; that every nerve in his body was quivering with terror of his doom.

Ruffian as he was, and merciless enemy, the juniors could not help feeling a sentiment of pity as they watched his ghastly face and read the fear and anguish there.

For a long time the dance continued, the savages working themselves up to a higher and higher pitch of wild and frenzied excitement.

Suddenly the dance ceased.

A rush was made for the Spaniard, and he was lifted from the ground in the arms of several of the savages. Man Friday could be seen driving a stake into the ground close to the blaze of the fire.

The heat drove him back, sweating and panting. But it was plain what the stake was for. It was to secure the prisoner.

The Spaniard was to be roasted. There was no doubt about it. The juniors were sick with horror as they watched.

The dwarf was dragged towards the fire, and one of the cannibals had looped a rope to fasten him there quickly, so that his captors could recede from the heat.

Tom Merry raised his rifle.

"Shoot!" he muttered. "Shoot at their legs; we must not kill if it can be helped."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Spaniard was shrieking with fear. His shrieks were answered by savage yells and cries from the cannibals.

Crack-ack-ack-ack!

From the wood came a sudden burst of firing.

Crack, crack, crack!

The juniors blazed away fiercely.

They aimed low, to avoid killing if possible. But it was no time to stand too much upon ceremony.

Crack, crack!

The savages who were holding the Spaniard let him drop instantly, and he rolled on the ground. Cannibals were falling on all sides—some of them struck by the bullets, some in sheer terror.

Crack, crack, crack!

"Charge!" shouted Tom Merry.

The juniors rushed towards the fire, still blazing away with the revolvers. With yells of terror, the savages fled.

In a frenzied horde they went dashing into the village, and through it, and away to the forest beyond, sending back affrighted yells.

Tom Merry stopped by the Spaniard. Lopez looked at him, dazed with astonishment. Tom opened his knife and cut the hide that secured the Spaniard's feet.

"Come!" he muttered.

"Loose my hands!" muttered Lopez.

"Your hands will do very well as they are," said Tom Merry curtly.

"But, seniorito—"

"Come!"

Tom Merry dragged the Spaniard up.

"Let's get off!" he exclaimed. "They may rally, and there are hordes of them. We'd better be gone before they come back!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And with the rescued Spaniard in their midst, the juniors ran into the wood. They left more than a dozen savages on the ground. Some of them were wounded, some only scared to stupefaction. Whether any were dead the juniors did not stop to look; it was better not to know. But they hoped not.

At a run they plunged on through the wood, and back the way they had come.

The Spaniard ran with them. He was as anxious as the juniors could be to get away from the vicinity of the cannibals.

That the cannibals would rally when their first fright was over Tom Merry felt certain, and he was right.

Before the fugitives were half-way to the shore, they heard savage yells behind, and in the red glare that fell among the trees dark forms could be seen moving swiftly.

"They're after us!" panted Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked back and grasped his rifle.

"Look after Lopez," he said.

"Right-ho!"

Crack!

The nearest of the cannibals jumped into the air, with a terrific yell, as a bullet struck him in the leg. He came down with a crash and lay groaning.

There was a howl from the others, and they gathered round the fallen man, looking at him in wonder, evidently quite at a loss to account for his fall and his wound. They did not understand yet the weapon Tom Merry carried; but they understood enough to terrify them.

Leaving the wounded man where he had fallen, the horde of them bolted back towards the village.

The juniors tramped on towards the shore at a more moderate pace.

They came out into the bright moonlight there.

The Spaniard stopped, panting, white, the prey of conflicting emotions. Even his hard and wicked heart could not be wholly insensible to what the juniors had done for him.

Tom Merry looked at him sternly.

"We have saved your life, Lopez," he said; "but you will remain a prisoner. You understand that?"

The Spaniard nodded.

"We are going to take your felucca and leave the island. You can remain here, or come with us as a prisoner, as you prefer."

"Loose me—"

"We shall do nothing of the kind. You are too dangerous a villain to be let loose," said Tom Merry curtly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why did you save me, then?" the Spaniard exclaimed, unable to control his curiosity. "Why did you rescue me from the savages?"

"Because they were savages," said Tom Merry quietly. "We could not leave our worst enemy in their hands so long as there was a chance of saving him. But I don't suppose you would understand our motives, anyway."

"It was a case of noblesse oblige, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "We shouldn't expect you to do anything of the sort, but we were bound to do it."

"I am grateful," said the Spaniard. "If you loose me I will promise—"

Tom Merry interrupted him with a gesture.

"Nonsense. We shall maroon you on this island, or take you a prisoner on board the felucca. Which do you prefer?"

Lopez gritted his teeth.

"The felucca," he said. "I do not wish to be left alone here to be devoured by the cannibals."

"Very well!"

"The sooner we get on board the better," said Blake. "Those black villains are certain to come prowling around again; and if they once get over their fear of the firearms, there are enough of them to eat us."

"Yaas, wathah! Buck up, deah boys!"

"Where is your boat, Lopez?" asked Tom Merry.

The Spaniard did not reply.

"We shall take your boat, and when we get near the felucca, you will order your men to admit us on board, without any trickery," said Tom Merry sternly.

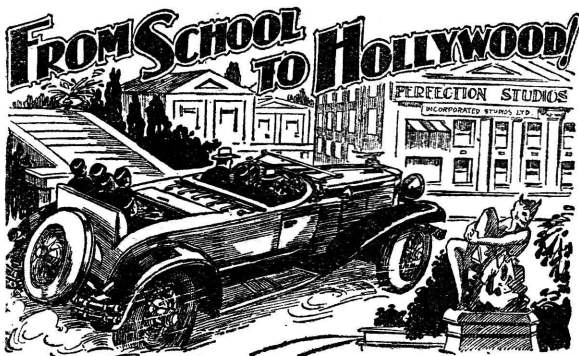
"I am willing to make terms, seniorito—"

"You are not in a position to make terms. You will take orders, Lopez—or else you will be left here for the cannibals."

"Better leave him," muttered Peter Raff.

"I will obey you, seniorito," said Lopez, between his teeth. "The boat is by the rocks here; it shall be as you say."

"Come on, you fellows!"



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In a few minutes the juniors were at the skiff. It was not large enough for all of them, and six of them went on board it with Lopez—Tom Merry, Figgins, Kerr, Lowther, Blake, and Kangaroo.

They pulled out to the felucca, which lay glimmering on the bay in the moonlight.

Tom Merry's grasp closed on Lopez's shoulder.

"You will speak in Spanish," he said. "But if there is a trick, you go over the side, bound as you are—on my word!"

But there was no trickery. The staring black faces looked over the side, and the Spaniard growled out an order, and the juniors were helped on board by the negroes.

The black seamen stared at seeing their captain a prisoner, and the juniors were quite prepared for any attempt at a rescue, but none was made. The negroes were not armed; probably the Spaniard did not trust them with weapons. He could not have been a popular skipper, and if he had once taken the gold aboard his life would not have been safe with an armed crew.

The Spaniard was bound to the mast for security, and then the skiff was sent back with Figgins in it to fetch the rest of the party. Ten minutes later they were all on the deck of the felucca.

CHAPTER 15.

Picked Up!

TOM MERRY & Co. were very wakeful that night. The exciting adventures they had passed through left them in little humour for sleep. And there was always a danger of an attack from the cannibals.

During the night, at intervals, they saw moving forms on the shore in the moonlight, and heard loud and savage yells. The cannibals had mastered courage to follow them as far as the bay. But they did not attempt to swim to the felucca, and morning dawned upon the Pacific without any attack having been made.

With morning the islanders disappeared from sight, streaming away through the wood.

Tom Merry rubbed his eyes.

"They're gone," he said. "Time we were gone, too. No need to stay here any longer, except for—"

"The treasure," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And the coconuts," said Fatty Wynn. "I don't know how this craft is provisioned, but a boatload of coconuts would be a good idea."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Right you are, Fatty! And we'll see how the water is, too. We want to take as much of that as we can."

"I wonder what the niggers are gone for, though?" Kangaroo remarked thoughtfully. "They've certainly got their backs up now, and want to get at us. I doubt if even a free gift of Gussy, to be used as a tribal god, would appease them."

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"I think I can give you a guess," said Kerr quietly. "I expect they have canoes somewhere—perhaps on the other side of the island—and they may be gone for them. If we stay here much longer we may have a crowd of canoes about us."

"Bai Jove!"

"Very likely," said Tom Merry. "Most likely, in fact. We'll get out to sea the moment we can. Let's overhaul the felucca and see how we're off for supplies."

That did not take long. They found that Lopez had provisioned himself well for the voyage, and that there need be no anxiety on that score.

The water was running low; but that could easily be renewed at the stream in the bay. The juniors set to work at once. And Tom Merry, finding that the black sailors understood a few words in English, gave them orders, which they obeyed cheerfully enough.

Peter Raff added orders in Spanish, and by the promptness with which he was obeyed, it is probable that he added threats in that unknown tongue.

An hour or more was occupied in bringing the water on board, and a load of coconuts was brought by special request of Fatty Wynn. Then it was a question of removing the treasure.

Pablo Lopez heard the juniors discussing the matter, and his black eyes gleamed and glittered as he listened. He was to sail with the gold on his felucca at last; but it was as a prisoner in the hands of his rivals, and the gold was not his. But perhaps the Spaniard had not given up hope yet.

The juniors kept a sharp look-out for the savages while they uncovered the great chest in the sand. It was taken into the little skiff, weighing it deeply down, and rowed

off to the felucca. Getting it on board was a difficult task enough, but with all hands to work it was managed, and the great chest was dumped down on the deck.

The Spaniard's eyes seemed almost to start from his head as he looked at it.

"Senorito," he said huskily, "is that the treasure?"

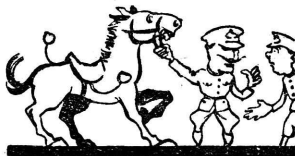
"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"May I see it, senorito? I beg of you—"

"Very well; when we are at sea."

There was a sudden shout from Kerr.

WELL MATCHED!



Sergeant: "Did you ever ride a horse before?"

Recruit: "No, sir."

Sergeant: "Ah, here's just the animal for you! He has never been ridden—you can start learning together!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Cragg, Church Bridge, Upwell, near Wisbech, Cambs.

"Look out!"
"What is it?"
"Canoes!"

Round the point of land at the head of the bay a canoe had appeared with a dozen savages in it paddling. Another and another followed.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "We're only just in time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I think we could keep them off; but there won't be any need of shooting now. Up with the anchor!"

The anchor was hauled up, and the black sailors, under Peter Raff's loud orders, set the huge sails.

The keen breeze caught the canvas, and the felucca moved like a great bird out into the bay.

There was a loud yell from the canoes. A dozen or more had come into sight in a few minutes, and the savages were paddling their hardest to cover the distance. They were trying to cut off the felucca from the open sea, but it would have gone hard with them if they had. The juniors stood with firearms ready, in case the canoes should come too near.

But they did not.

The great lateen sails bellied out in the wind, and the felucca tore through the water. The nearest canoe was fifty yards away when the felucca passed and swept out to sea, leaving the cannibals yelling and waving their spears in savage disappointment.

The islanders paddled after the felucca, apparently in some hope of overtaking her; but in five minutes or less the last canoe was out of sight astern.

The island itself was fading down to the sea.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"Once more upon the waters," quoted Kerr. "My hat! How this craft gets along!"

"She sails well, sir," said Peter Raff. "And I think I shall get on well with these niggers, sir. They know how to obey orders, and they're tame enough."

"Senoritos!"

"Hallo!"

"You promised to let me see the treasure."

"Very well," said Tom Merry.

The great chest was opened. Pablo Lopez stared with straining eyes at the great gold bars and gold ingots, the rolls and heaps of coins. A strange pallor showed through the dusk of his skin.

"Dios!" he muttered. "Dios!"

"Are you satisfied?" said Tom Merry.

"Gracias, senoritos!"

"It would not be a bad idea to fill our pockets with some of that stuff, in case of accidents," said Kerr. "What about taking a handful of these big doubloons each. If anything happened to the felucca that chest would go down like a stone."

"Jolly good idea!"

And the jolly good idea was carried out.

The juniors filled their pockets with gold doubloons, and so whatever happened to the treasure they were certain of saving something. And the fate of the great chest was very dubious, for storms were sudden and violent in the Pacific, and the felucca was a small craft to traverse that wild waste of waters.

The juniors looked back towards the island. It had vanished into the blue sea and sky. Round them was the Pacific once more. The Spaniard, stirring uneasily in his bonds, called out to Tom Merry:

"Senorito! Do you intend to keep me trussed up like this? I am cramped in every limb!"

The juniors consulted on the subject. It certainly was not safe to let the Spaniard loose, yet to keep him bound to the mast throughout the voyage was impossible. There were no manacles on board the felucca.

They decided finally to release him, but to keep his hands shackled to his sides, the rope loose enough to allow him to eat, but not to untie himself. This was managed at last, and the Spaniard, sullen and savage, was allowed to move about as he wished. His black looks did not trouble the juniors. As Blake said, his teeth were drawn.

Sailing the felucca did not prove a difficult task, and the black sailors obeyed Peter Raff's orders as they had obeyed the Spaniard.

The day passed in perfect calmness, the felucca speeding along before a strong breeze. It was towards sunset that Kerr, who was standing in the bows, was observed to have his gaze fixed attentively upon a spot on the blue horizon. Tom Merry joined him.

"What are you looking at, Kerr?"

"There's something yonder," said the Scots junior. "It might be a whale or seaweed, but—"

"But what—"

"It might be a boat."

Tom Merry started.

The course of the felucca was changed a little to bring her directly upon the unknown object. The juniors crowded in the bows, watching. The thought that it was a boat, that it might be Lord Conway's boat, was in every mind.

Tom Merry's idea had been to get to the nearest port in New Zealand, and then send vessels in search of the missing boat, for money would have been spent like water in the search for Lord Conway, and the juniors would gladly have devoted every ounce of the treasure to the task of finding him and rescuing him and his companions.

"It's a boat!" Digby exclaimed.

It was a boat, certainly. As the felucca drew nearer they could make out a ragged signal flying from the mast. The sail was in tatters; the boat had evidently been through rough usage.

Tom Merry scanned it with his binoculars, and made out several forms in the boat, most of them lying down.

"A shipwrecked crew, anyway," he said quietly.

The felucca raced on.

In the distant boat a man was seen to jump up and wave his hand frantically. He had evidently seen the sail. Then, after a few moments, the boat was put before the wind, the ragged sail bellied out, and the boat flew away from the felucca as fast as she could sail.

Tom Merry was puzzled for a moment.

"What on earth does that mean?" he exclaimed. "They are turning their backs on us."

"It means that it's Lord Conway's party," said Kerr quietly. "They recognise the felucca, and think it's Pablo Lopez after them."

"Bai Jove!"

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"Why, of course!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Well, we shall run them down under half an hour, that's a comfort."

The felucca was tearing through the water. She sailed four lengths to the boat's one, and the race was only a matter of time. Soon the juniors could see the occupants of the boat, and Lord Conway's tall form was recognised standing by the sail. Herries could be seen lying on a rag of canvas in the stern. Mr. Dodds was at the tiller. The seamen of the Silver Scud were there, and the juniors counted them anxiously, and were relieved to count up the full number.

They shouted to the boat, but for a long time the wind carried away their voices; but suddenly Lord Conway, who was looking back towards the felucca, was observed to give a start. He had seen the juniors waving to him, and understood that matters were not as he had supposed on board the felucca.

The boat swung round.

A few minutes more, and the felucca ran close beside the drifting boat. Tom Merry shouted out over the side:

"Ahoy, there! St. Jim's to the rescue!"

"Thank Heaven!" said Lord Conway.

CHAPTER 16.

Lopez's Last Blow!

IT did not take long for the castaways to clamber on board. They were in a terribly emaciated condition. They had not, as Lord Conway said, come to the end of their provisions yet, but they had been on short rations of both food and water, and it had told upon them.

The juniors gathered round Herries, and D'Arcy offered to carry him down to a cabin. Herries glared at him.

"Do you think I can't walk?" he demanded.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"And how the dickens are you going to carry me when I'm twice as big as you are?" Herries inquired.

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort, Hewwies. You are a little fattah and clumsier, I know, but you are not taller, and I could cawvy you quite easily."

"Ass!" said Herries.

"Weally, you chump—"

"Hallo! Rowing already?" asked Mr. Dodds.

"Oh, that's all right! That's only Gussy's way of welcoming a long lost chum!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, you ass—"

Herries was helped down to the cabin. He was really very weak, though nothing would have induced him to admit it. Fatty Wynn, who always had a ready eye for very important matters of this sort, spread the table with every delicacy that the felucca's lazarette could muster. Herries began to eat.

The others were well looked after, too, but, naturally, Herries was the lion. Any number of grown-up people could not, of course, be considered as being of as much importance as a chap in the Fourth.

"Well, I must say that this takes the cake!" Lord Conway said, as he looked at the treasure chest and then at the shackled Spaniard, and glanced up and down the felucca. "You seem to have scored all along the line, you youngsters. Next time I set out on a voyage for treasure I shall ask the Head of St. Jim's to send me a junior to take command."

"Bai Jove, that wouldn't be a bad ideah!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I should be vewy pleased, Conway, deah boy!"

And the juniors roared.

The rescued crew crowded the felucca somewhat; but, with Lord Conway in command, and plenty of hands to do the work, the little craft was undoubtedly safer.

Tom Merry willingly resigned the command to the viscount.

Lord Conway was a good navigator, and he fell into his new duties at once. Day after day the felucca glided on with fair winds and a cheerful crew. The expedition, after so many adventures and vicissitudes, was turning out a splendid success, but the end had yet to come.

The Spaniard had fallen into a quite sullen humour, and he moved about the ship with downcast face and silent lips.

After a couple of days the man was allowed the freedom of his limbs. There were so many Englishmen on board that it was absurd to think that he would attempt any desperate move for regaining possession of the felucca, and he was not allowed a chance of getting at any weapons.

Disappointment and chagrin seemed to have an effect upon him, and on the fourth day he took to his bunk, and did not leave it. He lay there through the sunny hours, eating little, and speaking not at all. To a sick man the juniors were disposed to be kind, even after all his villainies; but the Spaniard spoke no word to them.

(Continued on page 28.)

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The Call From Arizona!

MANY happy returns, Handy!" Edward Oswald Handforth's health was drunk with enthusiasm and considerable noise. Ginger pop and lemonade flowed freely, and the table in Study D, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's, groaned under an astonishing assortment of rich and indigestible-looking eatables.

It was a big occasion, Handforth's birthday. His father had sent him a big tip in cash, and his mother had sent him a big hamper. Various doting aunts had "come across" handsomely, so the burly Removite was well away.

"Buck up with the feed, my sons," said Handforth cheerfully. "As soon as tea's over we're going to the pictures in Bannington. It's my treat, and I'm paying all exes."

"Good old Handy!"

"Pass the sausage rolls, somebody!"

Handforth beamed upon his guests. Nothing pleased him better than to be the "big noise" of any party—and, incidentally, he generally was. At the moment he was thoroughly enjoying himself. The company was small, but select. In addition to his own study-mates, Church and McClure, the others were Nipper, the popular Removite captain, and his chums, Tregellis-West and Watson; Archie Glenhorne, Vivian Travers, and Justin B. Farman. The last-named was the only "outsider"—for, whilst the rest were Ancient House fellows, Farman belonged to the West House.

But there was a good and sufficient reason for the American boy's inclusion in the birthday party. After the Sky Wanderer's last adventurous trip—the great dirigible was now being overhauled and refitted—the airship schoolboys had arrived back at St. Frank's to find that Farman had blossomed out into a fellow of some importance. It seemed that one of his uncles had died and had left him a big cattle ranch in Arizona; and Farman had promptly declared that he would spend the summer vacation "out West," on his own ranch. Everybody in the Lower School was living in hopes of an invitation; so Farman's popularity stood, at the moment, was soaring.

Not that Handforth had invited the American junior to the birthday party as a sprat to catch a mackerel. Hand-

forth had already been invited to the ranch, and Church and McClure were included, too.

At present, Farman's millionaire father had gone to the ranch to "take over" on his son's behalf; and a recent letter from Farman senior had contained the disturbing information that things were not as they should be at Ghost River.

However, Farman's ranch was not under discussion on this bright, sunny, mid-April afternoon. The summer holidays were a long way off—and Handforth's birthday was not only a big event, but a matter of immediate moment.

"Everybody happy?" asked Edward Oswald genially. "Try some of those chocolate thingummyjigs, Archie; they're great! After the picture show we're going to have a special feed at the Japanese cafe—"

"After this?" gurgled Nipper.

"We shall be hungry again by then," replied Handforth, grinning. "It's all fixed. I've got special permits for all of us, and we're going to have a regular beano!"

"What about the expense?" asked McClure, in a pained voice.

"Blow the expense!" laughed Handforth. "What the dickens is money for, anyway? Birthdays only come once a year—Hi! Go easy there, fathead!" he roared. "Clear off! No admission!"

Somebody was trying to barge in, and the study was so full that two of the guests had their chairs tight against the door. But the door gave a heave, and a red face appeared.

"Is that young ass, Farman, here?" asked the face. "Somebody told me—Yes, there you are! You're wanted, Farman!"

The face belonged to Morrow of the Sixth—a prefect of the West House—otherwise an assortment of food might have been hurled at it. Prefects had to be respected.

"Aw, shucks!" protested Farman. "Have a heart, Morrow!"

Morrow was breathing quite hard.

"Do you think I like chasing about all over the school for you?" he demanded. "I only did it because you're urgently wanted on the telephone. I hope you're in a fit condition to walk!" he added, after a comprehensive survey of the feast.

"Play the game, Morrow," said Handforth warmly. "This is a birthday party—my birthday party. Farman can't be bothered about a silly telephone call—"

"Can't be bothered!" roared Morrow. "It's the Atlantic telephone, you young idiot!"

"Atlantic telephone!" repeated everybody, in one voice. "It's costing somebody about a quid a minute," said Morrow, not without relish. "So if you waste any more time, Farman—"

"Gee!" yelled Farman. "It must be my dad!"

He jumped on his chair, took two strides across the table, and a moment later he had performed the apparently impossible, and had squeezed himself out into the passage.

"Where?" he asked breathlessly.

"Mr. Wilkes' study—the phone's switched through," said Morrow, smiling at the American junior's eager excitement.

Farman raced to the Housemaster's study, and Old Wilkey, having surrendered the telephone, thoughtfully left him in sole possession of the room.

"Hallo!" said Farman, his voice trembling.

"Say, son, I thought you were never coming," came a clear, bluff voice over the wires. "It's sure good to hear your voice."

"And yours, dad!" gasped Farman. "Where are you? In Bannington? You sound so near—"

"So near, and yet so far, eh?" chuckled his father. "No, son, I'm in Arizona, on this doggone ranch of yours!"

"But that's impossible," protested the junior. "You can't be over five thousand miles away, dad! Not trying to kid me, are you? I believe you're right here, speaking from another House of the school."

"Listen, young man," said "Big Jim" Farman. "This telephone call is costing me plenty, and I don't aim to pay fancy charges while you yap about the wonders of a modern invention. I'm right here in Arizona, and that's on the level."

"Gee, dad, I'm sorry—I sure thought you were fooling," said Farman. "But what's the racket?"

"I'm through, that's all!" came his father's voice, with a sudden grim note in it. "I'm finished. But this is your ranch, and your signature is needed."

"But—but I don't understand."

"All you've got to do is to get in touch with my London lawyers—not later than to-morrow," came the voice. "They'll get you to sign the authorisation for the selling of this property. I want to be quit of it as soon as possible, and—"

"But I don't agree, dad!" protested Farman hotly.

"Say, son, I know what's best—"

"Gee, listen, dad!" urged the junior. "I've invited a bunch of the boys along for the summer vacation!"

"Well, I guess it's up to you to hold everything," said his father. "Ghost River Ranch has got me licked, son. Foreman after foreman quits, and the hands desert regular. They just go—without leaving a trace. There's rustlers around this country, too, and altogether it's a mighty bad spot. I'm for selling out—"

"Listen, dad," said Justin B. Farman, squaring his jaw. "Can't I come out there right now? It's my ranch, and I sure hate giving it up—before I've even seen it. Maybe I could bring a bunch of fellows along, too. We'd kind of liven things up some."

"Say, it's not a bad idea at that," came Mr. Farman's voice. "I'm sure lonely out here, and a crowd of you kids would make a heap of difference. Maybe it could be fixed. Gosh darn it, I like your spirit, boy, and I'd sure hate to disappoint you. It's your ranch, and I guess it's only right that you should come out here and see what's doing. Can you switch me through to your headmaster?"

"Easily, dad!"

"Then get going, and while I'm talking to him, you tote yourself around to his quarters so that you'll be on hand in case I want another word with you. All set? Let her go!"

The Head, getting that call, was exceedingly startled by this example of characteristic American hustle. Justin B. Farman, meanwhile, found Handforth and one or two other juniors awaiting him in the passage.

"Anything wrong?" asked Handforth, with concern.

"I guess not," said Farman, his eyes burning. "Say, you don't know the half of it! I'll be right back!"

He pushed past, and ran down the corridor like the wind.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Handforth, staring.

Farman tore across the Triangle, sped through Big Arch, and his progress across Inner Court to the headmaster's house caused many a senior to stare in horror. Such rapid and undignified movement within these sacred precincts was almost unforgivable.

Farman was breathless when he was ushered into the Head's study.

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"You will make all the necessary arrangements, then, Mr. Farman?" the Head was saying. "Very well; in the circumstances I will grant them the necessary leave of absence. The consent of the parents will be essential, of course."

Farman waited, seething with excitement.

"Yes, he's here now," said the Head pleasantly. He motioned to the junior, and Farman took the phone.

"All set, Junior," came his father's voice. "Maybe it's a good idea of yours to come out here. I'll sure be glad to see you, and it'll tickle me to see how you'll handle the situation."

"Gee, dad, I don't want you to think I'm full of 'Smart Alec' ideas—"

"Forget it!" interrupted his father. "This is your ranch, and it's up to you to get busy. Your headmaster says you can bring six of your buddies, and my London lawyers will take care of you. There's a liner sails in two days, and I'll have a plane at New York so that you'll fly straight out here. It's all set, son, and I'll be sure pleased to see you in ten days from now."

Farman scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels when he hung up. To-day he was in quiet, placid St. Frank's; in little over a week he would be on that far distant Arizona ranch!

"Rather sudden, eh?" asked the Head, with a smile.

"I've sure got to thank you a heap, sir—" began Farman.

"Don't thank me; thank Mr. Lee here!" put in the Head. "He has generously undertaken to escort you to New York, and see you safely aboard the plane which your father is chartering."

For the first time, Farman realised that Nelson Lee was in the room.

"Luck is with you, Farman," said the great detective. "Since there is nothing for me to do whilst the Sky Wanderer is being refitted for her next trip, I have accepted a commission—a forgery case, in fact—which takes me to New York. My passage is booked on the Britannia, which sails from Southampton on Friday. I expect to be in New York for some weeks—so it may mean that I shall accompany you home."

"Dad told me I can take six of the fellows with me, sir," said Farman eagerly. "I guess Nipper has your permission?"

"I imagine Nipper will be highly delighted," said Nelson Lee dryly. "Yes, Farman, as Nipper's guardian, I give you my consent."

"This—er—hustle is somewhat disturbing," put in the headmaster. "You had better select your other friends quickly, Farman, so that their parents can be approached."

"Leave it to me, sir," said Farman, with assurance.

He was glad to get out into the open air, for he was feeling a bit dizzy. In the Triangle he found Edward Oswald Handforth and his birthday guests, and the burly Removito was looking impatient.

"What's the idea of all this dashing about?" he demanded truculently. "I've been waiting for you, Farman. We ought to have been in Bannington by this time—"

"Bannington's off!" interrupted Farman.

"Oh, is it? You silly American ass—"

"Listen, Handy! We've only got this evening and to-morrow for packing," said Justin B. Farman. "The boat sails on Friday."

"Packing?" repeated Handforth blankly. "Boat? What boat?"

"I'm going to Arizona—to that ranch of mine—and if you'd like to come with me, you're sure welcome," said Farman. "My dad's paying all the exes—"

"Are you dotty?" broke in Handforth darkly. "If you're trying to be funny—"

It took Farman nearly five solid minutes to convince the juniors that he was in deadly earnest; then they nearly went off their heads with excitement and joy.

"Arizona!" said Handforth dreamily. "Cowboys—Redskins—desperadoes from the Bad Lands!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a bit out of date, Handy," grinned Church. "Arizona, in these days, is as peaceful and law-abiding as Sussex!"

"I wouldn't be so sure of that, chum," said Farman seriously. "My dad didn't say much, but he hinted a whole heap. Maybe we shan't find Ghost River Ranch so peaceful at that!"

He looked thoughtfully at the Removites.

"Well, I guess I can take six of you along," he went on. "It's dead easy. You're with me, Nipper, and so are you, Handforth. I guess Church and McClure can't be left behind; they'd be kind of lost by themselves. How about you, Archie? I'd be sure glad to have you?"

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorne, agitatedly adjusting



Numbering a full dozen, the horsemen, clothed in black from head to foot, rode at a hard gallop towards the St. Frank's Juniors, firing as they came. "Run!" gasped Farman. "They're the Black Riders, and they're out to get us!"

his monacle. "I mean to say, cowboys, and all that sort of thing! What-ho! A most frightfully attractive outlook, old thing."

"Well, that's fine," said Farman. "I've chosen you guys because there's likely to be no trouble with your parents. I guess they'll say 'Yes' at the first time of asking. But what about the sixth? Say, I'll take your young brother, Handy."

"Willy!" ejaculated Handforth, with a start. "We don't want that young fathhead! Still, he's better than any of these silly Removites," he added, pulling himself up with a jerk. "I dare say my people would like me to take him along, too. It's a bet, Farman."

Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson were very grieved, but it turned out that there was little or no hope of their people consenting to the trip; so they resigned themselves to remaining at St. Frank's.

As soon as the news got round there was a great clamour in the Remove and the Fourth. Everybody wanted to go. But Justin B. Farman had permission to take six, and six only; and he had already selected the lucky ones.

Thereafter there was much hectic activity; telegrams and telephone messages to parents; packing, and a hundred and one other things.

The time sped like lightning, and on Friday they took their leave of St. Frank's—bound for Arizona and adventure!

The "Hoodoo" Ranch!

BIG JIM FARMAN stood on the veranda of the big, sprawling ranch-house. In front of him, almost as far as the eye could see, rolling grasslands stretched far and wide down Ghost River Valley. The visibility was so good on this sunny April morning that the dense trees of the foothills were visible, like blue smoke, in the far distance. Beyond them rose rugged mountain peaks, sombre and majestic.

It was one of the loneliest spots imaginable, for there were no other buildings within sight, except the many barns and sheds which were clustered round the ranch-house. In the corrals near by were a considerable number of horses, and a few cowboys could be seen leisurely attending to their morning duties.

Mr. Farman, a big, bluff man, held a telegram in his hand. It had just been brought in from Fortune City by one of the ranch hands.

"Everything going fine," ran the wire. "Expect to make Ghost River by sundown.—JUSTIN."

"Good going," murmured Mr. Farman approvingly. "That plane will make it, too."

The telegram was the last of many he had received from his son; one from Southampton at the hour of the liner's sailing; another from mid-Atlantic; a third from New York, upon landing; a fourth just prior to the plane's take-off from Roosevelt Field; yet another from somewhere in Ohio.

Mr. Farman looked up at the clear sky; in his mind's eye he pictured the great plane winging its way ever westward, carrying his son and the six other St. Frank's fellows. By nightfall they would be here—and Ghost River Ranch would be all the better for their presence.

For, truth to tell, Big Jim was depressed and despondent. He had not brought his wife and daughter to Arizona—for his own home, his own great ranch, was in California. He had come here, in the first place, merely to "take over" on his son's behalf and to get the ranch shipshape. But shock after shock had assailed him—until, indeed, he had decided that the better course was to sell out.

Justin B., however, had vetoed that—and his father was pleased enough with the boy's determined spirit. Secretly he was sure that "junior" would soon find that he had bitten off more than he could chew, and the experience would do him good.

News had come in this morning that another thirty head of steers had mysteriously vanished. They had gone without leaving a trace, as though they had evaporated into thin air. The trouble at Ghost River Ranch was that there was nothing tangible to go upon; uncannily mysterious things were constantly happening, but there was no logical explanation. That rustlers were at work seemed certain, but it had been impossible to identify them, or even discover how they disposed of the stolen herds.

"This hyar ranch is sure 'hoodoo,' boss," said the foreman, when he came to the ranch-house a little later with Big Jim's horse. "I ain't figgerin' to be superstitious, but this outfit has sure got my goat. Them steers was right on the range yesterday at sundown. This morning they've gone. I 'lows I'm kinder beat."

"It's a queer business, Square-deal," nodded Mr. Farman. "You said it, boss!" said Square-deal Reeve, twisting his bronzed, clean-shaven face into a grimace. "I guess I'm hankerin' to get quit of this doggone outfit. 'Tain't healthy hereabouts, if you ask me. No, sir! 'Tain't only the ranch that's hoodoo but the hull darned valley!"

"Yet there must be some logical explanation," said Big Jim, frowning. "You're not going to have me believe that the ranch is haunted, Square-deal. What about the Black Riders? I guess they're the cause of all the trouble."

The cowpuncher shifted his "chew" from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Mebbe they is and mebbe they ain't," he replied. "But who are these Black Riders, anyway? Whar do they come from, and whar do they go to?"

"Sheriff Dixon would give a heap to know that," said Mr. Farman. "He's a mighty worried man these days and likely enough to be fired from his job. We hear about the Black Riders, and some folks say they've seen 'em—but they only ride on the darkest of nights."

"Black ghosts flittin' through a city of ghost buildings," said Square-deal Reeve impressively. "Tain't no good foolin' yourself, boss; we're up against the kinder trouble that we ornery men can't handle. Axing your pardon, but I'm figgerin' that you ain't shooting straight with the kid. Tain't kinda right to bring him out here with them buddies of his. This ain't no location for sech baby-faced tenderfeet!"

"This ranch belongs to Junior, and he wanted to come," said Mr. Farman almost grimly. "It'll do him good, Square-deal."

"Waal, mebbe you're right at that, boss," said the foreman, with a sudden grin. "Young folks, nowadays, kinda fancy themselves, don't they?"

"That's exactly the point," said Big Jim, nodding. "When my son arrives to-night, Square-deal, he'll be boss. Do you get that? You'll take orders from him. We grown men have had as much of this blamed ranch as we can stand, and we're ready to quit. Well, we'll see what the kids can do."

"Boss," said Square-deal Reeve admiringly, "I sure get you good and plenty!"

Mr. Farman, during his ride into "town," smiled more than once at the foreman's words. It was true enough that Big Jim was determined to surrender the ranch into his son's hands for one object only. The boy, with the sublime confidence of youth, believed that he could run the outfit, in spite of the sinister influences which were at work. Well, Justin was of the age when it would do him good to be taken down a peg or two. He and his schoolboy companions should have a free hand—and good luck to them! But Mr. Farman had no doubt as to the outcome. He gave his son three weeks at the outside. Twenty-one days of this hoodoo country would be enough, and then Justin would be willing to sell for any price he could get.

Mr. Farman himself was a strong man, and a fighter, too; but he saw no reason for hanging on to this desolate Arizona ranch. The whole of Ghost River Valley was a place of desolation and gloom and eeriness. The blue skies and the rolling grasslands could not compensate for the other things.

A turn of the trail, round rolling hills, brought Fortune City into sight. It was the only town in the valley, and it was, in all truth, a city of ghosts.

Riding along the well-worn trail, Mr. Farman let his thoughts dwell upon the strange events of the past weeks, since he had taken over. Time after time steers had disappeared, never to be seen again. Although plainly branded, not a single animal had ever been traced. The owners of neighbouring ranches beyond the valley had openly invited inspection of their stocks, but the most careful investigations had led nowhere.

It was not only cattle—men had disappeared, too. Foreman after foreman had gone—unaccountably, almost uncannily. Fresh hands had been engaged, and after a time one of them—or perhaps two—would be missing. A horse would come home riderless. On two occasions the horses had been grimly spattered with blood.

Small wonder that Big Jim Farman was "through." Throughout the State of Arizona the police had kept watch for the missing men, for it was believed by some that they had fled of their own accord. But not one man had ever been traced. It seemed impossible that they could still be within Ghost River Valley; for it was a land of wide open spaces, without settlements or towns, except for the derelict Fortune City.

Big Jim Farman, approaching the city now, was impressed by the utter desolation of the scene. The bright spring sunshine and the crystal blue sky did much to soften the picture, but it was yet forbidding. In the hour of twilight and during the hours of darkness it was utterly sinister.

A great sprawling town of derelict buildings; many brick-built, with gaping holes where windows should have been, with rents in their roofs, with doors falling off their hinges, mouldering and rusty. Streets and avenues grass-grown, neglected, with sidewalks half-smothered with rank weeds.

Sixty years ago gold had been discovered in the rocky hills, and a settlement—aptly called Fortune City—had

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sprung into being. It had grown like a mushroom overnight, and within a year or two had become a thriving community of some twenty-five thousand souls. The railway came into Ghost River Valley; brick banks, theatres, and business offices were erected in "mushroom" city, and round and about the gold mines flourished.

Then, as suddenly as prosperity had come, disaster swooped. For twenty years Fortune City flourished. Then the gold in the hills petered out, and the town, depending entirely upon the gold mines for its prosperity, faded almost completely away. The population left it like rats deserting a sinking ship, and for nearly two score years the buildings had been going to rack and ruin.

Not for eighteen years had a train run along the rusted tracks, and the permanent way had become a wilderness of weeds and sage-brush and cactus.

To-day Fortune City boasted no more than a mere thousand inhabitants, for it was a mere centre for the wide-flung ranches of the valley and beyond. It had its bank, its general store, and its saloon; but it was more dead than alive, and its only means of communication with the outer world was an old-time stage coach which ran three times weekly.

Main Street had its usual empty, neglected look when Big Jim rode in and dismounted outside the sheriff's office.

A middle-aged man, dressed in a quiet lounge suit, and as smart as though he were on Broadway, New York, stepped out of the office as Mr. Farman was about to enter.

"Well, Jim, what brings you here, thus early?" asked the other, extending a hand. "Expecting that son of yours to-day, aren't you?"

"Junior wired me this morning, Elmer," replied Mr. Farman. "Says he's likely to get here about sundown."

"I'm not sure you were wise in letting that boy come out here, Jim," said the other thoughtfully. "He's likely to find it tough going. What's the need? He doesn't belong to this country; neither do you, if it comes to that. Why don't you quit?"

"I want to see what he's made of," replied Big Jim, smiling.

Elmer C. Kyle nodded. He was the "big man" of the valley, and he owned virtually the whole of Fortune City. He ran the First National Bank and the general store and the saloon; he was the mayor and the organiser of the vigilantes. In a word, a fine-looking Western type of successful business man, with prematurely grey hair and many wrinkles about his eyes, which came into greater prominence when he smiled.

"You're in the happy position of being able to cut loose just when you please, Jim," he said, almost enviously. "I can't do that. Everything I own is right here in Fortune City, and I'm wondering how much longer I shall own it. The Black Riders have been out again."

"Is that so?" said Big Jim, with concern. "I'm here to report the loss of more of my steers; the rustlers have been at their old games."

"It's maddening, Jim!" said Mr. Kyle, clenching his fists. "These things happen, and we don't seem able to do a thing. The Black Riders robbed my bank—took thirty thousand dollars in solid cash. They came like ghosts in the night, and before I could get half-dressed after the alarm they had gone. Where to? When are these things going to stop?"

"Maybe they'll strike once too often," said Mr. Farman. "Maybe," nodded the other. "It's our only chance, Jim. We've got to watch and wait and be ready. But why did you allow your boy to come here with his English friends?"

"You think they're dumb, don't you?" retorted Mr. Farman, with a smile. "Let me tell you, Elmer, that these kids are alive—eager and active. I'm not saying they'll succeed where we've failed, but luck's a funny thing, and they might. One of those kids, let me tell you, is the ward and assistant of one of England's greatest detectives. Yes, sir! And he's a go-getter."

Kyle smiled. "I'd be kind of tickled, Jim, if that bunch of kids got to the bottom of this mystery," he said. "Come in and see the sheriff. Maybe we'll ride out to the ranch to-night and give the boys a welcome. I'd like to meet them."

"That's a date, Elmer," said Mr. Farman promptly. "Come out to supper. I'd be glad to have you know my son and his school-fellows."

"Try to keep me away!" laughed Mr. Kyle. "As your friend, Jim, I'll be tickled to meet that bunch; and as the Mayor of Fortune City I'll give them an official welcome."

The Black Riders!

THE fast monoplane, speeding with silver wings at a height of 8,000 feet, was fleeing through the sky into the setting sun.

Arizona at last!

For hours now the sturdy aircraft had been flying over

mountain and desert; over great tracts of dry, arid country, where, the rocks piled themselves into grotesque shapes—rocks of strange and distinctive colour; cactus and sagebrush, rolling plains, and desolate gulches.

Justin B. Farman and his six "buddies" were almost bewildered by the changing panorama of scenery. So swift was the monoplane's flight that it seemed only a few hours ago that they were flying over the orderly, settled eastern and middle-west States. Now they were over a land of vast spaces and rugged mountains.

"By George!" said Handforth, as he stared from one of the windows. "Do you really mean to say, Farman, that we're near your ranch?"

"I guess we must be," replied Farman. "The pilot says we'll make Ghost River Valley by sundown—and the sun's mighty low even now."

"It's most frightfully interesting, dear old boys," said Archie Glenthorne. "But I'm dashed if I can understand how people can live here! I mean to say, rocks and sand and all that sort of thing."

"We're making straight for the hills," said Nipper. "There'll be a change after we've crossed those peaks, Archie."

Fast as the machine was, it seemed to its eager passengers to be merely crawling. The countryside beneath was so barren and of so much "sameness" that the aeroplane seemed to be making little or no progress.

Away to the south there were green ranges; cattle ranches, no doubt. As the sun sank lower the plane went winging over wooded foothills, rugged canyons, and peaks; then over—and Ghost River Valley came into sight.

It stretched away, green with the freshness of spring, as far as the eye could reach—a great, rolling valley with a winding river in its centre, with forests climbing the foothills, and all round mountain peaks hemming the valley in. By road, the valley could be reached only by one or two canyon-like passes.

Fortune City was seen in the dim distance, and to the boys it looked a splendid town, for they were unable to distinguish the derelict desolation.

Headwinds had upset the pilot's calculations to some extent. He had hoped to land at the ranch in full daylight. But he was a clear hour later than he had expected to be, and he knew that darkness would almost have fallen before he could bring the plane to earth.

But he was not to be deterred now—he was not going to land until he had reached his journey's end.

The boys trusted him implicitly, for, since leaving New York, he had proved himself to be a pilot of rare skill and judgment. Even with darkness nearly upon him, he could land safely.

Big Jim Farman was watching anxiously. Lights were glowing in the ranch-house, and, so far, the expected plane had not arrived. The last glow of the setting sun had almost vanished in the western sky, and a few stars were beginning to twinkle.

Then at last had come the steady, rhythmic drone of the plane. And while Big Jim stood watching and waiting, a powerful automobile was bumping and swaying along the trail from Fortune City, carrying Mr. Elmer C. Kyle and Sheriff Dixon.

"Seems like we'll be right on time, Dirk," said Mr. Kyle, as he glanced up into the sky. "There she is! Looks good, eh?"

"Them as likes planes can have 'em," replied the sheriff gloomily. "I guess I prefer the solid earth. Mebbe we won't meet these kids, after all, Mr. Kyle. Mebbe they'll be strewed over the ground, with broken bones, by the time we get around the ranch. I'm figgerin' that they're likely enough to crash in this half-darkness."

Mr. Kyle only laughed, for the sheriff was by nature a pessimist. Yet, perhaps there was some excuse for his gloom just now. Darkness was almost at hand, and the great plane had not yet effected a landing.

The machine was descending in a long glide, engines throttled down. Try as the boys would, they could hardly see the ground, so suddenly had the darkness shut down.

But the pilot, a capable young man, was confident enough. At the moment the plane was passing over the ranch-house and buildings, and he was not rash enough to attempt a landing anywhere close at hand. He had already marked a long, level stretch of grassland a mile distant from the ranch buildings. It was better to take no chances.

"We're nearly down," said Farman breathlessly. "Hold tight, buddies!"

"Absolutely," murmured Archie, grabbing the arms of his comfortable chair.

Blindly, it seemed, the plane swooped to earth. But actually there was never a moment's danger, for the pilot was a man who had carried the United States mails on hundreds of occasions—a man with nerves of iron.

He could evidently see like a cat, too, for at the last moment he brought the plane on a level keel, her landing-wheels touched, and with feather lightness she landed. With brakes applied, the splendid machine bumped and rolled over the rough ground, and soon she came to a standstill.

"By Jove! That was as perfect as it could be," said Nipper admiringly.

Handforth was already wrenching at the saloon door, and as he opened it the engines ceased, for the pilot had switched off. The man himself appeared a moment later from the cockpit.

"O.K., kids?" he asked cheerily.

"A good landing," said Farman.

"Sorry I had to bring you so far from the ranch-house," said the pilot, "but I had strict orders to take no chances. But I guess you can do with a walk after being cooped up in that saloon all day."

"Listen," said Farman. "Seems like we shan't have to walk. My ears are singing a bit from the engines, but I'm sure I can hear the thudding of horses' hoofs."

"Cowboys!" yelled Handforth, staring towards the ranch.

"Cowboys coming out to give us a welcome!"

"But the horses are coming from the other direction," said Nipper, staring.

It was a fact, and the new arrivals, now some distance away from the stationary aeroplane, stared wonderingly into the twilight's gloom. A number of horsemen, bunched together, were riding up at the gallop. The hoofs of their horses were thudding rhythmically upon the hard ground, and behind them the dust rose in clouds.

Suddenly, lurid points of fire showed, and the next second cracking reports sounded on the still evening air.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Guns!" ejaculated Handforth in amazement. "They're firing!"

A wild yell came from the pilot, who had not yet left his machine. A bullet, coming as though from nowhere, had struck him in the arm, inflicting a flesh wound.

"These cowboys are mad!" he shouted. "They tried to kill me! What was that?"

Other shots were sounding, and with them came the splintering sound of wood as the aeroplane's propeller was struck and damaged.

"Jumpin' rattlesnakes!" yelled Justin B. Farman, his face flushed. "They're not cowboys! They're the Black Riders!"

"The what?" panted the others.

"My dad was telling me—"

But Farman got no further. Words failed him. He knew the startling truth, and by this time the other boys could see the menacing, forbidding figures.

The horsemen numbered a full dozen, and they were clothed in black from head to foot—for even their heads were covered in great black cowls, so that no faces were visible. The hands which carried the guns were encased in black, too. On they came, riding at the gallop. And every man was firing—not at the boys but at the aeroplane.

"Run!" gasped Farman, finding his voice again. "They're out to kidnap us before we can even reach the ranch-house! And they're trying to disable the plane so that there can't be any chase!"

But before the boys could start running a startling thing happened.

The Black Riders were almost upon them, thundering down with relentless force. There came a sudden flash from the plane and the next instant a lurid burst of fire.

A shout sounded from the infuriated pilot, but he could do nothing. He knew what had happened. One of the bullets had severed an electric wire, causing a spark. The petrol tank, already riddled with bullets, was leaking like a sieve. The spirit had caught fire!

A great sheet of flame leapt up like a torch, and it was at that moment that the leading Black Riders were practically upon the schoolboys.

But the desperadoes had overreached themselves. That livid sheet of flame caused their horses to rear madly and swing round. Then, in that dread moment of confusion, the active-minded pilot shouted a timely warning.

"Run, boys—run!" he yelled. "She's going to explode!"

Like hares they ran, and as they did so the Black Riders, baffled, were scattered in all directions, for their horses, terrified, had bolted. It was a tense situation, for at any second the great reserve tanks of the plane might explode.

(How do you like this new serial, chums? Great, eh? Make sure of reading next Wednesday's thrilling chapters. Order your GEM early.)

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THE ST. JIM'S CASTAWAYS!

(Continued from page 22.)

"We shall be at anchor to-morrow in Hawke Bay, in the North Island," said Lord Conway, one moonlit evening, on deck, as he smoked his cigar. "Then we can get the chest ashore, and, I hope, pick on a steamer. The felucca will hardly do to take us back to Europe."

"I shall be sowwy to leave her, though," D'Arcy said, glancing up at the big sails. "We have had a good time, and I think we are entitled to vegard her as a pwize."

"I suppose we shall leave her to the Spaniard?" Tom Merry remarked.

The viscount nodded.

"Yes, he can have his vessel back when we are ashore with the gold. The way things have turned out I think we can afford to forgive his rascality."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The felucca doesn't seem to be sailing so well just now," Figgins remarked, with a puzzled look. "She seems to be dragging, and look how the bows are dipping."

Lord Conway rose, and threw away his cigar.

"That's very curious," he said.

"Bai Jove! Yaas! The cwaft is wobblin', too."

Peter Raff came up to them with an anxious expression.

"There's something wrong with the craft, sir," he said.

"Looks to me as if there's a leak sprung somewhere below."

"Look at once, Raff!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

It was a hot evening, and everyone was on deck, with the exception of the Spaniard.

Peter Raff ran down below, and the next moment his voice was heard calling hoarsely for help.

"Lopez!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

They rushed down. Water was splashing over the planks of the cabin floor, and Peter Raff was struggling in the grasp of the Spaniard. The ruffian was grasped at once, and torn away from the panting sailorman.

Peter Raff staggered up.

"She's scuttled, sir!" he panted.

"Good heavens!"

Lopez, in the grasp of the seamen, turned a look of savage hate upon the Englishmen.

"Caramba! Did you think you would have the treasure, then?" he exclaimed. "Yes, I have scuttled the felucca! The treasure and all of us can go to the bottom together!"

"You hound!"

Lopez laughed exultantly.

"I have had my revenge!" he said.

The Spaniard was dragged on deck. Lord Conway made an attempt to get at the leak, but the hold was full of water. The Spaniard had known where to make the gash in the timbers, and it was not to be reached.

The felucca was filling fast.

"Fortunately, we are near the shore, and the boats will hold us all at a pinch," said Mr. Dodds.

"But the treasure—"

"We may have time to save it yet," said Lord Conway. "Lower away the boats!"

The treasure chest had been placed below in the after cabin. The door of the cabin was locked, and there was no key. They turned savagely to Lopez and demanded the key, and the Spaniard, with an evil grin, pointed to the sea.

"The key is there," he said, "and the treasure will soon be there also, seniors! That is the revenge of Pablo Lopez. Now do with me as you will!"

Crash!

The felucca was heeling over, and one of the great sails dragged down into the water. The mast snapped like a match. There was a rush of water below, and the men gathered at the cabin door were driven up the ladder.

Lord Conway set his lips.

"To the boats—quick!" he shouted.

There was no time for anything else—no time even for food and water—barely time for a wild rush to the boats to put off before the felucca went down.

"Leave the Spaniard here!" Peter Raff exclaimed. "Let 'No, put him into the boat," said Lord Conway.

The Spaniard was tossed into a boat, roughly enough. The crew pulled away from the felucca, which was now rolling over helplessly in the trough of the sea. The great sails flapped in the water and disappeared.

The felucca and the treasure were gone!

The Spaniard burst into a hard, mocking laugh.

Tom Merry turned upon him angrily.

"Silence, you scoundrel!" he exclaimed.

"But I have had my revenge!" muttered the dwarf.

The boats pulled for the shore. The Spaniard sat silent now, but with the same grin of evil triumph upon his face. He had lost the treasure, but the rivals in the quest had lost it, too, and that was consolation enough to Pablo Lopez.

A few hours later the twice-wrecked voyagers landed on Maori soil. The voyage was over, and it remained only to get to the nearest steamer and return to England.

The Spaniard was released—there was nothing else to be done with him. Of the treasure of the Pacific island all that remained was the Spanish doubloons the juniors had in their pockets; but that, at least, would suffice to show the fellows at St. Jim's that they really had found a treasure in the South Seas; and, after all—as Blake said—that was the chief consideration.

And so the St. Jim's party was cheerful enough when they trod the deck of a steamer homeward bound.

"We'll sell some of the gold coins when we get home," Tom Merry remarked, "and I think we'll blue the cash in a celebration at St. Jim's—what!"

And the juniors agreed that they would.

THE END.

(The first ripping yarn of another grand series appears next week. Watch out for "THE BOY WHO COULDN'T BE SACKED!"—starring a newcomer to St. Jim's.)



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