

stories to read in this number--

"TOM MERRY & CO."

"KING O' THE MOORS."

"TRUE TO HIS COUNTRY."

"THE IRON ISLAND."

A School Tale. By Martin Clifford.

By Ernest Brinck.

Thrilling Tale of a Britisher's Bravery

A wonderful NEW Story.

GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER

The **GEM** 2-

Best Stories.
Best Pictures.

LIBRARY. No. 145. Vol. 5.



TOM MERRY & CO. LOOK FOR CUSSY'S LOST SOVEREIGN.

FREE! FREE! FREE!

TELE-PIN, BROOCH, CHAIN, OR RING! FREE FOR SELLING 12 CARDS.
SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.

To advertise our new Series of lovely Xmas and New Year Cards, we offer every reader of this paper a handsome present absolutely FREE, simply for selling or using 12 cards at 1d. each. Our 1919 Grand Price List contains over 200 new gifts, including Ladies' or Gents' Watches, Electric Trains, Chains, Rings, Phonographs, Real Furs, Roller Skates, Umbrellas, Cinematographs, Toys of all kinds, Accordions, Air Guns, Steam Engines, Pins, Brooches, Etc., Etc., which we are giving away to purchasers of our cards.

GIFTS FOR ALL

All you need do is send us your full name and address in postcard within 14 days, and we will send you per return a selection of Xmas and New Year Cards including numerous striking cards, heavily gold-embossed, beautifully printed and coloured, to sell or use at 1d. each. Or send what you wish within 14 days, and we will reward you according to the list we send you.

WRITE NOW. IT NEED NOT COST YOU A PENNY OF YOUR OWN MONEY.

Send a Postcard to

THE ROYAL CARD CO.
(Dept. 21), ROYAL PARADE, KEW, LONDON.

This Splendid
AEROPLANE
FREE FOR ALL
WRITE NOW.



A PRIZE
for selling
12 CARDS.

**BE WISE
SEND
2/6**

PRICE LIST FREE

Be wise and say only a little before you actually handle the article you are buying, our easy payments are for wise buyers. We will send you our famous 26" Veranda Lever Watch - a masterpiece of true time-keeping mechanism - fitted in Solid Silver Cases, with Keywind, or Keyless action complete, with seven years' warranty, for 26 first payment. It will last 20 years, and keep true time to one minute a month. Price 27/- cash, or 26/- terms. Send 2/6 now, pay 2/6 on receipt, and 2/6 monthly. Send 2/6 now and ask for 26" Watch. Also supplied in Rotted Gold Cases (10 years' guarantee), 30/-, same terms. Full Hunting Silver Cases, 40/- (26 monthly) - MASTERS, Ltd., 7, Hope Street, Etc.



SOLID GOLD LADY'S WATCH
Jewelled movement, Keyless Action, Solid Gold Cases, 21/- cash; 25/- terms. Send 2/6 now, pay 2/6 on delivery, and 2/6 monthly. MASTERS Ltd., 7, Hope Street, Etc.

BLUSHING.

FREE. To all sufferers, particulars of a novel home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and nose. Toolless remedy to try postcard to Dr. D. TEMPLE (Horseshoe & Grosvenor Street, Road Street, London, W.)

FRETWORK DESIGNS

Send us three penny stamps, and we will, as an advertisement, send you a parcel containing 25 Novel and Dainty Fretwork Designs, and a complete Illustrated Catalogue of our Wonderful LARVE PERMY DESIGNS. Don't miss this bargain. Send today - NATIONAL 'FRETWORKERS' ASSOCIATION (Desk 43, 62, Farringdon Street, London).

The "LORD ROBERTS" TARGET PISTOL

Beautifully plated and finished. May be carried in the pocket. Will kill birds and rabbits up to 50 yards. Noiseless Ball Cartridges, 8d. per 100. Shot, 1/6 per 100. 100 birds or rabbits may be killed at a cost of 9d. only. Send for list. GROWBURN WORKS, 66, St. Charles St., BIRMINGHAM.

ALL ACCESSORIES FREE

To every purchaser of a **MEAD Coventry Flyer**. FACED FLYER. CARBON FAN. Forwarded to you. Features: Foot or Hand Top, Frontal Saddles, Hoosers; Spiced Grass. From 22/15. Cash or Easy Payments. 240, 250 and 260 cc. Models. Order from MEAD. Write for Free Art Catalogue and Prospect (or on Sample Machine. Agents wanted.) **MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 558 A** 11, Paradise St., Liverpool.

FREE! Thousands upon thousands of FREE GIFTS are now given away by us to celebrate

our 12th BIRTHDAY OF THE BUSINESS, and to show our appreciation to our Customers, Suppliers and Businessmen. **SEND IN, YOU GET A FREE GIFT!** So write today for our Illustrated Catalogue of thousands of FREE GIFTS by Post to the Editor, "THE GEM," 11, Upper Holloway Road, London, N. 16. **SEND POST FREE TO ANY PART OF THE KINGDOM.** Good illustrations and value thousands of FREE GIFTS are "thrown in" with the bargains, and no quite extra the great reductions in usual prices.

JUST LOOK AT THIS, FOR INSTANCE! ELECTRIC POCKET LAMP.

Superior 20 Model, size 2 1/2 by 1 1/2. Chrome Leather Pattern Case, with Nickel Knobs, fitted with a powerful battery. Gives 1000 Beams and brilliant electric light. A useful invention and an Amazing Novelty. No danger, no risk, no maintenance. You simply touch the knob to produce a brilliant light. Price 1/- only (ask your free list!). Electric resistance not attaching to Lamp No. you find in Lamp and the 1/- also free list.

A TREAT FOR ALL! Furthermore, every purchaser of the Lamp, or Lamp and Pin, will be freely presented with ANY ONE of the following valuable FREE GIFTS:

50,000 FREE GIFTS

(Half a million) are now ready in Fountain Pens, Brooches, Gents' and Ladies' Cigarette Cases, Neckties and Fragrances together, Cigarettes, Leave Together, Mouth Organs, Curb and Fastback Directories, Ladies' Children's Writing Sets. Don't forget to mention which gift you would like to be sent post free, with Lamp, or Lamp and Pin. We guarantee you'll receive of full money back - **PAIN BROTHERS, DEPT. 20, "THE PRESENTS HOUSE," HASTINGS, ENGLAND.**

HALF SHOP PRICES

Send 4/6 for the world-famous "ROBEY PRICES" with 24 selections and sumptuously decorated 17 1/2 inch, powerful motor, 10 and turntable and tone arm sound box, which lend on easy terms of payment at HALF shop prices. 1 cent in the bargain sent to the world of **PATHEPHONE, GRAMOPHONE, ZONOPHONE, DISHON, ANDERSON, COLUMBIA, EXCELSIOR** and other well-known Phonographs and records, and offer you over 200 magnificent records to select from. Thousands of the very latest records of all the well-known stars of all ways in stock. Sent on approval. - 5/60 minimum price. Write to Dept. 10.

Robey
The World's Provider. COVENTRY. WRITE FOR LISTS.

FREE

Now is the chance for readers of this paper to obtain a Dainty Brooch or Mizpah Charm absolutely FREE. **SEND NO MONEY.** Simply send us stamped addressed envelope and we will forward a return post whichever present you desire. Write today - you will be delighted!!! - to Manager (Dept. 21) 89, Cornwallis Rd., Upper Holloway, London.

Next Week's Number—Usual Price
and Usual Size—will contain:

"THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB."

GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER

The GEM 2^d
LIBRARY.

NEXT WEEK:
USUAL SIZE,
USUAL PRICE,
ONE PENNY.

Complete Stories for All, and Every Story a Gem!



LEVISON,

The Schoolboy Detective.

A Splendid Long, Complete
Tale of TOM MERRY & Co. at
St. Jim's.

Specially written for this number of
"The Gem."

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD,

CHAPTER I.

Not Welcome!

"Glad to see you, Tom Merry,"
Tom Merry paused in the doorway of the School House at St. Jim's. As he had his coat on, and he had placed his cap on his curly head, it was pretty plain to him that he was going out, and the question seemed to be, "What am I going to do?" But Ernest Levison looked as if he expected an answer.

"I'm going to check my sturdy stride, and gave Levison a nod, and a flourish, and a nod.

"I'm going to check Levison.

"Some of the fellows are waiting for me."

"You know how what Levison's question meant.

He had made no friends at St. Jim's, unless Mellish,

and the Fourth, could be called a friend. Levison

had passed those few scanty little time, and fellows had passed

expressed in dozens. Some of them had given him a

glance, most of them took no more notice of him than of

the wind he was leaning against.

He was not liked.

What was there was wrong about Levison it would be

probably most of the fellows could not have

possibly it was known that he had been compelled

to leave last school. Greyfriars, though he had tried his

best to keep that a secret. But that would have been forgotten if Levison had been a likeable fellow. He was not bad-looking, and he was at least as good as the average junior on the playing-fields, and at lessons he was ahead of most of his Form. He could assume a very pleasant manner when it suited him, but he was not liked. Perhaps it was because he had a gift of keenness that was almost uncanny in one of his age, and fellows did not like to feel that the penetrating eyes could see so far into their hearts, and read their motives better than they themselves could read them.

Horries, of the Fourth, never would speak to Levison, because his dog Towser had taken a dislike to the new boy at their first meeting. Most of the fellows laughed at the idea; yet in the main they agreed with Horries in his attitude. Levison did not seem to care. There was a coldness about him that seemed to render him almost indifferent to companionship.

Tom Merry hesitated. He was good-natured to a fault, and although he did not take to the new junior, he was inclined to ask Levison to come with him. But he remembered that Manners and Lowther had a right to be consulted, as well as Blake and his friends, with whom he was going down to Rykeston. So he did not speak.

Levison looked directly at him.

"I'll come with you, if you like," he said.

"Oh, very well," said Tom Merry.

"Wait a minute while I get my cap."

A LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 157 (New Series).

Copyright in the United States of America

"All right."

Levison went into the house. Tom Merry waited on the steps. Over by the gate he could see Manners and Lowther waiting for him, and Blake and Digby and D'Arcy were talking together near the steps of the School House. Herries had gone round to the kennels for his bulldog.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy is a long time!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, looking at his gold watch. "Some chaps do take a long time gettin' into their things." Jack Blake and Digby stared at him. The swell of St. Jim's was famous for the amount of time he spent in changing his clothes.

"Upon the whole, I will go and put on a new necktie, as we have plenty of time," D'Arcy remarked. "We are goin' to a wathah swaggal place to tea, you know."

Blake and Digby clutched the elegant junior as he made a step towards the School House.

"No you jolly well don't!" exclaimed Blake grimly.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We haven't got half an hour to spare."

"It would not take me more than a quartah of an hour to change my necktie," exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Blake—"

"Hallo, here's Herries!" said Digby. "Now, don't be an ass, Gussy. You look sweet in that necktie, and the young lady in the teashop will be charmed."

"Weally, Dig—"

G-r-r-r!

That remark was contributed by Towser. The chain rattled as Towser jerked at it.

"Good dog!" said Herries. "Down, dog! Good doggie!" D'Arcy turned his eyeglasses upon Towser.

"Weally, Hewwies, I wish you would keep that fealful brute away," he exclaimed. "I have told you several times that the rotten animal has no respect whatever for a fellow's trousers."

"Well, don't look at him. How can you expect a decent dog to see your chivvy and be good-tempered?" demanded Herries, with warmth. "You face worries him, and no wonder."

"Hewwies, you ass—"

G-r-r-r!

"I protest against that fealful beast bein' brought along," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He will be quite out of place in a teashop."

Blake and Digby looked at Towser doubtfully. They could not help agreeing with the swell of St. Jim's in his last remark.

"Rot!" said Herries emphatically. "Of course Towser's coming. He likes a run. Besides, we can feed him on sandwiches in the teashop. It's awful fun to feed Towser on sandwiches. You should just see him gobble 'em up! Why, you could spend five bob in five minutes, feeding Towser with sandwiches."

"Bai Jove!"

It was evidently no use arguing with Herries. A fellow who expected another fellow to regard it as great fun to expend five shillings in five minutes feeding a bulldog—well, such a fellow was past all argument.

"Where's that bounder Tom Merry?" exclaimed Blake. "This is what comes of going out with Shell fellows; something always goes wrong. The other two duffers are at the gate. Where's Tom Merry got to?"

"Bai Jove," exclaimed D'Arcy, turning his eyeglasses towards the School House, "there he is!"

"The ass!" said Blake.

He shouted to Tom Merry.

"Merry! Tom Merry! Tom Merr-r-ry!"

Tom Merry nodded to him.

"It's all serene," he called back.

"All serene, is it?" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "Rats! What do you mean by waiting there, while we're waiting here? You ass! We've been waiting for dog's ages. Come!"

"I'm waiting for Levison."

"What?"

"All four of the Fourth-Formers uttered that exclamation at once. Tom Merry turned red. He felt that he had overstepped his rights a little, perhaps, in accepting Levison's company without asking the others; yet Levison had really left him no choice in the matter. The kind-hearted, good-natured junior felt that he could not tell a fellow plainly that he didn't want his company. And besides, Levison was not so bad as all that. He might not be agreeable, but he wasn't quite disagreeable.

But the heroes of the Fourth were plainly displeased. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle, and gave Tom Merry a fixed stare. Blake and Digby frowned. As for Herries, he set his lips together.

"Is Levison coming with us?" asked Herries.

"THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 145.

NEXT

THURSDAY

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in

Advance

"Well, he wants to," said Tom Merry apologetically. "I suppose there's no harm in his coming, is there?"

"Yes, there jolly well is," said Herries uncompromisingly. Herries was a slow-going, good-natured fellow enough, and his dislike of the new boy was a surprise to his chums. Herries was generally too easy-going to take the trouble to dislike anybody. Even Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, was treated with a good-humoured, scornful tolerance by the burly junior. But with Levison he would make no terms; and the chums knew that his antagonism was founded upon the dislike Towser showed towards Levison.

"Oh, dwaw it mild, Hewwies!" said Arthur Augustus. "If Tom Mewwy weally wishes Levison to come, you know—"

"Well, I do," said Tom Merry awkwardly. "I mean, I'd take it kindly if you fellows will let him come, and be civil to him."

Blake sniffed.

"Oh, if you put it like that, he can come!" he replied. "But what do you want him to come for?"

"Well, he was alone, and—and he seemed to want to." Another sniff from Blake.

"Just your old game," he said. "If he's alone, it's because he's so jolly deep that fellows don't take to him. You remember the trouble there was because you would take up that chap, Lumley-Lumley, and play him in a football match? He was playing you for a duffer all the time, and you couldn't see it; and, of course, Levison is going to be the same. You're a jolly sight too good-natured for Merry."

"If you don't want him to come—" began Tom Merry rather abruptly.

"Oh, I don't mind! It's not so bad as that. I was only speaking to you for your own good," said Blake, in a fatherly tone.

Tom Merry smiled—his sunny smile, which always chased the clouds away from his face—as soon as they gathered round him. "That's all right, then," he said.

"It isn't all right," said Herries. "If Levison's coming, I'm not."

"Oh, weally, Hewwies—"

"Herries, old man—"

"I say, Herries—"

"It's all right," said Herries. "Look here, I'll tell you a chap. I know his blessed conjuring tricks, too. He'll say some mean dodge on you and make trouble, you understand words. That's his idea of fun. I'm not having any. When I know I can't stand a chap, I keep away from him. Besides, there'll be trouble if he's with Towser. Towser can't stand him any more than I can."

"You could leave Towser at home, dear boy," said D'Arcy, in a tone of one making a really bright suggestion. Herries snorted.

"Yes, I'll likely to leave Towser at home, to tell you a worm like that," he exclaimed. "It's all right! It's the old Towser for a run, and you fellows can go down to the new teashop. I don't care much for teashops, anyway." And Herries, without more words, marched off with Towser.

CHAPTER 2.

Herries in Hot Water.

TOM MERRY was very red and uncomfortable. Herries was so determined in the matter that it was useless to argue with him. His leaving the party upon the chums of the Fourth felt somewhat awkward, too. That Levison appeared in the School House doorway and Herries went swinging out of the gates with Towser—

"I'm ready," said Levison.

"So are we," said Tom Merry rather shortly. "Come on."

"Isn't Herries coming?"

"No."

"I thought—"

"He's gone out with Towser."

Levison understood, and his eye glinted for a moment. As the juniors descended the School House steps, Binks and "Buttons" came out of the doorway. Binks was a portly, tubby youth, with a chubby face. He was not overburdened with brains; but he was a kind and obliging fellow, and was devoted to Tom Merry. Mainly through Tom Merry's influence, Binks had made an effort to give up reading the blood-curdling literature which the enterprising publisher in New York send over to us in shiploads for the entertainment of British youth—thrilling stories of the adventures of Red Revolver Rupert and Blood-Stained Bill. It had been Binks's ambition to go forth into the Rocky Mountains on a coal-black steed, with a revolver in each hand, to slay stage-coaches, and demand gold-dust and nuggets. But Binks would do much execution with the revolver.

had them, was a question, as he had been known to turn pale at the sight of a cut finger.

Tom Merry had bought him a volume of healthy school stories, and persuaded him to put Blood-Stained Bill into the fire, and Binks, somewhat reluctantly, had admitted that the change was for the better.

Binks had a letter in his hand now, and he looked as if he wanted to speak to Tom Merry, so the hero of the Shell stepped at once.

"What is it, Binks?" he asked.

"I've had a letter, Master Merry," said Binks. "Bein' a 'erf-holiday, I thought you might be so kind as to read it for me, and give me your opinion. I didn't know you was gone 'bout, sir, though. 'Nother time," said Binks hastily.

"Well, it will do when I come in—" said Tom Merry good-naturally.

"Quite as well, Master Merry. It's all right."

"Bring it to my study after tea, Binks, then."

"Yes, sir."

"How's Shooting Sam getting on, Binky?" asked Blake suddenly. "Has he taken any more scalps? Or was it Tiger Tom who took the scalps?"

Bink blushed.

"I ain't got any of them books now, Master Blake," he said. "I've been reading somethin' better, that Master Merry gave me."

Tom turned round and looked at Binks.

"You're not reading 'Deadwood Dave, the Scarlet Sinner,'" he asked.

"I ain't," said Binks.

"What did you give it up?"

"Weeks ago, sir."

"And you haven't got a copy of it about you?" asked Lawson, with a cynical smile that very plainly hinted at a lie.

"No, I ain't," said Binks, turning red.

Lawson grinned.

"What's this, then?" he asked.

He slipped his hand under Binks's tight jacket, and drew out a faded periodical with a flaming cover in colours, representing a man with a revolver firing at several other men, one of whom was falling dead.

Lawson held the paper up to view.

Binks stared at it. A general glance of contempt was tossed upon him.

"Oh, bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "You needn't have told us about it, Binks, dear boy!"

Binks stammered.

"I don't!"

"Well, Binks—"

"You shouldn't have done that, Binks," said Tom Merry suddenly. "It's rotten. I asked you to try my sort of books instead of that trash, to do you a good turn, but I didn't want you to tell fibs about it."

"Master Merry—"

"It would be far better to read 'Deadwood Dave,' or any one of that sort, than to lie about it, Binks!"

Binks burst into tears.

"I don't, Master Merry!" he exclaimed, blubbering.

"I ain't a liar. I don't know 'ow the paper come there! I cuss I put it there and forgot, because I used to carry 'em about with me like that."

And Binks, dissolved in tears, went into the House, with Tom Merry in his hand, leaving the captured "horrible" in Lawson's possession.

Tom Merry's face was very pained.

It seemed to him that his well-meant efforts on Binks's behalf had led to more harm than good. He had meant to induce the lad to improve himself, and it seemed that he had accomplished in making a liar of him.

Lawson looked curiously at Tom Merry, and walked in silence down to the gates, putting the "Deadwood Dave" into his pocket.

Manners and Lowther were getting impatient. They asked askance at Levison, but passed no remark upon his story to the party.

"I thought you were going to make an afternoon of it," said Monty Lowther. "What has Herries just gone out by himself for? I thought he was coming with us to the ball."

"He's tired of waiting, perhaps," Manners suggested.

"He's taking Towser for a run!" said Blake hastily.

"Yes, go on."

And the juniors tramped down the road.

There had been much rain lately in Sussex, and the ground at St. Jim's was hopelessly unfit for footer. As if to provide occupation for the juniors on the half-holiday, the Arcadia had appeared.

The Arcadia was a new teashop. There were several inns in and about Rylcombe, where good meals could be had. There were several confectioners', where you could wash

down tarts and cakes with milk or tea. But a teashop in the proper sense of the word there was not—till the Arcadia was opened in the High Street, near the railway-station.

Mr. Bunn, who was the proprietor, expected a great deal of custom from the fellows at St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had suggested that it would really be the "thing" to give the new venture a leg-up. And as they had nothing particular to do that afternoon, Tom Merry & Co. had agreed.

Arthur Augustus had lately received a handsome tip from his governor, and he had insisted that he was to do the honours on this visit to the new teashop.

There was a crisp fiver in D'Arcy's pocket, and the chances were that by the time he had finished doing the honours at the Arcadia, there would be very little left of the fiver. That was Gussy's way. He was nothing if not magnificent.

The presence of Levison and the absence of Herries cast a little shadow over the party of juniors at first. But D'Arcy was somewhat consoled by the absence of Towser. He never felt that his elegant attire was quite safe in the presence of the bulldog.

But, as a matter of fact, the chums of the School House had not seen the last of either Herries or Towser that afternoon.

They had passed the cross-roads when there was a sudden howl of a dog and the rattle of a chain, and they sighted Herries. Towser was heading for the Green Man, a disreputable public-house that had been frequented by Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, when he had been at the school.

Towser seemed determined to get into the Green Man, for some fancy of his own, but perhaps because a catsmeat merchant had gone in for liquid refreshment, and the odour of his wares had reached Towser's nostrils. As a well-conducted and self-respecting bulldog, Towser ought to have despised the wares of the catsmeat merchant, but he didn't.

Herries was dragging on the chain.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Hold on, dear boy!"

"I'm holding on!" snapped Herries.

"Towser wants a drink!" screamed Monty Lowther. "You should have brought him up to be a teetotaler, Herries!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment Towser, with a powerful jerk, released the chain from Herries's hand and bolted. He was in at one of the doorways in the twinkling of an eye. Herries gave a shout, and darted in after him.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's exclamation was not caused by the action of Towser—nothing that Towser did would surprise him. He had caught sight of the somewhat ungainly figure of Knox, the School House prefect, coming down the road from the direction of the village. Knox had just caught a glimpse of Herries dashing into the inn.

He stopped, and stared at the juniors.

"Who was that?" he exclaimed.

"I don't understand you," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, you do!" snapped Knox.

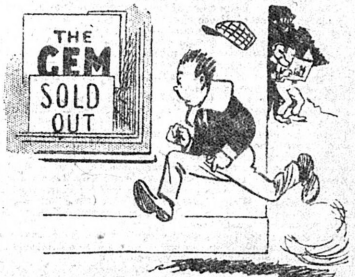
The Shell fellow flushed red.

"I'm not a liar!" he exclaimed angrily.

Knox snapped his teeth.

"One of you went into the public-house just now, and

Boys who do not read "THE GEM."



The Boy who is always TOO LATE!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

Sub. A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE TERRIBLE THREE'S

he's in there still," he said. "I saw him, but didn't see who it was. Who was it?"

"Towser, ran in there."
 "Then it was Herries?"
 "He's gone in for Towser."
 Knox laughed sneeringly.
 "That's a likely story!" he exclaimed. "I always had a suspicion about you—all of you; it's a certainty now!"
 "Weally, Knox—"
 "Hold your tongue, D'Arcy!"

The swell of St. Jim's jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked the bullying senior coolly in the face.

"I wufuse to hold my tongue, Knox!" he replied. "If you accuse my friend of goin' into that wrotten place from a disreputable motive, you are off-side, doah boy!"

The prefect clenched his hand. D'Arcy did not flinch, and his intention to hit back if he was touched was so apparent, that Knox dropped his hand. He knew that if he began to ill-use Arthur, Augustus, he would have the rest of Tom Merry & Co. to deal with—prefect as he was.

He strode to the door of the inn.
 Herries was just coming out. The elusive Towser had dodged him, and Mr. Jolliffe, the proprietor of the inn, had been decidedly rude. Herries was coming out without the bulldog, and with a very flushed face.

"He strove as he saw Knox."
 "So I've caught you!" said the prefect.
 "Caught me?" said Herries.
 "Yes; pub-haunting, you young rascal!"
 Herries's eyes blazed.
 "I went in there for Towser!" he shouted.
 Knox laughed.
 "Where is Towser now?"
 "He got away."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" exclaimed the prefect impatiently. To do him justice, he did not believe it. He was of a narrow and distrustful nature, and capable of deception himself; and a liar is always suspicious. "You'll go straight back to St. Jim's, and stay in for the rest of the afternoon—do you hear?—and write out two hundred lines, or I'll take you before the Head, whichever you like! Take your choice!"

Herries gritted his teeth.
 Without a word, he strode away towards the school.
 Knox cast a triumphant glance at Tom Merry & Co. He disliked them bitterly, all the more because they were not to be bullied. He felt that he had scored over them this time, and indeed he had.

CHAPTER 3.
 Gussy's Fiver.

TOM MERRY & CO. were looking a little glum as they entered the village. The punishment of Herries was annoying them. The Fourth-Formers, who were Herries's own chums, were rather inclined to blame Levison, which was hardly just, as the matter might have happened in the same way if Herries had been with them. There was no accounting for the vagaries of Towser.

"It's wathah wuff on Hewwies," said D'Arcy. "There is no end to the wuffy that feaful beast brings upon him. I suggested to him only yesterday to have it shot, you know, and he cut up quite wuff at the ideah!"

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"Well, here's the Arcadia!" exclaimed Manners.
 The juniors halted in front of the new tea-shop that adorned the High Street of Rylycombe. It was really very modern and up-to-date. Mr. Bunn had "done it down" in really good style. A facade of white and blue was very striking, and impressed the inhabitants of Rylycombe with Mr. Bunn's artistic tastes. There was a youth in a uniform and gold buttons in the doorway, who grinned at the juniors of St. Jim's as they came in.

Within, there was a long and lofty apartment, decorated in white and gold, with rows of round tables, at which the unoccupied youth of Rylycombe had tea or coffee and cakes. There were pastries in piles, of the deadliest colours, such as would have done credit to any London tea-shop.

The juniors seated themselves at a round table, and a pretty waitress came to take their orders. She was Mr. Bunn's daughter, and the juniors had met Miss Bunn before. She had once boxed Lumley-Lumley's ears for impertinence, which had led Monty Lowther to remark that she was a hot-cross bun. But she was very charming and obliging, and very pleased to see D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's, quite unconsciously—for he was the least conceited fellow in the world—had made an impression upon the susceptible heart of Miss Bunn.

"Hallo! School House cads!" by George!"
 The juniors looked round quickly. Three youths had just come in in St. Jim's caps, and they grinned a welcome to THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

Figgins & Co. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House, came up to their table.

"Come to see the new show—oh?" said Figgins genially.
 "Yess, wathah!"
 "Same here. We haven't come in to eat, have we, Fatty?"

Fatty Wynn gave Figgins an indignant glare.
 "I'm jolly well going to have something to eat!" he exclaimed. "I haven't had anything since dinner, and then I only had the school dinner, and some pork pies in the study afterwards, and the seed-cake at Mrs. Taggle's, and the milk chocolate and the apples and the toffee! I'm hungry!"

"You must be famished!" said Tom Merry sympathetically.

"Yess, wathah!"
 "Well, I've got a healthy appetite," said Fatty Wynn. "None of your fairy appetite about me, you know, Tom cat!"

"Ha, ha! You can!" roared Figgins.
 "Pway sit down heah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus hospitably. "I've had a fivah from my governess this mornin', you know, and I'm standin' twost."

Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened.
 "Well, I must say that's jolly decent of you!" exclaimed the fat Fourth-Former. "As a matter of fact, I was just saying to Figgins that if we met any School House chaps, I hoped he wouldn't begin a silly House row—"

"That you weren't!" chuckled Figgins.
 "Well, I mean, I was just going to say it!" said Fatty Wynn. "It's the same thing. What's the good of a House row? It only prevents us from—pulling together—to—"

"Feed," said Blake.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "House rows are off," said Figgins. "After all, few chaps can't help being School House bouncers, and I don't see that we ought to throw it in their faces."

"Weally, Figgins—"
 "Well, you cheeky New House waster—"
 "My dear chaps," said Figgins, with a patronising air of the hand, "we tolerate you! We can afford to tolerate you representing the cock House at St. Jim's!"

The School House fellows were on their feet in a moment.

"What's that? Who's cock House at St. Jim's?"
 "New House!" said Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn together.

"Rats!"
 "Look here, you School House bouncers—"
 "New House rotters—"
 "Bai Jove—"
 "If you want a thick ear—"
 "Rats!"

"Bai Jove! I wathah think that we'd better let these chaps a feaful thwashin, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, squaring up to Figgins in the most warlike way. "I don't like that their wernarks are inwah dig, you New House bouncers—"

"Gentlemen!" said Miss Bunn. "Gentlemen!"
 "Bai Jove! Figgins, you ass! What do you mean by quarrellin' in the presence of a lady?" denounced Fatty rather unreasonably. "I regard you as a wuffah!"

"Wily, you ass—"
 "I wufuse to be called an ass."
 "Chump, then!"
 "Weally, Figgins—"
 Tom Merry wated his hand, laughing.
 "Pax!" he exclaimed. "We came here for a feed, not at a House row. Shut up, you chaps! Cluck it!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

SANDOW'S BOOK
 FREE!

Just published, a new book showing how Sandow got Health and Fame; beautifully illustrated, and explaining how every man and woman can obtain robust health and perfect development by exercise.

SPECIAL OFFER.

To every reader who writes at once a copy of the book will be sent free.

Address: No. 17, SANDOW HALL, BURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.

"Sit down, Gussy."
 "Weally—"
 "Order!"
 "I refuse to ordah—I mean—"
 "Obsec it!"
 "You uttah ass!"
 "Ring off!"
 "I uttally decline to wing off. I was goin' to work—"
 "Order! Order!"
 "That undah the cires—"
 "Shut up!"
 "Here, I should be vevy glad to extend the wight hand of friendship to the Figgins & Co."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Why couldn't you say that before?"

"Because all you wotten boundahs have been intewwuppin' me like anythin'!" said the swell of St. Jim's wrathfully.

"Obsec—"
 "Yes, of course," said Fatty Wynn. "Have you ordered the grub, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Wynn—"
 "I'll help you give the orders, if you like."

Arthur Augustus grinned.
 "Certainly, deah boy," he said.

And Fatty Wynn did. He was an expert at giving orders. And Miss Bunn a blue eyes opened wide at the extent of the order he gave. But D'Arcy was beaming all the time. The swell of St. Jim's had more pocket-money than any other person at the school—excepting Glyn of the Shell—and he was never better pleased than when he was standing some little bits of this sort to his chums.

"I see, this will run you into something pretty steep," Kerr remarked.

"It's all right, deah boy."

"We deah chap, it's going to pound."

"It's all wight. I had a fivah froun my governah this mornin'. He instructed me to be economical."

"You can call this economical?" gasped the Scottish junior.

"Yaas, wathah! I was thinkin' of spendin' five pounds on a new festah wig-out," said D'Arcy. "Now I shall have a pound left afteh this feed, I expect, so I shall have saved a pound."

"But you won't get the footer rig-out."

"But I don't need it, deah boy. My old things were now the new, you know, and I weally don't want new ones."

There chuckled. There was no denying that the swell of St. Jim's, great as his gifts might be, had no head for finance. The canny Scottish junior chuckled for a considerable time over D'Arcy's project of saving a pound, by refraining from purchasing something he did not want, and expending fourpence of the money on something he did not need.

But there was no doubt that it was a splendid feed.

It was a celebration worthy of the opening of a tea-shop in Bond Street. Monty Lowther said, as he negotiated his tough chocolate-cake.

Levison, who sat beside the swell of St. Jim's, was very busy. There always seemed to be a manner about Levison as he were watching omeers, instead of taking part in what was going forward.

Figgins rose to his feet at last, with a glass of foaming ginger beer in his hand.

"Gentleman—"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "The founder of the feast!"
 "Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove, deah boy, I weally take that vevy kindly of you!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "Nothin' pleases me more than to see your cheery chivvies wound me in this kind of you moment."

"Hurray!"
 "I'm not only sorry that such an auspicious occasion must come to an end," said D'Arcy. "But unless we are to miss each other at St. Jim's, we shall have to go. Miss Bunn, deah girl, will you kindly get me my bill?"

And Mrs. Bunn did so.

It came to two pounds fifteen shillings, and the swell of St. Jim's, after a glance at it, felt in his pockets for the fivepound note he thrust the five-pound note carelessly into his trousers' pocket, in his usual way.

"A chap note came out in his hand, and he laid it on the table."

Miss Bunn took it up, and then, with an expression of amazement, laid it down again. D'Arcy glanced at her.

"Excuse me, sir—"
 "I presume you can change it at the desk?" said D'Arcy.

"I'm afraid not, sir," said Miss Bunn. "You've have made a mistake."
 "Weally, you know—"
 "This is not a good note, sir!"
 "What?"

CHAPTER 4.

Awful for Figgins.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY turned his mopple upon Miss Bunn—in blank amazement. Then he dropped his glance to the banknote in the girl's hand.

"Not a good note!" he repeated.
 "No, sir."

"But, my deah gal—"
 "It is not a banknote at all, sir."
 "Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy took the note from her, and gazed at it in astonishment.

It was printed on crisp, rustling paper, and looked at the first glance like a banknote. But a second glance showed that "Bank of Elegance" was printed along the top, instead of "Bank of England."

It was a spoof-note—not of a kind designed by a forger for passing, of course. D'Arcy stared at it in bewilderment.

"Bai Jove!" he said feebly.
 The chums were all on their feet now, looking at the note.

"Bai Jove!" repeated D'Arcy.
 "Well, I must say this is a rotten joke of your governor's," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther—"
 "Lord Eastwood couldn't have sent Gussy that note," exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"
 "Did you look at the note when you received it, Gussy?" asked Blake.

The swell of St. Jim's nodded.
 "Yaas, wathah!" he said. "I certainly did!"

"Was it a Bank of England note?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "You are sure?"

"I—I suppose so. Of course, I didn't look at it vevy particularly. But—but it's impos. that my governah would send me this."

"Unless by mistake," said Digby.
 D'Arcy went through his pockets again. He had a faint hope of finding the banknote there. But it was not there.

"Bai Jove, you know," he said, "it's awfully awkward! I suppose, on the whole, my governah must have had this wotten thing passed on him, and sent it to me by mistake. I looked at it, you know, but I nevah made a special observation of it, of course. I never suspected anythin' of this sort."

"Well, I must say you are an ass, Gussy!"
 "Weally, Blake—"

"Any way, Mr. Bunn won't take that note," said Blake.
 "Got any more tin?"

D'Arcy shook his head.
 "No, deah boy, exceptin' for that note I am stony broke. I shall have to ask you chaps to lend me some tin. Of course, I will wepapy it immediately I have communicated with my governah."

Tom Merry whistled softly.
 "I hardly think we can raise it," he said. "We'll try."

They couldn't. The sum pooled among them was fifteen shillings. Miss Bunn had been looking on with a sympathetic countenance.

"I'm sure it doesn't matter, sir," she said. "I will explain to my father, and you can send the money."

D'Arcy looked vevy much relieved.
 "Bai Jove! That is vevy kind of you," he said. "That will be all wight. Thank you vevy much."

The juniors moved towards the door, D'Arcy still carrying the offending Bank of Elegance note in his hand. He was still in a great state of astonishment. Levison lingered behind for a moment to speak to Miss Bunn.

"Do you miss any of the spoons, miss?"
 Miss Bunn stared at him, and then stared at the table. Certainly half the teaspoons were missing.

"Dear me!" said Miss Bunn.
 "Shall I tell you who's got them?"

"Mercy!" gasped Miss Bunn. "They can't have been taken—"

"Ask Figgins—that long chap—for them," said Levison.
 "But it's impossible—"

"Well, where are they, then?"
 Miss Bunn compressed her lips. Mr. Bunn had provided his new establishment with really elegant nickel-plated spoons, and it was easy to imagine that they would be an acquisition in a junior study—if a junior were dishonest enough to carry them off.

But surely it was impossible—
 Yet where were the spoons?

Miss Bunn hesitated. But there were six of the spoons missing, and they were not under the table or on the table. They could only have been taken by one of the guests. Miss Bunn, with a very red face, ran to the door just as the lad in uniform was opening it, with a flourish, for the juniors.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB."

"Excuse me," she exclaimed.
D'Arcy raised his silk hat with the greatest of grace.
"Yeas, wathah," he replied. "What is it, dear boy—I mean deah gal?"

"Excuse me, but—but—"
Miss Bunn broke off, red and confused. The juniors looked at her in surprise.

"Miss Bunn has missed some of the spoons," Levison explained. "She thinks you chaps may know something about it."

"Spoons!"
"Bai Jove!"
Tom Merry flushed angrily.
"What do you mean, Levison?" he exclaimed.
Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Only that some of the spoons are missing. I suppose a fellow has taken them for a joke; but the joke's gone far enough."

"I should regard such a joke as uttally wicidulous," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Has any of you fellows taken the spoons for a joke?"

"Certainly not!" said every fellow there.
"But—but they are gone!" said Miss Bunn, in great distress.

"Weally, my deah gal, you must have made a mistake."
"They are gone, sir."

"If it were a rotten joke, the fellow would own up," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, it is impos. for a friend of mine to tell a cwammah, deah gal."

"But the spoons are gone!"
"The most satisfactory thing," said Levison, in his cool, hard tones, "would be for all the chaps to turn out their pockets."

"Wats!"
"Stuff!"
"Rot!" said Figgins warmly. "Do you think we're going to turn out our pockets like a crowd of blessed pickpockets in a police-station?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders again. Kerr was looking at him with keen, attentive eyes, but Levison did not observe him for the moment. It was a most awkward situation, for other customers in the tea-shop were looking towards them, and Mr. Bunn himself, fat and florid, had come out of the dock.

"What is it—what is it, gentlemen?" he asked.
Miss Bunn, with obvious distress, explained; Mr. Bunn looked very much troubled.

"You are sure the spoons are gone, Alice?" he asked.
"Yes, father."

"Will you young gent's step back to the table where you had tea?" asked Mr. Bunn politely. "You will be able to see for yourselves."

With very red faces the juniors went back to the table. Nothing had been removed from it as yet, and ten spoons should have been there. There were only four to be seen.

"You see, young gentlemen," said Mr. Bunn persuasively. "Of course, I know it is only a joke; but the young gentleman who has taken the spoons should hand them back now."

"Bai Jove!"
"Better turn out our pockets," said Monty Lowther, in a low voice. "It will look as if we're a blessed gang of thieves if we don't."

Tom Merry nodded assent, and set the example himself. The rest followed suit. And as Figgins turned out the pockets of his big, loose jacket, there was a sudden clang on the floor beside him.

Something had fallen to the floor—something metallic! There was a general start.
Every eye swept downward to see what it was.

It was a nickel-plated teaspoon.
"My hat!" muttered Blake.
Then there was a frozen silence.

CHAPTER 5.

The Conjuror!

FIGGINS stared at the fallen teaspoon, and his eyes seemed to start from his head. He gazed at it like one in a dream.

The other juniors stood petrified. Mr. Bunn's eyes glittered, but his daughter looked inclined to cry. That Figgins should have stolen teaspoons was inconceivable—yet there was the teaspoon!

Figgins, with a gasping exclamation, dived his hands deep into his pockets and brought out more teaspoons—five in all—and laid them in amazement on the table.

Then he looked round.
"Who put those teaspoons in my pockets?" he demanded.
Silence.

THE BOYS' LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY!

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in Advance.

"It was a rotten, silly joke, whoever did it!" said Figgins warmly.

"Of—of course it was a joke," said Mr. Bunn hastily.
His manner so plainly implied that he did not think anything of the sort that Figgins started, as if he had been stung.

"Mr. Bunn—"
"It's all right," said Mr. Bunn soothingly. "I know it was only a joke."

"I didn't know the spoons were in my pockets," said Figgins.

"Of course you didn't," said Fatty Wynn.
But even Wynn spoke faintly. The other juniors were silent. How could the spoons be in Figgins's pocket without his knowing it?

Levison was studying the window. Kerr was watching him like a cat, with a peculiar gleam in his eyes.
Figgins's face went red, and then pale.

He glared at the shop proprietor, but the glare died out of his eyes and became a pathetic appeal as he looked at the chituns.

"You—you believe me?" he gasped huskily. "You don't believe that I wanted to steal a few miserable teaspoons?"

"Gwent Scott!"
"Of—of course not," said Blake uneasily.
"Somebody must have put them in my pocket."

"Of—of course!"
"It was a rotten joke!" said Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"
"Yes," said Kerr, speaking in a low voice, keen as a whip. "They were put into Figgins's pocket for a rotten joke. Don't you think it's about time you owned up, Levison?"

Levison started.
"What!" exclaimed Tom Merry.
"Haven't I heard some of you say that that conjuror's conjurer?" asked Kerr.

The School House juniors almost jumped. Levison started away a pace, his face growing uneasy.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Levison!"
"Yes, Levison."

Levison laughed, but his laugh did not ring true.
"I really don't see why you accuse me," he retorted.

"What reason have you to suppose that I played that game on Figgins?"
"You are a conjurer, and I suppose sleight-of-hand comes easy to you," said the Scottish junior.

"Possibly, but—"
"And you put those spoons in Figgins's pocket?"
"Really!"

"And I think I can prove it," said Kerr, with a stare in his eyes.
Levison laughed again.

"How?" he asked.
"Where is D'Arcy's banknote?"

The question was so sudden and direct that Levison did not prepare for it. He changed colour.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.
"Where is D'Arcy's banknote?" repeated Kerr, unabated.

"Gwent Scott! You don't mean to say, Kerr, that boy—"
"I mean to say that this is another of his rotten conjuror's tricks," said Kerr quietly. "I'll wager a great deal that he exchanged that Bank of Elegance note for D'Arcy's banknote. That rotten trash is just what a conjurer would use to hoodlum him for playing tricks with."

All eyes were turned upon Levison.
"Well, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, after a moment. "What have you to say on the subject?"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.
"Hand over the banknote!" said Kerr sharply.

"Suppose I haven't it?"
"You have it—and we'll reach you, anyway."

Levison laughed, and tossed the banknote upon the table.
"There it is," he said. "It was only a joke, you see. You don't imagine that I meant to keep it!"

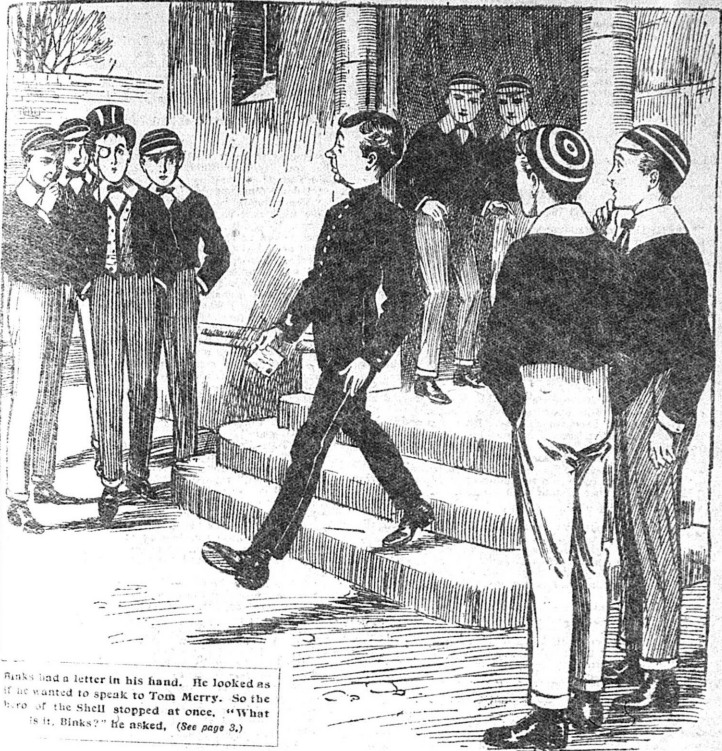
"No," said Kerr. "I don't imagine that, because the note is traced by the number, and you're too keen not to know that. But if it had been money, I should have thought you would have kept it."

Levison flushed.
"You weren't expelled from your last school for this?"
Levison, said Blake.

"I tell you—"
"If it was only for playing caddish jokes, you wouldn't have said Tom Merry. And I tell you plainly this sort of thing won't go down at St. Jim's, Levison. I suppose you don't know that you planted those teaspoons on Figgins?"

Levison nodded coolly.
"It was a joke," he said.
"You did it!"

"Yes."



Binks had a letter in his hand. He looked as if he wanted to speak to Tom Merry. So the hero of the Shell stopped at once, "What is it, Binks?" He asked. (See page 3.)

"It wasn't a joke—it was a rotten, caddish trick!" said Tom Merry deliberately. "That's plain English, Levison." Levison flushed crimson.

"I don't see why you can't take a joke!" he exclaimed. "I want to own up, of course."

"I hope you did."

"Do you doubt my word?" flamed out Levison. "You can hardly expect me to take it," he said.

Levison gritted his teeth. He had meant to place D'Arcy in a false position, and Figgins in a false position, by his foolish prank, and he had only succeeded in placing himself in a very false position indeed.

"Well, you can give me back my note now," he said to Levison.

The swell of St. Jim's took out the Bank of Elegance note. He caught it from his hand and deliberately tore it to pieces.

Levison started forward with an angry exclamation. "That's mine!" he said fiercely.

Kerr looked at him coolly. "You won't play any more rotten jokes with that," he said.

"And if I were Figgins, I'd give you the hiding of your life when you get outside this shop."

"Yass, wathah!"

Figgins glared at Levison. "I think you're a rotten worm—an unspeakable worm," he said.

"If Kerr hadn't been keen enough to bowl you out, you'd have made people think I was a thief. I'd like you to come into the gym with me at St. Jim's, with or without gloves, that's all."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Levison. And he strode from the teashop.

"Bai Jove! As my five has turned up, I will pay the bill afiah all, Mr. Bunn," said the swell of St. Jim's.

And having received the change of his five, Arthur Augustus led the way from the teashop.

The juniors turned their footsteps towards St. Jim's in the growing dusk of the evening.

The happening in the teashop had left them all with a very uncomfortable feeling. They walked on in silence for a time.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, at last, breaking the silence. "Bai Jove, deah boys, Towshah was wight!"

"Towser!" said Tom Merry.

"Yass, wathah—about Levison, you know!"

"And so was Herring," said Blake. "My hat, I rather think that even Tom Merry, the champion ass of the School House, will have done with that cad now!"

Tom Merry laughed uneasily.

"I don't think he means any real harm," he said. "It's a peculiar sense of humour he's got, that's all. I don't say I like it."

"Wathah not!"

Figgins set his lips.

"If it's a peculiar sense of humour, the sooner it's knocked out of him the better," he said grudgingly, "and I'll do my best this evening in the gym."

"Yass, wathah! I quite approve of your intentions, dear boy."

"Hicar, hear!"

And as soon as the juniors arrived at St. Jim's, Figgins set out to look for Levison.

CHAPTER 6.

Great News for Binks!

HERRIE was standing at the door of the School House when Tom Merry & Co. came in. He was looking decidedly glum.

"Seen Towser?" was his first question.

"No. Hasn't he come in?"

"Not yet."

"He'll turn up all right," said Blake comfortingly. "He won't be lost—so such luck—I mean, he's bound to come in."

"Yass, wathah!"

"I can't help feeling uneasy about him," said Herrie. "He's such an awfully valuable dog, you know, anybody might snap him up. I wonder if that chap Jolliffe's keeping him in the Green Man? Jolliffe's real enough for anything!"

"I rather think Towser wouldn't be an easy dog to keep against his will," Tom Merry said, with a laugh.

"Well, yes, but I feel very uneasy. I'd go out and look for him, only that beast Knox is keeping his eyes open. I'll get level with that rotter one of these days," said Herrie. "I was awfully anxious about Towser."

"Yes, it's hard cheese," said Blake sympathetically.

"I saw Levison come in a few minutes ago," said Herrie. "He wasn't looking pleased with himself. I suppose you didn't get on with him?"

"Wathah not!"

"What did I tell you?" demanded Herrie triumphantly. "You can always trust Towser!"

"Towser was right this time," said Tom Merry.

"Of course he was. He always is. You remember the time he tracked down the chapel burglars, Blake?"

"I remember the time he tracked down a kipper," said Blake.

"Look here, you ass—"

"I have done with Levison as far as I'm concerned," said Arthur Augustus. "I warned him as a wauk wathah. I would wathah go out with Towser, you know."

"Well, I should think so," said Herrie. "I told you he'd play you some rotten trick. But what did he do?"

Tom Merry explained.

"Just like him," said Herrie. "And, look here, I believe he played a rotten trick like that on Binks."

"Binks!"

"Yes," said Herrie emphatically. "I've thought it over; and I've spoken to Binks about it, and he swears that he never had a New York horrible on him, to his knowledge. It was just one of Levison's rotten conjuring tricks."

Tom Merry's brow darkened.

Now that it was pointed out to him, it seemed only too probable. It was as easy for Levison to plant "Deadwood Dave" upon Binks, as the Bank of Elegance note upon D'Arcy, or the spoons upon Figgins.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "But suahly the wathah would have owned up in the long wun, and not allowed us to believe that Binks was a liah."

"I don't know," said Tom Merry. "I don't believe he meant to own up at the teashop. It's a crooked sort of humour he's got, and he likes to make people jolly uncomfortable. He's a dangerous fellow."

"I really think you owe Binks an apology, Tom Merry."

"I'll see Levison about that," said the Shell fellow abruptly.

And he went to look for Levison. He found him in the study which he shared with Mellish, in the Fourth Form passage. Mellish was there, too, and the two juniors were talking as Tom Merry knocked at the door. Mellish and Levison had one topic at least in common—they had both been friends of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the fellow who had been known as the "Outsider" at St. Jim's—and they both resembled that youth in only two main ways.

Levison looked round at Tom Merry.

He did not speak, but the curious green glitter came into his eyes which was sometimes there, and which was a sign

THE GREAT LIBRARY.—No. 145.

THURSDAY:

THURSDAY:

of some inward emotion. But his manner was always cool and composed.

"I want to speak to you, Levison," Tom Merry said abruptly.

"Go ahead. If you want to apologise for the pleasant things you said in the teashop—"

"I don't."

"No?" said Levison, with a pleasant smile. "What is it, then?"

"You played several caddish tricks on us in the teashop."

Levison yawned.

"I want to know whether it was a trick of the same sort that you played on Binks, with that American trashy penicillin," said Tom Merry angrily.

"I don't remember—"

"You remember perfectly well," said Tom Merry quietly. "We were outside the School House, just before we went down to Rycomb. You pretended to find a copy of a rotten paper poked under Binks's jacket. Was it really there, or was it one of your rotten conjuring tricks?"

Levison laughed.

"I was going to tell you—"

"Then it was a trick?"

"Of course it was," said Levison impatiently; "I said joke on Binks. I was going to tell you—only it was such a joke to see his face. He was simply flabbergasted."

"You made me think he was telling lies."

"I will, I dare say he does tell lies—"

Tom Merry's look stopped Levison.

"I think you are a cad," said Tom Merry quietly. "You played a mean trick—all the meaner because Binks is an employment here, and can't resent your rotten insolence as another fellow would do."

"Thank you!" said Levison.

"And if Figgins weren't going to lick you, I'd do it myself, that's all."

And Tom Merry strode from the study and slammed the door. Mellish looked at Levison with a peculiar expression.

"So Figgins is going for you, is he?" he asked.

"So he says," replied Levison easily.

"You'll get an awful licking."

The new junior did not reply.

Tom Merry went to his study, where he found Masters and Lowther. Binks had also arrived there, with the book in his hand. Binks was looking very subdued. Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder at once.

"I'm sorry I doubted your word, Binks, old man," he said.

"Why, Master Merry—"

"I know now that that rotten book was shoved under your jacket by Levison, before he took it away; it was a rotten trick!"

"Oh, I see!" said Binks, in great relief. "I saw, Master Merry. I was a wonderin' how it come there, I was, but you know, I hadn't put it there myself."

"It's all right, Binks, and I'm sorry."

Binks's fat face beamed.

"Don't you worry about that, Master Merry. It's all right. Perhaps now you wouldn't mind reading us what I've brought it over as you told me."

Tom Merry took the letter.

"Who is it from, Binks?"

"Mother," said Binks.

Tom Merry hesitated.

"You're sure you want me to read it?"

"Yes," said Binks, "please! I don't rightly remember it, Master Merry—I can't. I think mother must be best something. It can't be true."

"What can't be true, Binks?"

"The noos."

"The—the what?"

"Noos," said Binks. "The noos."

"Oh, the news!" said Tom Merry, smiling. "Well, if you want my opinion on it, kid, I'll read it to you certainly."

"Perhaps Master Lowther and Manners would like to earn it, and tellin' me what they think," said Binks.

"Right-ho!" said Lowther. "Go ahead, Tom Merry. I'm blessed if it doesn't smell like a mystery."

"It's wonderful," said Binks. "If it's true, that's all I believe the noos. I think mother must be ill."

"Well, we'll soon see," said Tom Merry.

He glanced over the ill-written, ill-spelt letter. An exclamation of amazement left his lips.

"Great Scott!"

"What's the row?" asked Monty Lowther.

"My only hat!"

"Wonderful, ain't it?" said Binks.

"By Jove!"

"What on earth is it?" cried Manners.

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order to Advance.

"Listen!" said Tom Merry. And he read out the letter. We give it as written:

"Dear 'Erny,—There's the most surprising news for you and for all of us. Your uncle 'Erny oo lived in Australy has died and left you is money. Which I never knew for one that he was that rich, but the lawyer gentleman says it will be a million pounds and more, all made out of sheep. Which he never say a word again agen that frozen mutton. You will be as rich as creakers, 'Erny, and you want ave to send one your wages to your pore ole mother any more, for when we shall all be a-rollin in gold. Get leave from Dr. Quince and kum one as quick as you can, so no more from your loving nuther.
JANE BINKS."

There was a short silence in the study. The genius of the Shell stared at one another. "Binks—Binks the buttons—Binks the page—Binks the boots—Binks—Binks was a millionaire! It was incredible.

He said—unless Mrs. Binks was being deceived, or unless she had been made.

Binks looked from one face to another.

"What do you think, young gentles?" he asked.

"The young gentles could not reply for a moment. They could not stand in silence and stare at Binks. Binks was a millionaire!

CHAPTER 7. The Millionaire.

BINKS blinked doubtfully at the chums. He evidently could not believe the news—it was too great—too good—too amazing.

He asked who had sent home his few weekly shillings in the belief to help to support a brood of younger Binkses and it was possible that he was wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice.

"It is possible, but—"

Binks had lived too hard a life to think it probable. He would have understood five pounds—or even fifty. A million was quite beyond his mental grasp.

"It seems it's a mistake?" he remarked.

"I don't know," said Tom Merry at last. "Your mother is a family enough."

"She can't be hill."

"It is given to fancies, or anything of that sort?"

"No, sir," said Binks. "Not as a rule. Mother's as hard a worker and she need be, with eight youngsters to keep, to do nothing of father as was always too superior to go to."

Dr. Merry did not express an opinion of the gentleman who was the superior to go to work. He kept to the business of the office.

"Is it you an Uncle Henry in Australy?" he asked.

Binks smiled.

"That's it. I was named after him. Queer old cove he was. I just remember him leavin' England, after the war he came 'ome. He was werry pleased at my bein' a soldier after 'im, and said it might be worth a trifle to me in these days, if he never married. And he never did. I always thought that I'd have a fipun note per'aps in his pocket when I went to—"

Binks did not say what he meant to do with the five-pound note.

"You didn't know he was rich?"

"Well, no. Course, we knew in a general way as he was a rich man," said Binks. "He used to send mother a little something at Christmas, and he said in his letters that he'd be a good deal of 'ard of father bein' in a permanent job. But that was that superior. He ain't 'ad a job for years and years."

"Will I shouldn't wonder if it's true, then," said Tom Merry. "The amount of money may have been exaggerated, of course. But it looks to me as if you're a rich man."

"You're rich?" said Binks.

"I'm not."

"Being in wealth," said Manners. "Squirring in filthy ways."

"It is as 'crossus," said Lowther. "Exuding gold at every pore. Binks, old man. I always liked you. I always thought you were a handsome, bonny chap, very much like my twin brother—if I'd had a twin. I hope you don't forget our old friendship—the times and times when I asked you with the boots and the knives—or, at all events, I should have, if I'd known about your Uncle Henry."

Binks grinned.

"What do you must 'ave your little joke, Master Lowther," said Tom Merry. "If this turns out to be true, young gentles, and

I'm a rich man, I only 'ope as you'll be as kind to me as you 'ave been, and not think that I shall put on any hairs on account of the money."

Poor Binks meant "airs," that "hairs." But his meaning was clear, and Tom Merry impulsively caught him by the hand.

"You're a jolly good sort, old Binks," he said; "and though I don't value you twopence more rich than poor, you can always rely on me to stand by you if you want me to. If this is true, it will make a change in your circumstances, and if I can help you in any way, I'll do it like a shot."

"You was always werry kind to me, Master Merry," said Binks, with a moisture in his eyes. "Then you think I ought to go 'ome and see about this?"

"Why, of course. If I had known the letter was important, like this, I'd have read it before," said Tom Merry remorsefully. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"It's all right, Master Merry; I didn't want to worry you as you was going 'out," said Binks. "Pr'aps—pr'aps you wouldn't mind coming to the 'End with me, to—to explain that I ought to go 'ome to-day."

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry. "But if you show Dr. Holmes this letter, he will see at once that you must go."

Binks hesitated.

"I'd rather you came, Master Merry, if you don't mind," he said.

"Right you are," he said.

And he left the study with Binks. Manners and Lowther stared blankly at one another, and then they laughed.

"Well, my hat!" said Monty Lowther. "If this doesn't beat everything!"

"My word, yes!"

Binks was walking like a fellow in a dream as Tom Merry took him to the Head's study. Tom Merry tapped at the door; Binks did not nerve enough, and the deep voice of the Head bade them enter.

Dr. Holmes looked surprised as Tom Merry entered with the boot-boy.

"What is it, Merry?" he asked, with a curious glance at Binks.

"If you please, sir, Binks wishes you to read this letter," said Tom Merry. "He wants leave to go home to-day, sir!"

"This—or—letter!"

"If you'd be so kind, sir," quavered Binks.

"Certainly, my lad!"

Dr. Holmes read the letter.

He gasped, and read it again.

Then he looked at Binks.

"This is extraordinary news, Binks!"

"Yes, sir!" faltered Binks.

"I sincerely hope it is true, and that this sudden wealth will be a benefit to you, Binks," said Dr. Holmes. "Of course, if it turns out to be correct, you will leave your present position here at once—"

Binks's jaw dropped.

"Oh, sir!—I—you won't send me away, sir!"

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"My dear boy, you could not continue to black boots in the School House, when you are rich enough to buy the whole place!" he exclaimed.

"I—I a'pose not, sir, but—but—"

"Yes, Binks."

"I—I don't want to leave St. Jim's, sir. I—I thought that pr'aps you might gimme some advice, sir—some 'elp, if—I am a millionaire, sir. I shan't know what to do with the money!"

Dr. Holmes thought that very probable; and indeed he thought it very doubtful if this sudden accession to wealth would be a benefit to Binks, or to Binks's relations. But he did not say so.

"Of course, I should be glad to help you in any way, Binks," he said. "While in my employment here, you have been under my charge; and I have always considered it my duty to advise you if you needed it. This makes no difference. I shall be only too glad to stand your friend. I should advise you to proceed home as quickly as possible, and ascertain exactly how matters stand. Then you can come back and see me, and consult about the future."

"Thank you kindly, sir! I knew you wouldn't turn me 'out," said Binks.

The Head smiled again.

"Very well, Binks; and now hurry home. Are you in need of money?"

"I can pay my fare, sir, thank you!"

And Binks retired with Tom Merry, leaving the Head in a state of great amazement. It was not often that a boot-boy became a millionaire. Such things had happened, but not in Dr. Holmes's personal experience, and he was amazed.

"It's like a dream, Master Merry," said Binks, as they left the study.

"I dare say it is, Binks," said Tom, with a smile. "But you'll get used to it. Look here, are you sure you've got tin enough?"

"—I think so, Master Merry."

"If you haven't, I'll go and borrow a pound of D'Arcy for you. No need to scrape now, if you're a giddy millionaire," said Tom Merry. "Why, here's Gussy! Gussy!"

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"Lend me a pound."

"With pleasuru, deah boy," said D'Arcy, feeling in his pockets.

"It's not for me, but for a millionaire friend of mine," Tom Merry explained.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared at him.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, Lumlay-Lumlay was the only giddy millionaire here, and he has left St. Jim's. But do you mean Glyn of the Shell?"

"No."

"Whom, then?"

"Binks of the boots."

"What?"

"Binks—Henry Binks, Esquire!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"His uncle in Australia has left him a million pounds or so," Tom Merry explained. "Binks doesn't know the precise amount to a hundred thousand."

"Bai Jove!"

"Coming to the station with us?" asked Tom Merry. "I'm going to see Binks off. It isn't every day you have a chance of walking with a millionaire."

"Oh, Master Merry!" remonstrated Binks.

"Bai Jove! I congratulate Binks!" said Arthur Augustus. "I will come to the station with pleasure!"

And Tom Merry and D'Arcy both saw Binks off, with the sovereign in his pocket, and happy anticipation on his fat face. Had they taken his good fortune in an envious or sneering spirit, all poor Binks's pleasure would have been dashed. But Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus could always be relied upon to play the game. Their cheerful kindness sent Binks on his way with a happy and grateful heart.

CHAPTER 8.

The Thief.

LEIVISON, old man!"

Mellish's tone was quite affectionate.

Ernest Leivison looked at him quietly from under his eyebrows. Leivison had a look that seemed to go right through a fellow, and it always gave Mellish an uncomfortable feeling to have Leivison's eyes turned upon him.

"Well?" said Leivison.

"Can you lend me a pound?"

Leivison laughed.

"What do you want a pound for?"

"Well, I owe a chap a pound," said Mellish cautiously.

"I want to settle up. If you could let me have a pound, I'd settle with you next week."

"Better decline to pay Joliffe at all."

Mellish started violently.

"Joliffe! What do you mean, Leivison?"

"I mean what I say," said Leivison, with a grin. "If you'll take disinterested advice, you won't go down to the Green Man any more, and you won't pay Joliffe. He's cheated you, of course."

"You—you rotter!" said Mellish. "How do you know?" Leivison laughed again.

"I generally know things," he remarked. "Harry Wharton at Greyfriars said I ought to be a detective, and really I think there is something in it. I haven't been in the same study with you for a fortnight without learning your little ways. Besides, you were chummy with Lumley-Lumley, and I knew his little ways."

Mellish was silent for a minute.

"Well," he said, at last, "it is Joliffe. I really owe him the money—and he's cutting up rusty over it. I really wish you'd let me have the pound!"

Leivison shook his head.

"Can't be did, my son!"

"But, look here—"

"In the first place, I never lend money; in the second, I haven't a pound," said Leivison lazily. "Better go and ask D'Arcy."

"He wouldn't be likely to lend me money."

"Well, he might—he has plenty, and he's a fool," said Leivison.

"You'd better not let him hear you say so."

Leivison shrugged his shoulders.

"So you won't lend me a pound," said Mellish, with an unpleasant glitter in his eyes.

"No."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in
Advance.

"Very well. Will you come down to the gym?"

"Not just at present."

"Will you come for a stroll in the quad?"

"No."

"You're staying in the study?"

"Yes."

"And you think I don't know why?" said the cad of the Fourth, with a sneer. "Look here, you're quite sure you can't lend me any tin?"

"Quite sure."

"Very well. I suppose you've no objection to my asking Figgins to supper in the study?" said Mellish, in the same sneering tone.

Leivison's eyes gleamed.

He fully understood. He was staying in the study to avoid Figgins, until the affair of the Arcadia tea-shop should have blown over. Mellish understood his motives perfectly well.

But Leivison was too cool and collected to be taken aback.

"Bring him in by all means," he said.

He knew very well that Figgins was not likely to accept an invitation from the cad of the Fourth.

Mellish looked at him uneasily.

"You know jolly well you're dodging Figgins!" he exclaimed abruptly. "You know you're afraid of him."

Leivison rose to his feet.

"I'm not afraid of you, at all events," he said. "Get out of this study!"

Mellish blustered.

"I'm not going out of my own study, unless I choose," he exclaimed.

"You'd better choose."

Mellish evidently thought so, too, for he left the study hurriedly. Leivison sat down again, put his feet on the fender, and took a book. He did not object to passing a few hours, quietly in the study; it was better than meeting the long-haired New House junior in the gym.

Mellish paused in the passage.

Then he moved slowly along, a troubled expression on his face. He paused outside Study No. 6 for a moment, thinking of Leivison's advice to borrow the money from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was no friend of D'Arcy's, yet it was a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus was more likely to lend him the money than Leivison was.

He knocked at the door and looked in.

The room was untenanted.

The chums of the Fourth were out in the gym, and early on the door was the coat Arthur Augustus had worn that afternoon at the tea-shop.

Mellish knew it was D'Arcy's coat, not only from the last, some cut, but from the fact that it was carefully secured upon a wooden hanger, to preserve the shapely shoulders.

Mellish took a quick look up and down the passage.

Then he stepped into the study and closed the door.

His heart was beating violently.

He had heard all about the affair at the tea-shop, and he guessed that Arthur Augustus would have the chance of the five-pound note in his pockets.

Was D'Arcy likely to have left it in his coat?

Few other fellows would be so careless; but Mellish knew how careless D'Arcy was with money. It never seemed to cross the mind of the swell of St. Jim's that there could be such a person as a thief in existence.

"I—I can't ask D'Arcy," ran Mellish's thoughts. "It's not here. And—and he might refuse. I—I might ask it without asking."

Even to himself he would not admit that it was a thief he was thinking of.

His hands were on the coat now, and as he moved he heard the chink of money. That sound was irresistible.

His fingers slid into the ticket pocket, into which Arthur Augustus had carelessly slid the change of the five-pound note, along with other money.

Two pieces of gold came out in Mellish's hand, and there was a great quantity of silver left in the pocket.

Mellish slipped a sovereign into his own waistcoat, and his hands trembling so violently that a couple of other pieces slipped from his fingers and rolled upon the floor.

"It's—it's only borrowing," he murmured. "Yes, said D'Arcy won't miss it, and I'll let him have it later on, if he how."

We are informed that Messrs. Rudge-Whitworth, Ltd., the well-known cycle makers of Coventry, have received the Royal Warrant of appointment as bicycle manufacturers to H. M. King George.

He put the rest of the money back into the coat, and then stooped to pick up the pieces that had fallen.

He had no time to think; he sprang behind the angle of the bookcase, and crouched there to escape observation. The gas was turned very low, and in the dim light there was no reason why he should be seen, unless the new-comer overheard the study.

That it was not one of the fellows who belonged to No. 6 he knew, of course, from the knock on the door. The door opened.

at their being away. I told Blake distinctly that I should come in after tea to read him some extracts from my new volume on the subject of Determinism. How very forgetful of him!

Skimpole came into the study.

His reflections ran on aloud. Skimpole had a way of talking to himself, and sometimes he could be overheard addressing imaginary audiences in his study. Skimpole was a sage youth, and took a great interest in Socialism and Determinism, and, in fact, all sorts and conditions of "isms." He would expound his "isms" at any length, at any time, to anybody; and fellows who had nothing better to do sometimes



Lower seemed determined to get into the "Green Man," and he dragged Herries along to the doorway by the chain. "Bai love," gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Hold on, dear boy!" (See page 8.)

A large head, ornamented with a pair of very large spectacles, was projected into the study.

"Here we!" said a voice. "They are not in." Mellish held his breath. It was Skimpole, of the Shell. Surely he would pass on when he saw that the chums of No. 6 were not at home.

Mellish waited, his heart beating like a hammer.

CHAPTER 9.

A Narrow Escape.

SKIMPOLE blinked into the study. He was short-sighted, and the study was very dim, and the angle of the bookcase concealed Mellish, so it was not surprising that the Shell fellow did not see him.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole aloud. "I am very surprised

draw him out on the subject of Determinism, and made him explain that wonderful science, and demonstrate that whatever is, is, and whatever is not, is not, and other great discoveries of a like nature.

"I suppose I had better leave them a note," murmured Skimpole. "I suppose I shall find paper and pen here. It was really very forgetful of Blake."

He turned up the gas.

Mellish trembled.

He was now fully revealed, if Skimpole should look towards him; but the genius of the Shell, as he stood at the table, had his back to Mellish and the bookcase.

He was dipping Blake's pen in the ink, and drawing towards him a sheet of impot paper, to leave his message for the chums of Study No. 6.

Mellish set his teeth.

THE GEM LIBRARY, No. 145.
 NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB," A Splendid, Lenz, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Any fellow coming along the passage and looking in would see him. If he were discovered there, by Skimpole or anybody else, it would be all over with him, as soon as D'Arcy discovered the loss of the sovereign.

The cad of the Fourth was desperate. It was very well for him to say to himself that he had only borrowed the sovereign, and that he would return it to D'Arcy later, but he knew what the whole House would think of his action.

They would say that he was a thief—as indeed he was. But what was he to do? Skimpole had not seen him, but if he moved the Shell fellow would be bound to hear him, and look round.

Yet if he waited Skimpole must turn round after writing the note, and then he could not fail to see the Fourth-Former.

Mellish's heart almost died within him. In his mind's eye he already saw himself discovered, and branded as a thief—taken before Dr. Holmes, and expelled from the school.

"Dear Blake," mumbled Skimpole, as he wrote, "I called in as agreed, and brought my extracts with me, but found that you had forgotten the appointment. I am very sorry, and shall be very pleased to explain the matter to you any time. HEBBERT SKIMPOLE."

Skimpole blotted the letter, and laid down the pen. He was desperate, and he could wait no more. He trod softly towards the door.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Skimpole. Mellish stopped, suffocating. But Skimpole had not seen him.

It was the glimmer of a half-crown on the floor that had caught his eye.

He stooped to pick it up. He still had his back to Mellish, but he was too close for the cad of the Fourth to pass without touching him.

A desperate plan occurred to Mellish. He sprang upon Skimpole, and grasped him by the shoulders, and hurled him to the floor.

Skimpole gave a wild yell. "Oh! Oh! What— Mellish, my dear fellow, what do you mean?"

"What are you doing in here?" demanded Mellish. "I was just passing, and I saw you. What are you up to in Blake's study?"

Skimpole sat on the floor and blinked at him. "Really, Mellish—"

"What are you doing here?" "I was about to pick up this half-crown," said Skimpole, blinking. "Someone has dropped a half-crown in the study."

"Hallo, who's dropping half-crowns?" asked a cheery voice; and Tom Merry looked in.

Tom Merry was passing No. 6 on his way to his own study. Mellish gasped with relief. Had he remained in his previous position, Tom Merry would have seen him hiding behind the corner of the bookcase, to a certainty.

Now he believed that he could bluff the matter through. "Skimpole is," he said. "I found him here, and caught him bending, and bumped him over."

"It was really very rough and rude of Mellish," said Skimpole, blinking indignantly at the cad of the Fourth. "I have received a shock."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Serve you right!" said Mellish. "You shouldn't bend when a chap's passing. Besides, you can let Blake pick up his own half-crowns, for that matter."

"Really, Mellish—"

Mellish went out of the study whistling. Tom Merry looked after him; and then looked at Skimpole, who was slowly getting up.

"It was quite brutal of Mellish," said Skimpole. "Dear me, there is another half-crown on the carpet! How very careless of Blake! What shall I do with these half-crowns, Merry?"

"Better give 'em to Blake," said Tom Merry. "Yes, perhaps so; but I do not know where he is. Perhaps, upon the whole, I will leave them lying upon the note I have written for Blake."

And Skimpole placed the two half-crowns on the note. Tom Merry went out of his way, and was soon busy with his preparation with Manners and Lowther. Skimpole drifted back to his study to pursue his investigations into Determinism and Evolution, and other extremely important matters which were wont to exercise his nighty brain.

Mellish went on his way, too, and sat down in the common-room. He thought he had covered up his tracks pretty well. In fact, if there were any suspicion about the loss of the sovereign, it was more likely to fall upon Skimpole than upon himself, under the circumstances.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

D'Arcy minor, of the Third, came into the junior common-room. Wally D'Arcy, like most of the fags, generally kept to the Third Form-room, and left the junior common-room to the Fourth and the Shell. But Wally was on business now. He looked round the room, but it was nearly empty, most of the juniors being in the gym., or in their studies at prep. He crossed over to Mellish.

"Hallo, Mellish!" he exclaimed. "Got a sovereign?" Mellish sprang to his feet.

Such a question, from D'Arcy minor, at such a moment meant to the scared junior that he was discovered—that Wally knew.

"You young hound!" he shouted furiously. "What do you mean?"

Wally started back. "My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated. "What's the matter with you, Mellish? Keep your wool on, you know!"

"If you haven't got a quidlet, say so," said Wally. "No need to jump out on a fellow like that. What's the matter?"

Mellish glared at him, but his look gradually cleared. He could see, at the second glance, that Wally meant no harm and was not making an allusion to D'Arcy's sovereign, which was reposing in Mellish's waistcoat pocket.

"It's—its all right!" muttered Mellish. "I—I was—was— Look here, young D'Arcy, what do you want? Have you got the cheek to ask me to lend you a sovereign?"

"Not much!" said Wally aggressively. "Do you think I'd borrow money of you? I've had a postal-order from my Aunt Adeline, and it's come in by the last post, so I can't cash it to-night. I wanted some fellow to take it to my hand."

He held out a postal-order for a sovereign. "Oh, I see!" said Mellish.

"I came here to ask Gussy," said Wally, "but he's out."

"It's all right," said Mellish; "I'll cash the postal-order for you. I've got a sovereign, as it happens."

"Good!"

The sovereign and the postal-order changed hands, and Wally went out of the room whistling, too satisfied with having obtained the cash to worry himself about Mellish's strange outburst. Mellish was a fellow of uncertain temper, anyway.

Mellish drew a long breath of relief. He had obtained the sovereign, and as it was impossible to obtain a postal-order at that hour, he had had to come to break bounds that night to take the money to bed.

Breaking bounds to join a merry party was one thing, but to run all the risk for the sake of paying a debt was another. The postal-order came in the nick of time, and Mellish lost no time in writing a letter and enclosing it.

He dared not post a letter addressed to Joliffe in the street-box, so he waited about in the quad, till the postman came to collect from the box, and gave him the letter. The bag slipped it into his bag without looking at it.

Mellish returned to the School House, much to the surprise of his mind. He started a little as he met Levison passing.

Levison looked at him curiously. "Been for a stroll?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mellish shortly. "Without your coat, too?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" "Cold night for a stroll without a coat," Levison remarked.

"Oh, mind your own business!" snapped Mellish. And he walked on, leaving Levison staring after him with a very curious expression upon his keen face.

CHAPTER 10.

The Missing Sovereign.

"PWAY don't bump into me, dear boys!" Arthur Augustus made that remark.

It was bed-time for the Fourth Form, and the cad of St. Jim's was carrying his coat on his arm, and was in dormitory. He had taken the coat carefully out of the box, and Blake had stopped behind to read Skimpole's note, and to pick up the two half-crowns off the table—consequently puzzled to find them there, for Skimpole had added no explanation about his hiding them.

Arthur Augustus had disposed of the coat gracefully to his arm, and Horrie and Digby showed a disposition to look into him, for the heinous purpose of rumping the coat. The smell of St. Jim's turned a wrathful eye upon them.

"Pray don't be an ass, Horrie," he said. "Digby, my boy, keep off the grass, you ass! Levison, if you want to see me again I shall push you violently."

Levison grinned. "Is that your coat?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah?" "Curious things you've got in the pockets," said Levison.

"What?"
 "Look here!"
 Levison slid his hand into a pocket of D'Arcy's coat and the wolf of St. Jim's gasped as he drew out a frog.
 "Hi! Love!"
 "My hat!" ejaculated Digby. "How on earth did that get there?"
 "Look here!" said Levison.
 From another pocket he extracted a mouse.
 "A regular menagerie," he remarked.
 D'Arcy dropped the coat.
 "Hi! Hi! It's howlid! How—"
 "Hi, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "You ass! It's only that chap's rotten conjuring again! They're only spoof things—jabbering frogs and mice."
 D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Levison.
 "Uttah wottah—"
 "Hi, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

D'Arcy pecked up the coat, and stalked into the dormitory with great dignity. He took it towards the roomy old wardrobe at the end of the dormitory, where he kept most of his wardrobe supplies of attire.

As he hung the coat up he put his hand in the pocket to recover the money. It was not because it occurred to him that the money would not be safe in a coat-pocket in a wardrobe common to the whole Form. But he wanted it in his pocket for use on the morrow. He drew the money out, counted it, and slipped the silver into his trousers pocket without counting it, and then opened his little leather money-purse to put the gold away. Thus he became aware that there was, which anybody else would have noticed at first, only one, and only one sovereign instead of two.

"Hi! Love!" said D'Arcy.
 He felt in the coat-pocket again for the other sovereign. He felt there. He felt in the other pockets.

"What's the matter?" asked Blake.
 "Hi! Love! It's another of that wottah's wotten conjurin' tricks!" said Arthur Augustus. "He has been meddlin' with my money again."
 "Hi, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy strode towards Levison.
 "Give me my sovereign, you ass!" he exclaimed.
 Levison, who was sitting on the side of his bed taking his boots off, stared at him in surprise.
 "Your sovereign?" he exclaimed.
 "Uttah wottah!"

"What are you talking about?"
 "My sovereign."
 "Give me of your rocker!" drawled Levison. "Go to!"

D'Arcy flushed crimson with anger. After what had happened at the tea-shop, and after the trick in the passage on the night of that same coat, it was only natural that the junior should jump to the conclusion that Levison had been tricked and another trick, and taken the sovereign. The junior at the Arcadin had shown that he was by no means slow to catch on to other people's money.

"Hi! Love, you uttah wascal!" said D'Arcy. "I don't like to see him played with money. I told you so afore he went to work with my fivevah. Give me that sovereign."
 "I won't give you any sovereign."
 "You'll swammahs, deah boy."

Levison flushed in his turn. The fellows up and down the dormitory were all beginning to look at him very curiously.
 "What do you haven't any sovereign, either of yours or of mine?" he exclaimed. "I think you're dotty! Get away!"

"Give me a sovereign from my coat-pocket in the wardrobe!"
 "Hi! Love!"
 "You won't give it."
 "Hi! Love! I didn't!"
 "You deah boy!"

The juniors were gathering round now. Levison was on the spot, with one boot on and the other off, his face flushed and his eyes staring.

"You've accused me of picking your pocket, you hound!"
 "Hi! Love!"

"You'll say so; I accused you of performin' a wotten conjurin' trick with my money, the same as you did in the tea-shop," said D'Arcy quietly. "But before we proceed with the wottah, I pray undastand that I wufuse to be called a dotty fellow, to allow any othah opprobrious expressions to be used regarding me. I considah—"
 "Hi! Love, Gussy!" said Blake. "If Levison denies that he took the sovereign it's a serious matter."

"Yes, wottah! But I decline to wing off—"
 "Wottah and are you sure you've lost a sovereign?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes, wottah!"

"Quite sure?" asked Hancock.
 "Yaas, certainly! Blake knows that I had two sovereigns, and the west of my change in silvah."
 "That's quite correct," said Blake.
 "I have found only one sovereign in my pocket," said D'Arcy. "The silvah is there, and one sovereign; the othah is gone."

"Perhaps you've overlooked it," said Macdonald.
 "You are at liberty to look in the coat, deah boy, so long as you are careful not to wumple or wulla it."

Macdonald grinned, and fetched the coat out of the wardrobe. He and several other fellows felt in the pockets, and, as a matter of fact, the coat was both rumpled, and ruffled considerably in the process. But no sovereign was found.
 "Perhaps you put it in another pocket!" Digby suggested.
 "Wattah not! It was all together in that pocket, and I just took it all out before puttin' the coat away."

"And you think Levison took it?" asked Jogaes.
 "Yaas, wattah!"

"It's a lie!" said Levison fiercely.
 D'Arcy eyed him steadily.

"I have not accused you of stealin' it, Levison. I thought you played a wotten trick. You took the banknote from my pocket in the tea-shop to-day and kept it. You just pretended to be things from my coat-pockets in the passage. I considah, naturally, that you had taken the sovereign for a trick."

"I didn't!"
 "You must excuse me if I do not rely upon your word. I have heard you tell wank untwuths already."
 Levison gritted his teeth.

"I haven't touched your sovereign, and I don't believe you've lost one!" he broke out savagely.

Arthur Augustus clenched his hands. Blake pulled him back, and fixed an angry look upon Levison.

"Hold your tongue, you cad!" he exclaimed. "No one here is likely to doubt D'Arcy's word, though nobody would take your word!"

"Hear, hear!" said a dozen voices.
 Arthur Augustus looked round through his eyeglass.

"I trust, deah boys, that you wely upon my statement!" he exclaimed.

"Faith, and we do!"
 "Of course we do!" said Hancock. "The only question is, whether you lost the cash or whether Levison took it."

"Of course, it's one of his other tricks, and he means to own up later," said Blake impatiently. "He'll get set down for a thief one of these days."

"I don't know anything about the sovereign," said Levison sullenly.

"Wats!"
 "Oh, rot! Own up!" said Blake.

"If he doesn't own up," said Herries, in his deliberate way, "it shows that he's stolen it. He's none too good for that, in my opinion. You know how Towser wanted to go for him the first time he saw him. What about Towser, now?"

"Now, then, you ought to be in bed," exclaimed Darrel, the prefect, looking into the Fourth Form dormitory.

"What's the matter here?"
 Levison turned a fierce look upon the Sixth-Former.

"D'Arcy is accusing me of pickin' his pocket, that's all, Darrel!" he exclaimed.

The prefect started, and came into the dormitory.

CHAPTER 11.

Under Suspicion.

THERE was a grim silence among the juniors. The angry outburst on Levison's part was very like a proof of innocence, since if he had been guilty he would hardly have been the one to bring the matter to the notice of a prefect, who would be bound by his position to inquire into it. Yet it might only be Levison's cool impudence—he had coolness and nerve enough for anything. It might be that, knowing an inquiry to be inevitable, he had thrown down the gauntlet like this for the very purpose of making an impression of innocence. No one trusted him.
 Darrel was looking very grave.

"What is this?" he said, in his quiet voice. "Explain it, Blake."

"Weally—"
 "Let Blake explain."

And Blake explained. There was nothing to be concealed now, and he told the whole story, of the tricks Levison had played in the tea-shop that afternoon, and in the passage as the Fourth-Formers came up to bed, and then the discovery that the sovereign was missing.

Darrel looked hard at Levison.
 The new junior kept his eyes on the floor, and the expression of his face was hard and sullen.

"Very well, Blake. Levison, you admit having played these conjuring tricks?"

"Certainly," said Levison.

"You pretended to take a frog and a mouse from D'Arcy's coat pockets in the passage here?"

"It was a joke."

"But you did it?"

"Yes."

"You could just as easily have taken a sovereign from his pocket if you had chosen."

"Yes, I suppose so, if I had known it was there and had wanted to."

"You did not know it was there?"

"No."

"He jolly well did," said Blake. "He saw D'Arcy put it there in the teashop. He sees everything, whether it's his business or not, as a matter of fact."

"I may have," said Levison, "but I had forgotten all about it. If I had thought about it at all, I should have expected D'Arcy to change the money to another pocket when he took the coat off. But I didn't think about it."

"Only your word for that," commented Herries.

"Don't interrupt, Herries," said the prefect quietly. "You deny having taken the sovereign from D'Arcy's coat, for a trick or for any other purpose, Levison?"

"Yes."

Darrel turned to the wren of the School House.

"You are certain you had a sovereign there, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah. Blake knows it, too."

"Could you not have lost it?"

"Weally, Dawwel, I don't see how I could, without havin' lost some more of the money that was in the pocket."

"Was there a great deal there?"

"Another sovereign and a lot of silvah."

"And that was intact?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"You are sure?"

D'Arcy nodded.

"Well, I didn't count the silvah," he said. "I didn't know exactly how much there was eithah. But I believe it was all wright."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Blake suddenly. "What about that silver in the study? I found two half-crowns on the table."

"They couldn't have belonged to me, dear boy. Mine was in my pocket."

Mellish came forward. He would gladly have stayed out of the matter altogether, but he realised that Skimpole and Tom Merry would be brought into it now, and that they would mention his presence in the study.

"I think Skimpole could explain that," he said.

The prefect turned his eyes upon Mellish.

"Skimpole?" he repeated.

"Yes, Skimpole, of the Shell. I happened to be passing the study this evening, and I saw Skimpole picking up some silver on Blake's carpet."

"I was going to suggest calling Skimpole," said Blake.

"I found two half-crowns on the table, laid on a note Skimpole had written and left there for me."

"Go and fetch Skimpole here, Hancock."

"Right-ho!" said Hancock.

He hurried away to the Shell dormitory. In a couple of minutes he returned with Herbert Skimpole, dragging him along by the arm, Skimpole vainly protesting. The genius of the Shell was in trousers and shirt, with only one boot on, and his spectacles in his hand. The Fourth-Formers grinned as he came in, serious as the situation was.

"Dear me," said Skimpole. "Did you send for me, Darrel?"

"Yes," said the prefect.

"I was just getting to bed," said Skimpole. "I trust you will explain to Kildare that it is not my fault. I shall be late for bed, Darrel."

"Certainly. You were in Blake's study this evening, Skimpole?"

Skimpole adjusted his spectacles, and blinked at the prefect.

"Certainly."

"Why did you go there?"

"To explain to Blake some of the great truths of Determinism." By studying the great volume of Professor Hainyrumpt, and the wonderful books of Dr. Lozetop, I have obtained a complete mastery of the subject. It is now clear that, as there is nothing in existence except heredity and environment, heredity and environment are the cause of everything, and, in fact, are everything. Suppose you commit a murder—"

"What?"

"Shall I blame you?" said Skimpole, unheeding. "Certainly not. It is simply the murderous desire of some remote ancestors which is breaking out—"

"Skimpole!"

"Suppose, for instance, you are a thief— Yow!"

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 145.

Skimpole left off supposing as the prefect's finger and thumb closed tightly upon his ear.

"Ow! yow! yowh!"

"Don't talk nonsense, Skimpole. This is a serious matter."

"My dear Darrel, there cannot be a more serious matter than Determinism. The great truth that everything is what it is, and not otherwise."

"You found some money on Blake's floor?"

"Yes," said Skimpole, coming back to the earth from the airy regions of Determinism. "Two half-crowns. I placed them on the table on the note I left for him. I trust you found the note and the money, Blake?"

"Yes," said Blake.

"Very good. Speaking of Determinism—"

"We will speak of something else now," said Blake.

"Blake, as the money was on the floor in your study, it must have belonged to one of you."

"I suppose so."

"Was it yours?"

"No, I had only two bob, and I have it now."

"Or yours, Digby?"

"Stony since yesterday," said Digby cheerfully.

"Might it be yours, Herries?"

"My money's all right," said Herries. "I've counted it."

"Then it must be yours, D'Arcy?"

"Imposs, deah boy."

"Why impossible?"

"Because I'm a very careful chap, and not at all likely to spill cash about the floor," said Arthur Augustus with a shake of the head. "Blake knows that an awful good chap I am."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You must have dropped the money in the study," said Darrel. "If you dropped silver, you may have dropped gold."

"Bai Jove!"

"Before the matter proceeds further, the study must be searched for the sovereign," said Darrel. "You four who belong to the study, come with me. The rest of you go to bed. You may go back to your dormitory, Skimpole."

And Darrel left the Fourth-Form dormitory with the others of No. 6. Skimpole blinked after him, and then turned away. The Fourth-Formers slowly undressed and turned in.

There was a buzz in the dormitory as they discussed the occurrence. But no one addressed a word to Levison.

Blake & Co. and Darrel were not long in getting to Study No. 6. D'Arcy followed close on Darrel. The wren of St. Jim's was thinking it was just possible that he had dropped the sovereign. He did not want to be the victim of any more tricks.

Jack Blake was always ready for a jape. If he could drop from his pocket, and the clums found it before him, Arthur Augustus felt instinctively that, not even in his presence would save him from some jest or other.

"Here we are," said Darrel. "Search carefully."

"Yaas, wathah. But I'm certain, deah boys, that it hasn't dropped out of my coat—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Darrel lighted the gas, and the search began. For some minutes there was silence as the nooks and corners were thoroughly explored.

"Nothing here," said Herries and Digby together.

They were turning the linoleum up behind the bookcase and Arthur Augustus was watching anxiously.

"Pway be careful, deah boys."

"Rats! Go on with your own end," said Herries. "We won't do any harm to the lino."

"I wasn't thinkin' of that, Hewwies."

"By Jove, Dig! It might be under those hat-boxes."

"Yank 'em out, Herries!"

Herries and Digby took a keen delight in lifting the hat-boxes out of the corner. They were well aware of the anxiety of D'Arcy's anxiety. In a second, Herries had grabbed the lower one, and Digby lifted the other. D'Arcy made a dash to save his property. But it was too late. The sovereign had been snatched away unfastened, and as Digby lifted the hat, he came off and a silk-hat rolled on the floor.

"You clumsy ass, Digby! Why can't you be a bit more propriety alone!"

"That's jolly grateful, I must say, when we come to find your missing wealth."

"Hewwies, you bwute!" almost shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Can't you see you're tweadin' on my toppah?"

But Herries had only pretended to do so. The sovereign was on, and Arthur Augustus recovered his hat, which was undamaged. Blake and Darrel had found nothing, but the very much-disarranged furniture testified to the search they had made.

"I don't think it's here," said Darrel. "Five bob—"

THURSDAY! USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order at Advertiser

enough to search this room. We can't very well have missed it."

"The chums nodded.

"And the candle-ends are nearly done in, in any case," said Blake.

"It might have rolled, you know," went on Darrel. "And if it reached by the sides of the room, it might be wedged in the niche by the skirting-board."

"That's look," said Blake. "It's quite likely, Darrel."

The chums resumed the search. But nothing was found. The niche near the wall was quite innocent of sovereigns.

"You're letting your beastly candle-fat drop on my boots, Gussy," exclaimed Blake.

"Saway, deah boy. I beg to offah ar unqualified—"

"Rate! Keep it off 'em, Gussy. That'll do just as well."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Pater get back to the dormitory, you fellows," said Darrel. "The sovereign can't be here or we should have found it."

"Yass, watah! Good-night, Dawwel!"

Arthur Augustus wanted to tidy up the study before they got back to bed, but the chums would not hear of it. In ten minutes they were back in the dormitory.

"Hello," said Levison, "have you found it?"

Blake stared at him coldly.

"No," he said.

Without another word the chums turned in.

CHAPTER 12.

The St. Jim's Detective.

ERNEST LEVISON was the first up in the Fourth-Form dormitory, in the School House, on the following morning. It was probable that he had not slept soundly. Several of the fellows looked at him as he dressed, but no one spoke to him.

The mysterious loss of D'Arcy's sovereign was hanging heavily over the Fourth. Most of them agreed that Arthur Augustus was very wrong to be so careless with his money. That he did not excuse the thief. No one had a right to look if he found gold lying in piles near his hand. If he was a thief, he would be expelled from St. Jim's, and the whole school would be glad to see him go.

It was he!

There was very little doubt of his guilt among the juniors. A fellow who was fool enough to play tricks with other people's money deserved to be suspected, most of the juniors thought. He had kept the banknote in the teashop until King of the New House, bowled him out, and make him squaw. There was no proof that he had intended to return it to D'Arcy. In the same way he had taken the sovereign, and made it all in a conjuring trick if he was detected, and if not if he was not detected. It seemed so probable, and fitted in so well with the known character of Levison, that it was no wonder that this was the generally accepted theory of the Fourth-Formers.

Levison had denied taking the sovereign, either as a trick or as a steal; but he was known to be untruthful; besides, if he had stolen it, it was not to be expected that he would admit the fact. His denial counted for nothing.

Levison left the dormitory. As the rising bell clanged out, the Fourth-Formers turned out of bed.

As they dressed they discussed the mysterious occurrence, and most of them found themselves in agreement, that Levison had perjured the sovereign. Mellish found himself unable to form an opinion.

"You're in the new chap's study," Hancock remarked.

"What do you think?"

Mellish flushed uneasily.

"I don't want to say anything against my study mate,"

"What have you ever missed anything?"

"I don't say I have."

"But you know the chap was expelled from his last school," said Reilly. "He hasn't explained exactly what for."

"For stealing, very likely," Jones remarked.

"That's all, and it looks like it!"

"What do you think, Blake?"

"I don't know," said Blake. "It looks black enough to me, Levison. And if he's innocent, it serves him right for playing monkey tricks with money."

"Yass, watah!"

The Fourth-Formers went down. They found Levison in the Fourth-Form passage, scanning Study No. 6. Blake tapped.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Blake.

Levison, who was on his knees examining the carpet, looked up his habitual sneering expression upon his face.

"Investigating," he replied.

"Looking for the sovereign, do you mean? We proved pretty clearly last night that it wasn't here," said Blake.

"We've been all over the study."

"I don't expect to find the sovereign here."

"What are you looking for, then?"

"The thief."

"Bad Jove!"

Blake looked scrutinisingly at Levison. The new junior spoke perfectly coolly, and went on with his investigations. To Blake's mind he seemed like Sherlock Holmes at work in a play. Certainly nothing escaped the cold, penetrating eye of Ernest Levison.

"Then you still deny having taken the sovereign?" Digby asked.

"Of course."

"You think it has been lost?"

"I think it has been stolen," said Levison. "Gussy is a fool—"

"Weally, Levison—"

"A fool," repeated Levison coldly; "but if he lost a sovereign out of a pocket full of money, he would have lost some more, I should think."

"But the two half-crowns must have been dropped here," said Blake. "It's barely possible that the sovereign was dropped, too—somewhere else."

"I did not drop the half-crowns here, deah boy."

Levison shook his head.

"The half-crowns were not dropped here," he said. "Even D'Arcy wouldn't be ass enough to drop two big coins like those without noticing it."

"Weally, Levison—"

"Then what do you think?" exclaimed Blake.

"I think the thief dropped the half-crowns, in going through the money and looking for the sovereign," said Levison coolly. "Either he was nervous, and let them fall, or he was interrupted and startled, and so did it."

"But he would have picked them up again, surely?"

Levison rose to his feet.

"He might not have had time. Suppose somebody else came along?"

"In that case, the thief must have been in the study when somebody else came along," said Digby.

"Just so. That's a clue."

"Oh! You've got a clue."

"Such as it is," said Levison. "I've been told I ought to be a detective, and I really think I'm cut out for the work. I'm going to find the thief."

"That ought to be easy," said Herries disdainfully.

Levison looked at him with a sneer.

"I am not the thief," he said; "but I'll remember your kind opinion of me, Herries—and you may have cause to remember it some day."

"If you mean that as a threat, I'm willing to come into the gym. with you before breakfast," said Herries.

Levison did not appear to hear the remark. He was looking round the study. He took an envelope and a stump of pencil from his pocket and scribbled something.

"Making notes?" asked Herries sarcastically.

"Yes. What time did you hang the coat up in the study, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus reflected.

"It was about six o'clock, deah boy."

"Try to remember exactly."

"Weally, Levison—"

"Look here," said Levison coldly, "you all suspect me of being a thief. In an hour or two the whole school will be ringing with it, and I shall be pointed at on all sides. I'm looking into this matter to prove my innocence. You ought to help me."

"Well, there's something in that," said Blake. "We'll tell you everything we can."

"Then exactly at what time was it the coat was hung up here?"

"Just about ten-past-six," said Blake. "We got in, I remember, as six was striking from the clock tower, and we came straight in."

"And then when did you leave the study?"

"Digby was the last in."

"I left at seven," said Digby. "I turned the gas down."

"Seven," said Levison. "And when did you come back?"

"About eight."

"Then the study was empty between seven and eight?"

"Yass, watah!"

"Gussy. The theft was committed between seven and eight o'clock," said Levison, making a note on the back of the envelope.

"Where were you at that time?" asked D'Arcy. "If you can prove that you were out of doors, or with somebody, it's all right for you."

"I was in my study."

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"Mellish there?"

"He left soon after seven."
 "And then you remained alone?"
 "Yes."
 "Till aftar eight?"
 "Till nearly nine."

The chums of the Fourth looked at one another. Levison's investigations, so far, had had one result—of destroying any chance he might have had of proving an alibi. If he had been in his study, a few doors up the passage, all the time that No. 6 was unoccupied, he had had ample opportunity to perform the sovereign.

"Blake could not help grinning.
 "My hat!" he exclaimed. "If that's being a detective, Levison, I must say you're a regular scorcher. Can't you see that you're proving the case against yourself?"

"I want to get at the facts."
 "You've got at them," said Herries.
 "The study was empty between seven and eight," said Levison. "In that space of time, someone came in and took the sovereign, and dropped two half-crowns on the floor in his haste."

"And I jolly well know who did," said Herries. "But look here, there's one way of proving it clearly, and I don't mind doing it."

"You?" said Levison.
 "My dog, Towser."
 "Oh, rats!"
 "I'll put Towser on the scent, if you like, you chaps," said Herries. "I'll go and fetch him at once. We'll bring him into the study, and put him on the scent, and he'll jolly soon track out that sovereign."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look here—"
 "Oh, don't talk rot!" said Levison.
 Herries made a movement towards him, but Blake pulled him back.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was thinkin' that Towser was lost for good, you know."
 "He came in last night," said Herries. "Well, I jolly well won't bring him on the matter now. I know jolly well why that fellow doesn't want him. He knows jolly well that Towser would follow the scent straight to one of his pockets."

And Herries marched on indignantly. Levison was looking round the study with a keen eye. The chums watched him curiously.

"Someone came in and stole the sovereign between seven and eight last evening," said Levison, "and if I don't find out who it was, you're welcome to put it down to me, and the Head's welcome to expel me."

"Bai Jove!" How are you goin' to do it?"
 "I'm going to find out how many people came to this study last evening," said Levison grimly. "Every chap who came here, or could have come here, between seven and eight last night, will have to account for what he did."

"Bai Jove!"
 "Well, it's only fair," said Blake. "If you're not a thief, I hope you'll be able to prove it. But you must prove it—until then, you can't blame the fellows if they think you've got the sovereign."

"Yes, wathah!"
 Levison shrugged his shoulders.
 "They can think what they like. But I shall have shown up the thief before the morning's up, I think."

CHAPTER 13.

The Inquiry.

MR. LATHOM, the master of the Fourth-Form at St. Jim's, was a little puzzled with his class that morning. There was a continual exchanging of glances and whispers, much to the detriment of the work performed by the Fourth-Form—or, supposed to be performed.

If it had been Saturday, and a big footer match-booked for the afternoon, Mr. Latham could have understood it better.

But it was not Saturday, and there was no footer match near. It was evidently some other matter that preoccupied the Fourth-Form.

Fellows of both Houses were equally interested in it. Piggins & Co. had been the first to learn it, from Blake, in the quad. before breakfast. The whole school knew by this time what Levison was suspected of; and the fact that most of the fellows concluded that he was guilty only proved how bad an impression he had made upon them by his cunning and secretive ways.

His profession that he intended to investigate the matter, and discover the real thief, was regarded as so much bluff.

Jack Blake and a few others were rather inclined to believe that there was something in it. But most of the

juniors scouted the idea. Darrel had delivered no opinion; but it was clear that he did not trust Levison's explanation.

If the new junior did not succeed in clearing himself, the results were certain to be serious for him. The matter was bound to come to the Head's notice before the day was over.

Mr. Latham, patient little gentleman as he was, lost some patience, and handed out impositions freely, and half the Form were richer in lines by the time the morning classes were dismissed.

Levison was left generally alone when the Form went out. Even Mellish, his study mate, did not approach him.

Levison did not seem to mind.
 Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, had been taking the Sixth that morning, and he came out of the Sixth Form-room about the same time that the Fourth were dismissed. Levison walked up to him in the passage. Mr. Railton, to whom Darrel had reported the whole matter as in duty bound, gave the new junior a very curious look as he came up. The other fellows watched him, and gathered round as near as they could venture, to hear what Levison had to say to Mr. Railton.

"Can I speak to you, sir?" said Levison.
 "Certainly."
 "D'Arcy has had a sovereign stolen, sir," said the junior.
 "The fellows in my Form suspect that I took it."
 "Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, aside, to Blake.
 "He's wathah a cool beggah, you know."

Blake nodded.
 "Well, Levison?" said Mr. Railton, showing no sign of surprise.

"I think it only fair that the matter should be looked into, sir, so that I may have a chance of proving my innocence to the satisfaction of the House."

"That is quite right, Levison. The matter will certainly be inquired into very strictly."

"Thank you, sir. It is proved that the theft must have been committed between seven and eight yesterday evening, and it is known that a number of juniors belonging to the School House visited Blake's study at that time. Might I ask you, sir, to call upon those juniors to come forward and tell what they know. I believe it will be possible to make it clear by questioning them, which one of them took D'Arcy's sovereign."

Mr. Railton looked hard at Levison.
 But the request was evidently reasonable, and there was no desire on the House-master's part to refuse it. He turned to Kildare.

"Kildare, will you ascertain how many juniors went to Blake's study last evening, and at that particular time, and bring them into my study?"

"Certainly, sir," said the St. Jim's captain.
 Mr. Railton went into his study. Kildare led the juniors. All the School House fellows were called up to say what they had been to Blake's study the previous evening between seven and eight, and four fellows owned that they had. They were Skimpole and Tom Merry of the Sixth and Mellish of the Fourth, and Wally of the Third Form.

"Jolly lucky we saw each other there, Tom Merry," Mellish remarked, as the four juniors proceeded to the House-master's study with Kildare. "We shall be able to bear witness for one another."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "You and I and Skimpole were there at the same time. What about you, Wally?"

Wally looked rather blue.
 "I only looked into the study," he said. "I went up to Gussy, to ask him if he could cash a postal-order for me, but nobody was there, and the gas was turned low when I came away again."

"Nobody saw you?"
 "Not that I know of."
 "Well, nobody would suspect you, Wally, against that's all right."

"I trust nobody would suspect me," said Skimpole, looking at Tom Merry. "Of course, if I did take the sovereign it would not be wrong."

"What?" exclaimed Kildare.
 Skimpole blinked at him.
 "I mean, according to Determinism," he explained, "I should only be following the impulses of either my nature or my environment, and hence—"

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Kildare.
 "My dear Kildare," exclaimed Skimpole in a moment, "Determinism is not nonsense! I know that as a view commonly held, but I could prove, in less than an hour, that—"

"Dry up, you young duffer!"
 As they had now reached Mr. Railton's study, the juniors of the Sixth and the fellows of the Fourth and Third Form, and they found the chums of Study No. 6 there, who were looking very uncomfortable and uneasy.

altogether a decidedly unpleasant matter to be mixed up in, and they were greatly inclined to rag Arthur Augustus for being so careless with his money. D'Arcy, on the other hand, held that carelessness with money was really quite a judicious thing. If there was a thief in the School House, he sooner he was found out and expelled, the better.

Mr. Railton glanced over the newcomers.

"'Bal Jove!' ejaculated D'Arcy involuntarily. "What are you doing here, Wally?"

Wally made a grimace.

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Railton. "Now, it appears clear that the theft was committed, if at all, between seven and eight last evening, from what Blake says. Some of these juniors were in the study till seven, and again in it by eight."

"Excuse me, sir," said Levison. "I understand that Digby was left alone in the study after the others went out."

Digby's face flamed.

"You said!" he shouted, forgetful of the House-master's presence for the moment. "Do you dare to insinuate—"

"'Bal Jove, if he hints anythin' against Digby, I'll give him a toothful thwashin' on the spot!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"Silence!" said Mr. Railton. "I should not allow a suspicion to be entertained against Digby for a moment. If that is your desire, Levison—"

"It is not, sir, but I think the point ought to be borne in mind."

"Nonsense! I suppose any of D'Arcy's immediate friends has had any number of opportunities of robbing him, if that were so minded. There is nothing to be gained by insinuations in that direction, Levison."

"Very well, sir," said Levison quietly, while Digby clenched his fists, and longed to have a quiet ten minutes with the new boy in the gym. "Very well, sir, leaving that out, there are these four fellows. If I did not take the key from D'Arcy's pocket while performing those conjuring tricks in the passage, it must have been taken by someone who went to the study between seven and eight last night."

"That is clear."

"Then let those chaps explain, in the first place, why they went there."

"That is quite reasonable."

"May I question them, sir?"

"Granted, Levison," said Mr. Railton, upon whom the coolness and collectedness of the new junior were making a considerable impression.

"Very well, sir. What time were you there, D'Arcy?"

"About a quarter to eight."

"You, Tom Merry?"

"I think it was a quarter-past seven, or about that."

"And Skimpole and Mellish at the same time, I understand?"

"All together," said Mellish.

"Which of you was first?"

"I was," said Skimpole.

"Good! Why did you go to Blake's study?"

"To see Blake," said Skimpole innocently.

"Very hot for what object?"

"Oh, I see. I had promised to explain to him some points in connection with Determinism, and also evolution as the origin of species by natural selection," said Skimpole.

"You see, by the principles of the science of Determinism, it is quite clear that—"

"Keep to the point, Skimpole," said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir. I am doing so. Determinism clearly proves"

"You did not find Blake there?"

"No, sir."

"What did you do?" asked Levison.

"I left a note on the table for Blake, explaining how it was, in your case, he had forgotten that I was coming to explain the principles of—"

"Did you touch D'Arcy's coat?"

"Certainly not!"

"Did you touch any money in the study?"

"Only the two half-crowns. I saw them on the floor, and I was stooping to pick them up, when Mellish pushed me away in a way that I can only characterise as quite rude and insulting."

"I was passing along the corridor, and saw him bending over," said Mellish. "I pushed him over for a lark."

"That was when I came in," said Tom Merry. "I heard Skimpole say something about half-crowns being dropped, and then I saw—"

"Then it appears that all three were there together," said Mr. Railton.

"After Skimpole," said Levison. "You were there some time alone first, Skimpole?"

"Oh, yes; two or three minutes."

"Quite long enough to have taken the sovereign from the coat?"

"Oh, yes, if I had wanted to."

The simplicity of Skimpole's reply brought smiles to several faces. It was scarcely possible to suspect the genius of the Shell; and even Levison realised that.

"So the only boy who was there alone, besides Skimpole, was D'Arcy minor?" said Mr. Railton.

"Wait a minute, sir," said Levison. "When you were in the study, Skimpole, did you go into the angle of the wall beside the bookcase?"

Mellish turned deadly pale.

"Certainly not," said Skimpole, in astonishment.

"Did you, Tom Merry?"

"No."

"Did you, Mellish?"

"Of course not."

"Someone did," said Levison. "As it is an out-of-the-way corner of the study, it is not to be supposed that anybody living in the room would go and stand there. But someone with dirty boots did stand there, for I found the traces on the carpet this morning, and the marks were ground into the carpet, as if the person had crouched there, trying to make himself as small as possible, to keep out of sight."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Railton. "This is a little vague—"

"Please allow me, sir. My reputation for life depends on how this matter is settled," said Levison.

"You may go on."

"Skimpole, are you certain that the study was empty when you entered it? Are you certain that neither Tom Merry nor Mellish was already there?"

The juniors held their breath.

CHAPTER 14.

The Benefit of the Doubt.

MELLISH'S face was of so sickly a colour that several of the fellows could not help observing it, and it gave rise to strange thoughts in their minds. Mr. Railton looked sharply at Levison.

"What are you trying to establish, Levison?" he asked.

"I think, sir, that the marks beside the bookcase show that someone may have been out in the study when Skimpole entered, and may have crouched out of sight there. Skimpole is too blind to have seen him. It is a suspicious circumstance to me that Tom Merry and Mellish should happen along as they did. One of them may have been in the study at the time. I may mention, too, that shortly before that hour last evening Mellish had tried to borrow a sovereign of me, which he wanted for a very particular purpose."

"It's a lie!" said Mellish.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"We'll prove whether it's a lie or not," he said. "Now, Skimpole, answer me carefully. You say that Mellish pushed you over when you stooped to pick up a half-crown?"

"Yes."

"Where were you at that moment?"

"Near the table," said Skimpole reflectively. "Between the bookcase and the door."

"From which side did Mellish push you?"

Skimpole started.

"Dear me!"

Levison's eyes gleamed.

"Was it from the side of the door?" he asked.

"No, it was not."

"Then you were between Mellish and the door at the moment that he pushed you over?"

"Certainly! I must have been. It did not occur to me at the time, as I was thinking about Blake's great loss in not hearing my explanation of the principles of—"

"How did you come to be on the wrong side of Skimpole, Mellish, if you came in from the passage and pushed him over, as you said?"

"I—I stopped past him."

"Why?" said Levison relentlessly. "If you only wanted to push him over, you could have done so without passing him."

"I—I was thinking of rolling him out into the passage."

"Could Mellish have passed you, into the interior of the study, without your being aware that he was entering the room, Skimpole?"

"I think not. You see, there was no room for him to pass without touching me."

"Did you see him before he bumped you over?"

"Not at all."

"You came along the next moment, Tom Merry, I think?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB."

"Well, Skimpole was still sitting on the floor," said Tom Merry, who had been listening to Lovison's questioning with the greatest interest.

"If Mellish had passed along the passage and entered the study, as he has stated, he must have been just in front of you before he went into Study No. 6?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Did you see him in the passage?"

"No."

"But you would have seen him if he had been there?"

"Well, most likely."

Mr. Raitton fixed his eyes upon Mellish.

"That seems to me to be quite clear, Mellish."

The cad of the Fourth gasped without speaking.

"Come, come, Mellish! What have you to say?"

"I—I was in the study, sir," said Mellish, in scarcely audible tones. "I—I did myself behind the bookcase, to—to play a game on Skimpole."

Mr. Raitton's brow grew very stern.

"That is very different from the statements you have made within the last few minutes, Mellish."

"Ye-es, sir. I—I was afraid to—to tell you exactly how it was, when I—I heard there had been a theft. I knew Lovison would try to fix it on me, because we're on bad terms lately, and—and he's cunning enough for anything. Any of the fellows will tell you how deep he is, and that it's no good trying to keep up against him."

"Bai Jove, there's somethin' in that!"

Lovison's lip curled.

"I haven't finished yet," he said. "My statement is that Mellish wanted a sovereign for a particular purpose, and that he stole that sovereign from D'Arcy's coat. My belief is that he sent that sovereign away by post last night. What were you doing out in the quad last night, Mellish, at the time of the collection of letters from the box in the quad?"

"I—I was taking a stroll, because I had a bit of a headache."

"You didn't go out to post a letter?"

Mellish looked sickly.

"Now I—I come to think of it, I did post a letter," he said. "I had forgotten."

"You had better be careful, Mellish," said Mr. Raitton.

Mellish licked his dry lips. He realised the necessity of care. But what was the use of being careful, with Lovison winding the net round him in this manner? Mellish felt that he was lost.

Lovison smiled satirically.

"Good!" he said. "You posted that letter because you had found the money you wanted?"

"I—I didn't—"

"We shall see. As you handed the envelope directly to the postman, I don't suppose you put the money in it in gold. You must have got a postal order from somewhere. Now, you didn't go to the village. Where did you get the postal-order?"

Wally was staring blankly at Mellish.

"My—my hat!" he gasped.

Lovison swung round on him.

"What do you know about it, D'Arcy minor?"

Wally was silent, but still looking at Mellish.

"Will you ask him, sir?" said Lovison to Mr. Raitton.

"Tell all you know, D'Arcy minor."

"Well, Mellish changed a postal-order for me last night, sir," said Wally reluctantly. "I had one from my aunt, and I went to Gussy's study to ask him to cash it, as it was too late to go to the post-office, but he was out. That's how I came to be in the study at all. I went down to the common-room, and found Mellish there. He gave me a sovereign for the postal-order."

Mellish's face was haggard.

"Where did you get that sovereign, Mellish?" said Lovison.

"It was my own."

"Where did you get it?"

"I—I had saved it up."

"Then you had a sovereign of your own at the same time that you asked me to lend you one?"

"I—I never asked you."

Lovison shrugged his shoulders, and turned to the School House master.

"Have I made the case pretty clear, sir?"

"Bai Jove," murmured D'Arcy, "it's clear enough! But the fellow is a wottah, all the same."

"A tank rotter!" said Herries, in an undertone.

"I think it is quite clear," said Mr. Raitton sternly.

"Lovison has been wrongfully suspected, my boys."

"It looks like it now, sir," agreed Blake.

Mellish admits that he was in Blake's study when Skimpole came there, and that he concealed himself. He spoke feebly about it. He denied posting a letter, and then

admitted it. His falsehoods had one object—to conceal what he had done. There is no longer any doubt, Mellish, that you took the sovereign from D'Arcy's coat pocket."

"I—I—"

"As for you, Lovison, you deserve no sympathy," the House-master said. "You should never play tricks with money. That was what led to your being suspected, and I cannot blame D'Arcy and the others for suspecting you. At the same time, I must say that you have shown great ingenuity in bringing the truth to light."

"Thank you, sir."

"And now, Mellish, what have you to say?"

"I—I did take the sovereign, sir—"

"Ah!"

"But—I didn't steal it, sir."

"What?"

"I—I took it, sir, intending to put it back, but I lost it. The sovereign I gave D'Arcy minor for the postal order was one of my own. I—I was going to put D'Arcy's sovereign in Lovison's pocket, for a joke, sir, to pay him out for some of his rotten conjuring tricks he's played on me. I—I thought I'd get up a row between him and I for about it, you see, sir. He—he put a cigarette in my trousers the other day, and it fell out in class, and Mr. Lathow gave me lines."

Mr. Raitton looked hard at Mellish.

"I should be very sorry to judge any boy more harshly than he deserved," he said slowly. "I would wish to believe that you did not intend to be a thief. Certainly I should blame you for what you have done, and I should not believe any boy could be so foolish as to meddle with another boy's money; but Lovison has done so himself, and has clearly proved that he is not a thief. Therefore, I think that perhaps you are entitled to the benefit of the doubt, Mellish."

Mellish gave a gasp.

"Yaas, wathah, sir," said D'Arcy.

"And if Lovison had been found guilty of theft, Mellish, what could you intend to pursue?" asked Mr. Raitton.

"I—I was going to explain to Kildare, sir, and ask him to tell you—and to explain how it was."

"I hope that is the truth, Mellish."

The cad of the Fourth was silent. He hardly knew what whether it was true or false, so deep and tangled was the network of lies he had involved himself in, in his desperate attempt to escape the consequences of his act.

"Mellish will be punished, severely punished, for allowing the suspicion of his act to fall upon another," said Mr. Raitton. "I can only hope that his statement is true, and that he meant it only for a joke, and intended to own up. I feel little sympathy for Lovison in any case, who has brought this upon himself by his own crooked ways. You may all go, excepting Mellish, who will be punished."

The juniors left the study.

Tom Merry and his friends heard the swishing of a door as they went down the passage, and a gasping sound from Mellish.

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally. "Mellish must have intended to really keep that shiner, Gussy."

"Weally, Wally, that is a vevy vulgah expression."

"Rats, old son!"

"Weally—"

"We must think the best of any chap, even of Mellish," said Tom Merry. "It may have been all a joke, as he said, and it would be no worse a joke than some of the other tricks Lovison has played on all of us. Anyway, I don't see such a scare that I don't think he'll do anything of the sort again."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lovison looked at them, with a sneer.

"I rather think you owe me an apology," he said.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Nothing of the sort," he exclaimed. "You brought it all on yourself, and I hope it will be a lesson to you."

"Yaas, wathah! I concenwate you f'rom the suspicion havin' ab'st'wacted my sovereign, Lovison, but I don't think you as a wank wottah, all the same."

"Same here," said Blake. "You've brought it on yourself, and you can go and eat coke! You're as bad as Mellish, any time, and I'm sorry he's got all the blame. You ought to have half of it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums walked away, leaving Lovison standing alone. Lovison shrugged his shoulders.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the Chums of St. Jim's again next Thursday, entitled "The Terrible Black Sub," by Martin Clifford. Order your "Gem" Librarian an advance. Usual size and price. One Penny.)

The Second Long, Complete Story contained in this number.



King of the Moors.

A Thrilling, Long, Complete Story, dealing with adventure in the West of England.

By ERNEST BRINDLE.

(War Correspondent in the Russo-Japanese War.)

CHAPTER 1.

Friends and Foes—Revolt—The Fight in the Dark—
"To me, Royal!"

"It is no hard thing to do, Phil, I know, but you must put up with it. He stands to you in the place of a father."

"Father!" interrupted Phil Denham impetuously, his cheeks sparking, and his cheeks flushing a fiery red. "He never been anything like that to me since the day he took me to his miserable home. And he did that not out of any kindness for me, but because he saw that one day I should be a cheap servant for him—a slave to treat as he likes for that's what I am, Mr. Penruddocke—a slave!"

A look of compassionate sympathy passed over John Penruddocke's lean, weather-beaten face as he listened to the passionate outburst, for well he knew that there was much to grieve for it. As a poor, friendless orphan, six years before Phil had been adopted by old Joe Heald, a sheep-herder, whom not a living soul had a good word to say, and since the boy had received little else than harsh and hard treatment from his master. Bitter words, black looks, and hard blows were his portion, and in course of time he had grown to regard and receive them with stubborn, unrepentant indifference. Yet occasionally a fit of savage resentment would seize him as he thought of his wrongs, and then it might have gone hard with Joe Heald had the lad set out to seek revenge.

But that was what Phil never did, for his frank, generous nature would not allow him to forget that it was Heald who had saved him from want and destitution, and that however hard he was treated he must still perform his duty to his master.

But his periodical outbursts of indignant rage against his master gave no expression to the bitter sense of injustice and oppression that was always smouldering in his heart, and did his work on the farm as well and efficiently as though the discharge of it was a source of constant pride and pleasure to him. He grew up strong, and sturdy of body, with the rude, vigorous health that comes to those who live their days in the pure, bracing air of the country; and in the craft of shepherding sheep he was the rival of any old shepherd.

Early and late, in all weathers, he was out with his flock on the moorish moors, his spare time being generally spent at John Penruddocke's farm, where he was always sure of a kind welcome. Penruddocke was a prosperous sheep-farmer, well and respected by most of those who were acquainted with him, and hated by most of those very reasons by Joe Heald. The latter time had Heald endeavoured to stop Phil from associating with Penruddocke, but to no purpose, for the lad was as loyal to his friends as he was to his sense of duty to his master who had adopted him.

At the farmhouse in Bratton Hollow, where Penruddocke lived with his wife and his daughter Lucy, a fair, pretty girl of seventeen, Phil spent many a happy evening, the party had to pay for which upon reaching home being more often than not a thrashing. He had paid it on the previous evening, taking a more than usually brutal beating from Heald in proudly-sullen silence, but in telling Penruddocke of it, his hot, young blood had risen to boiling point with anger and rebellion. It seemed to him that his life had

at last become unbearable, and that to endure it any longer would lead him to commit some act of desperate madness.

"It isn't as if I was an idle wastrel," he continued, as Penruddocke remained silent. "I do my work for him willingly, and even he can't find fault with me on that score. It's his black heart that turns him against me, and nothing'll change him. It's certain that he's a bad lot altogether, or the children hereabouts wouldn't run from him as they do. He cares for nothing, nor nobody, but himself."

"You're forgetting Black Harry," said Penruddocke, with a grim smile. "It's my belief that Heald couldn't live without his dog."

"That's true enough," agreed Phil bitterly. "He and Black Harry understand one another better than any pair of mortals do, and the dog hates me just as much as his master does. It's his natural, I suppose, and I'm not grumbling at that; but it's time to do something when he tries his best to make away with Royal."

Penruddocke looked at the boy with a new light in his eyes.

"D'you mean to say," he inquired quickly, "that Heald has tried to kill your dog?"

"That's it," replied Phil, his face darkening with emotion. "He put a piece of poisoned meat outside that little shed in the back garden, where I put Royal at nights when he's at home. The dog had sense enough not to touch it, but he might have, and then—"

His voice choked in his throat, and he clenched his fists, while his eyes blazed with such a startled look of hatred for the dastardly wrong attempted as to startle the farmer.

"Do you know for certain that he placed the meat where you found it?"

"It couldn't have been anyone else," replied Phil, "and what makes me more sure still that it was him is that he's been threatening mischief ever since Royal gave Black Harry such a drubbing down last week. And when I accused him of it he didn't attempt to deny it, the mean, cowardly scoundrel! I don't think he'll try on any more tricks of that kind, though, because I let him understand that if he did I'd let everybody hear of it, and leave him for good, and he doesn't mean to lose me if he can help it."

"It's a black sin for a shepherd to be guilty of," said Penruddocke, "to seek to injure another's sheep-dog, and if the folks round here got to know of it Joe Heald would be hounded out of the country."

He paused, looking inquiringly at Phil, who, comprehending the meaning of the look, shook his head.

"No," he said; "I've not told anyone but you of it, and I'm not going to—unless it happens again."

"That's the wisest course to follow, my boy," rejoined Penruddocke approvingly, "and perhaps what's happened'll be a lesson to Heald to act differently in the future. He's sour and bad-tempered, but he's a man, and a man's got some good in him however much it may be hidden away from the world."

A scornful laugh rose to Phil's lips, but he checked its utterance, for whatever John Penruddocke said had weight with him.

"I suppose that's true," he said; "although it's hard to believe in Joe Heald's case. I'll be getting on home, now, Mr. Penruddocke. Come on, Royal!"

"Won't you come on down to the farm and join us at

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB." A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's, By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"supper," asked the farmer. "You know that you'll be right welcome."

The boy hesitated a moment, and looked longingly down at the twinkling window-lights of the red-roofed farmhouse in the hollow below, and then he moved on again.

"Not to-night," he said, a little catch in his voice. "I'm best alone to-night, I'm thinking."

Casting a perting glance at the farmhouse he walked on towards the open moors, the night wind from off the distant sea washing the shore of the North Devonshire coast blowing in his face, and whistling through the grass and heather. By his side trotted Royal, the great, grey sheep-dog, whose dash and intelligence were the talk and honest envy of every shepherd in the district. It was said of him that, alone and unaided, he could drive a flock of frightened sheep into the penfold, or coax them across the narrowest plank that ever did duty for a bridge across a river. He was in his fourth year, and Phil had owned him since he found him, a starving puppy, in the hut of a shepherd who had met his death one wild night in winter while out searching for strayed sheep.

As no one came forward to claim it, Phil had taken charge of the little animal, and in course of time Royal, as he named it, became his inseparable companion. It possessed all the ingrained, natural instincts of the best class of sheep-dog to an extraordinary degree, and knew far more of the art of shepherding than ever Phil was able to teach it. And when he became old enough to tend sheep himself, the lad found in Royal a valuable assistant, as well as a faithful, devoted friend.

There were fewer losses amongst Heald's sheep in the winter months than on any of the other farms for a hundred miles around, all as a result of the fine work done by Phil and Royal, and the old farmer grudgingly acknowledged to himself that he was well served by the boy he had taken into his home.

Then there came a time when he began to regard the dog with suspicion, then with dislike, and finally with a hostile hatred that was also extended to Phil. For Royal showed unmistakable signs of becoming a better dog than his own Black Harry, which had won the reputation of being without a rival on the Devonshire sheep-farms. And the thought that his dog, upon which he lavished all the affection his crabbed nature was capable of feeling, should take second place to Royal was unbearable to him. In the darkness of the night, with Black Harry's muzzle resting across his knees, he would sit brooding over it hour after hour, plotting and planning how to get rid of Royal without anyone knowing of it.

One day he had set the two great dogs on to fight, and Black Harry had got the worst of it, and this aroused the old man's vindictive hatred of the other dog to fever pitch. Watching for his opportunity while Phil was asleep one night he had crept out of the house and put some poisoned meat near the door of Royal's kennel-shed. But Royal knew his enemy, and left the meat untouched to be discovered by Phil in the morning.

It was while leaving for his work that same day that the lad had come upon this evidence of the farmer's murderous treachery, and he had been thinking about it all day. Now, after his talk with John Penruddocke, his thoughts reverted to it again, and wave after wave of passionate indignation heated his blood as he realised to what lengths Heald was ready to go in order to injure his dumb friend.

"He won't do it again!" he muttered aloud, repeating the same words that he had used to John Penruddocke. "He won't do—"

A low, mocking laugh, coming apparently from the midst of a clump of gorse-bushes near the rough footpath he was following, interrupted him, and he halted, while Royal, the big buff round his neck rising ominously, growled and threw up his head. Again the laugh rang out, but this time farther off, and the dog sprang towards the bushes with the silent, fateful bound of the sheep-dog when it attacks a known enemy.

"Black Royal!" said Phil, and the dog immediately came to heel. "It's only the old man!"

He stood up on tip-toe and peered over the bushes across the dip in the moors beyond, but no moving object met his gaze. Then he walked on again, wondering how much of his conversation with Penruddocke had been overheard by Heald, for that mocking laugh from behind the gorse bushes had told him that the old farmer had been playing the spy.

"It don't much matter whether he heard us or not," he said to himself, with a reckless little laugh. "He can't do more than give me a hiding, and I'm used to that by now, I reckon."

A little farther on he came to a neglected copse of pine-trees, skirted the copse on the right, and ascended a steepish hill. On the crest of the hill stood an old farmhouse, with sundry haystacks, and outbuildings in front of it, and scattered fruit-trees on either side. It was here that Phil lived all

alone with Heald, for no house-servants were kept at the farm, and after taking Royal round to the shed in the garden at the back of the premises, the lad returned to the yard and entered the building by the front door.

There was no light within, and supposing that the farmer was not yet home, Phil went along the stone passage and pushed open the door of the kitchen. A slight sound caught his ear, and, glancing round, he saw two shining eyes glaring at him out of the black void. Hesitating a moment, he next struck a match and lit an oil-lamp on a sideboard near the door, and then stepped farther on into the room.

Sitting in an archway against the far wall was Heald, a thin, shrivelled little man, with a head of grey, wavy hair, and a cruel, sardonic face, and at his feet was stretched the huge bulk of Black Harry. As his master looked so physically weak, so did the dog look the embodiment of animal strength, his neck round and massive as a pillar of stone, and his great under lip, slightly drawn down, revealing a perfect row of white teeth.

Yet between man and brute there was a curious similarity of outward expression, especially in the surly, scowling look of their eyes. The bitter dislike that Heald bore the lad had communicated itself to Black Harry. Each was his enemy, and if Phil had not known it before, he must have become aware of it at that moment.

"You've got home before me, I see," he said, putting the lamp down on the table. "Was it you I passed on the way about quarter of n hour ago?"

"Happen it was, and happen it wasn't," answered Heald with a wry smile. "Anything more to say?"

"Yes," said Phil, "I have." It was you I passed, but I know your laugh—and you'd just come from spying on me and Farmer Penruddocke. It's a pity you can't show yourself as an honest man at such times, instead of peeping and nagging about!"

"Ah, well, my lad," said the little man benignly, "it's no use say that confession's good for the soul, and I'm right glad to hear you confessing that you've been and disobeyed my orders again. When I tell you not to go near Bratton Head, I mean it."

"And I mean to keep on going there, always!" exclaimed the boy.

"And not content with disobeying my orders," said Heald, still with that wry smile on his lips, "you go to Bratton Head, with a lying story about me trying to poison your dog, and you're ashamed of yourself, my lad!"

"It wasn't a lying story!" rejoined Phil boldly, "but the truth—and you know it!"

The little man smiled on, tapping Black Harry's head with the fingers of his left hand, and stretching out his right arm to clutch a stout ash stick that lay on the table.

"I'll not argue, laddie," he said, "no contradiction of mine 'ould only be waste of time. So I'll thrash you. Happen good thrashing'll lead you to see the error of your ways. Take off that coat, and bare those big shoulders. I'm used to make you feel this time, my lad!"

The boy silently obeyed, and stood up, a good deal taller than the other, his face white and sad. The dog sat up on his haunches, licking his lips, his eyes shining in greedy expectancy.

"Say you lied to Penruddocke," said Heald, as he lit the ash, "and I'll let you off easy."

"I told him nothing but the truth," replied Phil, and he tried to reason Royal up towards him.

The stick whistled through the air, and came down upon his bare back with smashing force, a thin line of blood on the white flesh marking where it had fallen. Again and again it rose and descended, and still Phil did not move, but stood there straight and almost motionless. It was only when it added to the hundreds of thrashings that he had received in the little tyrant in the days gone by, and custom had made him callous.

But there is a point beyond which endurance will not stand, and as the cruel blows of the ash-plant fell upon his back, he suddenly reached it. Something seemed to snap within him, and he swung round and away, catching the dog from the ash full across the face.

"Stop it!" he panted, his eyes lurid with rage. "I can't stand any more, I warn you!"

The little man, smiling still, hit on savagely, and he swung in and seized him round the waist, lifting him up, and set him right across the room.

Screaming madly, he scrambled to his feet again, and said, "Tear him down, Black Harry!" he shrieked. "Tear him down, good dog!"

Uttering a gurgling roar, Black Harry sprang, dodging quickly, grasped a bottle on the edge of the table, hurled it at the lamp. There was a loud smash, and a sparkling leap of flame, and then darkness. And in the confusion the raging cries and stumbling movements of the little man strove to grip the lad who had at last defied him.

dog leaping of Black Harry as he crept stealthily over the fence towards his prey. Then a chair crashed over, and the dog leapt and struck Phil in the chest, sending him reeling against the wall.

He was pressed back and back, and his hands gripped about a horse's throat in mad desperation. He could see the rolling, glittering eyes of the enormous brute searching for his throat, and could feel the hot, fetid breath in his face. With a mighty effort he lifted the dog and dashed it from him, and they staggered blindly out of the room, down the passage, and out of the house, banging the door after him.

From the passage sounded the running of feet, the cries of the infuriated Heald, and the baying of the no less infuriated dog.

"Royal!" he cried. "To me, Royal!"

A pealing, musical bark answered him, and round the yard and across to him rushed Royal like a thunderbolt. And as he came the farmhouse door opened, and Heald appeared, with Black Harry behind him. The cheeks of the little man were pale, and with rage as the hair upon his head, but when he saw Royal standing there he fell back, with a look of cunning fear in his eyes, dragging Black Harry with him. He feared Royal, but he feared him still more for his own dog's sake, so he knew that Black Harry was no match for Phil's despised staunch ally in a fight to the death.

With a curse at the lad, he withdrew into the house, pulling Black Harry with a strength that was amazing in an old, and slammed to the door.

Being exhausted, and with all the fires of passionate anger and resentment smouldering in his breast, Phil stumbled down the gate to Royal's shed.

"I'll sleep here, to-night, old chaw," he whispered huskily, patting the dog's noble head. "They don't want me yonder."

And Royal looked up at him, an expression of understanding and sympathy in his beautiful brown eyes that was almost human, for he knew, and would remember in the days to come,

CHAPTER 2.

In Muckleston Pass—Treachery—The Rivals Meet—A Friend in Need.

"MUCKSHEEF take the loon, whoever he is!" said Phil Denham to himself. "Who hasn't he made sure that the road's clear?"

It was a natural question to ask, for the rule of the road observed by all shepherds using Muckleston Pass—a steep, narrow defile leading up from fertile valley to high, rocky moorland—was that a descending flock of sheep should always make way for the one on the ascent. It thus became necessary for the shepherd approaching the top of the pass to make sure that the road was clear, as moving-space in the defile was not wide enough to admit of two flocks passing each other.

It was already commenced the ascent, Phil, who was leading a flock of sheep to Torley, a small market town about twelve miles distant from Joe Heald's farmstead, was anxious to see the leaders of another flock entering the top of the defile. On they came, with many more close behind them. And then Phil found voice, and shouted expostulation and warning. The sheep, frightened at the noise, threw up their turned heads and came to a halt, but a dog's angry bark drove them forward again, and immediately afterwards the dog itself appeared, followed by the shepherd, a long-limbed, shaggy fellow, smoking a clay pipe.

"What's there?" called Phil, gesticulating with his arm. "Just keep these sheep back until I've passed! You know what the dog's name is, as well as I do!"

"I'm thinking' as how it's the dog that'll have to turn back," muttered Andrews, with a sly grin, "and not me."

"That'll never do!" said Phil stoutly. "And whatever you say, the blame for it'll be on you!"

So that the two flocks neared one another, slowed down, and then, as they advanced again as the dogs barked and worried at their heels, with quick, unwearied persistence. At last they stopped, shivering in nervous terror, puzzled, obstinate, and most, with scarcely a dozen inches separating them.

"What's them a-goin' to do now?" inquired Andrews, uttering only a half-smile laugh. "Rock on as neither thee nor the dog's name, if there can do aught here!"

But when the angry words that rose to his lips, Phil waved his hand to Royal, and the dog flung his way to the front of the young master's flock. In between the closely-packed rows of Andrews' sheep he forced a way, slowly but steadily, and in his wake followed the whole of his flock, as if urged on by Phil whenever they hesitated, or impeded to bring about dire confusion by seeking a wild, untried flight.

It was magnificently done—an almost incredible feat of maneuvering by dog and boy—and Bob Andrews watched it

with an expression of grudging admiration on his coarse, heavy features that speedily changed to one of bitter jealousy. Here was something that he could never hope to imitate, much less to rival, and a cowardly desire to spoil the performance of it seized him.

"It's a rare bit o' work, no doot," he said gruffly, "but I can't bide idle here to watch it any longer. Happen there's room for me to work past thy lot on the side."

"Best stop where you are," warned Phil, "or you'll have a tip or two over the rocks. I'll be through in a couple of minutes."

"Them's a couple o' minutes too long," answered Andrews, pushing hard against a sheep with his knees. "Git on!"

The sheep backed, to receive a savage kick, and then, uttering a bleating cry of fear, sprang into the narrow lane between Phil's flock and the side of the defile. It dashed forward a yard or two, and, becoming wedged between the rocks and the sheep moving past it, scrambled on to the extreme edge of the defile, lost its precarious foothold, and toppled over into the gulch that ran parallel with the pass. The thumping sound of its body striking the sharp, rusty rocks seventy feet below came upwards in a strange little echo.

"You've done it now!" said Phil indignantly. "Yon sheep's been murdered if ever one was, and I'll bear witness against you, too, Bob Andrews, should I be called on to do it."

One moment Andrews peered down into the gulch at the motionless, broken-limbed body of the sheep, dead now beyond a doubt, and then he turned and looked into Phil's flushed face with a sour smile on his lips.

"Happen thy evidence won't be taken by the owner o' these sheep," he said, "for he's none so fond o' thee!"

"Who might he be?" asked Phil sharply.

"Joe Heald," chucklingly replied Andrews, driving his flock forward again down the now unimpeded pass. "He bought 'em yesterday at Torley market, and I'm taking 'em to his farm."

Chuckling still, he slouched on, turning a derisively mocking face to Phil as he did so, and apparently well pleased with himself at the turn things had taken. The loss of the sheep was due to him, but he knew perfectly well that Heald would not hold him responsible for it after he had told his tale to the old farmer—and Phil knew it, too. Between him and Andrews, who was a lazy no'er-do-well few farmers in the district cared to employ, there was no friendship lost, and he had good reason to believe that the other would not hesitate to do him an injury should the chance to do so offer itself.

"He did it on purpose," he thought, as he peered over the brow of the pass on to the open moorland. "Must have spotted me before I did him, and drove his sheep on to meet mine. Well, I did my best, and lies can't make black white."

So he strove to forget the matter for the time being, and succeeded in doing so, but upon reaching Torley it was brought back to his mind by the remarks of a shepherd he was chatting with in the market square.

"So that big loon, Bob Andrews," said the man, "is goin' to work along w' thee! Happen thy gaffir might get a better servant than he'll ever be."

"Who told you that story?" asked Phil, unable to conceal his astonishment at this unexpected piece of information. "This is the first I've heard of it!"

"Be it now!" said the other. "That's rummy, seem' as how you be a sort o' son to Joe Heald. I had it from Bob hisself, and he seemed mighty pleased about it. Told me as Heald engaged him at this very 'epot yesterday, a'ter the sheep sales."

His suspicion, then, thought Phil, that what happened in Muckleston Pass was deliberately brought about by Andrews, was correct, and his own conviction that he had gathered from the shepherd troubled him a good deal. For some unknown reason Heald had left him in ignorance of his intention to employ Andrews on the farm, and it looked very much as though that reason must be a sinister one. Since the night when he had turned on him the old farmer had treated him differently than before. Sour and silent, he rarely spoke a word to the boy, and after nightfall whenever they chanced to be sitting together in the farmhouse kitchen, Phil might have been out of the room for all the notice taken of him.

"He's up to some underhanded game, I'll be bound," thought the lad, as he left Torley on his homeward journey.

And Bob Andrews was taking a part in it. Sure as anything shall be held to blame for the loss of that sheep, and be docked of a week's shilling a week pocket-money for good 'an' all."

It started to rain hard as he trudged home, and long before he came to the end of his journey he was drenched to the skin, a fact, however, that troubled him very little, accustomed as he was to being out in every sort of weather. Lights gleamed in the windows of the farmhouse, but, to his surprise, he found the door locked, and his knocking for admittance brought no response from the inside. Ten minutes he stood there, with the rain beating down upon

him, and then the kitchen window was slowly opened, and Joe Heald thrust his gray head out into the night.

"Who's that?" he inquired blandly, while Black Harry, forepaws resting on the window-sill, growled and gurgled spitefully by his side.

"Why, me, of course," replied Phil impatiently. "I've been here knocking loud enough to wake the dead. Didn't you hear me?"

"Oh, it's you, is it, Phil Denham?" said Heald. "Hardly expected you back here after what happened in Muckleston Pass-to-day. Happen you've come to pay me the price of that sheep of mine you drove over the rocks?"

He spoke in a slow, aggravating tone of voice, charged with malice, and his eyes twinkled with mocking glee as he noted the effect of his words on his listener.

"You must talk to Bob Andrews about that," said Phil hotly, "for it was his fault that the sheep was lost, and not mine!"

"The little man turned his head, and waved a beckoning smile.

"D'you hear that, my man?" he exclaimed, with a dry, throaty chuckle. "This bold, young servant of mine brings a most serious charge of sheep murder against you. What's your answer to it?"

A dark shadow flitted across the light, and then Bob Andrews appeared at the window, a look of impudent assurance on his face.

"It's a lie," he said, "and 'e knows it's a lie. It was 'im an' his dog as worried the sheep—that much that it jumped into the gulch near the pass, as I've already told you, Mr. Heald, and when the poor thing went down, he laughed, and said as 'ow it 'ould pay you out. That's the truth, and he can't deny it."

"It's a sorry tale," said Heald, shaking his head sadly—"A very sorry tale. Little did I think that Phil here would turn out to be so ungrateful when I adopted him for charity's sake."

He stopped speaking, and drew back with extreme alacrity as Phil strode forward with clenched fists and burning eyes.

"That'll do," said the boy. "What you've done for me, I've repaid a hundred times over, and if you believe what that big, hulking coward there tells you, then you're as bad as he is."

The farmer laughed evilly, and looked down into the red eyes of Black Harry, whose back-set ears and bared teeth showed that he desired nothing better than to spring at the boy he hated as thoroughly as did his master.

"D'you hear what he says?" inquired Heald, fondling the great dog's head. "He makes me out to be a liar, me, as took him from the gutter. Oh, a nice boy he is, Harry, an ungrateful lot, as beats you most cruel, and kills my sheep. Sha'n't we teach him a lesson!"

The dog uttered a ferocious growl, and, shaking its head free of Heald's hand, hurtled through the rain-swept darkness, and crashed full into Phil's chest. The boy fell backwards, and Black Harry bit at his throat, while Heald stood and watched from the open window, his grinning face white as a mask. Rolling over, Phil struck out blindly at the savage brute, and the next minute his coat-sleeve was ripped up from wrist to shoulder.

"Call the dog off, master!" cried Bob Andrews, his teeth chattering with terror. "He'll kill the lad, sure!"

"Happen he's had enough," said Heald, licking his lips. "Come back, Harry. Come back!"

His voice rose to a scream of entreaty, for at that moment a third figure added itself to the combatants struggling madly on the ground—the figure of a dog large as Black Harry himself, Royal, the sheep-dog. He had heard the noise of the struggle in the farmyard, where he had wandered to, and had come to the rescue of his master with the swiftness of lightning. Eyes lurid, and hair bristling with the awful, silent fury of his kind, he sprang at his foe.

"Keep him off, Phil!" screamed Heald, all his hate of the lad forgotten in consternation over the danger threatening his dog. "Keep him off, I say!"

Phil got slowly up on his feet, bruised of body and bleeding of face, and he laughed wildly.

"Not to save my life!" he said. "You started it. Let 'em fight it out, and we'll see which is best of the two."

Snarling and biting, rearing up on their hind legs, the two rivals fought and wrestled like battling giants of the brute creation. Then down they went, Black Harry lowmost, and Royal hanging on to his shoulder. Howling furiously, the black dog freed himself, red blood bespattering his body, and made a fresh leap. Jumping here, striking there, and fighting with teeth, paws, and bodies, the two dogs warred in grim, desperate tenacity.

"Harry! Harry!" wailed Heald hysterically. "Come to me, Harry!"

It promised to be a duel to the death, for the rivals were mad with the lust of killing, on fire to avenge old wrongs, THE GREAT LIBRARY.—No. 145.

and satisfy the hate that had always parted them. Round and round they whirled, turning the ground for a space of twenty yards and more into a field of battle, and leaving streaming drops of blood to mark the progress of the combat. Well-matched in size and strength as they were, Black Harry yet lacked the marvellous quickness of movement that was Royal's distinguishing characteristic, and his heavy bones were repelled time after time.

Slowly he was pushed back towards the wall of the house, and at last, seizing his opportunity, Royal darted in and hurled him over. His head struck the stone wall with a thudding impact, and he rolled over and lay still, with blood pouring from a dozen wounds. And Royal, giving a steely-like bark of triumph, trotted back to Phil's side, the winner of the fight.

A sobbing moan came from the window, and then Heald, frenzied with grief and passion, sprang out of the room.

"Out of my sight!" he yelled frantically. "Never come nigh my house again, or I'll shoot you and the dog!"

He sank down on his knees, and leaned over the back of Black Harry, calling to it, and fondling it with his hands, and even Phil was touched by the spectacle. He said nothing, and walked away through the driving rain. Royal, the only thing that no man in the world would take from him, at his side. A little way farther on, at a cross in the path leading up the hill to the farm, he looked back. The little man had risen from his knees, and Black Harry was on his feet, while Bob Andrews's fear-stricken face was plainly visible at the window. Then Heald struck for the dog inside the room, climbing in himself a moment later and closing the window after him.

"So, Black Harry's not dead," muttered Phil to himself, as he walked on up the hill. "Well, I'm glad of that."

Late that night, as John Penruddocke was taking a last look round his farmyard, a pale-faced, wet, and bedraggled lad, along with a dog that limped slightly, appeared at the door.

"Hallo, Phil, my boy!" said the farmer, shrewdly looking at once that something was amiss. "What's gone wrong?"

And Phil told him, keeping nothing back, and at the end of his recital, Penruddocke took his hand in a hard grip.

"You're not to blame, Phil," he said, "and you needn't suffer because of an old man's wicked spite. There's no harm here for an extra hand, and I'll gladly have you to work for me if you'll come."

Phil's eyes sparkled, and the burden of loneliness that he had carried upon his young shoulders for so many years, young though he was, was left him for ever.

"There's nothing I'd like better, Mr. Penruddocke," he said, a sobbing note of heartfelt joy and gratitude in his voice, "than to work for you."

"That's settled, then," said Penruddocke, with a hearty smile. "Now, we'll go into the house. Happen a change of clothes won't hurt you, and Lucy can give the dog a wash. He wants it." — — —

CHAPTER 3.

The Fight for the Shepherds' Cup.

"YOU'VE just got to win, you dear, old thing!" barked Royal knowingly at Phil to Lucy Penruddocke's words. "Bo-o-ow-ow!"

The great sheep-dog, standing higher than the table in front of him, formed the centre of an admirably critical little group in the kitchen of Penruddocke's farmhouse. Leaning back to pat and stroke his noble head was Lucy, and he understood her father and Phil Denham, whose honest, sun-browned face had a graver look upon it than usual. For the first time in thinking of what lay before him, and of what the next few hours might hold in store for him and Royal, he had a thorough awareness each year to the winner of the Shepherds' Cup, the trophy awarded each year to the winner of the best Devonshire sheep-dog trials.

"Never fear that he won't win!" said Penruddocke with a confident chuckle. "There's no other dog as good as him when it comes to masterin' sheep, and nobody else that'll smile it."

Phil smiled, and shook his head.

"You're forgetting Joe Heald," he replied. "He's the one that Black Harry'll win the cup."

"Then he's the only one as does," said the farmer, without saying as Black Harry isn't a fine dog, one of the best in the West of England; but he's no match for Royal when it comes to rounding up sheep in rough country that's been over before. It's there he'll lose points.

"I hope so," answered Phil, "but it remains to be seen."

Much as he believed in the capability of Royal to beat every dog that might compete against him in the coming trials, he was by no means inclined to take the

Lucy's view that Black Harry had no chance of success. He knew, far better, the fine qualities of Heald's dog, and he knew them as well as he did, he foresaw that to win the cup Royal would have to put forth all his wonderful powers of speed and endurance.

"It seems to be seen, my lad, as you say," said Penruddocke, "and you'll see that my words come true. Royal's gone to win the cup. Nothin' can stop him." "The Shepherds' Cup is mine!" cried Lucy laughing. "The Shepherds' Cup is coming back here to-night with us. And now we must think of making a start to get it," she added, as they heard the noise of moving wheels in the yard. "There's the trap."

Leaving the horse, they took their seats in the trap which was driven away then to Tatton Mount, the scene of the dog trial, with Penruddocke holding the reins, were soon being along at a smart pace over the moorland roads. The morning was bright and warm, with a soft wind blowing in from the distant sea, and the fragrant perfumes of millions of sweet flowers scented the air.

A better day for the trials no shepherd could wish for, and the sports rose high under the genial influences of the bright sunshine and the merry chatter of his companions. Looking into Lucy's deep blue eyes, and at the rough, but good face of her father, he knew that his success would be due to them as to himself, and the knowledge acted as a most invigorating tonic. He and Royal must carry off the honours of the day, if only to bring delight to the hearts of the warm-hearted people who had received him into their arms with the open arms of unselfish kindness.

That night when Joe Heald had shut the door upon the farm he had found a welcome at the farmhouse in the village, more than three months had passed, and it had been the happiest months of his life. He was regarded as a son of the family than as one to whom a debt had been shown, and manfully had he striven to repay the debt of gratitude that he considered himself to be to his benefactor. And now he had a chance of winning more, for the winning of the cup by a dog of his own, Penruddocke's farm would bring fame and fortune to the old farmer just as much as though Royal had won to him.

When there's a bigger crowd round the Mount," said Penruddocke, cracking his whip, "than I've ever seen afore." The thought of the moment scattered by the remark, Phil turned, and his heart gave a great bound. The trap had come to a sharp bend in the road, and Mount Tatton was just a few rods away. It was a big hill, rising steeply up from the level moorland, and over it and round about it swarmed upon thousands of people. Acustomed as he was to the busy life of the moorland shepherd, Phil experienced a new and thrilling excitement at the spectacle of such a

crowd of folk, he said slowly. "I expected to see hundreds at the most. Where do they all come from?"

"From every part o' the west and south, my lad," said Penruddocke, chuckling amusedly over the lad's question, "and it is to see Royal here win the cup as they've

heard of." He reared up his horse as he spoke, and in a few minutes they were at the foot of Mount Tatton, and being welcomed by the crowd and strangers alike. Farmers, shepherds, and all sorts of folk, as well as the well-to-do, who had come from all kinds of miles to see the Devonshire sheep-dogs contend for the coveted trophy. And everywhere were dogs, of all breeds and sizes, but alike in the distinguishing features of the breed of sheep-dog.

"There's Heald!" said Penruddocke, as he and Lucy were passing by the paddock. "Seems as lonesome as a lone sheep."

They were in front of them stood Heald, attired in his usual dress for the occasion, and crouching by his side was Black Harry, scowling defiance on everyone around. In the background that laughing, light-hearted throng the man who had looked strangely out of place, and not one of whose glances was turned upon them. The surly reserve of the little man had always maintained towards his neighbor, and he left him friendless, and now no one wished him and his dog any luck.

Penruddocke and Lucy approached him, a sour smile creased at the corners of his mouth, and Black Harry's tuft of hair as he caught sight of his deadly enemy.

"Well, old chap!" said Phil, as Royal stopped dead in its tracks and stared at the black dog with the light in its eyes. "No fighting of that sort

to-day. The dog looked up at his master, wagged his bushy tail, and then moved on again, as serenely indifferent as though Black Harry had been a hundred miles away.

"That's how you ought to train your dog, Heald," said Penruddocke, as the little man had to hold back Black Harry by main force. "But he's a mighty quarrelsome brute, and there's a no more curin' a dog than a woman o' being quarrelsome. You 'ave my sympathy."

A few shepherds round laughed aloud at the jesting words, which were spoken in all good part, but Heald's thin, wizened face went white with rage, and the sour smile deepened on his lips.

"Happen you speak wi' the experience of a henpecked husband—eh?" he remarked, in the bland tone of voice that he used to deliver his most venomous shafts of speech. "Bein' a single man myself I must take your word for it, Farmer Penruddocke, and gi' you my sympathy. You had it once before, when you took in Phil. Found out what a sad young waster he is yet?"

"No," said Penruddocke, as he passed on, angry with himself that he had spoken to the other; "and I'm not likely to, either."

Heald laughed spitefully. "You'll find out afore long," he called out. "These brats as come from nobody kens where never brings good luck to them as are soft enough to take pity on 'em."

"That's where you're wrong," Penruddocke flung back at the little man—"saddy wrong." It's Phil here, who's one o' the best lads as ever breathed, what's goin' to take back the Shepherds' Cup to my farm to-night."

At that Heald put up his hand to his brow, and turned away, for Penruddocke had put into words the fear that had been oppressing him for weeks past.

"That's settled the little reptile!" said Penruddocke, as he and Phil walked on down the paddock. "Dashed if I'll ever set out to crack a joke wi' 'im again!"

"Jokes don't agree with Joe Heald," answered Phil laughing. "There's a flag going up yonder," he added, as one fluttered out at the top of a pole just beyond the paddock. "We'd better be moving along there and see the trials start."

The first part of the programme consisted of trials for young and untried sheep-dogs, and it was not until the afternoon that the great event of the day—the race for the cup—took place. The course was a stiff one, leading up the slope of the hill, round a flag-pole, and down the hill again to a gap in a thick pile of furze-bush. Beyond the gap it ran across the top of the hill-side to the hill-side, then took an abrupt turn to the right through a second gap, and then returned once more to the penning fold, which was placed close to the brink of a deep pool of water.

The difficulties of the course soon told a tale, for out of sixteen dogs that attempted to take their flocks over it, only four—Royal, Black Harry, the General, and Mayflower, two dogs that had competed for the cup in earlier years—were selected for the deciding trial by the judges. The course was altered, made as difficult for successful negotiation as expert knowledge could make it, and the spectators settled themselves down to witness what all foresaw would be one of the finest exhibitions of shepherding ever witnessed on the Devonshire moors.

Halfway round the course the General, who was the first to make the trial, could not get his sheep through the furze-gap, and, time being up, returned to the starting-point, disheartened and beaten. No better fortune attended Mayflower, whose sheep broke and ran in front of the second gap, being still unmanageable when time was called.

"Now, Phil," said Penruddocke, his voice trembling with emotion, as Royal's number went up on the board, "go in and win, my lad. Keep a cool head and a steady nerve, and the cup's yours."

"I'll do my best," replied Phil, stepping forward, the youngest shepherd there by ten years—"I'll do my best."

One swift glance round he took at the vast sea of faces lining each side of the hill, in the midst of which, clear and distinct to his eye, was the sweet face of Lucy Penruddocke beaming affection and encouragement upon him, and then he and Royal were off on their run for the cup.

The dog found his sheep at once, and sent them up the hill, as though he had known them since they were increased lambs. They were a wildish lot, and made several dangerous dashes for the open, but Royal headed off the runaways each time, and brought them back into the pack. Behind him ran Phil, cool and collected, despite the sledge-hammer beating of his heart and the singing in his ears, keeping a keenly watchful eye on dog and sheep alike. Past the pole on the top of the hill they went, and then turned and swept down towards the narrow gap in the furze-bush that had been the General's undoing not an hour before.

"He's bringin' 'em down too fast," said an old shepherd in the forefront of the crowd. "They'll never stand the pace."

But they did, and went through the gap without a blunder. A rolling cheer went up from the vast crowds of onlookers.

and then a deep silence fell upon them as the sheep raced towards the sharp turning leading to the next gap. Would they take that turning, or break and scatter? A big, black-horned top shield and darted sideways up the hill. A quick gesture from Phil and Royal had headed the top off, and the next moment the turn was rounded, and the sheep were heading for the gap. Now they were through, and again a deep-throated cheer echoed over the far-spreading moors.

"Didn't I tell you as Royal 'ould win!" shouted Penruddocke, wild with excitement. "There ain't another dog to match 'im!"

A cackling laugh sounded at his elbow as Joe Heald, his face white and strained, craned his head forward.

"Wait!" he said. "Yon plank's goin' to worry 'im." It was the plank crossing the pool of water to the pen, a narrow bit of timber scarce wide enough for a sheep to tread upon, and towards it Phil's sheep were racing at headlong speed.

A murmuring hum of excitement passed along the packed rows of spectators as the sheep neared the plank. The leading sheep stopped, throwing those behind him into momentary confusion, and then stepped out and stopped again, on the very edge of the plank.

"He's only got another minute," cackled Heald, at Penruddocke's elbow. "Only one more minute."

Men were looking at their watches, their fingers shaking with uncontrollable excitement, and a tiny figure almost lost in the crowd, Lucy Penruddocke was holding her hand to her eyes, afraid to look. Steadily, calmly, Phil and Royal coaxed the sheep forward. Now the leader was moving on again, but slowly, slowly, and the precious seconds were flying by.

"He'll never do it!" muttered Penruddocke.

"He'll never do it!" echoed Heald. "Didn't I tell you so?"

Then Penruddocke looked again, and a flashing smile lit up his face.

"It's a lie!" he yelled. "He-will do it! He's done it!" A spasm of fear had sent the leading sheep to the far side of the plank in a flying leap, and the rest followed it over the frail bridge and into the pen. Then a thunderous roar of cheering broke loose, and old shepherds turned to each other and said that never before had they seen anything like that.

"Three cheers for Royal, King of the Moors!" shouted a voice, and the cheers were given by twenty thousand throats, again and yet again.

The tumult subsided almost as quickly as it had commenced, and all eyes were turned on a thin, little man, hatless and compass, who had stepped briskly up to the starting-point, followed by a gigantic black dog. The man was Joe Heald, and the big dog at his heels was Black Harry.

The two were off in a moment, and Black Harry had his sheep on the run with marvellous quickness. Up the hill he sent them at a tremendous pace, bullying them as only he knew how to bully, and they were over the hill and through the first gap ten seconds ahead of the time taken by Royal to cover the same part of the course. The spectators held their breath, and stared at the flying pack in sheer amazement. Black Harry was hurrying his sheep along like a charioteer hurries his horses round the ring in a chariot race, keeping them on a straight, undeviating line, with Heald flying along behind, with his features set in hard, grim lines of purpose.

Along the hill-side, round the turning, and through the second gap they raced, and now they were heading for home. A shout, the first sound to break the astonished silence, went up, as the sheep came to a huddling halt in front of the plank. Five, and five of them broke and dashed for the open. Like a flying thunderbolt Black Harry was after them, and turned four back, but the fifth ran on up the hill-side, and by the time the dog had brought him back, other sheep were plunging and darting in all directions.

"He's two minutes yet!" shouted a score of voices. "He'll do it!"

The two minutes dwindled to one, and still the sheep plunged and backed, refusing to set foot on the bridge. Behind them Heald, the perspiration streaming down his face, worked like one inspired, and Black Harry charged and bulled with demon-like energy.

"They're on!" roared the crowd, as the sheep rushed for the plank. "No! No! No!"

The leading sheep had slipped clean off the plank into the water, and those following backed wildly on to firm ground, and headed a mad flight that was still in progress as the last minute of grace ticked out, and Royal was declared the winner of the cup.

Caught up shoulder high, Phil was carried in triumph through a surging, cheering crowd to the judges' stand, and then presented with the silver cup that he and Royal had won.

THE GREAT LIBRARY.—No. 145.

"Bravo!" shouted Penruddocke. "Cheers for Royal, the King of the Moors!"

And as the rounds of applause rang out, a little man, sweeping unrestrainedly in the bitterness of his disappointment, turned and stumbled blindly away from the scene of his defeat, and by his side moved Black Harry, with drooping tail and lowered head, for in his own way he suffered pangs as keen and bitter as his master's.

Once he stopped and looked back, his great jaw bared and his eyes flashing deadly hate and defiance, for on the judges' stand he could see the lordly figure of Royal, his rival.

"He's beaten me!" cried Heald aloud, as he reached the open moors. "That young 'out I took from the gutter's beaten me, hang him! But I'll be even with him yet, and with his dog!"

And Black Harry, as if understanding the meaning of his master's words, growled hideous approval. His longing for revenge was almost human, and had Heald but given him the word he would have raced back to fight with his rival to the death. But weeks and months were to pass until the opportunity he desired came to him, and then his revenge was taken in a totally unexpected way.

CHAPTER 4.

A Mission of Rescue—Fighting the Storm—What Phil Found.

"HERE'S the farm at last, thank goodness!"

As he uttered the words aloud, Phil Penruddocke stopped to give a sighing gasp of relief, and then, fought his way onward again through the blinding snow-storm towards Penruddocke's farmhouse, that, for the first time, he had almost despaired of ever seeing again. Out on the moors, while returning late in the afternoon from the farm, some seven miles distant, where he and Royal had been with a flock of sheep, he had been caught in a blizzard that had seemingly swept down upon the earth some a cloudless autumn sky.

Believing that it would soon be over, he had taken refuge in the hollow trunk of an old and withered tree, but the storm increased in fury, and he was compelled to seek a move, or run the risk of meeting his death from cold and exposure.

Hail and snow fell in quantities unprecedented for the time of year, and was quickly blown into drifts by the fury of the gale. Such a night set in as the lad never remembered, and in bleak, open places he was driven helplessly from his path and thrown off his feet time after time.

But for Royal he must have perished, for the dog, as he way home with an instinct that never wavered, waited his short, joyous barks announced the fact of the shepherd's arrival at the old house in the hollow that had once been a place of refuge for Phil, and was now his home.

Stamping his feet, and shaking the thick coating of snow from his overcoat, the lad opened the back door of the house and entered the kitchen, with Royal at his heels. A woman, faced, trembling woman, with a piteously agonized expression in her eyes, which were red and swollen with weeping, ran forward to meet him.

"Is she found yet?" she cried eagerly. "Tell me, have you found her yet?"

Then, as the lad's face expressed bewildered surprise, she sank back into a chair and put her apron to her eyes.

"I'd forgotten," she sobbed, "that you hadn't gone with John to look for her, my Lucy!"

In an instant Phil was by her side, and perceiving her face.

"Lucy!" he exclaimed hastily. "What's happened here?"

"She's lost!" came the broken reply. "Early this morning she set off for Torley, to order some things for the stores, and she's not come back since. When she had broken her father and a couple of the farm hands were to meet her, expectin' that she'd be almost home. 'Twas five hours ago, or more, and they haven't returned yet."

Phil put his hand on the table to steady himself, for the news had given him a terrible shock. Staggering through the storm and darkness the thought of the welcome he would receive from Lucy Penruddocke warmed his heart, and now he heard that she had been lost out in the black night at the mercy of the raging elements. He himself had been nearly cast away. How could he survive where he had been all but overcome by the storm of death? He staggered back at the awful thought, and then his young face hardened in that expression of determination which had been so often on it in times past, against the

Crossing over to an old oak sideboard, he took from it a spirit flask and filled it with brandy from a bottle. This, along with a few other things, he

thought might come in useful for restorative purposes should they be required, he stowed away inside his pockets.

"Where are you going to?" asked the woman wonderingly, as he was making these few preparations.

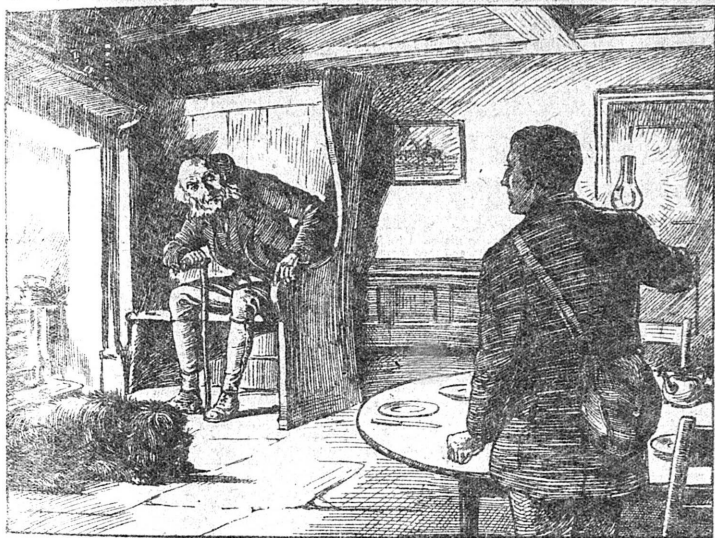
"I'm going to find Lucy," he replied, looking at her with a brave, heartening smile. "And try and keep from fretting so much, Mrs. Pennruddocke. I sha'n't be surprised to find her safe and sound with her father and the men in one of the barnhouses on the Turley Road. Happen they've all put up there for shelter till the storm's over. So keep up a stout heart, and when you see Lucy again, remember, you'll see me too."

Before the other could utter the words of feeble remonstrance that rose to her lips, he had left the cosy, firelit kitchen and faced once more the wild and stormy night. He had, however, taken the precaution of arming himself with a stout ash stick and a lantern, and by the aid of the

hand was eclipsed in his sight by the vivid picture that he carried in his mind's eye of Lucy's sweet face, clear blue eyes, and white brow crowned by a glory of fair hair. To save her from death he was risking his life, and his only fear was that his bodily powers would not endure the strain that he was putting upon them.

At times he floundered and fell while plunging through some drift, and it was Royal who lifted him on his feet again, and licked warmth back into his chilled face and hands. It was a battle between him and Royal on one side and the elements on the other, and as though imbued with a sentient fury at the dogged fight that was being maintained against it, the storm increased in violence. It shrieked and bullied in a thousand mad voices, buffeting the lad right and left, and forcing him to cower on his knees, spent and breathless, time after time.

A numb, drowsy feeling was creeping over him, and



As Phil placed the lamp on the table he glanced at Heald, who was seated against the far wall in an old arm-chair. "You've got home before me," said Phil. "Was it you I saw on the moor about a quarter of an hour ago?" (See page 20.)

last of light thus available soon reached the snow-covered slopes leading to Turley over the moors.

It descended one of the slopes of Bratton Hollow, and for a hundred yards was protected from the wind, but upon reaching the top of the slope the lad encountered the full force of the storm. The wind was blowing more strongly than before, and the snow fell upon him in blinding sheets.

It was impossible to see an inch in front of him, for the snow fell mercilessly into his eyes, and but for Royal he must have wandered from the path.

It was a time to test the courage of boy and dog alike, if ever there was one, and they answered to the test with a heroic stubbornness. Never faltering, the great sheep dog pressed on, keeping just ahead of his master, and yet looking back every moment or two to make sure that nothing was afoot with the other. Where the path dipped the snow sank correspondingly deep, reaching in places above the lad's waist, and clinging around his limbs like the softly tenacious paws of some enormous octopus. But he pushed doggedly on, kept from succumbing to the bitter cold by the fires of his own determined purpose.

The howling, white wilderness encompassing him on every

surely as he fought against its paralyzing influence he could not shake it off. How far he had come he did not know in the least, for his brain had lost all count of time and distance. His one fixed idea was that he had to rescue Lucy, who was battling somewhere ahead of him in the storm, and that he must reach her at all costs.

The sound of Royal's whining bark reached his ear, and at the same moment the dog pressed softly back against his knees. Almost mechanically he pushed forward, but the dog would not move, and whined again. Wondering vaguely what the cause of this was, he held up his lantern and peered ahead through the whirling snowflakes. Then he knew why Royal had come to a halt. He was close to the entrance to Mucklostone Pass, but a huge wall of snow blocked up the narrow defile, and to hew a way through it was a sheer impossibility.

A groan burst from his lips, for it seemed to him that his journey was to be a fruitless one, and then hope came more close to him. The pass was some considerable distance from Turley, and if Lucy had approached it after the storm commenced, she would in all probability have taken the footpath that led round one side of it as being the safer

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB." A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of SK Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

way. No sooner had he thought of this than he struck out to the left and gained the path, now knee-deep in drifting snow. Under the jagged wall of rock that now sheltered him, he was able to gain a respite from the fierce buffeting of the gale, and made quicker progress. His lantern now became of more use to him, and he looked keenly to right and left for signs of recent footprints.

He discovered none, however, and after a while he abandoned the search as useless, and hurried on towards the junction of the path he was following with the one at the far end of the defile. He was nearly there when Royal, who had been sniffing uneasily for some minutes past, uttered a loud bark and dashed off into the darkness. He was gone some three or four minutes, and upon reappearing looked up into Phil's face with an air of wonderful sagacity, and then moved off again.

He left the path and clambered up over the rocks that were piled together high above him, and Phil followed, a wild hope aflame in his breast. Up and up he and the dog climbed, slipping in the snow continually at the risk of being hurled down to a suffocating death, but pausing never a moment. They were almost level with the summit of the rise when Royal barked and darted in between two rocks that leaned towards each other, forming a natural archway, and following him, Phil saw, at the far end of a recess backed by a huge block of granite, three huddled figures lying in the thin mantle of powdery snow that the wind had drifted into the shelter.

In an instant he was down on his knees by the first figure, and tearing away the shawl that had been wrapped round the head, he peered down into the white, still face of Lucy Penruddocke.

"Lucy!" he cried, in a queer, strangled voice. "Lucy, it's me, Phil Denham! Wake up, Lucy!"

There was no response to his pleading, and with a great dread that he had come too late to save her tugging at his heart, he set about to try and restore animation in the unconscious girl with feverish haste. Opening the spirit flask, he rubbed her hands and lips with brandy, and then forced her mouth open and poured a dose of the fiery liquid between her teeth. A slight flush of colour in the pale cheeks, and a fluttering of the closed eyelids rewarded him, and he was almost overwhelmed by a suffocating sense of boundless gratitude. He was not too late. She was saved.

"Lucy, dear!" he exclaimed, as she opened her eyes. "It's me, Phil. Don't you recognise me?"

A faint smile lit up her face, and then she sat up feebly, and caught his two hands in hers with a gesture of unspeakable relief.

"I knew you would come, Phil," she said. "I told Mr. Heald so when he brought me in here, and—"

She stopped speaking suddenly, and glanced round with a startled, frightened look on her face.

"Joe Heald!" cried Phil in amazement. "Was it him who saved you?"

The girl was still looking behind her, and now she stretched out a trembling forefinger.

"Look!" she said,

Phil's glance followed hers, and then he stepped quickly across to those huddled figures that he had first noticed, and then forgotten in his joy at the sight of Lucy. One of those was that of Joe Heald, and the other of Black Harry, and one swift glance told Phil that both man and dog were dead.

The little man was lying on his back, a set smile on his marble white features, rigid in the sleep that knew no awakening. He was without a coat, and his shirt-sleeves were torn where the sharp rocks had pierced them. And stretched upon his breast, his master's hands still clasped about his neck, was Black Harry. The great dog had huddled there to keep his master warm, and the look of almost human anguish in the glazed eyes of the latter animal showed that he had suffered all the bitterness of a hopeless grief before the death that had claimed the little man he had loved laid its cold finger on his broken heart.

"He's dead!" said Phil, tears that he was never afterwards ashamed of remembering coursing down his cheeks.

"Both he and Black Harry will wake no more."

"And Lucy Penruddocke sobbed bitterly over those stark forms of the man and the dog who had given their lives to save her.

"He was lost in the storm like I was," she said. "I found me in the pass. I was stupid and overcome by the cold, and all I remember is that he lifted me up in his arms and brought me in here."

"He wrapped you up in his coat to keep you warm," added Phil, "and but for that you must have perished as he did."

Awed into silence by the thought of the noble deed that had glorified the last hour of Heald's death, she waited there in that place of shelter between the rocks as the storm had abated in violence. Then, hand in hand, the Royal guiding them, they sought the footpath by the side of the pass and walked on in the direction of Torley, to which they met John Penruddocke at the head of a search-party. And so there was rejoicing that ought to have rejoicing mingled with grief for the death of a brave man and a dog who had loved his master as his master had loved him.

In less than a week later the bodies of Joe Heald and his dog Black Harry were buried in one common grave in the little churchyard at Torley in the presence of the stranger who had known them in life. Both had been feared and disliked while living, but now there was not a man who did not think of them with kindly thoughts, for their death upon earth had been one of unselfish heroism that was a forcible appeal to the rugged hearts of men whose hearts lived out on the wild moors of Devonshire in sunshine and in gloom, in calm and in storm.

And so long as Phil and Lucy, now looking forward to the near day of their marriage, are alive, so long will the flowers bedeck the green mound above that prove the grateful thoughts keep alive the memory of the noble man and his sheep-dog, than whom there was none better than one—Royal, King of the Moors.

THE END.

"THE BOYS' HERALD,"

NOW ON SALE.

The Grand Christmas Double Number of "THE BOYS' HERALD," besides containing the best stories, also contains a splendid article entitled

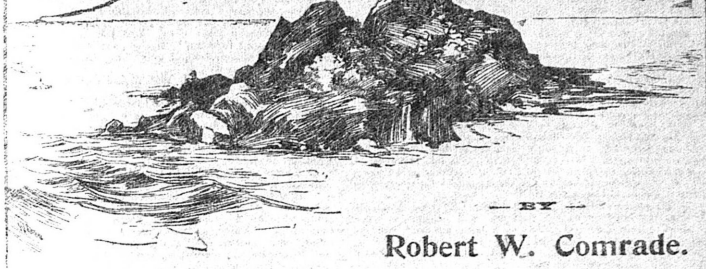
SIMPLY
TOLD.

"CONJURING TRICKS FOR CHRISTMAS."

EASY
TO DO.

A Wonderful New Story!

THE IRON ISLAND



— BY —

Robert W. Comrade.

PROLOGUE.

Alone!

While Graydon stood staring out over the vast expanse of transparent blue water, lost in thought. He was standing within a foot of a steep precipice, but this in no way affected him. He was a young man, so remarkable to relate, his hair and beard were similar to those of the man of severity.

They were not grey, but excessively long, and they gave him a slightly grotesque appearance. He turned slowly, and a dreamy expression could be seen in his eyes. Before him stretched now an island, an island composed for the most part of ironstone, dingy ironstone. Only a comparatively few trees could be seen.

Only a few latry big wood or grove at the bottom of the valley, and the rest was ironstone. Not a living soul could be seen, and a sense of desolation and loneliness hung over everything. Graydon stood alone on an isolated island in mid-Pacific!

And through his hair and beard matched the surroundings, his clothing was decidedly out of keeping. This peculiar man was attired in the latest out fashions, white shoes, and Panama hat! Who could he be?

What Was He Doing Here?

Three years previously, when he had been a youth of twenty, he had been drawn into the clutches of a vast criminal society known as the Brotherhood of Iron, and had found out too late the nature of the commission.

Marooned!

The indignation he had threatened to expose them, and they, not wishing to kill him outright owing to a vast fortune they were supposed to get, simply marooned him on the Iron Island.

Every year, Don Sebastian, a member of the Inner Council of the Brotherhood, paid him a visit, bringing out clothes and eatables. The visits were really due even now, and Graydon had been thinking about his coming. His years of solitude had changed him into a man of intellect and strength—he was unlike any other man on earth. His manner became merely disguised his real character.

He quickly made his way to the other side of the island. His home was the interior of a hollow banyan-tree which grew just over the rocky margin of beach on the island; everywhere else sheer cliffs rose from the water.

The Castaway.

The next day a terrific storm arose, and a dying man was cast upon the island—a man who had just returned from the gold-mines with a small fortune. Frank Kingston was his name, and before dying he told Graydon he had no relations, and that the ship had sunk with all hands.

So Graydon unemotionally buried him, and decided that, when he escaped—as he knew he would some day—he would assume the character and name of the dead gold-miner and exact his revenge upon the Brotherhood secretly. For Graydon swore vengeance for the terrible wrongs that had been done him. The Brotherhood of Iron should be wiped out, and he would be the instrument of their downfall.

But when he was to escape he knew not; somehow he felt it within him that he would escape, and waited patiently for the day to come. On the island the secret Board of the Brotherhood was stored, and he

intended to take it with him when he left and spend it to bring about the downfall of that organisation.

An Amazing Discovery.

Then, a day or two later, Graydon received a shock. He journeyed to the west of the island to procure a piece of wood, and quite suddenly came upon something which caused him to stagger back and utter a cry of amazement. For once the lazy look died out of his eyes, and he stared downwards fascinatedly.

The Footprint!

His emotion was justifiable. There, clearly impressed in a soft patch of clay, was a footprint—small, narrow, and dainty. The pointed toe, the delicate shape, all pointed to one amazing fact—the footprint was that of a woman!

The Queen of France.

Graydon was utterly at a loss, and was not to know of other strange happenings far from his rock in mid-Pacific. In Paris considerable commotion had been caused by an actress known as Dolores de las Mercedes. She was an extremely extraordinary woman, and for advertising purposes had claimed to be the rightful Queen of France.

Her scheme worked to perfection, and everybody crowded to her theatre to see her act, for she was a pretty and an exceptionally good artiste. But besides proving a good advertisement her scheme stirred up the Anarchists of Paris, and riots became of frequent occurrence.

Defying the French Government.

The Government ordered her to drop her claim to the throne, but she replied that she could call herself what she chose. When a bomb was hurled at her brougham the following night the Government decided to adopt severe measures. M. Lemerre, an important official, interviewed Dolores de las Mercedes, but she utterly refused to relinquish the hold on the public she had secured. M. Lemerre, therefore, in consultation with his subordinate, M. Garnier, declares his intention of giving Dolores a last chance to submit before he resorts to force.

M. Lemerre's Fruitless Mission.

"Force?"

"Exactly. Don't you see, Garnier, this simply cannot continue! She may not believe it, but she is in peril of her life—surely after what happened last night she will realise that! At all events, I intend seeing her, and having it out. There is not a moment to be lost."

"And if she refuses to withdraw her claims?"

"Then, my dear Garnier, I shall put into execution a little scheme which has entered my head. It will effectually suppress my lady, and if she is obstinate her name will never be heard of in Paris again."

"I don't think I understand."

"I suppose not. Well, to be brief, my idea is this: I wish to give the girl a chance of remaining in France; it seems

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB." A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"If you will keep him at bay, Mr. Graydon, I will set about cutting your hair and beard to resemble his," said Dolores. "There is no time to waste, remember." (See page 29.)

the stage door remaining alight. For some reason the two gendarmes were loitering about.

The stage door opened, and Dolores came into view. She was probably the first to appear. With a wry grimace at the state of the weather, she stepped across the pavement, her dainty petticoats to avoid getting them wet.

"Night home, Louis!" she said to the chauffeur, and she threw the brougham. In the darkness she failed to see that the two gendarmes had glided up, one each side of the carriage, and locked the doors; the hum of the motor and the noise they made.

The brougham glided off, and Dolores looked at the two gendarmes interestedly. She thought, in a vague way, that she had done wisely in refusing the Government's offer. M. Lemerre's last words had caused her a little more than once. But she had decided now, and she would abide her decision; it was ridiculous to say she was afraid of the riots—she didn't incite the people to do anything.

She pulled out into the street again, then started. The carriage was travelling in a different direction altogether than she had invariably took. Besides that, it was moving at a slower pace than usual, and drove ahead as if the driver was uncertain as to his destination. Dolores hastily called to the driver, but no reply was forthcoming.

"What could be the matter?" she thought. "Who was Louis going the wrong way, and why did he give me those signals? She looked out of the window more and more than ever. Evidently they were making for the open country. She pulled the window-strap, and received another

surprise—it refused to budge! The doors, too, were locked!

Dolores became somewhat excited. What had happened? She was a prisoner in her own carriage, being whirled in a strange direction at the rate of thirty miles an hour! It was impossible for her to escape—unless she smashed a window and threw herself out. And that would probably mean death.

She had been kidnapped! Her mind was in a dizzy whirl. Who could have done it? What could be the motive for the outrage? With wide-open eyes she looked through the thick glass. She was changing from hot to cold, and it was with an effort she kept herself from shrieking. The brougham was in the country now, driving through the mud and rain with unslackened speed. Again Dolores signalled the chauffeur, but again she got no reply.

And so, until the end of a long and weary ride, she sat there, half angry, half frightened, waiting for some explanation of this extraordinary journey. At last, after an interminable time, the power was cut off, and the vehicle came to a halt. For the last few minutes it had been passing through lighted streets, and now stopped in almost utter darkness.

Dolores sat listening for a moment, then one of the doors was quickly thrown open. Several men stood outside, and the splashing of water could be heard. The sky was now clear and starlit, but the high wind still prevailed.

"Pray step outside, mademoiselle," a polite voice said, "and be good enough to make no attempt to escape. There are three men with me, so you will see the wisdom of my words."

"Monsieur Lemerre!" cried Dolores in amazement.



"If you will keep him at bay, Mr. Graydon, I will set about cutting your hair and beard to resemble his," said Dolores. "There is no time to waste, remember." (See page 39.)

the stage door remaining alight. For some reason the gendarmes were loitering about.

The stage door opened, and Dolores came into view. She was probably the first to appear. With a wry grimace at the state of the weather, she stepped across the pavement, and her dainty petticoats avoided getting them wet.

"Good night home, Louis!" she said to the chauffeur, and she entered the brougham. In the darkness she failed to notice the two gendarmes had glided up, one each side of the carriage, and locked the doors; the hum of the motor was the only noise they made.

The chauffeur glided off, and Dolores looked at the dark streets interestedly. She thought, in a vague way, that she had done wisely in refusing the Government's offer. M. Lemerre's last words had caused her a little uneasiness, and she had decided now, and she would make her decision; it was ridiculous to say she was frightened by the riots—she didn't incite the people to violence.

She looked out into the street again, then started. The brougham was travelling in a different direction altogether to what she had invariably took. Besides that, it was moving at a slower than usual, and drove ahead as if the driver was endeavouring to get to his destination. Dolores hastily called to the driver, but no reply was forthcoming. What could be the matter?

What was Louis going the wrong way, and why did he not give her signals? She looked out of the window more and more anxiously. Evidently they were making for the open country. She pulled the window-strap, and received another

surprise—it refused to budge! The doors, too, were locked!

Dolores became somewhat excited. What had happened? She was a prisoner in her own carriage, being whirled in a strange direction at the rate of thirty miles an hour! It was impossible for her to escape—unless she smashed a window and threw herself out. And that would probably mean death.

She had been kidnapped! Her mind was in a dizzy whirl. Who could have done it? What could be the motive for the outrage? With wide-open eyes she looked through the thick glass. She was changing from hot to cold, and it was with an effort she kept herself from shrieking. The brougham was in the country now, driving through the mud and rain with unslackened speed. Again Dolores signalled the chauffeur, but again she got no reply.

And so, until the end of a long and weary ride, she sat there, half angry, half frightened, waiting for some explanation of this extraordinary journey. At last, after an interminable time, the power was cut off, and the vehicle came to a halt. For the last few minutes it had been passing through lighted streets, and now stopped in almost utter darkness.

Dolores sat listening for a moment, then one of the doors was quickly thrown open. Several men stood outside, and the splashing of water could be heard. The sky was now clear, and starlit, but the high wind still prevailed.

"Pray step outside, mademoiselle," a polite voice said, "and be good enough to make no attempt to escape. There are three men with me, so you will see the wisdom of my words."

"Monsieur Lemerre!" cried Dolores in amazement.

"Exactly! I think I mentioned when I saw you the other day that something unusual would occur, that through your own folly—"

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" cried the prisoner angrily. "I demand to be set at liberty. I am amazed, Monsieur Lemerre, at you, a member of the Ministry—"

"I am under orders for the Government," interrupted the other quietly. "Everything that has happened has been done by the police; the man who drove you here is a member of the Force. No harm will come to you; not a hair of your head will be touched."

"But I don't understand—"

"Of course not!" said M. Lemerre, noting the bewilderment she was in. "Now, Lieutenant Bouillier, is everything in readiness?"

"Everything, monsieur."

"Good! If you will agree to follow me, mademoiselle, I will show you the way to your cabin."

Dolores started back.

"Cabin!" she echoed. "What do you mean? Are you going to take me on a ship? I won't go! I am not a criminal!"

"I think you will agree with me that it will be better to walk than be carried," said M. Lemerre calmly. "I warned you, and you have only yourself to blame for what is now happening. You will come with me quietly!"

Dolores stood for a moment looking at the men before her. The lights from the brougham showed her their faces and clothing, and she noted that they were sailors. Her brain was working like lightning, but she could not fathom the meaning of this strange proceeding. She knew from M. Lemerre's presence that it was in connection with her refusal to sign the necessary paper, stating that she would drop her pretence to the throne, but what they were going to do with her was a puzzle. It half frightened her when she thought of a ship. Was she banished from the Republic? At all events, it would be better to fall in with M. Lemerre's suggestion, and follow him quietly.

"Yes," she said, in answer to his question. "I will go without assistance. But somebody shall be made to answer for this, monsieur. I am a free citizen, and have done no wrong."

The sailors closed about her, and she noted that all wore a half-concealed smile. It was clear that no harm was to befall her, anyway. The affair had more the appearance of a joke than anything else. The walk was not a long one. Having passed through a maddy alley, she found herself on a quay, while moored alongside was a large man-of-war. Without a word she crossed the gangway, and found herself on the deck of the vessel. The whole adventure seemed like a dream to her; it was too fantastic to be true.

"This way!" said the high Government official, and Dolores followed him into a brilliantly lighted cabin. She gave a cry of surprise, and stepped forward. The old servant who looked after her Paris villa was seated within, and she appeared to be remarkably comfortable. These surprises were continuous.

"Ah, mademoiselle, you have got here!" she cried. "Are you not wondering what is the matter? We are to go on a long sea voyage. Monsieur Lemerre has told me—"

"A long sea voyage!" echoed Dolores. "I am bewildered. I must ask you to explain, monsieur."

"In a moment. The captain's presence is essential, so I will go and find him. Meanwhile your excellent house-keeper will show you your cabins. There are three at your disposal, so I think you will be quite comfortable."

And M. Lemerre, serious and polite, left the cabin. Very soon he returned with the captain, and explained to the dismayed Dolores that owing to her refusal to comply with the Government's wishes, she was to be banished on an island in the Pacific for ten years. All her fortunes, and £5,000 over in banknotes was to go with her, and a guarantee that her house and furniture would be preserved during her absence.

At first she was nearly hysterical, terrified with the thought of what was to be her lot. M. Lemerre had expected her to beg to be allowed to return, ready to do anything he wished. But in this he was mistaken. After the first shock Dolores became calm and quiet. She declared that if she escaped she would not lift a finger to do as he required. She had a will of her own, and plenty of brains.

M. Lemerre admired her for it, and wondered if, after all, she would have her spirit broken when the cruiser called on the return journey to fetch her off. At all events, she would be out of France for a month or two, and during that time she would be forgotten, and the affair have blown over.

And so, in this abrupt, dramatic, and ignominious fashion Dolores de las Mercedes left the French Republic for the Pacific. The cruiser was a fast one, but it was well on into November before it reached the vicinity of the Iron Island. A few days before sighting it a fierce storm had raged—the

storm which had sent the Sunbeam to eternity. Dolores had grown resigned to her fate almost by now, although she couldn't believe that she was to be left alone for ten years. Yet she didn't guess M. Lemerre's strategy.

The Iron Island, as it happened, was the first sighted, and the captain decided it would do as well as any other, for there were numerous uncharted rocks therabouts. By purchase Philip Graydon was asleep in the banyan tree when the cruiser steamed up. The captain had made a circuit of the island beforehand, had seen the jagged reef, and had decided upon another method of landing his charge. The reef looked dangerous, and an under-surface rock might mean disaster.

A boatload of bluejackets sent off to a spot where the cliff was the shallowest, and where it sloped a trifle. This was to the west of the Island—at West Point, as Graydon called it. It was difficult work, but after a while they had succeeded in climbing to the top. They carried a heavy rope ladder with them, and it was a simple matter to swing it to a rock at the summit.

A tent was carried up next, and numerous bags containing Dolores' personal belongings. The sailors grinned as they worked, for this was rather a novel occupation. They did not know any of the particulars, but knew who she was, and what a commotion she had been causing in Paris. Not a sign of life of any description was to be seen on the island.

They pitched the tent several hundred yards from the cliff edge, down in the valley under the shade of some cocoanut palms, placed the supply of water, food, &c. inside, then signalled to the captain that all was in readiness. In a few minutes Dolores, pale and calm, was being sent towards the jagged ironstone cliff, unable to believe that leaving civilization behind for ten years. Her intention that her name would be taken off before then.

Being active and agile, the climb up the rope-ladder was as nothing. With mingled feelings she watched the bluejackets returning to the cruiser. The boat reached a safe, and a few minutes later the war-vessel steamed off to the northward. It had only been in view from the bay for a few minutes, so Graydon had little chance of seeing it, even if he had been awake.

Dolores turned with heavy heart and gazed about her. She was alone! Alone on an island, with no hope of help—she felt the same feelings exactly as her companions did, and these two were only separated by a mile of the jagged ironstone. Both thought they were alone, both thought they had the island to themselves, until—

Endeavouring to brighten herself a little, Dolores went down to the west of the Island, to the place where the French politeness certainly had been performed for her. She found a cosy little hut in that part. The captain of the cruiser had no objection of putting his charge to any discomfort during her stay on the island.

Curious to see what was beyond the trees a little way down, Dolores presently strolled into the valley. She had just placed her foot on the soft patch of clay, when she paused, her heart beating wildly, her whole frame quivering with excitement and amazement. Her face wore an expression of incredulous wonder. Somewhere from behind the trees had come a voice—a voice humming an English song.

She waited a moment longer, and the sound grew louder and nearer. There could be no doubt as to its genuineness. Looking swiftly around her, she darted behind a bush and lay still, watching with wondering eyes. What could it be? She couldn't even imagine.

Then she drew her breath in sharply between her teeth. Graydon had walked into view, and his grotesque features and awkward gait caused her to cry out. With dilated eyes she watched him walking onwards, towards her tent, which she had, so far, hidden by the trees. Who was he? What could he be doing here? Again she drew her breath in sharply. Graydon had seen the footprint, and had staggered to the amazement.

"Great Heaven!" she heard him exclaim.

With sudden decision she made up her mind. There was no object to be gained in concealing herself. Besides, the strange man might be able to help her. He was a fisherman evidently; but why did he wear his hat? Dolores stepped out into the open composure, and she had got over her great surprise. She was only a few curious now.

"My friend," she called calmly, in perfect English, and seen to be puzzled over something.

Philip Graydon swung round like lightning, and looked at her with open mouth and dilated eyes, gazing at the girl before him. He had an accepting glow over his head, and he had never been more taken aback. He stood still, and he flabbergasted to move an inch or utter a sound.

And there these two stood, separated by no more than a dozen yards—these two whose destinies were now

in a manner that neither of them dreamed of. And surely they were the most peculiar spectacle in the whole world. Both were attired in the latest of fashion, both were young and healthy, and yet both were in a position almost alike—they were marooned on a rock, a mere speck in the Pacific, the one for life, and the other—as she thought—for ten years. Surely no two people since the earth's creation had found themselves in such a remarkably singular position!

The Meeting of the Exiles.

Far away, against the rough ironstone cliffs, the gentle murmuring of the placid Pacific made itself heard. Overhanging the branches of the tropical trees, numerous birds sang and sung. And below, separated but by a few feet, stood Philip Graydon and Dolores de las Mercedes, the exiles of the Iron Island.

For some of them spoke, Graydon, a peculiar spectacle with his flowing hair and beard, had for the moment lost his reason. Dolores, on the other hand, had recovered from her shock, and waited for him to speak. True, she was conscious with an overpowering curiosity. Not thirty minutes before she had been landed on a seemingly deserted island, and a number of wonders!—she had come across a man—an Englishman—attired in beautifully-cut clothes, but having about him an air of grotesqueness that made everything singular.

Then, on himself, usually so unemotional and expressionless, he had completely taken aback at this totally unexpected sight. It was the greatest surprise he had received during his eight years' stay upon the Iron Island. The finding of the Englishman had been shock enough, but this last discovery coming right on top of the other, was astounding. Was he, and where in the world had she sprung from? How wasn't to know that the cruiser which had brought her to France was even then steaming full speed northwards, nearly disappearing below the horizon. All he could grasp was the fact that she was here. With an effort he pulled himself together, drew himself up straight, and took a couple of steps towards her. The old lazy expression had returned to his eyes, and when he spoke his voice was a quiet drawl.

"Really, you gave me quite a start!" he exclaimed. "To be sure, at least, your appearance was certainly unexpected."

Dolores opened her eyes a little wider. This remarkable man spoke in a distinctly cultured voice, while his rapid manner of demeanour was as unsuspected as it was sudden. Her attention was an extremely peculiar one. She had been ready to burst into a torrent of questions, but his quiet voice and unobtrusive manner made her change her mind.

"I was under the impression that this was a desolate rock," she said, without the trace of an accent; "and your appearance was as much a surprise to me as mine was to you."

"Your impression is a similar one to my own," replied Graydon calmly. "Having been alone on this island for ten years, you must excuse my little astonishment I may have displayed at first catching sight of you."

"Eight years?" cried Dolores, advancing to his side. "How you been alone here for all that terrible time?"

"Eight years does not sound long to me. I seem to have seen been all my life. But I am puzzled. Would it be impossible to ask you who you are, and how, in the name of all that's wonderful, you got here?"

They looked at one another for a moment, taking stock. They could see now that he was a young man, in spite of his long hair and flowing locks. But his manner puzzled her exceedingly. To hear them one would think they were in the habit of conversing on ordinary topics, instead of being marooned, absolutely alone, on this little island in the middle of the impenetrable vastness of the Pacific Ocean.

"You could not help noticing the expensive cut of her hands, the delicate whiteness of her hands, and the general aristocratic finish which surrounded his fair companion. He felt sure that she was a person of some importance, and he added to his perplexity considerably. He looked at her eyes, and inwardly told himself she was a woman of some rank—a woman of courage.

But he had forgotten everything in the excitement of this singular discovery. She had forgotten that she was marooned on the rock—she thought—for ten years, not having the slightest suspicion that the cruiser was to return for her in fourteen days. The half-trimmed look had died from her large eyes, and she was replaced with one of interest and inquiry. Strangely enough, there was no feeling of embarrassment on either side. Situated as they were, it seemed only natural that they should take an interest in one another—that they should be as if they were companions in distress. Convention did not count—could not count—in such a place as this. "You are a very remarkable man," said Dolores. "It is impossible to look upon you as an ordinary individual."

Your long hair and beard give you an appearance of strangeness that is impossible to describe. I hardly know what to say or do. There is such a lot to tell you, and such a lot for you to tell me, and standing here—"

"I really beg your pardon!" Graydon hastened to say, removing his Panama. "But I was wondering where—well, to speak the truth, this hardly seems a fit place for a woman. A man can tend himself, kill his dinners, or build a shelter, but for you to attempt—"

"Thank you, but I am well provided for," smiled Dolores. "If you will follow me a few yards up the hill I will show you where I am staying."

She turned, and walked towards the tent, Philip Graydon following with his languid saunter. In a moment they were in the little clearing, and Dolores pointed to the stout tent. Her companion displayed no surprise, but merely nodded his head.

"I can see there have been other people here," he remarked, noticing the footmarks and one or two cigarette-ends lying about. "Upon my soul, I am heartily ashamed of myself! To think I allowed all this to go on while I slept! Either I must have been very tired or your friends made very little noise. By the way, how did you manage to get here? I'll swear you didn't land in the bay!"

"The bay?" repeated Dolores, opening the flap of the tent and passing inside. Without appearing to do so, Graydon flashed his eyes round and noted the contents in one glance. There was a neat little folding-bed, a table, a chair, and a couple of large travelling trunks—presumably filled with his companion's belongings. A thick rug covered the wooden flooring, and altogether the tent was quite comfortable.

"All these things were hoisted up the cliff by sailors, and finally I was landed by the same method," said Dolores. "It was a rather uncomfortable climb, but they made it as easy as possible for me."

"By Jove! And I was under the impression that the only landing-place was the bay," said Graydon. "You don't mean to tell me that you climbed up the cliff unaided?"

Dolores laughed. She was beginning to like this very remarkable man.

"Oh, no! A couple of sailors scrambled up first and secured a rope ladder. So you see, it wasn't so very hard for me to climb up."

"Quite hard enough, I'll warrant. And has the ship that brought you gone straight back to France?"

"To France? How did you know—?"

"Really, when I see a French manufacturer's name on the tent, French luggage labels on the trunks, and French furniture, it is fairly obvious that you have come from France, is it not?"

"I had forgotten that. But you have remarkably keen eyes; we haven't been here for more than a minute."

"Quite time enough to note those trifling details. And now, mademoiselle—for, in spite of your splendid English, I can detect a suspicion of an—well, not an accent, but a peculiarity of pronunciation—"

"I am neither English nor French."

"You surprise me! I could have sworn— However, if you will permit me to take a seat, I shall be gratified if my visit will satisfy my curiosity as to who you are, for you will admit that it is unusual for ladies to be marooned on desert islands in this fashion. I had no suspicion that my solitude was to be enlivened by the presence of a second exile."

He removed his hat and sank to the floor, sitting cross-wise, tailor-fashion. Just for a second he glanced at Dolores, and she felt, as her gaze met his, that he was looking into her very soul. And yet his eyes were half closed, and seemingly full of languor. She was more puzzled than ever; it seemed so unreal, so fantastic. There he sat, waiting for her to speak, his long, brown beard touching his knees, and his hair falling in waving curls over his shoulders. Had it not been for his well-cut flannel suit she could not have looked upon him as a civilized being. Yet his manners, his speech, all told of a highly educated— Oh, it was too puzzling!

"You wish me to tell you all about myself?" she said, after a moment. "If I do I shall expect you to satisfy my curiosity, and let me know what you are doing here."

"Of course!" he murmured. "That is understood. But I have not forgotten that ladies are always first."

And the reason Dolores de las Mercedes told Graydon of her life in Paris; how she had claimed to be Queen of France for advertising purposes; how the people had flocked to the Theatre du Triomphe to see her; how the Anarchists had caused riots; and how, finally, the Government had kidnapped her and set her on the Iron Island for ten weary years.

"It is unheard of!" she concluded, her great indignation kindled. "Monsieur Lamerce shall be made to pay for his outrageous conduct. It is true I refused to comply with

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

the Government's wishes, but was I not a free citizen? Could I not call myself what I wished?"

"It is unjust—not," said Graydon dryly.
"It is evidently—tyrannical! I shall have to escape—I must escape! I could not live for ten years on this barren spot! It is impossible!"

"And yet I have endured it for eight years," said Graydon, a sudden fire appearing in his eyes. "Escape is impossible—at least, it seems so at present. I have a presentiment, however, that some day not far distant I shall get away, and be free to revenge myself upon my enemies. And when that day comes—"

The expression of his face told Dolores the rest. When that day did come Graydon would be a very dangerous man. It made her all the more curious to know his story. But she had not finished her own yet.

"I cannot realise the extent of my sentence yet," she said. "It seems impossible that I am to remain here for ten years. What can I do? How can I live? Oh, if I were free—"

"But you are not, mademoiselle. And, if you will excuse my being quite candid, I think you did very foolishly to set yourself against the Government. Governments are tricky things to tamper with. They are all-powerful, and can do as they please. And, after all, your scheme was unusually audacious. I admire you for it greatly, and am sorry it has terminated in such an abrupt fashion. But to defy the Government! Really, it was unwise!"

She could not be angry with him for his plain speaking. He spoke so pleasantly, so concernedly. Already she was beginning to see that he was right; she had been unwise. M. Lemerre had carried out his plan, and Dolores was bitter against him. Poor Lemerre! His intentions were really good; he had done this merely to save Dolores from being banished from France. How was she to know that she was to be fetched off in a fortnight—that the threat of leaving her there for ten years was merely to break her spirit?

"Will you admit this Lemerre you talk about is something of a tyrant," went on Graydon. "His action in marooning you here is scandalous, and when you return to France, ten years hence—"

"But I must escape before then!" cried Dolores. "I cannot exist for all that terrible time!"
"I thought the same when I was first landed here, and I had nothing to look forward to. I am sentenced to spend my life here!"

"You will leave the island when I do."
"Of course; but that may not be for ten years!"
They looked into one another's eyes, and there was something in that glance that told them both that he was wrong; that they would leave the island almost immediately. But how they knew it, and in what manner they would escape, was a question neither could answer. The feeling was there—intangible, but nevertheless positive.

The Man of Mystery.

"You have greatly interested me by your very singular story," exclaimed Graydon, stroking his beard, "but there is one thing puzzling me. You said a short time ago that you were neither English nor French. Since you have a French name, French manners, and have been earning a living on the French stage, I fail to see how—"

"Oh, that is easily explained," laughed Dolores. "For some strange reason she felt light-hearted. Perhaps it was that feeling—the feeling that they would both escape in the near future—that had taken possession of her."
"Dolores de las Mercedes" is merely an assumed name. My real name is not nearly so imposing, and would not look at all well in Paris. It is—"

"By Jove!" said Graydon languidly. "That's Irish!"
"My father was a native of Belfast, while my mother was of Spanish blood, so, you see, I'm not French at all. But my father lived most of his life in Paris, so I grew up a French girl almost. He insisted, however, on my learning the English language, and being fond of learning I eagerly agreed. But you have not told me anything about yourself—who these enemies are, and why you were placed here all alone."

Graydon rose to his feet. Although not a big man, he seemed to Dolores to be powerful, both in body and in mind. His very coolness was disconcerting; his utter indifference to the peculiarity of the position. He fascinated her. She did not know why, but she seemed drawn towards him; his personality was magnetic, and she was burning with curiosity to know who he was.

"It is rather a long story," he exclaimed, picking up his hat. "Perhaps you would like to come down to the other part of the island? I can show you my home, and can explain things much better there."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 115.

NEXT THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in Advance.

"Oh, that is a good idea!" she said, rising. "I've been wondering where you lived."

"I am afraid you will find it not nearly so attractive as your own cozy front here. You have at least got signs of civilisation all around to remind you that you are not alone in the world!"

"And haven't you?"

"That," he said, "I will let you see for yourself."
He walked out into the sunlight, and stood for a moment looking directly up into the golden ball. The sky was cloudless, and the heat intense. The humming of bees and the gentle rustling of the palm-leaves were the only sounds to be heard. A peaceful scene, but one of such loneliness that was absolutely inconceivable to a person who had never been there. The Iron Island seemed to be great from the world; isolated, with not an animal in its whole length and breadth, and only a limited number of birds. Dolores and Graydon, standing there, felt the utter solitude of the island intensely; the overpowering sense of being deserted, of being alone.

He was used to it—used to loneliness far greater than this. During the weary eight years of his exile it had sometimes nearly sent him mad; at others it had given him time to think, to strengthen his brain, to strengthen his nerve, until he was no other man on earth. By this time he had grown to like his solitary life; the overpowering longing to have another human being by his side had passed. Nevertheless, he was glad Dolores had come; he would have somebody to tell his plans to. And he was glad she was a woman, for he felt that she would sympathise with him more than a man; would understand and help him.

Dolores, on the other hand, was almost terrified at the utter loneliness of the island. She stood there thinking of the terrible years to come, the weary months with nothing to do, no other woman to speak to. Then came another thought; or, rather, a feeling of exaltation. She would escape! In exactly the same manner as the convict had taken hold of Graydon, so it took hold of her.

"There's going to be some rain, some rain," declared Graydon, looking upwards. "Before night, too!"

"So I should's not the slightest sign of it!"
"But I there's had said eight years ago. But since then I have had ample time to study Nature. And by the way, I can definitely state by a glance at the sky what the weather will be like six hours hence."

"Really, that must be very handy!"
"It is—in a way. Now, if you will follow me I will lead you to the path. The rest of the island is not so pretty as this you know."

Graydon walked down the lull, and she could not help admiring his magnificent physique. He walked easily, his feet appearing to glide over the ground, yet his feet slipped; every step was firm and sure. She walked by his side, and almost felt envious of his curly locks. Graydon's own thoughts were busy. He was thinking of the strange life he had just told him, although she would never have guessed it. To all appearances he was totally occupied in his own way. He wondered what she would say when she heard the facts about himself, for he meant to tell her all reserving nothing.

They passed the shed containing the stored-up lumber of the Brotherhood of Iron, and Dolores looked at it curiously. As he vouchsafed no explanation, however, she said nothing. Presently the luxuriant vegetation and trees were behind, and they were on the bare, scorching iron-plate.

"Oh, how horrible!" she said, as she stumbled and tripped over the rough ground. "I had no notion this was this wretched stuff here! Isn't it difficult to walk on?"

"Do you find it so?" he queried. "I have got accustomed to it, although I remember it was rather awkward at first. However, there is little further to go."

"Look at that bird!" she interrupted, pointing to a gaudily-coloured creature that had suddenly alighted on the ground twenty yards distant. "What a size it is!"

"Yes, they are a decent size," agreed Graydon. "They're very good eating, too. Would you like to try one?"

"But you have no weapons," said Dolores, in surprise. "No civilised weapons certainly, but there are other things. There, he is going!"

The bird had taken to the air, and was slowly flying over their heads. Quick as lightning Graydon stooped and picked up a round stone of about an inch diameter, and threw back his arm. Dolores watched in amazement as he was ridiculous to suppose he could hit it!

Graydon's arm shot forward, and, although Dolores tried to see the stone leave his hand, she failed to do so. It had already sped into the air like a shot from a gun. Suddenly there was a loud squawk, and the huge bird, now thirty feet

and as high from the ground, seemed to crumple up and drop like a stone. With a thud it struck the ironstone and lay perfectly still.

"You see," drawled Graydon, with a quiet smile, "a stone is not absolutely necessary!"

"But I cannot believe it!" exclaimed Dolores amazedly. "It seems impossible that you killed it with a little stone, when you could see it with sufficient force!"

"I admit I have practised stone-throwing a lot. When you see nothing else to do, it is really an interesting hobby."

"But the force with which you threw it was stupendous! And your aim, too! The bird was in flight at the time. Really, you are a most remarkable man. I can't help saying so."

"Years of solitude has no doubt worked many changes in me, both in body and in mind," smiled Graydon calmly. "It is nothing to be surprised at; it is only natural!"

"He pulled over to the bird and picked it up. It was just dead. The stone had struck it in the side, smashing its head and causing instant death. Dolores had never seen such a thing, and she was amazed. The force with which the stone had been thrown was stupendous. And the accuracy of Graydon's aim was a marvel in itself. Yet he made no boast about his powers. She did not know half his accomplishments yet. He looked at him somewhat in awe. His was such a strange personality—such an air of mystery seemed to surround him. She almost dreaded to hear his story; she had not concluded in her own mind that he was a criminal yet. But for what other reason had he been marooned on this island? Then she thought of her own case. She was not a criminal, so why should he be? He certainly seemed unpleasantly enough. His eyes and face, too, were somewhat honest-looking. No; before she judged him she would wait until developments.

"This, in my opinion, is the best place on the whole island to observe Graydon, as they left the ironstone and went under the impenetrable shade of the mighty many-leaved banyan tree. "Straight ahead, you see, is the beach, and in the foreground is the only stretch of beach on the island."

"Is there a lovely tree?" she exclaimed, looking up into its branches. "And isn't it cool here, after that hot walk!" The sea, too, looks just delightful. But I don't see your house! Didn't you say—"

"You are looking straight at it," drawled Graydon, pointing to the banyan tree.

"I looked about her wondering. She seemed a very nice person now, to what she had been in Paris. Her eyes appeared to have gone, and she was a girl again, with a naive curiosity. Her simple glances were merely expressions of interest, and she seemed, in no way embarrassed. Had she not been an ordinary man she would have been so; but she was not. He was a decidedly extraordinary man, and she was glad to be at home in his company.

"I can't puzzle me," she laughed, surprising herself at her own lightheartedness. "Everything was so different from what he had expected. I certainly can see no place on the island possibly be called a home."

"I will," she exclaimed Graydon, taking a couple of steps forward and opening the door which he had let into the banyan tree, and displaying the hollow interior.

Graydon Tells His Story.

"I am glad to see you, and stepped closer. Her eyes were fixed upon the various uncivilised articles the man had contained. The rough table and chair, the wooden stool, the dried leaf bed, all seemed too peculiar and uncomfortable. "Everything was so clean, so neat and tidy. It was a pity where you have lived all these years!" she said to herself.

"It seems so remarkable; so like a home. I will be home over again! But I must ask you to explain the presence of these. They seem so out of place!" she said, pointing to a couple of canned meat tins with their faded and coloured labels. They certainly did seem out of place with the remainder of the articles, and Graydon smiled.

"I will be so glad," she smiled, "the presence of those will be explained to you when I tell my story. You will see my abode is exceedingly comfortable. You are in a palace in comparison almost. Your needs are easily satisfied, and I am content. Shall I tell you of the shade here while I relate my story? It is not so hot, and I am afraid, will weary you."

"I will," she exclaimed Dolores quickly. "Indeed it won't. I am longing to hear it. Everything seems so interesting. I know you have something interesting to tell."

"I will do my best to tell it in an interesting manner," he said. "It is no small matter you fail to understand, that I am not at all at home."

He seated himself on a patch of grass which grew just under one of the minor trunks of the banyan tree, while Dolores sat facing him. She was looking expectant, and watched his unemotional face closely. She did not picture him as a young man still under thirty; it was impossible to do so. He was a personality all to himself.

"In a quiet voice, Graydon proceeded to tell his fair companion of his first dealings with the Brotherhood of Iron, how he had been a weak youth of barely twenty. He told her how he had joined the Brotherhood, believing the whole thing to be an elaborate joke, and had discovered too late the villainous object of the society. She listened, enthralled, for the narrative—the way in which he told it—was thrilling. When he definitely learned the truth—that the Brotherhood of Iron was nothing but a colossal criminal organisation—he had declared himself highly indignant, and threatened to expose them to the police.

"I was hot-headed at that time," said Graydon quietly, "or I should have used a little stratagem; instead of that, I swore excitedly that immediately I got out of the council chamber I should inform the police. Of course, that settled matters. They weren't going to be frustrated by a youngster, so merely bundled me aboard a ship, and brought me out here, where I'm as harmless as a kitten."

"But why should they keep you here? If they are as bad as you say, I should have thought they would kill you."

"So they would but for one fact. Every year a ship comes to this island, and every year I am asked whether I have changed my mind."

"Why don't you say you have, and get to England again?" asked Dolores interestedly.

"Because it would be worse than useless. I should be watched by a dozen spies, and any sign of treachery would mean instant death. No, I want to escape—disappear, and be able to avenge myself by methods of my own; to remain in the background, to strike them down one by one; and to let them remain in ignorance as to who their enemy is."

Dolores shivered a little as she looked at his face then, for it was alight with a terrible fire. His eyes had grown as hard as steel, while the set of his jaw could be seen even through his thick beard. Then he laughed lightly, his expression changing like magic.

"But I have not escaped yet," he drawled. "You were asking why they do not kill me? Well, in England there is a certain young lady who has a vast amount of money. I have a little, too, and the Brotherhood want me to marry this lady, gain her fortune, and hand it over to the common fund. Of course, the idea is absurd, for even if I did return to England, I should never marry her. I have almost forgotten her, and she I have often wondered why the Brotherhood doesn't kill me for their know I am adamant."

"But weren't you in love with this girl?"

"Not the least bit, I think she cared for me a little, but it's all over now," said Graydon carelessly. "My whole time on this barren isle has been directed to perfecting myself—to strengthening myself, and when the day comes, when I finally escape—"

"They will regret not having killed you?"

"By Heaven, yes! The fools! They think I am still a weak nincompoop! They think I am like putty, to be worked any way in their fingers. But the awakening will come—I know that; but the question is when?"

"It is hard to say," replied Dolores, realising the enormous power of the man by her side. "But how long is it since the ship paid its last visit? When do you expect it again?"

"I have been looking out for it for the past few days," answered her companion. "It may be here this afternoon."

Dolores jumped to her feet.

"Then," she cried excitedly, "they can take me away with them? I can escape!"

"You seem to forget that you are in a position exactly similar to my own," rejoined Graydon quietly. "If they take you off the island, you will be a danger to them, for you know as much as myself. Even if you didn't, they would still leave you here. They can afford to take no risks. I am afraid you must await your opportunity the same as I have been doing for so long."

Dolores smiled disappointedly.

"Of course," she agreed, "it is impossible. Besides, if they took me away, I could easily have a ship sent for you. I had overlooked the most obvious difficulties. How silly of me."

"Not at all. It was natural that should be the first thought to cross your mind. By the way, you have the explanation of the meat cans now. My food mostly consists of tinned stuff, and they bring a fresh supply every year, together with some clothes. Don Sebastian is the name of the man who comes—a confounded Spaniard! Oh, I really beg your pardon! I had forgotten for the moment that your mother—"

"There are bad people in Spain as well as good," exclaimed

Dolores. "But tell me about this ship. How long does it stay?"

"Just long enough to land any bullion, if they have any—you remember I told you this was their treasure-house—and my boss of tired goods, etc. When that is over, Don Sebastian sets me out for a few minutes' chat; to ask me if I have had my spirit broken or not. Pah, the very thought of him turns me sick! He only comes so that he may taunt me!"

"Has he no compassion with him, then?"

"None, except a glittering revolver. He is foolish enough to imagine it would save him if I wished to harm him. Before he could draw trigger, I could knock him senseless!"

"And as Dolores looked at him she could well believe it."

"And you let him think he has the upper hand?" she asked.

"Why not? What good would it do harming him? I could not escape by doing so. And I wish the Brotherhood to think I am as weak to-day as I was eight years ago."

"Understand. But who is this Don Sebastian?"

"He is a member of the council—one of the men who govern the Brotherhood—one of the greatest scoundrels un-
ding!"

"I suppose he is one of those blustering men—big and self-important!"

"On the contrary, he is no bigger than I," replied Graydon, quite ignorant of the fact that Dolores had worked up to the question—she was a fine actress. "He is of much the same build as myself, in fact."

"And does he always come?"

"Always."

Dolores was silent for a moment. An idea had entered her head; a wild, fantastic idea at first glance, but one that, if carried out properly, would mean the liberty of them both. She was too clever to allow her feelings to betray her; she must have time to think it over, to perfect it, before laying it before Graydon. Her keen, womanly sympathy was all with this much-wronged man. She wanted to help him, for she knew that his case was a very serious one, serious than her own. He was a good man, had done no wrong, but had been placed in his present terrible position because of his straightforward honesty.

She knew that when he did escape he would wreak a terrible vengeance on the Brotherhood for the great wrong they had done him; but she was in agreement with him, heart and soul; her own liberation could only come about by helping him. But she wanted time to think—to be alone. He must know nothing yet. Her woman's wit was to get them out of the seemingly insurmountable difficulty they were in.

"And to think the ship may turn up at any hour," she said, gazing dreamily at the distant horizon. "How terrible it must seem to see the way to civilisation before you, and yet be unable to avail yourself of it!"

"It is certainly exasperating," agreed Graydon. "Now that you know all concerning myself, and we thoroughly understand one another, suppose we go and examine a very peculiar cave in the cliff face just here. It is low water at present, and that is the only time the entrance is accessible."

"Oh, I shall be delighted!" exclaimed Dolores instantly. She was still thinking hard, but wished to be alone to perfect her plans. Yet she did not want her singular companion to think she was eager to be away.

They walked out of the shade of the banyan-tree, and progressed down the shingly beach, a strangely-assorted couple indeed. Yet their position was identical. But she was new to it all; the absolute solitude gripped her and frightened her, whereas Graydon seemed unaffected by anything. The rapidity with which he had got over his first surprise at meeting her was remarkable in itself—it served to show Dolores what absolute control he had over himself. She looked at him now, but whatever his thoughts were, whatever his emotions were, his careless, manner, and lazy, expressionless eyes, concealed everything.

The tide was right out, the sea having receded for a distance of two or three dozen yards. And in one of the cliff faces—the left-hand side only—a dark, low opening could be seen. The difference in the colour of the ironstone several feet up the cliff clearly showed that at high-tide the cave-entrance was completely under water. At present, however, it was possible to walk right in.

At first, it seemed pitch-dark in there, but after a minute their eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and it was possible to distinguish the surroundings. The ground was covered with a thick layer of soft, spongy seaweed, while a salt, fishy smell assailed their nostrils. The ground sloped sharply upwards, and ahead there was nothing but absolute darkness.

"If you follow me," said Graydon, "I will lead the way upwards. There are no dangerous pitfalls, so there is no necessity to caution you."

They walked onwards into the darkness, Dolores following her companion, curious to see where he was leading her to.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in Advance

The cave narrowed as they progressed, until it was nothing but a steep passage. Presently it wound round at the left, and Dolores saw a faint light ahead. She wondered what it could be, but said nothing. The next moment the mystery was explained. Quite abruptly the passage widened, and a good-sized cavern, and overhead, in the roof, a long, narrow slit admitted the blazing sunlight, making the apartment almost as light as day.

"What a quaint place!" exclaimed Dolores, looking round her. "It isn't possible to get out of here by any other means than that by which we came in, is it?"

"That is the only exit."

"Then suppose the tide came up? We should be drowned like rats in a trap, shouldn't we? How awful!"

"It is not so awful as it seems at first sight," he answered.

"You see, where we are now standing is almost at the top of the cliff, and quite out of reach of the tide. At the worst it would merely inconvenience us, for we should have to wait for the water to recede again."

"How curious! Nevertheless, I should not much care for the experience. I should be afraid of the tide. Is it absolutely certain it couldn't reach here?"

"Absolutely. In the most violent storm it would be safe. As a matter of fact, I have spent a good many hours here. It was rather risky, the first time, but I came out all right."

"Then if anybody had looked for you while you were here, and while the tide was up, it would have been impossible to find you?"

She put the question carelessly, as if merely interested, but, in reality, she was quite excited. At first she had only bored her—for she was anxious to be alone—but she saw the significance of it had struck her forcibly; it was a remarkably effective hiding-place.

"Quite impossible, Miss Dolores. I was practically hidden in the earth, for when the tide is up the cave entrance is hidden. It is beneath the surface, and nobody could guess its existence."

"But they could see in the top through that slit," Dolores, gazing up at the strip of blue sky overhead, and dark fissure such as this, nothing is discernible when one is here, one is in good hiding."

In a few minutes they were out in the open again, as Dolores expected, Graydon offered to show her the tent. She eagerly acquiesced, and fifteen minutes later bade him good-bye.

"Don't be surprised to see me early to-morrow," he said. "For I shall walk over. You haven't told me how long adventures yet, and I'm really interested. Besides, I want you to show me over the island."

"I'm afraid you've seen the best of it," replied Dolores.

"However, I shall be delighted to see you at any time you, I dare say, will find it more than lonely up here, by."

She watched him disappear among the trees, and a little smile on her lips. What a marvellous man! What supreme self-control he possessed; what courage and determination. She shivered a little at the thought of the scoundrels who had been responsible for his exile. When he escaped—when!

"I must think it over," she murmured, "and tell you about it to-morrow. It can be done—the idea is feasible. Oh! what a lot it means if it succeeds—what a triumph!"

Don Sebastian Receives an Injury.

"Well, senior, I think you know everything. You are all straightforward, and I really envy you. This holiday, pure and simple. I wish I could go some place that's impossible. The business of the Brotherhood attended to."

The speaker, a breezy little man of about thirty, Lord Mount-Fannell, the Chief of the Brotherhood. He was seated opposite to Don Sebastian, the member of the Inner Council, in the cabin of the Hawk, the large steam yacht owned by the Brotherhood. It was lying just off Gravesend, on the point of the Pacific. Nobody else was present in the cabin, but two men were having a last few words before they parted.

"And I understand," said Don Sebastian, "Graydon still remains deaf to reason, I am to send him straight off!"

"Those are your instructions. You tell me he is a weak-nerved young fellow, and that he will offend the audience. Very well, you should not have much difficulty. It will be quite safe; nobody knows he is in the—er—occurrence cannot possibly be traced. In any case, it is absolutely useless leaving him there any longer. The girl we wanted him to marry—so as to gain her fortune—has just been married to another man."

"He's got to go, and it'll be quite safe."
 "That is over you will simply steer for home, calling
 on the way at Rio, where you will carry out the business
 of the traitor, No. 220—John Fraser."

"That may be gone! It will be several weeks—"
 "You can't be gone. Listen here, and I will refresh your
 memory. No. 220 was commissioned to secure the Walkley
 diamonds; they had been in Sir Roger Walkley's family for
 generations of years—and succeeded remarkably well. He got
 them every one."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

"I understand," murmured the Spaniard, rolling a
 cigarette instead of handing in the proceeds to the Brotherhood,
 receiving the usual high commission; No. 220 took
 the diamonds and hid them. It was a foolish thing
 to do. His agents are in every port, and it will only mean
 trouble for you. Still, if members will be so traitorous,
 I will pay the penalty. At all events, No. 220 managed
 to get them in South America. I imagine he thought him-
 self safe there—and still does—but a couple of our agents
 got to him immediately, and at once set about their duty—
 they intended to kill him. An hour or two before their plans
 were put into operation, however, No. 220 was unhappily
 involved in a street car accident, and sustained a broken
 leg."

couple of hours to accomplish. All the rest of his time
 would be spent in looting about the decks and state-rooms—
 and Don Sebastian was very fond of the sea, especially when
 there was no work to do.

The whole crew were common members, and looked upon
 the Spaniard as if he were a prince. Even the captain was
 most deferential. The first part of the journey was rather
 rough and cold, for the winter was coming on fast, but
 soon, as the vessel steamed into sunnier climes, the weather
 began to improve.

A few days before Cape Horn was sighted, a change of
 wind and the rapid dropping of the glass told the captain
 —a man named Shaw—that something rough was in store.
 A few hours later, such to Don Sebastian's disgust, the
 storm burst in all its fury. By midday it was at its highest;
 the yacht was pitched and tossed about mercilessly, every
 plate and bolt in her groaning under the pressure.

The skipper, oil-skinned up to the eyes, was in charge on
 the bridge, and every now and again a great green moun-
 tain would thunder over an appalling crash on the fore-
 deck, sending the spray flying like hail over the bridge, and
 rushing madly through the scuppers into the angry sea again.
 The lower decks were awash almost unceasingly, and even
 the crew kept as much as possible to the snug forecastle.
 Down in the engine-room the engineers had their work cut
 out to keep their feet, for the pitching of the vessel was
 tremendous.

The wind shrieked through the rigging, and the captain
 was forced to cling tightly to the wheel to steady himself.
 The flying spindrift cut like a knife, while the rain beat down
 upon the decks with a roar that could be heard above the
 howl of the gale. Every now and again the Night Hawk
 would glide giddily down a watery slope, down, down, until
 it seemed impossible to rise again; then the oncoming wave
 would run over her bows, swirl madly into the scuppers, and
 the ship would shake the tons of water from her, shuddering
 through her whole length and breadth.

Don Sebastian, in one of the state-rooms, was trying to
 read, having propped himself on one of the lounges. But
 it was a hopeless task; he felt restless and wanted to be out-
 side. He knew the storm would soon be past—the glass was
 already rising—and wished to see the angry waste from the
 promenade deck. For the Spaniard was no coward; he en-
 joyed an experience like this now and again.

He rose, lit a cigarette, and walked unsteadily across the
 heaving floor. Outside it was cold and chill, while the wind
 seemed to be a solid body. The spray tore past him,
 drenching him on the way. Clinging to the rail, he fought
 his way forward. He was well accustomed to rough seas,
 but for once he under-estimated the force of the storm.

Suddenly a cry rang out—a cry of warning. Don Sebastian
 heard it faintly and turned. But it was too late; a huge,
 solid wall of water came bounding across the deck towards
 him. In a second it struck him, picked him up like a feather,
 and carried him at a mad pace onwards. A cry of horror
 arose from those who saw. Don Sebastian was being carried
 overboard! Escape seemed impossible, and if he once did
 leave the ship, nothing on earth could save him. A boat
 couldn't live for a moment in that foaming waste of waters.

The Spaniard cried aloud, and threw his hands out to save
 himself. As luck would have it, the wave was not of
 sufficient strength to carry him right overboard, but its strength
 was, nevertheless, tremendous. Unable to save himself, he
 was flung with stunning force against the bulwark, rolled
 back a few feet, and lay still.

Several members of the crew dashed towards the spot, and
 their faces grew serious as they saw blood streaming from
 their superior's face. Hurriedly they lifted him, and bore
 him back to the cabin. He recovered himself after a minute,
 and looked dazedly about him. A couple of stewards assisted
 him to a couch, and hastened to procure water, bandages,
 and ointments.

Besides being bruised, it was found that Don Sebastian
 was suffering from a nasty cut right across his nose and
 cheek—at one place the gash extended to the bone. It was a
 difficult place to bandage, but it had to be done, and the
 Spaniard was put to bed. His bruises were considerable,
 and it was several days before he could walk about again.
 When he did, he found the Horn had been rounded, and the
 Night Hawk was well on her journey to the Iron Islands.

The weather conditions were superb now; hot, sunny and
 delightful. Don Sebastian cursed his luck, for there was not
 much enjoyment for him, aching as he was, and with a
 bandage across his face which practically obscured his
 features. It would be a month before he could dispense
 with it—the best part of the whole journey, and he was
 naturally annoyed. Not that that helped matters. The mis-
 chief had been done quite quickly enough, but it took a long while
 to heal.

And so, some days later still, when the look-out reported
 "Land-ho!" Don Sebastian was still half-obscured with his
 bandage.

lugo bandage. The Night Hawk had arrived at its destination; but the Spaniard felt quite up to his coming interview with Philip Graydon. The pain had gone by now, and the wound was quickly healing itself. Eagerly he clambered on to the bridge and seized a pair of binoculars. "Yes," he announced, after taking a long look, "it is the Island, right enough. I wonder what the next twenty-four hours will bring—I wonder?"

Had he known, Don Sebastian would have given hurried orders for the ship to reverse immediately, and scurry away from the Iron Island, as if it were the plague itself!

Dolores' Scheme.

Dolores emerged from her tent and stood for a moment gazing at the trees around her. Although they were rustling softly in the breeze, a hundred numerous birds flitted about, she did not notice them. All she noticed was the absolute stillness; the absolute absence of ordinary, everyday sounds.

"What a terrible place!" she murmured. "I should go mad if I were to remain here long! But I'm not; I'm going to escape. It is possible, and if everything comes off all right, easy."

Dolores had decided to throw in her lot with Graydon; to exert all her wit and powers to helping him. Somehow her heart had gone out to the exile; she felt sorry for him, and if she didn't help, who would? Besides, it was the only means of effecting her own escape; and even then she would have to keep her identity a secret.

She walked down the path hurriedly, and wondered what Graydon would be doing. The morning was a beautiful one, with the tropical sun shining with a brilliance which dazzled her eyes. When she emerged from the bushes on to the ironstone, she paused for a moment and gazed about her. The sea looked magnificent, sky-blue, and perfectly transparent. Then her eyes turned in the direction of the banyan-tree. No Graydon was to be seen. Away to her left stretched the scorching ironstone—

But what was that? She opened her eyes wider. Speeding over the jagged ground at an astonishing pace was Graydon himself. One he came, as sure-footed as a deer, leaping high into the air every now and again to clear a particularly large hump. His speed was amazing, and Dolores could not help admiring the grace with which he ran. His long hair was floating behind him, and a stranger figure could scarcely be imagined. Seeing her, he altered his direction, and a moment later was standing before her.

"Ah, good morning, Miss Dolores!" he cried. "You came just as I was taking my morning sprint. It is the only way to keep yourself fit, you know."

His voice, his manner, his careless dress; all were as they had been the day before. Although he had just been taking violent exercise, he seemed as cool as ever. His breath, instead of coming sharply as Dolores had expected, was regular and moderate; there was no sign of perspiration in his brow, nothing to show that he had been exerting himself as no other man could have done. His endurance must have been marvellous; his fitness almost superhuman.

"But the way you ran!" exclaimed Dolores, gazing at him in amazement. "It was astounding! And yet you seem at no loss for breath. I cannot understand it."

"You would if you had lived on this island as long as I have done," Graydon replied. "Remember, I have nothing else to do, and so can spend more time than other men in perfecting my muscles and lungs and sinews."

"But it does not seem natural—"

"It is not natural," he strengthened by my very existence on the island. The iron had entered into me, and made me different to other men. Yet I do not show it. To look at me one would take me for a man of ordinary strength. But I'm not; I have spent the years in making myself equal to the task before me—the task of wiping out the Brotherhood of Iron."

"When you get the opportunity," put in Dolores softly.

"Yes, when I get the opportunity, Miss Dolores; when I escape. And I feel the time is not far distant now. Would to Heaven I could be certain! It will be too late in a few years' time—"

"Suppose I tell you the opportunity is here, and it only remains for you to take advantage of it."

Graydon staggered back. For an instant the sleepy expression died out of his eyes, the languid manner vanished as he drew his figure up rigidly, and he gazed at his companion with an intense eagerness that was disconcerting. Then, equally as suddenly, despite the shock her words had given him, despite the multitude of thoughts they had brought to his mind—he relaxed into his usual condition and laughed lightly.

"You're joking," he smiled.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order at
Advert.

"On a matter such as that? No, Mr. Graydon, I am scarcely so thoughtless. What I said just now is the perfect truth; the way is open before you—myself as well. I have something to tell you—something to suggest."

His lazy glance met hers.

"Really," he drawled, "you seem to be the great soul that would help me out of my difficulty. My dull brain is a blank; it is your woman's wit that will do the trick. The only means of escape I can think of is by balloon."

She laughed, but she knew his return of unconcern was merely a disguise to his real tumult of thoughts.

"Balloon," she cried. "They're right out of date now. You would want an aeroplane."

"Aeroplane!" repeated Graydon. "I'm afraid that would be more useless than—"

"Oh, I had forgotten! You have been out of the world for eight years, haven't you? You didn't know that the air has been practically conquered, and that aeroplanes are flying about everywhere like birds!"

"Then I am certainly out of date," he smiled. "I must have to get you to tell me all the news. But your work of a minute ago have interested me. Suppose we discuss the matter? No other topic of conversation could be half so interesting."

"But not here. The heat, and—"

"I think the arbour will be as good a place as any. It is shady there, and the sight of the ironstone is shut out by the trees. I have spent many a hour there by myself."

In a few minutes they were seated in the little loggia, and again Graydon had created for his own comfort a most elegant, waiting for her to commence, and although he said no sign of it, Dolores knew he was eager to hear her plans.

"You told me yesterday that this man, Don Sebastian, always interviewed you alone, believing you to be his only friend."

"Alone, except for his revolver. I think he considers that good company," smiled Graydon.

"And he is a man of about the same size as your self. Is he any peculiarity, anything out of the usual?"

"Nothing. Don Sebastian is a common place, but a good fellow."

"Does he wear a beard?"

"He has done so since I have known him," replied Graydon. Dolores searched in vain for a sign of interest. It was all right enough, but hidden behind his mask of perfect control. "It is brown, sharply pointed. His nose, too, is waxed, with long extremities."

"Oh, his hair is the same as most other people's. It is cut short, and parted in the middle. I used to wear it the same. But why this long cross-examination on the habits of my Spanish friend?"

"It is important," replied Dolores, her eyes shining with enthusiasm. "Now, listen carefully. Don Sebastian is to arrive at any hour, isn't he?"

"The ship may be in sight even now."

"And that is the only vessel that ever visits this island. This being so, you must escape from this island by some means on her—"

"But that is impossible," protested Graydon.

"Hear me out before you say that. When Don Sebastian comes you must get him out of view of the ship, and then I will knock him senseless!"

"What would be the use?" the sailors in the boat asked.

"When you have done that," said Dolores, "I will emerge on the beach of his interruption, 'I will emerge on the beach of his interruption.'"

"Your part!" repeated Graydon. "Really, I am sure I cannot follow you, Ah, but wait a minute!" His face lit up and an expression of understanding entered the lines of his face.

"You have guessed it?"

"I am to knock him senseless, then you are to disguise me? You will cut my hair and beard, and give me a replica of Don Sebastian—you will alter my face so that nobody will tell?"

"That is my plan!" exclaimed Dolores. "If you will cut your part the rest will be easy. I can disguise me. I have a whole box of theatrical make-up with me. The idea is so simple that it is bound to succeed."

"I can do my part of it; it will be an easy task to assume the character of Don Sebastian. I know the actor—every intonation of his voice."

"You can retire to your cabin immediately and get ready."

"The captain will not dare to question me. You will tell me the senior is one of the councillors. You will tell them that the prisoner has escaped; or, better still, that he is dead, that his remains are among the trees, and that gold can be stowed aboard."

"But you?" said Graydon. "How about you?"

"I will explain that soon. The very minute the ship is in sight, you must get me out of the island."

"You can order the gold to be landed, and instruct the captain to go straight home to London. Immediately he is done, it will be an easy matter to shave yourself, and be gone."

"Frank Kingston," interjected Graydon quietly.

"Frank Kingston?" she repeated. "What do you mean?"

"It is rather a long story, so I will tell you later. With regard to the other matter, however, it seems a first-class plan. It will be easy for me to impersonate Don Sebastian; and easy to overpower him when he comes to taunt me. But you cannot kill him, therefore he will be left on the island. It will be equally impossible for you to accompany me. You will be left here as well—"

"Of course," replied Dolores, smiling. "I shall be left here. It is the only possible way. I am sentenced to spend ten years by the French Government on this island, and any chance of escape is better than serving the sentence. Don't say so that as soon as you are yourself again—or, rather, the Frank Kingston—you can charter a yacht for your own use, make all haste here, and take me off."

"In that way we shall both get free. By Jove, it's a fine scheme, Miss Dolores! But that scoundrel will be gone alone. I could not think of leaving you alone on the island with Don Sebastian—"

"That is unavoidable. It must be so. And, anyhow, it will be so terrible. He will not molest me. What would be the use? He will be unarmed, while I shall have a revolver for a revolver!"

"When will you sleep? He may kill you—"

"There is the treasure-house. That is strongly built. I shall lock him in there every night, and release him in the morning. But you needn't worry, for I shall be able to take care of myself. And you will be back in a few weeks—perhaps in a fortnight."

"You can rely on my return at the earliest possible moment. But it seems too easy; there will be something to come of it. After all these years—"

"That wants is good acting and plenty of nerve."

"I think I have the latter," smiled Graydon; "while the former is very simple. There is only one real obstacle."

"What is that?"

"Suppose the excellent don does not turn up? Suppose

the other men come in his place?"

"In any case all our planning will have been in vain.

"I have no reason to think he won't come? It is

his position, and is in all probability groundless."

"I shall wait for a few minutes, each engrossed in thought. It

is a desperate scheme, but would it succeed? Graydon

had no doubt; he felt that the time had come; that

the day—the day—he had been waiting for

was something within him told him that his hopes

were realised. Dolores had come to the island under

the circumstances, and had she found it deserted would

be a needless. As it was, she had found him—and a

friend.

"It was the same with Graydon. Alone, he was utterly

unable to do a thing; to lift a finger to help himself. But

she could assist him. She could effect his escape; with-

out that she could never have hoped to disguise himself as Don

Sebastian. He could effect her escape; without him she

could have had no avenue for the conception of her scheme.

"But they were powerful—divided, useless."

"The gold will remain untouched?" asked Dolores.

"Of course, it can be observed from the sea."

"It is completely hidden. There will be no necessity

for me to tell the captain that I am dead, so there

is no need to search the island. But I don't like it," he

said. "Frankly, I don't like it. It is your idea entirely,

and you will be doing all the work. Think of those weeks

with that wretched Spaniard, while I am looting about

the island. It is unfair to you."

"It is better than spending ten years here? It is the

best thing I can do. Anything is preferable to a life of exile here.

"In spite of what you say, I think I would rather have

Don Sebastian for a companion, even though I have to keep

him from a revolver, than nobody. I should go mad

if I were alone. I shall have something to do, something

to think of."

"That is your thought. But the ship is not here yet.

"I will come, I know it will come, and it will bring Don

Sebastian too! Ah, how I have planned, how I have looked

for this day! Eight years I have been here—eight

years of my life have been practically lost. But the injury

will be avenged, and Heaven help the members of the

Council when I reach England! Heaven help them. I

will make every one of them shall be brought under the lash!"

"I have looked at him as he made this speech, his voice

rising to a higher pitch than usual. And a cold feeling made

me shiver down her spine. He was a terrible man for an

Englishman, and she was glad she had thrown in her lot with him.

"They were friends—companions in distress—but she could

never look upon him as an ordinary man. He was different. Everything he did was different, and there hung about him an air of mystery which fascinated her, which made her enthusiastic for his cause, and which made her decide, there and then, to help him after their arrival in England.

The Brotherhood of Iron was a blot on the earth; and, anyhow, she would be doing good work. She knew that Graydon would not inform the police. That would be too tame altogether. No, he would do things in his own way. She could not go back to France, either, for if she did she would be recognised by the police and shipped back to the Iron Island. Here she sadly misjudged Mr. Lemerre; but she was not to know that it was a meaningless threat; that the French Government never had any serious intention of leaving her on the island for ten years. She thought their sentence was final, so decided to live in England under her own name—Kathleen O'Brien, and do all in her power to help Graydon. She had a fortune of her own, and was quite independent.

"And they deserve it," she said, in answer to his passionate speech. "They are worse than murderers! The excellent Don Sebastian will be tasting a dose of his own medicine. How long will he be here, for though? You won't take him off when you come for me?"

"Most decidedly not. He shall, as you say, be dosed with his own medicine, and dosed strongly. He shall remain here until it is convenient to take him off. The taunting bound has thought all along that I am still a weak— What was that? Did you hear? By Jove!"

Graydon broke off suddenly, and stood in a listening attitude. Dolores, seeing the eager expression in his eyes, felt her heart thump wildly against her ribs as she guessed what he was listening for. She herself could hear nothing—nothing, that is, except the gentle murmur of the sea and the rustling of the leaves overhead.

"It is," muttered Graydon. "As I live, it is!"

"What?" asked Dolores quickly. "Is what? I cannot hear anything. Do you mean to say—"

"Follow me," he said calmly. "I think you can guess where I am leading you."

He stopped the four yards up the path to where a clear view of the sea was obtainable. Excitedly Dolores parted the leaves of a bush, then she cried out and pointed, her face flushed and eager:

"It has come," she called out—"it has come!"

"Yes," Graydon murmured, "It is the Night Hawk right enough. But does it bring Don Sebastian?"

Steering straight for the island, sending a wide line of foam in its wake, could be seen the graceful lines of a large steaming-yacht. When still far away Graydon's remarkable bearing had distinguished the steady thud-thud of her engines.

"That question is very easily settled," cried Dolores. "He is pretty sure to be on deck, if there at all. I have a pair of binoculars here. Just glance through them and tell me what you see."

Graydon took them with no sign of hurry, and a slight smile played round the corners of his mouth. Leisurely focusing the glasses he placed them to his eyes and took a long look, his companion meanwhile fuming with impatience. Finally he lowered them and handed them to Dolores.

"Well?" she asked tensely.

"Our fears may all be set at rest," he replied coolly, a touch of triumph sounding in his voice. "The worthy, or, rather, unworthy, Senor Diego Sebastian is standing on the bridge beside the captain, looking at the island by means of one eye. The other is effectively blocked by a huge bandage. From his general outward appearance I should say he has been decidedly in the wars. I wonder what has happened!"

Freedom—After Eight Years.

"Here at last! And there couldn't be a better day to effect a landing. But where is Graydon? I see no sign of him. He is usually the first noticeable thing on the island."

"Possibly he is asleep, sir," said Captain Shaw, gazing intently at the strip of beach before him.

He and Don Sebastian were on the bridge of the Night Hawk as it drew nearer to the isolated rock. The sun was blazing down upon it, and it looked strangely peaceful and quiet.

"Not a sign of life was visible, and both the captain and his superior were struck by the same thought—Graydon was dead!"

"Tell the first officer to lower the boat as soon as possible," said Don Sebastian. "The weather is ideal now, and I wish to get this business over at once, and be away again before nightfall. As usual, I shall interview Graydon alone. As there are no provisions to land this time the small boat will suffice."

In a few minutes the yacht's engines were shut off, and the anchor lowered. The sailors bustled about the deck, and presently, with a rattling of ropes and pulleys, one of the

boats dropped to the water. Without loss of time the crew scrambled aboard, and Don Sebastian took his place in the stern. It was rather ticklish work getting past the reef, but as the sea was as still as a pond there was not much danger.

The Spaniard looked a curious spectacle with the bandage obscuring the greater part of his face. Only one eye, one pointed moustache, and a sharply-cut beard could be seen. His nose was completely hidden. The long gash was nearly well by now, but unsightly, and Don Sebastian cursed his luck—the scar would remain for all time.

It was a pleasant journey from the ship across the bay, with the pretty view in front, and the rugged cliffs on either side. "The water was transparent, the sandy bottom being plainly discernible. At last the boat grounded, and Don Sebastian stepped out on to the shingle.

"You will remain here until I return," he said. "You need have no fear for me. I shall be all right. I may be half an hour, or I may be five minutes. Anyhow, you needn't move from where you are."

"Very good, sir," said the first officer respectfully. "We will wait for you here."

Without another word the Spaniard made his way up the sloping beach, producing a formidable-looking revolver and keeping it in his hand. He looked about him searchingly, but there was no sign of life. Everything seemed stilled; the wind had dropped, and the sea was practically motionless. The door of the banyan-tree stood wide open, and Don Sebastian paused for a moment and looked inside.

"Not here," he muttered. "I wonder where he is? No sign, either, of his having lately occupied the place!"

He stood looking undecidedly about him for a moment, then proceeded through the grovelike density of the banyan-trees. Just past its limits, the ironstone, in the full glare of the sun, radiated the heat terrifically; and Don Sebastian, after a hasty glance over its barrenness, turned his steps in the direction of the path that led to the storehouse, where the vegetation grew thickly and luxuriantly.

Hardly knowing what to expect, he continued his way. On every other occasion he had found Graydon waiting on the beach, and his absence this time was significant. The path curved a little ahead, so that the arbour was out of sight. Cautiously the Spaniard walked onwards, then he uttered an exclamation of surprise and cocked his revolver.

Seated in the arbour was Graydon himself, his expression one of lazy contentment; a look of quiet amusement in his eyes. He smiled as the visitor cocked the revolver, but made no effort to rise. For a moment neither spoke.

"Oh," said Don Sebastian at last, "you're here, then!"

"I should scarcely be anywhere else," replied Graydon coldly. "You seem surprised to see me."

The other drew closer, rather disappointed at finding Graydon alive, for he had really thought to the contrary. He had no fear of an attack, for Graydon had always seemed so broken-spirited, yet obstinate.

"I notice your beard is getting longer, my dear Graydon," he sneered. "Have you enjoyed yourself this last year? Any better than the previous ones?"

"You are wasting your time, Sebastian, by speaking to me. The answer I have given you on previous occasions would apply equally well to this. You can leave as soon as you like."

"Ah, my good fellow, your existence on the Iron Island ceases from this day onward!"

"What do you mean?" Graydon asked, in a nervous voice. "I thought that would startle you!" chuckled Don Sebastian, enjoying himself immensely. It was one of his chief delights to gloat over the misfortunes of others. "You may well ask what I mean. Well, I will tell you. As you are no longer any use to us, and as you still remain obstinate, we have no other alternative than to relieve ourselves of your existence. To speak quite plainly—

"You mean to kill me!" cried Graydon, starting back in horror.

"It is the only course. You are a fool, Graydon—a pig-headed fool—to let your life be thrown away like this. If you had only agreed to throw in your lot with the Brotherhood last year all would have been well. As it is," the Spaniard chuckled—"as it is, my friend, even if you consented now, it would be too late."

"Have no fear! I should never consent to join your murdering band of scoundrels! They number too many already!"

"Then you have nobody to blame but yourself for what happens. I have come here as the emissary of the Brotherhood and must carry out my instructions. As I said, your life on the Iron Island is at an end!"

Graydon rose slowly from his seat.

"You are right," he exclaimed; "it is!"

Don Sebastian looked up sharply. The tone in which Graydon had spoken the words was startling. He was standing up

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in Advance.

rigidly now; and somehow, as the Spaniard looked at him, a cold shiver passed down his spine. Graydon's eyes, a moment ago so full of languor, were shining, black and piercing, and they seemed to look right through Don Sebastian.

"What—what did you say?"

Graydon did not answer, but continued to look at his companion. He seemed taller, broader, while his hair and beard gave him an appearance almost majestic. But his face was terribly stern. The set purpose in his eyes told of power, determination, and resolution. In a second his whole being had changed, and Don Sebastian felt somehow that he dared not move. Those eyes held him where he was. He was transfixed, and he felt himself involuntarily giving way.

"My life on the Iron Island is at an end," exclaimed Graydon slowly, "for I am leaving it to-day by means of your yacht— No, don't speak!"

The other had endeavoured to shake that horrible feeling of fascination from him, and cry out, but he found it impossible. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he fixed there.

"Up to now, Sebastian, you have had the upper hand; but now, at last, my time has come. You thought me a weakling, and I allowed you to go undeceived. Drop that revolver!"

The Spaniard's face contorted itself into an expression of mingled rage, surprise, and fear. To be told to drop his weapon by an unarmed man! He struggled feverishly to raise his arm, and fire—to kill this mysterious man! But it was impossible; he could not move an inch. That marvellous power held him tightly, and he found it impossible to stir his eyes away from Graydon's. He was impotent, hopeless, and unable to lift a finger, yet he was armed!

"Drop that revolver!"

The voice cut like a knife, and Don Sebastian showed. Graydon bent forward suddenly, and grasped his wrist on the wrist of his left hand. The revolver was held in the right. And that grasp was like the clutch of a steel vice. The Spaniard felt it growing tighter and tighter.

The two combined powers—the strength of will and the strength of muscle—proved too much for him. It brought home to him the fact that a revolver even would be useless against such a man. He felt that if he levelled it, his arm would be snapped in two like a carrot.

His nervous fingers opened, and the pistol dropped to the ground. He knew that his master was before him, and that he was as weak as a child in comparison to Graydon, whom he had always considered a fool. And it frightened him, his fear was born within him that he had never before experienced. "It was uncanny."

"Thank you!"

Graydon released his hold of the other's wrist, raised, and picked the firearm from the ground, keeping his eyes fixed upon Don Sebastian all the time. He twisted it about in his fingers for a second, then levelled it at the Dutch lad.

"Strip!" he commanded.

The Spaniard, as if dazed, as if hypnotised, could do nothing but obey the order. Hurriedly he divested himself of his outer clothing, finding himself even incapable of cursing. And as he undressed, so did Graydon.

"Put this suit on, and be sharp!"

Again there was silence for several minutes, only the rapid breathing of Don Sebastian breaking the stillness. His breath hissed between his teeth in slow gasps, and a clammy perspiration stood out on his forehead. The air was changed now—Graydon stood attired in the Spaniard's clothing, and vice versa. Then Graydon raised his hand and a loud, melodious whistle sounded.

"Well," he remarked, "that's one thing done. Now it's the next. Don't move, please. Remember, this is a very fully cocked. One movement, or one cry, will terminate in very unpleasant results to yourself."

He sat down, and smiled. The piercing expression had vanished from his eyes, and they were dreary and dead again.

Don Sebastian shook himself, and muttered a curse. The spell was broken; and he was nearly foaming at the mouth with rage and impotence. This man was doing as he liked with him; was playing with him as a cat does with its mouse. Yet he could do nothing; that was the terrible part of it. In some unaccountable, mysterious fashion he had forced him to relinquish the revolver. The position was reversed now—Graydon had the upper hand.

"You—you fiend! You have got the better of me for the minute, but by Heaven, your success shall be short-lived! You can do nothing. You cannot get away, and my men are within call—"

"Nevertheless, they are ignorant of your position. And I think you will agree with me that it would be unwise to the extreme to raise your voice just now. Remember, according to you, I die in any case, so I shall have no compunction in shooting you down first!"

Don Sebastian swore violently. He saw that his position

was absolutely helpless. He could do nothing. He was ostroly in Graydon's hands. Suddenly, the latter looked at the prisoner. "You could be heard approaching. The prisoner could be heard behind him in amazement. Who was this? It could be one of his own men, for they were in the opposite direction."

"A. Now we shall soon get the business over!" drawled Graydon. "I imagine you are considerably astonished, Sebastian? You were not aware of a second person's presence on the island, were you?"

The other opened his eyes wide as he saw who the newcomer was. Dolores, from her tent, had heard Graydon's whistle, and had hurried down with the make-up box. It had been an anxious time for her waiting for that signal, and she sighed with relief as she saw the Spaniard attired in Graydon's clothes, helpless and unarmed.

"Things are progressing swimmingly," remarked Graydon. "You have very little time, however, I will ask you to be as quick as possible."

"I have been so anxious," she cried. "So that is the wonderful who comes here to taunt you! He is meeting with his efforts at last. But see! What a fortunate chance, his face has his face injured somehow, and is forced to wear a bandage. It will conceal your features better than anything else."

"What do you mean?" gasped Don Sebastian. "What—?"
"Oh, my friend! Your voice is really unmusical!"
"You will keep him at bay, I will set about cutting his hair and beard," said Dolores quietly. "There is no time to waste, remember!"

Graydon's left fingers she set to work with the scissors, and Don Sebastian looked on, who rapidly cut Graydon's beard until it was a replica of the Spaniard's. His hair, too, was shorn, and his moustache waxed and dyed. The resemblance was already startling. But probably when Dolores got to work with her make-up box, the Spaniard's features became precisely similar to the prisoner's. It was a clever piece of work, and nobody could have detected the deception.

"Now, then," said Graydon, "the bandage will complete the disguise. He is wearing two—an inner and an outer one. The outer one will be sufficient for me."

"At that moment it was off; in another, Graydon had it soundly round his own head. Then he stepped back, smiled triumphantly, and mimicked the Spaniard's voice to a degree of exactness which was startling.

"Good!" cried Dolores triumphantly. "You have got it exactly. And now, I will bind him. You must be getting up the ship, or they will be wondering what has become of you, a father of your counterpart here."

She felt exultant. Her plan was working with amazing swiftness. Escape was assured now, for nobody on the ship could possibly detect the exchange. It had been done so quickly, and so effectively that even she found it hard to believe upon Graydon as himself.

"Before we bind him, I have a few questions to ask," said the counterfeit Don Sebastian coolly. "It is very important that I should have them answered, so please give him to me."

"You will get nothing out of me!" snarled the beaten Spaniard, in a furious voice. "By Heaven, you don't think you can escape, do you? You fool, you will be detected immediately! See here, if you will give this mad scheme up, I will allow you to escape."

"But, my friend! Don't be absurd. You know well enough I shall escape without your help. Now, look here—"

"I shall answer no questions!"

"I imagine you will," exclaimed Graydon sharply. "Now, then, tell me what your instructions are—what you intended doing when you departed from here."

"It was to make for Australia, and—"

"That is a lie! The truth, I said, and the truth I want to know, what were your instructions? Tell me exactly, everything, and be quick!"

Graydon's hand fell upon Don Sebastian's shoulder, and gripped it tightly. Once more the Spaniard felt that shiver race down his spine. Graydon's eyes were like live coals again. They burnt into his very soul, and in vain he tried to utter a lie. Somehow, against his will, he began telling Graydon everything, including the stoppage at Rio, and the business connected with John Fraser, the traitor. The words poured out of his mouth as if drawn. They were drawn, in fact, although he used all his will-power to stop their flow. But it was no use; Graydon's mysterious power was too strong, too much for him. He could not resist the feeling to tell everything that he was told.

Dolores watched in awe-struck astonishment. She knew that Graydon was a marvellous individual, but she had never dreamed that his will was so strong that he could absolutely force another man to do something he wished not to do. For

it was not hypnotism, it was sheer will-power. He could do as he liked almost. It was uncanny to see the two facing one another, Don Sebastian speaking words he was trying to keep back the whole while, and Graydon standing motionless, every now and again putting a sharp interrogation.

"And that is all!" he said at last. "Quite an interesting account, Sebastian. Now, if you please, Miss Dolores, will you bind him up? I promise you he won't move."

Still helpless, the prisoner was deftly secured by the stout rope Dolores had brought. That done, she gagged him securely, then rose to her feet. "He lay like a log now, completely defeated. His violent rage suddenly deserted him, and left only a craven fear. What were they going to do to him?"

"Now," said Graydon briskly, "it is time I was off. I have been away from the ship too long as it is. They will be wondering what has become of me."

"Yes, you must be off," she replied, flushed and excited. "Oh, I believe everything is going to turn out all right! Only do be careful."

"Please make your mind easy on that score," he said, looking straight into her anxious eyes. "Nobody shall know that I am an impostor. It will be simple to masquerade as Don Sebastian, and this bandage makes it doubly easy. But he cannot be left here. The sailors will be coming presently to remove the gold from the storerooms. For the same being he can be placed by your tent. Then, when I am gone—"

"I shall look after him," she said grimly. "But be quick! I am fearful all the time lest one of the men should come."

Graydon stooped down, and lifted the bound prisoner as if he had been a baby. With seemingly no effort, he carried him swiftly up the pathway to Dolores' tent. Unconsciously he deposited him on the ground, drew himself up straight, and looked at Dolores, who had followed close behind. There was no time for more than a very few words. The task he was to undertake was a heavy one, and he fully realised the importance of getting back to the ship.

"Miss Dolores," he said quietly, and grasping her hand, "your scheme is going to liberate us both. Of that I feel confident. But I don't care for the idea of your being left alone with this scoundrel."

"I shall be all right," she said eagerly. "He is completely defeated, and it will do him no good to harm me. Besides, I have the revolver. All I ask is for you to be back as quickly as possible."

"I shall be here again at the very earliest opportunity," he said earnestly. "Look out for me, and take care of yourself. If anything has happened to you during my absence, I shall never forgive myself."

"You'll find me safe and sound. Good-bye, Mr. Graydon, and remember, I shall help you all in my power when we reach England!"

They gripped hands tightly, and for a moment stood looking into one another's eyes earnestly. They were good friends, these two, and were destined to pass through many adventures together.

"Good-bye," he said quietly, "and don't forget when I return that I shall be Graydon no longer, but Frank Kingston!"

(Next Thursday's chapters will tell of Frank Kingston's thrilling adventures, disguised as Don Sebastian, and his return to the Iron Island. Frank Kingston also makes his first decisive move against the formidable Brotherhook.)

FOR NEXT WEEK!

"THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB,"

A splendid, long, complete tale of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"THE IRON ISLAND,"

Another long instalment of this powerful and enthralling Adventure story.

By ROBERT W. COMRADE.

"IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING."

Further chapters of this thrilling sea story.

By LIEUTENANT LEFEVRE.

Order in Advance. Usual Size—Usual Price.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB." A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Third Long, Complete Story contained in this issue.

TRUE TO HIS COUNTRY



A Magnificent,
Long, Complete Tale,
dealing with the
Thrilling Adventures
of a patriotic young
Britisher.

Written for the
Christmas Double Number
of "The Gem" Library
by an ex-lieutenant of His
Majesty's Navy.

CHAPTER 1.

Queer Chums—The Secret Worker—The Strange Light
on the Wall—Tracked Out—"Jack English, Traitor!"

"YOU will be true to me, Joe? If you fail me—"
"If the moon turns into green cheese, and St. Paul's goes for a walk! It isn't my style to crow; but Extra Special Joe—that's me—never turned on a friend, and he isn't going to start now. You au' me have promised to stand by each other; leastways, I rather thought we had, Mr. Jack."

The first speech came in tones so subdued that they scarcely sounded above a whisper, while they yet quivered with a tense, even a fierce earnestness. The second speech was in a boyish voice, rough and ready, and full of an indignant, remonstrating note.

The two speakers were standing in a cellar, which was so far underground that not a sound was to be heard in it except the echo of their own voices; although Oxford Street, one of the busiest of London's thoroughfares, with all its rush and roar of traffic and hurrying pedestrians, was almost exactly above them.

The sole illumination in the cellar came from the red glow of a furnace; but this was built so low down that most of the light fell on the floor, and left nearly all the rest of the cellar in obscurity.

Yet it was enough to show that the cellar was furnished half like a living-room and half like a workshop. The walls were nearly hidden by strange-looking pieces of metalwork, hanging from hooks and nails. There was a lathe and a carpenter's bench on one side, and in the centre of the brick floor was a second bench, but this was of wrought iron instead of wood, and was covered with a number of moulds, dies, and tools. In a corner was a narrow, iron bedstead, covered by a coarse rug.

Was the cellar a coiner's den?

At first glance any stranger might easily have taken it for one. Amongst the objects on the iron bench were things which glittered; but a closer examination would have shown that these were of steel, and were evidently intended to form parts of some invention.

The first of the two speakers appeared to be a very old man, shabbily dressed, and with a stooping figure, long grey hair, and a beard reaching nearly to his waist.

The second speaker who had answered so promptly was a London street boy, whose only home had been the slums and gutters of the Great City. His clothes were rags, and he was half-starved; but there was an expression of perkiness and self-confidence in his sharp features, while loyalty and shrewdness twinkled in his small eyes. The way he carried himself suggested that it would be unsafe for anyone to attempt to "put on" him.

He had a bundle of newspapers tucked under his arm.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEW
THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in
Advance.

Before the street boy had finished what he had intended to say the old man hastily placed a hand over his mouth.

"Do not speak so loudly, Joe," he whispered; "and do not repeat my name. It is one that will do me no good if those who are seeking me hear it. You know what you promised to call me?"

"Guv'nor!"

"That's it. I am sorry I said anything to make you suppose I could distrust you. I do not, indeed, Joe. I have proved that by allowing you to see this place, where I live and work in secret."

He indicated the cellar with a swift movement of his head, as he added:

"My life would not be safe if you betrayed what you knew about me."

"If you ain't going to be in danger till I lets out something, you'll live for a jolly long time, guv'nor," rejoined Joe confidently. "Wild horses sha'n't drag nothing out of me, and I'll stick to you till the good times comes along when everyone will know you're innocent and you'll get justice. I'd walk round London barefoot for a dozen years if I could only make the time hurry up for your sake."

"I believe it, Joe," the other answered huskily. "I hope you will be rewarded some day for being so true to me, and I should be a coward if I despaired while I have such a true friend as you. But sometimes I cannot help wondering how it is all going to end."

He glanced round the cellar as if he were in prison. His companion was anxious to divert his thoughts into a new channel.

"How's the big work going on, guv'nor? Can I see?"

The old man hesitated, and looked about the cellar with increased uneasiness. The door was locked and bolted from the inside; and it was a strange thing that, while the door itself was so like the home of someone sunk in deep poverty, the door was strengthened by sheets of iron riveted to the woodwork, and was little less powerful than that of a strong-room of a bank.

No thieves or enemies could have forced it open without resorting to the use of explosives.

Finally, after that hesitating pause, the old man went to part of the cellar wall which was ostensibly no different in appearance than all the rest. It was of brickwork, grouted with the smoke from the forge. But when he took a pebble from his coat and thrust its point into a high-invisible hole in the centre of the bricks, there was a sharp, clicking sound, and simultaneously a portion of the wall, about two feet square, swung out. It consisted of a door, cleverly constructed to pass as a part of the wall, and mounted on a pivot. It had covered a hole in the wall in which was a metal-box, ribbed round with steel bars and fastened with a couple of strong padlocks.

The old man unlocked the box, and from it lifted something which looked very strange in the dim-lit cellar.

It was the model of a cannon, fashioned in glittering steel. It had an unusually long breech, and, though it was small and comparatively light, it presented a curiously-deadly aspect when it was set on the work-bench.

"Crates!" murmured the street boy. "It's a beauty! How much would those foreign War Offices give for it, guv'nor—how many millions?"

The old man smiled slightly as he handled the gun. It was but a model, yet even as a model it was not finished yet. But it was beautifully designed, and a naval expert would have told at a glance that it embodied some wonderful improvements, which, if they could be perfected in the finished weapon, would be certain to produce a gun which would revolutionise naval warfare and give a tremendous advantage to the fleet possessing it.

But how came this model to be hidden in the cellar, and why were the man and the boy who alone appeared to know of its existence?

"The questions will soon be answered. You don't think it matters what the foreigners would offer, as they are not going to have the chance of buying," the old man replied. "I hope to get on fast with my work now, guv'nor, and finish the model soon. Then—"

He paused abruptly. He had been speaking to his companion in so unobtrusive a whisper that he knew it was impossible for anyone outside the cellar to hear him. It was not, therefore, any dread of being overheard which troubled him. It was something as startling as it was unexpected.

When he had taken the model from its hiding-place the dull red glow from the forge had given the sole illumination in the cellar; but as he was speaking to Joe, a faint, quivering mass of light shone on the wall near the door. It vanished instantly as he stopped speaking.

"Did you see that, Joe?" he whispered. "Answer softly or someone should hear you."

"There's somebody watching, guv'nor!" whispered the boy excitedly. "But he's not near the door, or the light would have been on the other side of the cellar. If there's a spy anywhere near, I'll see if I can't mark him!"

As he spoke, Joe took from under his ragged jacket, a small packet of pepper. Pouring some of this into the palm of his hand he threw it against the wall opposite to where the mass of yellow light had shone. It spread all over the grimed surface.

"That's myenne," whispered Joe. "And if there's a spy anywhere on that side of the wall, he ought to be able to give me some account about its quality!"

There was no sound to tell if the pepper had been thrown for any purpose. But the newsboy did not waste any time in waiting. Lighting a stump of candle, he went close to the pepper-covered wall.

"Take the model away, guv'nor, and then open the door," he whispered.

Whether did so, taking it for granted that the quick-witted little chap knew what he was talking about. Outside the cellar door was a dark, low passage. The street boy stepped cautiously along this, holding the candle above his head so that the light flashed on to the brick wall. There was an expression of keenness and suspicion on the boy's sharp features, which made him resemble a terrier. There was no sound in the passage; but Joe's eyes scanned every inch of every dab of mortar.

"See there?" Joe had stopped suddenly, and with his hand which was holding the candle he pointed to the wall. The old man was some behind him, and followed the direction of his outstretched finger.

To an ordinary eye there would have been nothing to attract attention, but the eyes of the street boy and his companion were of the keenest, and the light of the candle revealed to them that the mortar in one part of the wall had disintegrated from the interstices between the bricks in several places, and in such a manner, that they indicated four lines in the wall, which, joined together, formed a square.

"In your eye, guv'nor?" whispered Joe, his eyes glittering with excitement.

The old man nodded, and, taking from his pocket a clasp which such as sailors carry, he forced it between two of the bricks where the mortar was lacking, as far as it would go, and pressed it from side to side. Nothing happened at the first experiment, but he repeated it in different parts of the square.

Suddenly there was a sharp sound, to tell of the release of the mortar, and the square in the wall swung out so quickly and so far that they had to jump aside to avoid being struck. The square was as clever a secret door as that which covered the entrance of the model. It was several feet above the level of the passage, and only large enough for a man to squeeze through it. Joe would have gone first with the candle, but the old man took the light from him and went

first to confront any danger that might be waiting beyond. The boy wriggled after him.

They were in a second cellar, smaller than the one they had just quitted. It was quite empty, except that on the floor was stretched the figure of a man.

He was lying on his back, with his arms thrown out on either side of him. His eyes were wide open, but they were glassy, and seemed to stare up without seeing anything. His face, as the candlelight shone on it, was ghastly and pallid.

He was a tall, bony man, with a face so sharp and cunning as to suggest some bird of prey. He wore a rusty-black suit, such as might have been worn by an out-of-work clerk, and a pair of black gloves were on his hands, and a shabby sliohat had rolled away from him into a corner. His hands were tightly clenched, and he looked as if he had fallen in a fit.

Was he dead? It might almost have been thought so. But Joe, pointing to the wall on the right-hand side, nodded significantly. Through the wall had been drilled a hole, no larger than a thick needle could have penetrated. It would have been invisible, in fact, had not the glow of the forge on the other side shone through it.

Then the boy pointed down at the motionless man. "Look at his eyes!" he said. "He is spying! He's a villain, guv'nor!"

There were flecks of pepper about the man's eyes. But the man on the floor never moved when the street boy denounced him. Not the shadow of an expression flickered across his face. He continued to lie there, motionless, with his hands clenched and his glassy eyes staring vacantly.

He looked so forbidding and sinister that most people would have hesitated to touch him. But the old man knelt down, and thrust his hand under his coat and shirt to feel his heart. He could distinguish no beating, and the skin felt cold and clammy. Yet, if the evidence of the flecks of pepper was to be relied on, the man had been standing close against the wall less than a minute or so before.

"He is not dead, but is playing us some horrible trick, I'm positive!" the old man said between his teeth. "Give me the pepper, Joe!"

The boy handed him the packet, which was still more than half full. The old man dropped several grains into the wide-open, staring eyes. For an instant the cadaverous face did not change, and not a muscle quivered. But it was for an instant only.

Then a spasm, full of baffled anger, passed over the cadaverous face, and the glassy eyes glared with savage passion. With a swiftness that had something tigerish in it, the man on the floor rose to a crouching position; and, seizing the old man, dragged him down.

The old man? No! There was no old man in the cellar. As he went down and grappled with the man in black, the false hair and wig he had been wearing fell from Joe's companion.

He was a young man, with a face which, despite that it was worn and haggard, and that its expression was the fierce, tense one of a man who knew that he was being hunted for his life, was daring and resolute. It was the typical face of an officer in the British Navy.

"Let me go!" snarled the man in black in English, but with a foreign accent. "Let me go, or it will be the worse for you! You think you've got me, don't you? It is I who have got you, Jack English—traitor!"

CHAPTER 2.

At the Bidding of an Enemy—Aboard the Mysterious Yacht off Gravesend—What the Man with the Twisted Foot had to say—A Solitary Life Against the Empire's Safety.

AS he heard his own name—the name he had told Joe, it would be as much as his life was worth for his enemies to hear—uttered by the man in black in tones of savage mockery and menace, Jack English wrenched himself free, and, springing to his feet, glanced hastily towards the door of the secret cellar in dread lest someone should have heard what had been said.

He need not have troubled, however. The name had been uttered only in a strangled, half-choked tone, and as his companion had been dragged down Joe had closed the door with such celerity that not a sound had escaped from the secret cell.

Then the street boy would have gone to Jack's assistance, but the struggle was over before he could do anything.

Jack English gazed down at the man on the floor, who made no immediate attempt to get up.

"You spy!" the young fellow said. "I guess in whose pay you are. How did you discover that I was in this place? Only the owner of the house above knew that I was

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 145.

hero, apart from the boy; and he has cause to be grateful and true to me."

The man in black gave a harsh, jeering laugh. "It does not matter to you how I found you out, Jack English," he replied. "I have done so; and I do not suppose there is any necessity for me to explain why I ordered me to find you. The man who is your master—"

Jack English flushed hotly. "No man is my master!" he broke in. "I—"

But then he stopped, checked by another jarring laugh from the man in black, who said:

"I have no more time to waste in talk. I was given my orders before I came here, and I must obey them, and so must you. I was ordered, if I found you, to tell you that you must go with me to the man who sent me to find you; or, if you refuse—"

He paused, a cruel smile on his cadaverous face. "If I refuse?" demanded Jack.

"He was very pale, but there was no sign of craven fear about him.

The man in black answered deliberately: "Then another hour or less will see you in the hands of the police, with nothing but a traitor's shameful death to look forward to. You cannot escape. You are like a rat in a trap!"

Up to now less than five minutes had elapsed since Jack English and his companion had found the man in black lying on the floor.

In going down and grappling with his enemy, Jack had dropped the stump of candle, which, however, had remained alight when it fell to the floor, and had been picked up by Joe, who was now holding it in his left hand free for action.

The street waif was standing close behind Jack English, and as the man in black uttered his threat he made a sudden movement.

"It's a lie!" he said. "My guv'nor's not trapped, and never will be by such a sneak as you!"

He would have flung himself bodily on the man, but his companion got hold of his shoulder just in time to hold him back.

"Be quiet, Joe!" Jack English ordered sternly.

The waif wriggled round, and looked at him reproachfully and wonderingly.

"I was only trying to back you up, guv'nor, same as I told you I would," he returned sulkily.

"I know it," Jack English said, "and I am grateful to you for your intention, Joe; but you also promised to do just as I told you, and you must do it now. Perhaps later on you may be able to help me, but at present you cannot. This man is speaking the truth. I am in a trap, and I must go with him."

His tone was low and suppressed, and his eyes gleamed strangely. His hands were clenched, and he held them behind him, as if afraid of being tempted to use them.

Was he a coward? Was he so cowed by a mere threat that he dared not defy the man who had acted as spy on him?

The man in black thought so, at all events, and an ugly smile of malicious triumph flickered across his pallid features.

But Joe, after barely an instant of blank dismay and doubtfulness knew better.

Jack English was no coward, but at the present crisis of his life he was confronted by a dilemma which would have been too much for many men whom no one could have called cowards.

It was a dilemma of peril and difficulty, and on its solution depended not merely the safety of Jack English himself, but the safety, perhaps even the existence, of the British Empire. And, for the sake of the Empire, Jack was willing to sacrifice his life.

It was because of this, and not through any craven fear of what might happen to himself, that he felt he must go with the man in black.

"I must go with him, Joe," he said to the street boy. "I do not know when I shall come back, but here are all the keys of this place. I leave you in charge, to guard everything for me—everything, you understand?"

He was alluding to the hidden model of the gun, though he did not mention it to the man in black.

Joe understood his meaning perfectly. "I'll hold on here like—like cement! You can trust me. But I'd a jolly deal rather go with you, and be in it along with you if you're going to be in trouble."

Jack shook his head.

"You can't go, Joe; and you will be far more use to me by remaining here and guarding everything for me. I trust you, as I could trust no one else in the world!"

The boy flushed with pride as he closely clutched the bunch of keys which the man whom he had chosen for his leader gave to him.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order by Adver.

Order by Adver.

Order by Adver.

Order by Adver.

Order by Adver.

Order by Adver.

The strange scene in the cellar did not last for many seconds longer.

Jack quickly resumed his disguise, and then, going back into the other cellar, put on a long, heavy overcoat and a broad-brimmed felt hat, which almost wholly concealed his face.

Then he curtly signified to the man in black that he was ready.

Leaving Joe in the cellar, Jack and his sinister companion went up the cellar steps, until they came to a strong wooden door, which was sheathed with strips of iron. It was locked from the other side.

The man in black rapped on it sharply three separate times, with a distinct pause between each rap. After a short interval it was opened, and a man carrying a candle appeared on the last steps of a second flight of stairs.

He was a thin man, with an extraordinarily long face and big, prominent eyes, and he had a mass of fiery red hair which seemed to give him an aspect of perpetual terror, since it stood up on the top of his head in spikes.

He was trembling so much that the grease dropped from the shaking candle in his grasp, and hastily turned aside his face, so that he might avoid the reproachful gaze which Jack English fixed upon him.

"I thought I could trust you, Bolter!" Jack said. "Are you now have betrayed me, and let this spy in on me, to watch me, and do all he can to drag me into danger, perhaps to my death! Is the world full of traitors?"

The man flushed a dull red.

"I'm—I'm sorry!" he stammered. "I didn't want to do it, sir; I swear I wanted to be true to you, but I couldn't help myself! He forced me to be a liar and a traitor! I'd like to kill him!"

He turned fiercely on the man in black, who said nothing, but only smiled in a sneering way.

"Well, the mischief is done now, and there's no good call to be served by talking about it," Jack said quietly. "I'm going away from here, Bolter, and I do not know when I shall come back. But I am leaving Joe Ferret in charge of my place downstairs, and I should advise you to leave him alone."

Without waiting for the man's answer, he went up the second flight of stairs, following the man in black. He came to a door at the top, which led into a small kitchen, and from this door at the top a passage led to a door leading into a side street. This door was at the corner of a small, dingy tobacconist's shop, and Oxford Street was within a stone's throw distant.

It was night-time, and that the hour was late was proved by the fact that all the ordinary traffic in the street had ceased, and that only omnibuses, taxi-cabs, horse-cabs, and hansom were whizzing along. Not very many pedestrians were on the sidewalks.

They went into Oxford Street together, and the man in black hailed a passing taxi-cab, the driver of which stopped rather doubtfully when he heard where he was expected to drive to.

"Babington Street, Linehouse!" repeated the man in black with a snarl. "Do you not know the way, or are you afraid that you will not be paid? Here, take up the fare, drive fast, and remember that there is more than one of you if you waste no time."

He thrust a couple of sovereigns into the chauffeur's hand, and then, dragging Jack English after him, jumped into the taxi-cab, which at once started.

The chauffeur intended to earn the promised price, and used as much haste as he dared. He exceeded the normal limit in the more deserted streets, and once whizzed round a corner at a rate which almost sent the taxi over the top of the side.

All through the long drive Jack and his companion did not exchange a solitary word. The man in black sat stiff and motionless, with the sneering smile still visible on his features.

The young fellow opposite to him knew perfectly well that it would be waste of breath on his part to seek for any information from the living sphinx who was his companion.

The man who would answer questions, and who he had decided what the fate of Jack English was to be, was now for him down the Thames, over which the black steamers at night were now drifting like a sombre pall, to land, and sorrow and the crime which flow at night on and beneath its murky waters.

The cab stopped at last, and the chauffeur opened the door.

"Very sorry, sir," he said, "but I'm afraid I can't take you quite to where you want to go. It seems that Babington Street is low down by the river, and the only way to get it is through narrow alleys which I can't get the taxi into, they're full of such sharp turnings."

The man in black snarled again, but he was compelled to acquiesce for the money he had promised, and then, taking the cash from the arm, drew him into the network of dark, twisting streets, which were so confusing that even a person, knowing they would have been a labyrinth to anyone not absolutely familiar with them.

But now, though it was so pitchy dark that even the gas-lamp which appeared here and there did no more than cast a scarcely visible flicker of light, the man in black did not seem to care for a moment. He moved forward with a step so light and stealthy, that he might have been an evil spirit led on a wicked and cruel errand.

The thought came to Jack, who shuddered involuntarily, and instinctively sought to put as much space as possible between himself and his companion, but the man in black tightened the hold of his bony, clammy hand. "If we are detected, I shall find it hard work to find you again." "You do not suppose I could find me at all?" retorted Jack. "You do not suppose I would go with you to all if I did not wish to see the man who sent you to me? If I wished to escape from you—"

"Yes, it, and see if the best hiding-place in the world could conceal you from me!" retorted the other. "I found you in the cellar, and I could find you anywhere!"

Jack English made no reply. They went on together, the man in black still never hesitating in all the devious windings, and at last they stopped. Then Jack's conductor struck a match, the flame of which showed they were standing outside the high, wooden gates of a wharf. These gates the man in black unlocked with a key he took from his pocket.

The wharf, as revealed by another match, was old and deserted, and entirely deserted except for the new-comers. The strange guide went close to the edge of the wharf, upon which the river was flowing, sluggish and murky, and whispered softly. Instantly he was answered by another voice, and a boat, rowed by a solitary man, glided up to the wharf. Obeying a sign from his companion, Jack English stepped into it, his swimming from the wharf with his hands, and the man in black followed. The boat was pulled out into the middle of the stream.

It had been dark in the narrow streets, it was like a vault of impenetrable blackness now. A thick mist was floating over the river, and nothing was visible. But the man in black steered the boat apparently without an effort, and presently whistled again.

Jack answered this time, not by any sound, but by the flash of the lantern, which it was evident someone was swinging round in a circle. The light was so faint as to be hardly distinguishable, yet the steersman saw it, and made directly for it. In a couple of minutes the boat glided alongside a larger and much larger boat, in which were three men.

Jack obeying his companion, Jack English clambered from the smaller boat into the larger one, and the man in black followed. At once the larger boat was pulled off from the main, and the smaller craft was swallowed up in the darkness.

Jack was seated in the stern sheets beside his guide, who had taken the tiller ropes. The light given by the lantern was so dim that at first he could see nothing with anything like distinctness, but as his eyes became more accustomed to the obscurity, he felt a sudden tightening of his heart-strings, and it cost him an effort to stifle a startled cry. He saw, lying in the bottom of the boat, a form, draped round in dirty canvas, and tightly bound with ropes. He felt a doubt that it was the body of a man, though whether dead or dead it was impossible for him to guess.

The figure was motionless, and no sound came from it. Almost unperceptible as Jack's start had been, it had not escaped the detection of the man in black, who at once asked what had caused it.

"I laughed softly, without an echo of mirth, but jarringly. "You have got hold of another worker for the island?"

"Yes, and a good one," one of the rowers replied. "He will be no more than catch to-night, but one new worker is more than nothing."

The man in black laughed again.

"But not the lantern," he said curtly. "We have no light, and it and it may only betray us to interfering fools. I could find my way down the river if I were blind. You must be obeyed, as at once. Though Jack English could not see them, except as fantastic-looking shadows, he felt as by instinct that the three rowers in the boat shrank

from the man in black as he himself had done in the streets, not from something evil and sinister, although they did not dare to question the orders he gave them.

It was a long run down to Gravesend, but the three men were powerful rowers, and they tugged at their oars without intermission. The black pall still hung over the river when the end of the extraordinary midnight expedition came.

No light glimmered through the blackness, nor was any hail given from ahead, but, as though he were independent of the senses of eyesight and hearing on which ordinary people relied, the man in black abruptly pulled the boat half round, and headed as if directly for shore. Simultaneously the rowers relaxed their efforts, and allowed the craft to drift onward. In less time than it takes to tell the boat was alongside a vessel, which was moored in mid-stream off Gravesend, and was completely hidden by the blackness. No light was shown aboard her, and Jack English would have been quite unaware of her proximity had he not heard the boat grate softly against her side.

He felt the bony hand of the man in black touch his own once more.

"Up with you!" came the whispered order.

Groping with his hands, Jack touched a rope ladder, which was dangling from the sides of the invisible craft. With the expertness of a sailor he mounted this, passed over the side, and stood on a firm deck.

Still he could see nothing, and no voice greeted him. He could detect no sound, not even the slightest, to prove that any living men were aboard the mysterious ship.

The effect was almost uncanny.

As Jack English stood motionless on the deck of the unknown vessel, he felt the clammy fingers of the man in black close over his own again, and the sibilant whisper sounded in his ears:

"Come!"

The blood was coursing with feverish heat through the young fellow's veins, but it was with excitement born with the knowledge that a crisis in his life was approaching, and not with fear. His nerves were as steady as steel, and his every sense was on the alert.

He was led across the deck and down a companion hatchway. Then they traversed a narrow passage, also buried in the same darkness which hung over the river and the ship. A door was opened, and Jack was drawn forward. He heard the door close behind him with a snap, and for another second he stood enveloped by blackness.

Then a voice spoke—a soft, smooth, almost purring voice, which, for all its softness and smoothness, had a curiously metallic, pitiless note in it:

"So you are here at last, Jack English—traitor!"

As the words sounded in his ears, Jack was dazzled and nigh blinded by a blaze of light which flooded out. It was the white, cold light of electricity, and, breaking in on the darkness, and dissipating it without warning, was for a full minute unbearable to him.

He put his hand over his eyes to shield them from the sudden glare, and fell back, so that his back was against the door through which he had just passed.

The movement was one simply of self-defence, so that he might guard against a treacherous attack from the rear. Then he dropped his hand, and, raising his head, stared steadily at his surroundings.

He was in a cabin of a ship, though it was hard to believe it. All the woodwork was concealed by hangings of priceless tapestry, and furniture inlaid with gold, silver, and ivory was scattered about, while ornaments of massive gold seemed to meet his gaze in whichever direction he turned.

But he looked at these things only for an instant.

Then his gaze was riveted on the man who had spoken to him. He was a tall man, thin almost to emaciation, and with a face which more resembled a mask of greyish-hued parchment than the features of a living being. It was a lifeless face, with no expression on it, and the man's eyes were so cold, and with such a strange, filmy cement over them, that they resembled glass.

For the rest, the man was dressed in shabby, grey clothes, which contrasted strangely with his garish surroundings, and when he made a step forward it was at once evident that he walked with a limp.

"So you are here at last!" he repeated. "I need not tell you what I want from you. You will consent to give me your gun, finished and perfected, or I will surrender you to the British Admiralty, who will shoot you as the condemned traitor that you are!"

Jack English set his teeth. He knew that the time had come when he must make the choice of his life. He had to choose between imperilling his own life and risking the safety of the British Empire—perchance its existence as the foremost Naval Power of the world.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB." A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

ANSWERS

CHAPTER 3.

The Dark Page from the Past—Bound for an Unknown Goal—The Threatened Liner—A Brave Attempt—Baffled—Like a Ghost from the Sea.

THE words were startling in themselves, and though the man with the limp never altered his soft, smooth tones when he uttered them, they vibrated with the same deadly, pitiless note which had been observable before.

There was not a shadow of doubt that he meant exactly what he said. He believed he had Jack English at his mercy, and that he could consign him to a shameful and violent death whenever he chose, and he intended to use that power unless the young fellow consented to agree to his terms.

Jack had known pretty accurately what would be said to him on the vessel at Gravesend as he had made his strange journey with the man in black. He was not, therefore, taken by surprise, nor were his nerves any more shaken than they had been by what had happened before.

But he had reasons of his own for not betraying anything to his tempter of what he thought or what he intended to do until he was driven to do so.

Jack English was playing a daring game for the sake of the British Empire, and playing it none the less bravely because he knew full well he had not more than one chance in a thousand of carrying out his plan and escaping with his life. If he did escape, it would be by the skin of his teeth.

A year before, Jack English had been a lieutenant in the British Navy—as smart and alert, young officer as ever trod a warship's deck, as daring as he was true, and ready to go anywhere, and risk anything for the Empire's sake.

In addition to being a good officer as far as his ordinary duties were concerned, Jack had been fond of dabbling in inventions. He was possessed of a very real talent in this direction, and his great ambition had been to use all his skill for the benefit of the Fleet and of the Empire.

At last Jack had hit on an idea for a new naval gun of an absolutely unique pattern. If it could be perfected, it was certain to utterly revolutionize naval warfare. The weapon would be so powerful and destructive, and would hurl out most formidable shells so much farther than any previously known weapon that navies armed only with the old guns would be, in comparison, out of date and ineffective.

Jack English had spent all the time when he was free from duty in his efforts to perfect the scheme of his gun. Many a night, instead of sleeping, he had paced the wave-swept deck thinking. But he had not succeeded for a long time. The idea of the gun was magnificent, and he had been able to plan it out, detail by detail—but only up to a certain point.

Then he had been baffled. There had been something lacking in the scheme of the gun. It was only a solitary detail, which might be hit on in a minute; but for a long time it had baffled Jack, eluding him despite all his efforts to hit on it.

With this finishing detail the cannon would be perfect, and worth any price to the nation who possessed it. Without this finishing detail it would be useless, and worth no more than scrap-iron.

Though Jack had been baffled, he had never for an instant thought of giving up his task in despair. There had been too much of the naval bulldog, never-say-die bred about him for that. He had simply gone on working and trying. And the time he had been doing this, Jack had been literally haunted by the man with the limp. It had been a strange, almost an unceasing sensation.

As far as he knew, Jack English had no relations in the world; he had never seen his father nor anyone else who claimed kinship with him. He had been brought up by a strange guardian, who had refused to tell him about himself. After his education was finished, he had passed into the Navy as a midshipman. After that he had worked his own way up, step by step, knowing that it depended entirely on himself whether his career was a good one or a bad one.

One thing had perplexed and disturbed him. It had been of such a nature that it might well have shaken his nerves had they not been of the strongest.

It had begun when Jack was at school. One winter's afternoon when he had been coming home alone from a paper-chase, he had seen a man's figure skulking near the great entrance gates. The light had been too dim for him to make out the figure distinctly, but as the man had moved away hastily, Jack had been sure that he was walking with a limp, though the light had not prevented him from moving fast.

A year afterwards, while still at school, Jack had seen the man with the limp under precisely similar circumstances. Again the man had made off hastily—so hastily that the pursuit had been impossible, even had Jack been disposed to follow him. He had not spoken a word.

Then Jack had not seen him again for several years—not

for certain, at all events; though once when in London on a holiday he had thought that a strange figure was limping after him in the Strand. But when he had turned round sharply, he had failed to detect anyone with a limp in the hurrying crowd.

His very first cruise had taken Jack to Alexandria, and on the very day before landing he came face to face with the mysterious stranger, who was standing on the jetty alone. Jack had been struck by the man's extraordinary appearance and deathlike pallor, and had been also inspired by a sensation of repulsion and distrust, such as no human being had awakened in him before.

But his nerve had not failed him, and he had gone forward resolutely.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Why do you follow me? What do you want with me?"

The man with the limp had made no reply. His inscrutable expression implied that he had not heard the question, though Jack was certain that he must have done so. He had simply turned and limped off, and the midshipman had been left helpless.

The next time Jack had seen him had been at Cape Town. Then they had met again at Bombay, and after another long interval, at Sydney.

Jack had become convinced that the man with the limp was following him about the world, dogging him, in fact, keeping watch. He knew simply nothing about him, nor even his name. And what object could he have for persisting in such an extraordinary course? That was more than the young naval officer had succeeded in finding out.

All Jack's efforts to force the man with the limp to speak to him and explain the enigma had been failures. He had vanished as soon as he had appeared; now meeting Jack in one remote part of the world, and then in another, thousands of miles away, but never uttering a word.

This had gone on for years, and then something happened which had, for the time at least, caused the young fellow to forget even the sinister man with the limp.

Jack's ship, the Hercules, had been sent to Delagoa Bay under sealed orders. It had been believed by many on board that the object of the voyage was to checkmate an attempt on the part of a foreign nation to acquire a hold on the Portuguese port for which would have been disastrous to the interests of Britain in South Africa.

The captain's instructions had been not to open his eyes until the cruiser's arrival at Delagoa Bay, and he had accordingly had followed a startling surprise. The sealed orders had been stolen from the captain's cabin, together with a book of secret signal-codes for use in war! The identity of the thief had remained a mystery for days. Then, in a drinking saloon in Delagoa, a man had been found, stabbed in the breast, and apparently dying.

When the police had been brought, the man had sworn that his name was Ambrose Brink, and he had sworn that he had brought the stolen sealed orders and signal-book from the man who had stolen them from the Hercules, with the intention of selling them at a profit, to an enemy of Great Britain. He had also sworn that the thief had tried to murder him because they had rebelled over the price of the stolen articles. He had sworn that the thief was Jack English, and no other.

In vain Jack had passionately protested his innocence, in support of his story, Ambrose Brink had given up the sealed orders and the signal-book, and had provided a letter signed by Jack stating that he had stolen them, and offering to swear them; he had also brought forward three witnesses who had sworn that they had seen Jack hand over the code-book and the sealed orders to Brink.

At the court-martial Jack declared the letter to be a forgery, but experts had pronounced it to be in his handwriting. The evidence had been held to be overwhelming against him, and he had been found guilty, and sentenced to death as a traitor to the Empire.

A traitor to his Empire! The brand of shame implied in the words had hurt Jack English far more than the sentence. They had been far harder to bear than the danger of death. He was innocent, and was ready and eager to risk with his life for his King and country, and yet he was regarded as worse and meaner than an ordinary felon—a scoundrel who had been waiting to sell both King and Empire for gold.

Though Jack had been condemned, many of his boat officers, and practically all the crew "twen decks, had refused to believe in his guilt. To them he was "Lucky Jack"—loyal to the Empire and his comrades alike, and capable of doing anything vile.

At dead of night, within a few hours of the time that his execution, friends on board the cruiser had given him the chance to seize off his irons and escape from his cell. But he could be seized he had jumped overboard into the water. Delagoa Bay.

He had sunk at once, and purposely, and in the

it had been impossible for either of the search-boats to see anything of him when he came to the surface. However, he managed to reach land, and then found himself ashore in South Africa, penniless and an outcast.

It would take far too long to detail all his adventures after that, nor is there any necessity to do so. He had evaded death, and, refusing to be daunted by difficulties or hardships, he had eventually found his way to the Rand. There he met with such good luck that fortune had been within his grasp. The prospect of becoming rich did not tempt him. His great object was to return to England and perfect the cannon. In all his troubles he had never forgotten the gun which was to mean so much for the Empire. If he could only find it while working on the Rand, he believed that he had hit on the all-essential missing detail.

So Jack returned to London, bringing with him the money he had earned. He had made himself known to no one except the man who kept the shop off Oxford Street. In the meantime Jack had befriended Bolter, and he had thought it well to trust him, and lived the secret caller from him, and then worked on his model day and night, with the hurrying, hurrying crowds of people so near him overhead, and yet without suspecting his hiding-place.

At first Jack had worked alone, but after a time he found a friend and an ally in Joe, the street waf, who was called "Special Joe." Jack had sometimes got out in his queerly arranged disguise, and one miserable, pitiless night he had found the boy huddled up in a doorway, nearly senseless and literally dying of starvation. He had hurried him to the cellar and been kind to him, and the boy, as hard as he was a London sparrow, had soon recovered. He had named himself so grateful and loyal that Jack had at last thought it safe to trust him.

The time had slipped by, and Jack had worked with feverish anxiety anxious to perfect his model before he lost his liberty again. Not one thought had been for himself as he worked in the night. His only wish had been to perfect his work so that the Empire should be powerful and great—invincible against all foes. And at last he succeeded.

He had finished the model, all but the one last, essential detail, and he had known what this detail was to be. He had been on the point of fitting it in, when Joe and he had discovered the man in black, playing the part of spy in the cellar.

The man in black was Ambrose Brink, who had brought up the false accusation against Jack English at Salisbury Bay.

Jack had recovered from his wound, and, after the court-martial, had tried a secretive and hurried departure from the city. Jack had not known whether he had gone, but an officer had told him that they would meet again. The same officer had led him to guess that Brink was taking him to a place where he might meet the man with the limp. Jack had not had time to tell how or why he had anticipated this. It had not been one of those guesses which are like intuition, and none to all of us now and then.

He had become convinced that the man who had dogged him around the world had not done so without a purpose, and he had been sure that this purpose was not a good one. He had considered if his nameless pursuer could have any share in the honoring against him of the false accusation of being a traitor to the Empire.

Jack had not consented to famely accompany Brink to the desert because he was afraid of anything that might happen to himself if he refused to do so. It was the instinct of a man that he was to be taken to the man with the limp that had caused him to go so quietly. If he could only come face to face with the man of mystery, he had told himself, he would have at least a chance of solving more than one of his puzzles.

The strange man expected that Jack would betray any weakness or fear upon hearing his threatening demand, he had thought. The young lieutenant looked him squarely in the eyes.

"What is my sin you want?" Jack said quietly. "Why would you want it to be?"

"That is my own concern," the other replied, with the same calm as before. "I do not intend to explain, because I should do you no good to know, and I do not believe in explaining myself. It is enough for you that I want the cannon that I want it perfected. The price I offer you for it is your freedom."

"Supposing," said Jack coolly, "before we go any further, you tell me who you are, and why you have dogged me all these years?"

"You can call me Clement Graves if you like," the other answered; "but as to why I dogged you, as you put it, is a matter I intend to keep to myself, for the present, at all events. The main point is the cannon. I know that the matter is worthless as it is now. I have seen it—"

"You have seen it?" echoed Jack. "Where?"

"On board this yacht, the Siren," answered Clement Graves coolly. "Do you suppose I was going to leave it in the cellar while you came here? Look, Jack English, I will tell you this much. I have kept watch on you for years, and not I alone, but many others. I have more spies than you could count—spies everywhere. Many of them at different times and at different places have kept watch on you. They found out that you were working on the cannon, and brought news to me. When you were in South Africa I never lost trace of you for a day. When you returned to London you were followed. My best spy discovered your hiding-place beneath Oxford Street, and bribed the man to allow him to watch you through the hole in the cellar wall. He watched you for days though you never suspected it. He learnt enough to be sure that you could put the finishing touch to the model of the cannon whenever you liked, though he failed to discover what that missing detail is."

Jack drew a deep breath. Brave as he was, he almost shrank as he looked into the cold, cruel, calculating eyes of the man who was speaking to him—eyes which seemed to see everything and betrayed nothing.

"He was certain that behind Clement Graves was a secret power potent for evil. The man spoke like one who had but to will a thing to have it come to pass. But there was one thing Jack intended he should never find out.

"The secret of the cannon is my own," the young sailor said firmly, "and I intend to keep it."

"Even if I give you up to those who are hunting for you if you refuse to obey me?"

"Yes."

"Why will you not give up the secret?"

"Because I believe you want to sell the cannon to an enemy of Great Britain," Jack replied. "And I would rather die a hundred times than help you to deal a foul blow against the Navy of the Empire."

"You fool!" Clement Graves said. He did not speak with any anger, but with a passionless scorn which was more than any outburst of rage. "What is the British Empire to you that you should throw away your life and die a traitor's death to secure it? It has disgraced and sentenced you to death; it has made you an outcast, robbed you of all life. Even if you give your cannon to the British Admiralty, you are not certain that you would be rewarded. But you never will give it to the Admiralty; you are in my power, and if you will not agree with my terms you will never regain your freedom. On the other hand, if you do as I ask, I will make you rich for life. I have the power to do that, as I will prove to you presently. I ask you again, what is the British Empire to you?"

Jack English drew himself up stiffly, as he had often done on the quarter-deck while sailing the flag.

"It's the Empire," he answered; "it's the Empire for which I'll live and die, and to which I'll be true as long as there's blood in my body. That's all I've to say to you, Clement Graves. But as to whether I'm as completely in your power as you boast, that's got to be proved."

With the last words Jack sprang on the man with the limp. He intended to seize him by the throat and make a fight for liberty. Clement Graves did not recede an inch or make the slightest motion to defend himself, but before he could reach his enemy the lieutenant found himself helpless.

Graves had raised no cry for help, nor given any signal that he needed any; but no sooner had Jack English sprang forward than two men entered the cabin, swiftly and noiselessly. Both were men of gigantic stature, dressed as sailors; one was a yellow-skinned Mongolian, the other a negro.

Before Jack could turn on them they had seized him. He had no time to make a real struggle before a rope, formed in a slip-noose, was thrown over his shoulders and drawn tight. He was powerless and stood a helpless prisoner before his enemy, who regarded him with a mocking smile.

"I have given you a chance of life—a fortune, Jack English," he said, "and you have defied me. I tell you had any other man dared to do as much as that on the Siren, the world of the living would never have seen him again. But you are a fool and obstinate. When I ask you to agree to my terms for the second time, you may have found sense, and be willing to give me a different answer. Take him away."

The answer was given, not to the pair who had seized Jack, but to Joseph Brink, who had suddenly appeared at the door of the cabin. He glided behind Jack, and threw a heavy shawl over his head, drawing it tightly over his eyes and mouth, so that he was deprived of sight and gagged simultaneously. Then Jack was dragged away.

Whither?

All that he could be sure of was that it was down a steep unknown way. He saw nothing of the yacht. He only heard a door open, felt himself thrust forward, so roughly that he lost his balance and fell on his knees, and heard the door close to the accompaniment of grating bolts.

He was a prisoner on board the Siren. The yacht was in a British port within sight of London, yet Jack English was absolutely at the mercy of a man who, for aught he knew to the contrary, was an outlaw of the ocean, or even something worse.

"All the same," Jack informed himself, "while there's life there's hope; and I don't think that Clement Graves will kill me just yet, though he no doubt intends to give me as rough a time as he can."

Jack already judged that the man with the limp would not kill him, simply because, if he were dead, the secret of the caution could never be wrong from him. While he was alive, Graves could believe that he might bribe, trick, or torture the secret out of him.

The sequel was to prove that Jack was correct in this guess; but even in his wildest imaginings the young sailor fell far short of what he was to experience while in the power of his strange enemy.

Without wasting any valuable time in howling his position, Jack promptly began to make the best of it.

When he was thrust into his prison, the shawl was still twisted round his head, and he was still pinioned; but he laid his strength left, and had no time in using it. Getting first in a kneeling position, he worked his arms about in an effort to loosen the encircling cord. At first he could not move them for more than a fraction of an inch, and the effort caused him excruciating agony, for the cord cut into his flesh, until it seemed as if it would sever the muscles. He persisted, however, and even then the task, far from being finished, was only just begun. How many hours it occupied before it was actually finished, Jack English never cared to calculate afterwards.

But the time seemed endless as he knelt there, in the pitchy darkness, fighting for liberty. The sweat was flowing down his face, and every nerve in his body was strained and quivering.

At last, however, it was all over. He felt the noose slacken suddenly as the slip-knot loosened. He could have shaken the rope off, and was indeed about to do so, when he was stopped by a scraping sound. It was the grating of bolts. The door of his prison was being opened.

Instantly Jack threw himself flat on the floor, rolled himself over on his back so that the slackened slip-noose was hidden beneath him, while at the same time he drew the rope tightly across his chest with his freed hands.

It was done so quickly and cleverly that no one would have suspected that he was really free. The shawl which still enveloped his head added to the effect of helplessness.

The plan succeeded. Jack heard the door of his prison grate open, and soft stealthy footsteps cross the floor of his prison. It was, of course, impossible for him to see anything, but his ears were so keen and his perception so rapid, thanks to many a long watch, that even the covering over could not shut all sound out of his ears. He heard a soft, drawing voice say:

"Him safe enough. Him faster tied up. Him be a silly fool not to do us him teller. But waiter till him get to the island!"

The voice sounded so close that Jack guessed that the speaker was either kneeling beside or bending over him, and he had more than a suspicion that the speaker was the same Celestial who had taken him by surprise in the cabin of Clement Graves.

Then Jack decided that it was high time that he took as prominent a part as he could in the proceedings. He had feigned to be still helpless in order to take his visitor by surprise, and he succeeded beautifully.

Before the Chinaman even surmised that anything was going to happen, Jack had jerked the rope aside, and, twisting himself up, thrown his arms round his knees, dragging him down. Then they grappled and rolled over on the floor. It was a grim struggle while it lasted, but it did not last long. The Chinaman was a powerful brute, as lithe and sinewy as a tiger; but Jack was his master. The young fellow's blood was up, and his resolute spirit made him the master of the yellow man.

It was Jack's object not only to master the Chinese, but to prevent him from raising an outcry; and he succeeded. His strong fingers, having once closed on the yellow man's throat, held tenaciously, and he threw every ounce of strength and science he possessed into the contest.

The struggle ended in the Chinaman making a savage writhe to get loose. Jack threw him back again, and his head was dashed against the floor with such force that he was rendered insensible. He quivered, and lay still.

"He's harmless for a few minutes, anyhow," the lieutenant muttered, "and it's my business to see that he hasn't the chance to do any mischief for a bit longer."

The Chinaman had been holding a lantern when Jack had pulled him down. This had fallen to the floor; but, being mostly of iron, had not been broken, and it was still burning. Jack picked it up, and was able to see his prison.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order by Advertis

It was a cabin with walls and roof and floor of polished steel, and a door of the same material. There was no porch, and air was admitted only through some small holes drilled in one of the walls.

It was entirely devoid of furniture, and not so much as an old rug was on the floor to serve as a bed. Altogether it was only such a prison as could have been devised by a man who was not in the habit of showing any mercy to his captives, and in itself it gave Jack a clear notion of the sort of treatment he had to expect if he continued to defy the man with the limp, and remained in his power.

But Jack did not waste any time in examining his prison, nor in troubling himself with what might happen in the future.

He used the rope which had pinioned himself to bind the Chinaman, hand and foot, cutting the rope into convenient lengths with a knife which he found in one of the pockets of the shawl. He finished his task by stuffing a portion of the shawl into the fellow's mouth, and fastening it there, so that he was effectually gagged.

"And now to find out all I can about the yacht," the lieutenant thought.

With the knife in one hand, as his sole weapon, and the lantern in the other, Jack stole from his prison softly and cautiously.

The Chinaman had left the steel door open when he came in, so that there was no difficulty at the outset. The dim light of the lantern showed him that he was in the fore-cabin hold of the yacht, and the silence which prevailed gave him that it must be night-time, and that most of those on the strange craft were asleep.

As it turned out, this was an accurate guess. He had no one as he went up the companion-ladder, and emerged on the fore-deck of the Siren.

Before venturing on to the deck, Jack thought it prudent to extinguish the lantern and put it down. The precaution was a wise one. The deck of the yacht was not deserted, although at first he was inclined to wonder if it was.

The night was not intensely dark, but the moon and stars were obscured by drifting wreaths of clouds, so that at a distance it was possible to distinguish objects at a distance with clearness, while the next minute saw everything obscured.

Forward on the yacht's deck, so far distant from Jack that they looked like shadows, were a number of men, who were working busily and silently about a long, dark object the character of which he could not make out, because it was covered by tarpaulins.

Jack stole a little nearer, and as he did so looked out over the sea, for he had been so many hours in his prison that the Siren had been given time to drop down the Trades, and was now surrounded by trackless waves on every side.

The fact that it was again night told Jack that the vessel had been steaming at full speed for twenty-four hours, and his sailor's experience showed him at a glance that the yacht had been built for speed first, speed second, and so on afterwards.

The swiftness with which she tore through the choppy seas was amazing.

As Jack's gaze swept the sea he perceived what struck him as something ordinary enough at first glance. It was not fully a couple of miles away, so that in the dim and dusky moonlight, it was impossible to catch more than a very blurred glimpse of her. But Jack knew her at once by the liner's outward bound.

The Siren was overhauling her steadily and surely, so cleverly was the yacht being sailed that it was impossible for those on the liner, especially under the prevailing conditions, to see that they were being pursued, or to dogged across the ocean.

And Jack, looking up, saw that the yacht was flying a yellow flag at her main-mast. It was the flag of distress, denoting that she had serious illness, porphyria danger on board, and was in urgent need of assistance.

The flag of distress was a lie. It was being displayed to lure the liner into a treacherous trap. Jack was instinctively, and he was more certain of it when he saw once more at the shadowy figures on the yacht. They had removed the tarpaulin from the object in question, and that object was revealed to the lieutenant's eyes.

It was a cannon!

Long, swivel-mounted, with a wicked and an murderous about it. Not nearly so deadly or so formidable as which Jack had invented, yet as up-to-date as any that he so far known, and with a range of several miles. The painted black, so that no flash of steel should be in presence on the yacht to those on the liner, even if the two craft were much nearer to each other than they were.

As it was, they were gradually drawing closer, and the yacht was more than within range, if her crew were to make a treacherous night-attack on the other vessel.



There was a sudden flash of illumination in the prison cabin, and the door opened noiselessly and swiftly. On the threshold stood the man with the twisted foot, followed closely by the huge Chinaman.

(See page 49.)

Jack English was convinced that they intended to do something else, and his nerves tingled with excitement at the possibility that he would soon be in the midst of perilous adventures.

What object could the projected attack have? Was it to catch the liner and the shadowy figures on the deck? Or was it to catch the liner and the shadowy figures on the deck? Or was it to catch the liner and the shadowy figures on the deck?

When watching the liner and the shadowy figures on the deck, Jack had been crouching behind one of the staterooms. He made not the least movement, he was as motionless as a statue. No one on the yacht suspected as yet that he had broken loose from his prison.

How long he waited, watching and listening, Jack could not say. Each minute seemed so intolerably long. But the moon became more obscured by clouds, so that the light on the sea grew even more uncertain and dim than before. The yacht continued to gain upon the man, creeping on her, as it were, like a wolf of the sea upon its marked-out prey.

At last, Jack did not believe that the man with the twisted foot was a mere thief of the ocean. His aspect, his cunning, his calculating, had led him to expect something far more tremendous than that. He felt certain that the man with the twisted foot was a criminal of a type the world had never seen before.

But apart from this, there was not a shadow of doubt that the crew of the yacht were bent on luring those on the deck into a state of false security by showing the flag of peace and taking advantage of this to make a treacherous attack on them.

It would be remain idle while this was done?

Not if he was not strangely changed from the Jack English of old, who had been ready to lead his men into the teeth of death and expose himself more than all with a laugh on his lips.

Nearer and nearer the yacht stole upon the unsuspecting liner. But those on the Siren did not intend to lose any advantage they might possess by being in too great a hurry. Having trained and sighted the cannon, the men who had been engaged on the work threw the tarpaulin over the gun again, and stole below, with the exception of one man, whom they left on watch.

"They mean to get even closer before they start any mischief," Jack muttered. "The question is, am I going to let them do just as they like? If the liner isn't warned I shall feel myself responsible for any evil work that's done to-night."

He made up his mind quickly. As far as he could see, the man by the cannon was the only man on deck. Softly and cautiously he stole on him, and, with a spring, was on him, bearing him down and crushing him down to the deck with one hand, while he held the other hand over his mouth to prevent him from raising an alarm.

It was a repetition of the scene of the prison cabin. The fellow struggled savagely, but Jack held him tenaciously, and was on the point of mastering him, when there was a rush of feet along the yacht's deck, and the next moment Jack himself was pounced on by half a dozen enemies, who all held him at once.

He fought desperately, but he had no chance against such odds. He tried, at least, to shout a warning to the threatened ship, but the liner was too far away for his voice to carry.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB." A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

to her, and he was half stunned by a pitiless blow on the temple from a pistol-butt. Still he did not know when he was beaten, and fought hard to throw off those who were holding him.

In vain! They held him too fast, and he had to confess, with bitter disappointment in his heart, that he had been baffled in his brave attempt to serve others.

But as Jack struggled with his enemies, a slight, lattered, boyish figure raced across the deck of the Siren. The tar-paulin was jerked off the cannon, and the firing cord was pulled. There was a flash and a mighty roar as the gun was fired in the air.

The flash lit up the boyish figure by the gun. Pale as a ghost, in rage, with bloodstains on the sharp, eager young face, but dauntless and defiant.

Extra-Special Joe, or his ghost from the sea!

CHAPTER 4.

The End of a Strange Voyage—The Island of Hidden Treasures—Clement Graves Reveals His Secret—A Dastardly Threat.

FOR a minute Jack English could not credit that it was his street-boy chum whom he saw on the deck of the Siren, and believed that it must be Joe's spectre that had appeared so opportunely to perform the task he had himself attempted in vain, and thought the notion was.

But then he realized that it was Joe in the flesh, for he heard the street-boy's voice, shrill and perky as ever, exclaim:

"How's that for a bullseye? One for me, I bet!"

While the exultant cry was still ringing in Jack's ears a second blow from the pistol-butt rendered him senseless, and he knew nothing of what happened for several hours afterwards.

He recovered his senses to find himself bound hand and foot, twice as fast as before, and lying in total darkness. He guessed that he had been again flung into the prison-cell, and a torturing throbbing of his temples nearly maddened him.

But the thought of his own sufferings and his own increased jeopardy was swallowed up in the bitter knowledge that his boy friend was also a prisoner in peril on the sinister yacht, if indeed, he had not met with a violent death at the hands of the scoundrels of the sea whom he had done his best to baffle in their treacherous purpose.

Poor Extra-Special Joe!

A groan broke from Jack at the thought, such as his own danger and sufferings could never have wrung from him. His heart was very heavy for a second. But then it bounded within him, and an exclamation fall of joy and relief burst from him.

"Hallo, guv'nor! Have you come to yourself agin? That's a bit of all right. Never say die! While there's life there's hope."

It was Joe's voice. A bit shaky, certainly, but still with the old perkiness in it.

"So those villains did not kill you after all, Joe? We're together!"

Jack struggled to a sitting posture. It was impossible, of course, for him to see anything in the darkness of his prison; but he could hear a movement, which proved that the street-boy was with him.

"Kill me!" echoed Joe defiantly. "I bet you, guv'nor! I would take a lot more than those cowardly beggars to finish me off. I was born for something big, I was, and I feel jolly sure I'm going to do it. I was getting afraid that it was you that was dead. You lay so awful still for such a long time, and never said nothing when I talked to you. But it's all right now; we're both alive, and we're together."

"Together, yes, but in a prison we cannot escape from; in the power of a scoundrel who will show us no mercy!"

Jack muttered the words hoarsely. His own peril was nothing to him, as far as anything which threatened himself went. He was ready to meet it bravely. But his heart failed him when he thought of the danger the street-boy was in, and he blamed himself for it. Had it not been for his connection with himself, Joe would never have been on board the Siren at all. The boy understood Jack's feelings, and at once proceeded to do his best to console him.

"Don't you worry yourself about me, guv'nor," he said; "I'm all right. I'd rather be here with you and take my chance along with you, than be at a picnic all on my own. As for being in the power of a scoundrel—and if you mean that chap with the twisted foot, he is a scoundrel, and no error—"

"I do mean, Joe."

"Well, we are in his power," the street-boy said. "But it don't follow that we're always going to be. As I said before, while there's life there's hope, and we may beat

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY:

him yet. Cheer up, guv'nor! You ain't yourself just now. Wait a bit, and, bless you, you'll be as right as rain!"

"You plucky little brick!" Jack exclaimed admiringly.

After that, for a little while, Jack could say no more. His head was throbbing, and causing him intense pain, and he was sick and giddy, and so weak that he sank back on the floor of his prison and lay there, helpless to move for some time.

But he could hear movements, which told him that his boy companion was doing all he could to roll himself across the prison-cell in order to get close to him. He needed no one to tell him that Joe must be bound hand and foot as he himself was.

Clement Graves was not at all likely to have left Joe the use of his hands to baffle him again. Presently Jack felt the street-boy roll against him with a bump.

"Beg your pardon, guv'nor," Joe said. "I know it's the polite thing to knock before you comes in, but I didn't mean to knock as hard as all that."

"It's all right, Joe. I'm very glad to have you near me."

They could not clasp hands, but it was a great comfort to both of them to lie close together in the darkness of their prison. They could talk more easily, too, in lower voices.

"How were you brought on board the Siren, Joe?" Jack asked.

"Brought myself," answered Extra-Special Joe promptly. "I did my level best to look after things for you in the cellar after you went off with the ugly chap in the uniform, taker's togs. I give you my solemn word, I did. I would have let 'em tear me to pieces before they should have taken anything, if I could!"

The boy's subdued voice was eager and shaking with an anxious fear lest the lieutenant should doubt his sincerity.

"There's no need for you to tell me that, Joe," Jack returned kindly. "I know it already. Just tell me what happened to you after I went away with Ambrose Brink?"

"Ambrose Brink? Who's he?"

"The man in black, who was hiding in the inner cellar, and whom I went away with."

"Ah!" muttered Joe, drawing a deep breath. "I know him. To make a note of his name in my pocket book, he could get it, as one of those who I've got little account of settle with."

Joe's story was not a very long one, though it was entirely enough.

After Jack had gone away with Ambrose Brink, Joe had settled down in the cellar-workshop to guard the model of the cannon, and everything else which Jack English had left behind him. So great was the street-boy's faith in the ability of his leader to look after himself, that he had confidently expected Jack to return to the cellar that night after expeditiously and effectually disposing of Ambrose Brink and all his other enemies. So he had locked the door of the cellar, and then, raking the forge-fire together, he sat down before it, resolute to keep his eyes open all night if necessary, rather than be untrue to his charges, which Jack English had left behind him.

For several hours he had sat there, not stirring, but attentively for any suspicious sound, like to a fierce little watch-dog left on guard. He had been very tired, but had resolutely declined to admit the fact even to himself. He had kept his eyes very wide open.

He succeeded for a long time. Then he had begun to feel a strange, heavy, stupefying sensation had stolen over him. It had stupefied him, though he had fought against it. He had at first supposed that it was nothing but sheer drowsiness, but then it had broken on him with a shock that was something far worse.

It was being made the victim of treachery. With a half-choked cry on his lips he had staggered to his feet, beating at the air as if to keep off an invincible enemy. His assailant was one whom he could not beat off. He had attacked him too insidiously to be resisted. The cellar had been filled with a sickly, pregnant odor of gas. It was pouring through the keyhole and under the door.

The boy had made a supreme effort to get to the door, to throw it open, but he had staggered when half was across the floor, swayed helplessly from side to side, and finally fell in a heap. The roof of the cellar seemed to be falling on and crushing him down, there was a horrible roaring in his ears, and a great blackness blotted out everything from his sight, and even swamped consciousness itself.

"And while I was lying flat on my back," the street-boy said, "two of the ugliest-looking men I'd ever set eyes on, except that snake in black, opened the cellar door and came in. They had a false key that did the piece, for they were in. They had a false key that did the piece, for they were in. If someone had told me about the piece, for they were straight to where your model was hidden and got it."

"And destroyed it!" asked Jack hastily.

"Not by no means," repeated Joe. "Pinched it, I mean."

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in Advance.

it, and took it off. After putting it in a box one of 'em had brought with him."

"But how did you know all this, Joe, if you were senseless?"

"I wasn't senseless for long, guv'nor. You see, before these thieves came into the cellar, they hung outside a bit, to let the gas escape. That gave me a chance to come round. I was only funny and queer, but I saw 'em and knew what they were doing. I wanted to go for 'em, but it wouldn't have been no sort of use. I wasn't in fighting form, and, besides, the odds was too much for me. So I just lay low and let my eyes half open. They thought I was blind and deaf, and they was more sure of it than ever after one of 'em kicked me, and I didn't even wince. All the same, I was going to let 'em do what they liked without trying to do anything on my own."

"I knew it wasn't no use shouting for help down in the cellar, because nobody would have done anything even if they heard me," the street-boy went on; "and it was just as well not to get a policeman to stop those two thieves when they went off with your model and were walking down Oxford Street. If I'd done that I should have had to explain about you, so all I could do was to pick myself up and follow 'em just to see where they went, and if I could do anything. It was rather stiffish jolting down to Gravesend though."

"You don't mean to say that you walked all the way?"

"I stepped a lot of it," rejoined the boy cheerfully. "I had to be pretty quick to keep on their track, and I was uncomf'rd when they took a cab. They nearly did for me when I raced after 'em to London Bridge, and then they 'em and hung on behind. When we got to Gravesend, the boat was waiting for 'em, and they were taken off to the Siren. I heard one of 'em say wroth they was a-going to be paid, but he wasn't polite enough to ask me to pay him a penny, so he reckoned I'd go on the yacht without being asked, and he was as I heard one of the men on the boat say you was on the Siren, and that you'd been trapped."

"But how did you manage it?"

"I was a guv'nor. I ain't been a mud-lark down by the pier for nothing. It wasn't daylight, just a dirty sort of dawn in the sky, and I got on board the yacht and bunked below, and did the stowaway business, dodging about and picking up all the information I could. I didn't have no money, and you before you got free on your own account; but I heard these villains getting the gun ready to fire on the pier, and watched 'em. When I saw you come stealing out in the shadows, my heart nearly jumped out of my mouth. I guessed what you wanted to do, and when all the fellows jumped on you at once, I thought I'd do it myself."

"But how are you a prisoner in consequence, at the mercy of Ambrose Graves?"

"I got with you, guv'nor, with a jolly good chance of getting all out alongside of you. I couldn't not clasp hands, but Joe testified his devotion to me, and I put myself up as nearly as he could to Jack English."

"You were two more questions which Jack was compelled to answer, though he shrank from the first, out of fear of the Siren, and might receive."

"Ambrose Brink, and the others hurt you when you tried to get the gun, Joe?"

"I struggled."

"They knocked me about a bit," he admitted; "but, bless my soul, all over now, guv'nor, it might have been a lot worse. When you call Ambrose Brink, was going to knock me on the head and throw me overboard; but he was stopped by a well, by somebody I ain't anxious to see again."

"The man with the twisted foot?"

"That's him! He came limping on deck, and when they asked him what I'd done, he gave me a look worse than all the needles and curses. Then he smiled—ugh! It gives me the chills to think of it! And he told him to tie you and me to the end of the boat, and look us up fast."

"You must have taken warning from the cannon being fired, and guessed that the flag of distress was a lie," replied the boy. "Anyhow, she cleared off so fast that the yacht couldn't catch her up—or didn't try to. It's my opinion that the yacht wanted to make a treacherous attack, but she was afraid to risk a fight on level terms."

"Why did the Siren want to attack the liner at all? They're pirates on the yacht?"

"I snatched the words to himself, but Joe caught them. I don't think they are pirates who are after gold and silver, guv'nor," the boy said, sinking his voice to a hoarse whisper. "They're after—men!"

"Living men!" repeated Joe in the same subdued tones as

before. "I heard the man with the twisted foot say that I'd been off the case of him losing many workers, whom he could have got off the liner."

"Jack's thoughts flashed back to the huddled-up figure in the boat at Gravesend, and the answer of the rover to Brink's question: "Another of them?" What could it mean?"

"What sort of workers can Clement Graves want?" Jack said, rather allowing the question to escape him involuntarily than directly asking it of his companion. "What work can he have for them to do?"

"As a case which he had never expected came to him in a startling fashion."

There was a sudden flash of illumination in the prison cabin, the door of which had opened noiselessly and swiftly. On the threshold was standing the man with the twisted foot himself. Close behind him was the Chinaman, with whom Jack had so recently had his exciting encounter. The Celestial held a lantern of peculiar shape stilt in his left hand, so that it cast a dazzling light into every crevice of the previously black cabin. In his right hand he had a revolver, ready cocked for instant use should either of the prisoners have been in a position to attempt mischief.

The Chinaman's expression was savagely malevolent, and it was evident that he was only withheld by fear of his master from taking a cowardly revenge for his recent defeat. But the face of the man with the twisted foot was as coldly serene, as passionless, and withal as deadly as ever.

The face of a man who knew no pity, who would stick at nothing to attain his ends.

Jack English had thought so before. He was more sure of it than ever now, as, lying on the floor of his prison, he looked up at his enemy.

He was utterly helpless to do the slightest thing in his own defence or on behalf of Joe. But if Clement Graves had expected to see any signs of fear or yielding about the young fellow he held in his power, he was disappointed. Jack returned the gaze of the cold, pitiless eyes with a steady and undaunted stare.

For a second a shadow of doubtfulness flickered across the pallid face of the owner of the Siren. It seemed to him that his belief in his power to break Jack English to his will was shaken. Then, however, his sneering smile came back.

"Wait outside, Wah Fang," he said to the Chinaman. "Leave the lantern on the floor, and wait for my orders outside the door."

"Me not to killee him?" demanded the Celestial, scowling.

"Not until I give you the order," retorted Graves, in the tone he might have used in addressing a dog. "Go!"

He pointed imperiously to the cabin door, and the yellow ruffian, who would have committed murder without compunction, slunk away, shaking with fear.

He left the lantern on the floor, and closed the door of the prison cabin after him.

For a full minute Clement Graves did not utter a word. He stood with folded arms, looking down at his two prisoners.

There was something so evil in the man's cold eyes that the mere hint of it would have shrunken strong nerves. But Jack English did not lose any of his composure, and Joe, though very much inclined to shiver, bravely imitated the example of his leader in declining to betray the white feather.

"Well, Jack English," Clement Graves said at last, "I have come to ask you if you have learned any sense since I saw you before? You will do well to give me a different answer this time, if you wish to live to be a free man again."

"I've given you one answer," Jack returned, "and I will never give you another. If you want the secret of the cannon—"

"I want it, and I mean to have it," Clement Graves interrupted harshly. "You fool! Be careful how you anger me! You have already done so much to injure me—you and the boy there—that you would both have been thrown overboard before this had I not wished to betray you in spite of yourself. I offered you safety and wealth before, and I offer them to you again for the second time. Are you going to be so mad as to refuse them for the sake of the Empire which has made you a fugitive and an outcast?"

Jack English made no response.

He knew that, to a certain extent, though a fast prisoner, he was the master of the situation. Clement Graves had not spared him so far out of any sentiment of mercy. The man with the twisted foot was more anxious to get hold of the secret of the new, untrival cannon than anything else in the world. He would rather have the secret of the cannon than any sum which could have been poured out in gold before him from the richest treasury in existence.

And Jack English was the only man living who could give him the secret of the cannon and confer on him the terrible

power which the possession of the new gun would carry with it.

Jack realised that as long as there was the faintest hope of forcing the secret from him, Clement Graves would not take his life. He might threaten and even torture him, but he would stop short of the last extremity, because he knew that if Jack English was dead the secret would die with him. Jack's great desire was to find out everything he possibly could touching Clement Graves. He believed that his best chance of doing this was to force the man with the twisted foot to take him whither the Siren was bound, and to allow him to see with his own eyes the island he had alluded to. If he refused to open his mouth and kept his secret to himself, Clement Graves would have no choice save to do this.

Once on the island, with his limbs free again, there might be an opportunity for a daring bid for liberty. There was simply no opportunity at all in the prison cabin. He had escaped from it once, but he would assuredly not be given the chance to do so again.

So Jack lay obstinately silent, refusing to speak a word in response to Graves's tempting offers and fierce threats. Even when the Chinaman, Wah Fang, was recalled and ordered to place the muzzle of the revolver against his temple, he did not move an inch.

"Tell me the secret of the cannon, or the Chinaman has my orders to blow your brains out!" the man with the twisted foot said. "You are tempting my patience too far, Jack English."

Jack laughed defiantly. "Do what you like," he said; "but when I am dead seek the secret of the cannon from whoever can give it to you!"

The recklessly daring shot told. Clement Graves set his thin lips, and his cold eyes glittered with anger. He waved Wah Fang back, and bent over the lieutenant.

"Very well, Jack English!" he exclaimed. "It is to be war between us. We shall see who will conquer in the end!"

He quitted the cabin followed by the yellow man, who carried off the lantern with him.

The prisoners were once more left in the darkness. And this was the beginning of a terrible time for Jack and his boy ally. They were left in their prison for so many long, black, dreadful hours, that they lost all count of their number. Indeed, there was nothing to tell them where one day ended and another began. At irregular and long separated intervals, Wah Fang appeared, and gave them some drops of foul water, but never enough to assuage their thirst, and some scraps of mouldy food, which barely sufficed to keep them alive.

Save for the visits of the Chinaman, they saw no human being, and not a ray of light penetrated the blackness of their prison.

It was the intention of Clement Graves to starve them into weakness, and to break Jack's spirit, so that when he was once more called on to give up the secret of the cannon, he would have neither the strength nor the courage to refuse.

All the time they lay in their black prison, which became more and more dreadful to them, day and night the Siren sped over the ocean on her voyage.

Whither was she bound? Joe could neither of them tell. There was nothing for them to do but to wait until the unknown goal was reached.

At last, after an interval which seemed to the prisoners as if it were intended to be endless, the door of the prison cabin was again thrown open, and the dazzling light of the lantern again flooded into it. This time, however, it was not Clement Graves nor Wah Fang who appeared, but Ambrose Brink accompanied by four of the Siren's crew. One of the latter carried a couple of scarves, which he bound over the eyes of Jack and Joe, so that they were blindfolded. Then the cords round the ankles were cut, and they were roughly dragged to their feet. Their hands were still bound behind them, and both were so weak and so cramped by starvation and long inaction that they reeled, and would have fallen had not the men nearest at hand caught hold of them. They were half led and half dragged from the prison cabin, and up the companion-way.

It was icy cold. The air cut like the sharp edge of a razor, causing them to shiver excessively. Joe gasped for breath, and even Jack, habituated though he had been to every climate of the globe during his previous voyages, had never experienced anything like this before. They were forced across the yacht's deck and down a rope-ladder and so into a boat. When they were dragged from this they slipped, and Joe fell to his knees, while Jack maintained his balance with difficulty. They were standing, not on firm earth, but on ice.

Once more they were half led and half dragged forward. When they halted again it was to be forced into a vehicle. They could not see what it was, but Jack at last knew as soon as it began to move. The jingling of bells and the smooth, gliding motion told him that he and Joe were in the

seated in a sledge, such as Arctic or Antarctic explorers use when in quest of the North or South Pole.

Jack English set his teeth. The blood was rushing through his veins, hot and fast, in spite of the cold, and his heart was beating faster. He would have given worlds to have got his hands free and torn the maddening bandage from his eyes. He was beginning to guess where he was, but the guess seemed so wild and improbable that he hesitated to place any credence in it. The drive in the sledge was a long one, and it appeared to the two prisoners to be even longer than it actually was. It ended eventually, however, and with it ended all uncertainty. The sledge stopped with a jerk, and they were dragged out.

Simultaneously there sounded the voice of Clement Graves, a note mingling with triumph and exultation in harsh tones.

"You are welcome to my kingdom, Jack English. Here I reign as a sovereign—here even the boasted might of the British Empire cannot reach me! Here I hold more power than any crowned monarch in the world possesses! Do you see if you will defy me now!"

The bandage was plucked from Jack's eyes. He saw snow, snow and ice, everywhere. Look where he would, Jack could see nothing but a white, frozen wilderness. He seemed to be in a different world from that to which he had away London and modern civilisation belonged.

The glaring whiteness was unbearable to his eyes, and he had been immured in darkness for so long. He had in fact been, afraid of blindness if he stared about him for so long. It was some time before he could open them and look about him with anything like steadiness.

When he could do this, however, it was to see that, since he was standing in the midst of a frozen wilderness, it was far from being a wilderness abandoned by men.

In the distance, across the ice, was a vast building of iron, from within which came the ringing of many hammers, and from the lofty chimneys of which poured down columns of smoke. And near the building rose a skeleton-like structure of wood and steel, on which a countless crowd of men were working.

It was a great battleship, nearing completion, and the workers were the shipwrights who had built her. All were working their hardest, but all bore such a strange aspect that Jack doubted if his eyes were telling him the truth, and Joe, whose sight had now been uncovered, gasped at the astonished cry.

"Why, they're convicts in chains!"

If the boy did not speak the exact truth, what he so fully justified the thought to which he had given expression. The men working on the warship had come from all countries. There were dark Italians, fair Swedes, and Spaniards, wiry Frenchmen, stolid Germans. These were Britons, too, unmistakably marked out from the remainder of the motley crowd. They had not all been drawn from one rank of life; this much was told by their dress, which was left of it. For all the toilers amidst the ice and snow were clad in garments which had been so much soiled as to be now little more than dirty rags, and this despite the cold. All were emaciated and desperate, and all had the aspect of slaves who were forced to toil until they dropped by merciless taskmasters.

Overlooking the toilers were scores of other men, every aspect was in every way as evil and repulsive as that of the crew of the Siren. They were all armed to the teeth, and in addition, each carried a heavy whip with a long, and less lash of dried rhinoceros hide into which had been hammered strips of steel wire. The whips were capable of skilful hands, of killing a man at a blow, or inflicting shocking injuries on him.

The guards of the workers were using the whips with pity, and cries of agony mingled with the ringing of hammers. Jack felt Clement Graves standing close to him when he turned his eyes away from the strange scene, and was so perplexing and yet so fraught with startling possibilities.

"Well, Jack English, do you understand now?" the man with the twisted foot demanded. "Have you any more to guess the truth for yourself, or must I take the trouble to explain?"

The young fellow looked the man straight in the eyes.

"Perhaps I can guess something," he replied. "But I do not mean to trust to such a guide. If you wish to tell me to do anything, you will have to explain a good deal more. I will do nothing in the dark." The eyes of the man were very cunning.

"Will you do what I want after I have told you?" "That will depend on whether or not you consider that it is worth my while to do so."

In his heart, Jack was sure that Clement Graves would say and do nothing powerful enough to induce him to

traitor to the Empire. His object was simply to lead the man on to explain matters to him, and he felt he was perfectly justified in tricking his enemy if he could.

But Jack Graves fell into the trap. He believed that Jack was shaken by what he had seen that he was wavering, and that it would only be necessary to press home this point to cause him to give in altogether. He was convinced by this belief, the man with the twisted foot insisted that Joe should be taken away by those who were with him, and that Jack's hands should be free, and that he was instructed to the lieutenant to follow him.

"Jack English," he said. "I'm going to show you my island." The other answered with an enigmatical nod, and again motioned to Jack to follow him. He led him through the vast iron building. It was a foundry, and was equipped as any that ever has been found in Europe. Machinery and appliances were of all the most up-to-date description. Here, as on the warship, hundreds of half-starved, desperate sailors were at work. The armed men and lashed into new activity by the warship whenever they lashed from sheer weariness.

The roar of furnaces, the clangour of mighty hammers, the crack of the whips, and the harsh orders of the guards and masters mingling with the shrieks and groans of the wretched slaves—all contributed to create a scene of unmitigated pandemonium, and Jack English noticed that all this which was being done had some connection with the sea. The glare of the furnaces fell on armour-plates, and rifled cannon in a more or less disordered state. Jack could understand more clearly than he had done before why the man with the twisted foot was anxious to get hold of the secret of the new cannon.

It was impossible for Graves or Jack to talk in the midst of this pandemonium. The man with the twisted foot led the young man to his workshop after workshop, and then out into the open again. They walked away from the scene of the pandemonium, and were close on the frozen waste.

Jack English spoke abruptly, and his speech was a revelation to the man with the twisted foot.

"I have seen the beginning of a man's revenge, Jack English," he said. "A man offered Jack a cigarette as he spoke, and Jack fellow took it, and lit it coolly. He betrayed no suspicion of what had been said to him, but puffed out a tiny cloud of smoke and waited for Graves to go on. He did not say a word. His harsh voice was sunken and intense, and he spoke it a passion so deadly and so fierce that the man with the twisted foot, an ordinary man would have been as nothing in his presence."

"Revenge!" he said. "A revenge which has cost me my life, and will cost me millions more! A man has taken years of my life, for the sake of a few dollars, and sacrificed all that others set store by. But I will have my revenge which, when it comes, shall shake the Empire to its base. It shall not be my fault if it is not a revenge which is crashing down in hopeless and shameful ruin."

Jack English was sounded as if they could come from no one but the man with the twisted foot, and Clement Graves was mad—mad with hate and most violent kind. The story he told was the most extraordinary one.

Jack English and Clement Graves had been a slaver. He had been the captain and owner of a ship that was used for the purpose of kidnapping blacks—men, women, and children—and selling them to the markets where they were sold into hopeless and endless bondage. Graves had known no other life than that of a slaver. He had been nothing to him but a man who died when in heavy irons, or battered and mangled in the death-rooking hold, as long as he was left to yield him a profit on each voyage. He had sailed the West Coast of Africa, and, indeed, throughout that part of the world, Clement Graves had been one of the most cruel and heartless traffickers in slaves and blood who ever trod a deck.

Jack English was cunning and daring, too, and for years had been successful in his attempts to capture him, though practically all his efforts had set a price on his head, and warships were sent to hunt him in the world had tried to hunt him down. Jack English had fought like a tiger, and got away by the skin of his teeth, and on other occasions, helped by evil luck, he had slipped through the fingers of those who had hunted him, and had escaped in the most cunningly-chosen hiding-places.

Jack English had seemed to lead a charmed life. It was as if nothing could bring his career as a slaver to an end.

But now he had been helped by his son, Renton Graves. He had been as wicked and cruel as himself. Black and white, he had shared though he was, without an atom of pity

for the unhappy blacks in whom he traded, Clement Graves had idolized his son, and had loved him, much as a tiger might have loved his whelp.

"He is dead; but he would be alive now, and he and I would be sailing the seas together if it had not been for the accursed British Empire and your equally accursed father, Jack English!" the man with the twisted foot said, with a burst of passion which transformed his appearance. "Your father, Captain Mark English, was sent with a cruiser to the West Coast of Africa, with orders to take me alive or dead, or to capture or sink my ship. He forced me to a fight, after a chase which lasted for months, and he took my ship, and shot my son dead with his own hand as he boarded her!"

"It was done in fair fight!" Jack exclaimed. "My father was only doing his duty."

"He killed my son!" Clement Graves repeated. "That is all I remembered. I jumped overboard and escaped to shore. Before I reached land I swore to have a fearful revenge on the Empire whose cruisers had run me to bay, and on your father, who had shot my son. Part of my oath I have kept. The rest I intend to keep."

"If you can!" said Jack quietly.

Clement Graves shot a menacing look at him. Then he finished his story.

He had escaped capture, and had devoted himself to compassing the death of Jack's father. He had dogged him for years from one end of the world to the other, and had, at last, under cover of the darkness of night, treacherously shot him. He had not been satisfied with this, but had left a scrawled message beside his victim, boasting of his crime, confessing his reason for committing it, and declaring that his revenge was only half complete. As Mark English had shot his son, he had sworn to have the life of the officer's son, if he had to wait for many years for the chance of taking it.

At this time, Jack had been a little fellow, too young to understand what had taken place. His guardian had not told him the story, being anxious that he should not be troubled by it. Jack had been sent to school, and there had seemed less reason than ever to tell him the story, when news had come that Clement Graves had met with a violent death in Zambar.

But the rumour had been a false one, circulated by Clement Graves himself with the object of throwing Jack and his friends off their guard. In reality, the man with the twisted foot kept watch on Jack, following him like a bloodhound. Once he could have made a treacherous attack on him, but had held his hand. This had been out of no feeling of compunction. He had intended to be not merely satisfied with taking Jack's life, but had made up his mind to add the bitterness of ruin and disgrace to his fate. For this reason he had merely kept a pitiless watch on him, and had waited till he grew to manhood.

While wishing to strike his blow against Jack, Clement Graves had never for an instant forgotten his vow of revenge against the British Empire.

As a slaver he had amassed an enormous fortune, and he had added to this by daring speculations and the fruits of many crimes. He had been the chief of a gang of pirates who plundered innocent people in all parts of the world, and had brought him the lion's share of all their plunder. Added to all this, the discovery of a tract of land in Alaska, rich in gold, had made him a millionaire three over.

Then, the master of enough money for his scheme, he had set to work in earnest. His plan had been a daring one, fully worthy of a Napoleon of crime.

As a wanderer of the seas, he had made many discoveries unknown to the geographical world. One of them had been an island in the far Southern Seas, near to the South Pole. It was far out of the beaten track of explorers, and for the greater part of each year was blocked in by a frozen sea. But once every year the ice broke in one particular place, so that a wide channel, deep enough for the largest warship to navigate, was broken open. On this island, amidst the ice, Clement Graves had by degrees accumulated a vast store of material for the work he had in contemplation. And he gathered workers. Some he had coaxed to go to the island of their own accord, in the hope of being richly rewarded for their work there; others, by far the larger number, had been kidnapped from all over the world, and carried to the island on the Siren. All alike he had found themselves the slaves of Clement Graves, doomed to lives of cruel, never-ending toil.

And this had taken years, but the man with the twisted foot had persevered with a patience matching his hatred. His purpose had been nothing less than to build a fleet of warships in his ice-hidden lair, and with this fleet to inflict all the damage he could on the British Navy.

"Do you think it a madman's plan, Jack English?" he asked. "It is nothing of the sort. My idea was to start

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 115.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB." A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of St. Jim's! BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

with one ship, the swiftest, most powerful cruiser afloat, and to use her to prey upon British merchant-shipping."

"To make her an ironclad pirate, in fact?"

"If you like to put it like that. I call it making war on the tyrant of the seas. I reckoned on my first ironclad bringing me in so much plunder and so many more workers that I should be able to add to my fleet by degrees. I had no hope at first of doing more than inflict enormous damage on British commerce, and destroy a part of her fleet; but when my master spy, Ambrose Brink, whom I set to keep watch on you, found out that you had invented the new cannon, then I knew that if I could only induce you to work with me, I should hold the boasted British Navy at my mercy!"

"How?"

Jack was puffing at his cigar as coolly as ever. He more than half-guessed what the answer would be.

"Are you such a fool that you need to ask that?" Graves demanded harshly. His tones vibrated with excitement. The same excitement glittered in his cold eyes. "Look, Jack English, with the help of your cannon, I can destroy the British Navy and drag the British Empire into the dust!" He went on speaking in an intense, sunken tone, which only Jack could hear, as if he intended to run no risk of being overheard over the waste of ice and snow.

Through his spies, whom he kept constantly at work all over the world, Graves had learnt that a European Power, a rival of Great Britain, was planning to make war on her, and was only waiting till it could put on the seas a fleet equal to that of the British Navy. Many years would have to pass before any rival could hope to do this in the ordinary course of things.

But Clement Graves knew that if he could induce Jack to give up the secret of the cannon, he could then, not only arm his one cruiser with the new weapon, but could turn out the new cannons in his arsenal on the island. These cannons he could sell to the enemy of the British Empire, and that enemy's fleet, even if numerically inferior, would become so immeasurably more powerful through being armed with Jack English's cannon, that the British Fleet would sink to second place at once, and would be outclassed in the fight for existence.

"I could make such a bargain with this rival Power that I should be the richest man in the world, and I should, besides, have gained such a revenge as no other man ever knew," Clement Graves said. "Why should you hesitate to join me, Jack English? The *Milord*, has made you an out-cast. I will make you a millionaire, and give you freedom and safety if you will give me the secret of the cannon!"

Jack English threw away the stump of his cigarette.

"I have answered you once," he said. "I will not betray the Empire, and I will have nothing to do with you, who killed my father!"

"It was in fair revenge," Clement Graves returned, biting his lip. "I advise you to think carefully before you throw your chance away."

"I will not agree!"

"Not if refusal costs you your life?"

"No!"

Jack spoke with steady deliberation. He thought he knew all that his defiance would cost him, but he was ready to pay the price rather than become a traitor. No harm should befall the Empire through him. Jack was disturbed, in spite of himself, by the fashion in which Clement Graves received his defiance. Had the man with the twisted foot burst into savage anger and open threats, it would have been easy enough to have answered him. But he simply nodded in an indifferent way, while a smile quivered on his thin lips. It was a sinister smile and bodiless of evil.

"Just as you like," the man with the twisted foot said carelessly. "But come with me. I have something more to show you."

Jack hesitated. He was wondering if it would be of any use to make an attack on Graves and try to master and extort terms from him.

He knew that the man was armed, while he himself had no weapon. This, however, was not restraining him, but the fact that Joe was in the power of Clement Graves's men. If anything was done by him—Jack—against the master of the island, Joe would probably be made to pay dearly for it. So Jack kept his hands thrust into his pockets, and walked off at the man's side. He would have to wait for a better opportunity.

It was a long walk over the ice, and, as they went on, Jack saw that, behind the great workshop, there was a town with a fortress on one extremity, though whether this was to repel the attacks of any invaders, or to overawe the captive toilers if they were tempted to revolt, he could not be sure. From the embrasures of the fortress scowled the black muzzles of cannon.

THE GREAT LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT THURSDAY:

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Order in Advance.

They went a long way past the fortress and the town, and then Clement Graves stopped suddenly.

"See there!" he said.

They had come to the brink of a great crevice in the ice, forty feet across and fully a hundred feet in depth. Across it had been run a rope, fastened at either end to two staves driven into the ice, and from the centre of this rope hung a cord, the end of which was tied round the wrist of a boyish, ragged figure, which was thus dangling over the crevice.

It was Joe, the street boy!

Crouching on the other side of the crevice, close to the end of the rope, was Ambrose Brink. He had a sharp look in his grasp, and the razor-like edge of the blade was resting on the taut strands of the rope. A movement of his wrist and the rope would be severed, and all would be over with the boy, who would be dashed, shapeless and shattered, into the depths below.

"Now, Jack English," Clement Graves said, with a triumphant, cruel smile, "will you give me the secret of the cannon? If you do not, I will signal to Brink to cut the rope, and the boy will go to his death—and you will be a murderer!"

CHAPTER 5.

Baffling a Scoundrel—In Peril of their Lives—Playing a Daring Game—The Dash Through the Channel of Ice—Jack English, Hero of the Empire.

FOR the first time since he had confronted Clement Graves in the cabin of the *Siren*, Jack English stood himself at a standstill. His heart seemed to be beating as he stared at the boyish figure dangling between life and death over the crevice.

The secret, or Joe's life!

It was no longer a matter of what might happen to himself. This new peril, which had been devised with such ingenuity, menaced the boy who had stood by him in his troubles, and had shown himself such a brave and true friend.

Joe's eyes were closed. All the colour had faded from his face, to leave it an ashen hue, and he hung heavily from the cord. At first Jack thought he was dead already, but then he saw the boy's lips moving slightly.

Could he doom Joe to a dreadful fate by refusing to give in to the man with the twisted foot?

It was a fearful dilemma, and Jack's brain rebelled. He confronted and tried to solve it. On the one hand was the life of his boy-child, on the other hand was the safety of the Empire, the honour, perchance the existence, of the British Navy, and the lives of countless men who would perish in the sanguinary war which would be inevitable if Clement Graves was once the master of the cannon.

What could he do? What should he do?

For a minute that seemed an endless hour of terrible suspense, Jack debated the point. Then he made up his mind in a flash. He thought he saw his way clear. With a suddenness and daring which left his enemy no time to prepare for the attack, he sprang on Graves, gripped him by the throat, and bore him to the ground. With the same desperate swiftness, he got his hand into the outer pocket, and jerked out a revolver, the outlines of which had been seen through the cloth. The muzzle of the weapon was pressed against the temple of Clement Graves as he lay on his back.

"Now, it's my turn!" Jack English said through his teeth. "Give that scoundrel on the other side of the crevice a chance to pull the boy back into safety or I swear I'll show you no mercy! I'll not see the boy killed, and I'll not let myself without making you pay for it!"

Looking up into the young lieutenant's set face, Clement read there that he was a lost man if he did not do as he was bidden.

Jack's blood was up, and he intended to stick at it till he saved Joe or, if he could not save him, to avenge his death. Suddenly the master of the island gave the order to the British.

"Pull the boy back!"

Brink snarled like a baffled wild beast, which he was in blood and had been baffled of it; but he dared not disobey the command of his terrible master. Dropping his revolver, he reached down over the crevice for another cord, which he fastened to Joe's shoulders, and pulled the boy on to the ice.

For less than a minute Joe lay there motionless, incapable of making an effort on his own behalf. Suddenly Clement Graves, who was prompted by Jack, Brink cut the rope which was fastened round the boy's wrist. No sooner had this been done than Joe leaped to his feet, and was off with a shot. He tore over the ice at lightning speed, and was paused to look back and shout:

"Don't bother yourself about me, guv'nor! I'll look after myself, and it will be my own fault if that limping demon comes back to me again! You think of yourself!"

But Joe disappeared. Brink dared not attempt to pursue after him, for Jack threatened that if he did either he would pull the trigger and send Clement Graves out of the world. It was not until the boy had made good his escape that Jack rose and allowed the ex-slaver to get to his feet.

It was then too late for Jack to seek to escape on his own account. A number of the men of the island, who had followed the affair from a distance, came rushing up, and the young fellow was surrounded and outnumbered. He fought for liberty; but he had no real chance. A couple of men disabled two of his assailants, but then he was overpowered by sheer numbers, and dragged down, and his hands were bound behind him.

But when Graves stood the personification of livid, malignant hate, it seemed as if his thin lips were bound to utter a word for Jack's death, but he restrained himself with a gasp.

"Do you think you have beaten me, Jack English!" he hissed. "I will see! You do not know what I can do to you. I will have the secret from you in the end, if I have it from your heart!"

He answered by silent contempt. He knew that he must be paid time at the hands of his enemy; but his anxiety was for Joe. Could the boy retain his liberty, and, above all, the find means to sustain life when he was alone in the open wilderness to which he had fled?

He almost sank when he thought of what Joe would have to undergo even if he avoided recapture; but he had a chance in the street boy's pluck and endurance, and he was sure that Joe would never give in while he could stir up his own behalf.

He did not wait for long before experiencing something of what Clement Graves intended him to suffer. He was destined to be one of the captive workmen—to take part in the vast workshop, and there toil almost day and night for want of food, and under the lash of the task-masters, who were ordered to show him no pity.

His sufferings were so great that he was sometimes glad to wish himself dead. The days were full of agony and sorrow, and the nights were little, if any, better, for he was whipped but the briefest snatches of sleep being allowed with the whip, and driven back to his labour.

His only thought of giving in ever came to him. If he could do anything else for the Empire, he could die for it. He was determined to do, rather than part with the secret of the man with the twisted foot was so eager to keep his keeping.

At intervals Clement Graves came into the works, and when Jack's arms folded, a sneer on his pallid features, he would ask some question on his lips:

"Are you tired of being an obstinate fool, Jack English? Will you give me the secret of the cannon? Will you exchange this dog's life for the lot of a millionaire, or will you suffer endless slavery?"

But since did Jack make him any reply, save by a complete and defiant silence. It maddened Graves and deprived him of his impassive coolness, so that he raved with anger, and ordered his men to use their whips until the young workman could scarcely stand—sometimes, indeed, until he fell insensible.

He would not break the spirit of Jack English. The days passed and lengthened into months. Jack lost track of the reckoning of time, but he knew that he must be a slave on the island for the greater part of a year.

At all this time Jack was never allowed to go out into the open, but nothing could prevent rumours of what was going on outside from filtering in to the enslaved workers. They knew that the great warship was finished, and that the day was drawing near when the channel amidst the ice would be open, so that she could be floated out into the sea.

It was a daring plan suggested itself to Jack. He persuaded toolers far outnumbered their guards, who were then under control because they were armed and outnumbered men were not. Many of the workers were strong and fit, and too weak to be equal to any effort; but the others were still possessed of the strength necessary to bring aid for liberty and revenge on those who had done such cruel injuries on them.

It might not be done, if enough of the desperate workers could be induced to revolt against their task-masters. They would have but one chance in a million, but they would have a chance.

It was Jack's idea, and he did not allow it to die when it once sprang to life in his brain.

The workers all slept in wretched pens at the end of the

great workshop, and the guards grew careless, thinking they were too cowed to attempt any mischief. Watching for his chance, Jack, at dead of night, crept about among them, whispering his plan to them, and discovering which among them would help him to carry it out. Over a hundred agreed to rise against their tyrants when he gave them the signal. Many of them had thought of rising before; but they had not had a daring leader, without whom they were helpless to do anything.

They had found a leader now, and one who feared nothing. One night, when midnight was close at hand, they rose. The movement was so swift and well-timed, that victory was half-won at the start. Armed with sledge-hammers, iron and steel bars, and any other such weapons as they could seize, they attacked their guards. The fight was a savage one while it lasted. Some of them were shot down at once; but the others, inspired by Jack's voice and example, stood firm.

Jack was at their head, in the thick of the danger. He seemed to bear a charmed life. Shot after shot was aimed at him; but he was unhurt, and urged his men on.

"Death or freedom! Strike for your lives and liberty, men! To surrender is death!"

His ringing voice rose above the din of the fight and the crack of firearms and the curses and shouts of the enraged task-masters. He swung a great sledge-hammer in both hands, dealing terrible blows, and as each blow an enemy went down and he advanced a step. When Clement Graves appeared on the scene, it was to find his men in full retreat for the doors of the works, with the revolted prisoners pressing them hard. In vain he frantically tried to rally them. They were full of fear of Jack English, and would not stand. They were driven out, and the doors were closed and fastened against them with massive iron bars.

Jack was in possession of the arsenal of the island. He lost no time.

For the next three days and nights the arsenal was besieged by Graves and his men, and defended by half the force at Jack's disposal. The latter had found and taken possession of all the arms and ammunition in the works, and were thus able to make a telling defence. And while they fought to keep their enemies out, the other half of the revolted prisoners worked with feverish haste to get through the work their leader had set them to do.

Jack English was finishing his cannon at last!

Anticipating that Jack was to give in to him in the end, Clement Graves had caused a dozen cannons to be fashioned on the lines of the model which had been taken from the cellar. All these guns were complete, except for the last detail which was to make them so deadly and formidable. Under Jack's directions the workers added this detail to each gun; and when they had done their work, Jack had enough cannons of the new and terrible type to have swept out of the ocean any modern Dreadnought that had been within range.

He had no ammunition as yet, but he intended to get it. When the cannon were finished, he drew up his men in fighting order, and caused the doors of the works to be flung open. His men had been without food for three days; but their very hunger, added to their desperation, made them far more formidable than before.

When they poured out into the open, and once more attacked Clement Graves and his followers, it was with the stern resolve to win their liberty from slavery or to die.

The fight this time was waged on very different terms than before. Jack's men were armed now, and they had new allies to help them. The prisoners who had been working on the warship had learnt of what had happened, and had revolted in their turn. Graves was not only taken at a disadvantage, but outnumbered. His men fought like so many tigers for a time; but they were hemmed in between two bodies of foes, and their ranks thinned rapidly.

Fighting like a creature of evil, Clement Graves forced his way to the front, and confronted Jack English. It was for less than a minute. Jack saw the murderer of his father, the villain who had done his utmost to force him to become a traitor, and the sledge-hammer rose above his head. As it did so, Graves levelled his revolver first in his face. But as he pulled the trigger, the figure of Joe—thinner, more ragged, but every whit as plucky as before—wriggled to his side through the press of struggling men, and, jumping up, caught his arm and jerked it down. He fired simultaneously; but the bullet flew wide, and ere the report had died away the sledge-hammer swung down!

Jack English had struck the most righteous blow of his life, and the worst and most vile enemy of the Empire lay dead at his feet.

"Save himself who can!"

The waiting yell rose from the dead slaver's remaining followers, who were utterly disheartened by his fall. They were swept aside like chaff. Only one prisoner was taken, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

and he was Ambrose Brink, who threw himself at Jack's feet, and, clinging to his knees, shrieked for mercy.

It was an easy task after that for Jack to seize the warship. There were enough good sailors amongst the men whom he had led to victory and liberty to form a capable crew. The new cannons were dragged aboard, and all the shells which Graves had prepared for his own use in the war he had anticipated against Great Britain.

The warship had already been launched in the thawed channel. She was surrounded by drifting masses of ice, but her powerful engines made short work of these. Under the command of Jack English, the great ship forged ahead, scattering the ice before her bows. And, as she went, Jack made the first use of his cannon. Broadside after broadside was directed against the fortresses, the town, and all the works of the hidden island amidst the frozen wilderness, until nothing but ruins were left.

That was the end of Jack English's trials.

The warship cleared the channel in safety. The voyage homeward through the southern seas was a perilous one; but the young naval lieutenant's superb seamanship stood him in good stead, and the great ship obeyed him like a thing of life, while his crew were only too eager to execute his orders.

On the voyage home Joe told how he managed to live in the wilderness of ice on the island, stealing near the town at night to pick up scraps of food, and avoiding capture. Nothing but his pluck had kept him alive; but he had come

through, and as soon as he had heard the sounds of fighting he had hurried to take part in it.

"And it was well for me you did, Joe," Jack said. "I shall be your debtor as long as I live."

"Say my friend, gov' nor, and I'll ask nothing better," the boy said eagerly. And they gripped hands on it.

No need to describe Jack's welcome home, nor the sensation his story caused. His cannon was adopted, as a matter of course, by the Admiralty, and its possession made the British Navy even more supreme than it had been before.

And Jack's good name was cleared also. In the hope of escaping a part of the punishment his crimes had merited, Ambrose Brink confessed that he had lied when he had accused Jack of selling him the code-book. The thief who had attempted to kill him was another member of the crew, one of Clement Graves's innumerable spies, who had been set on by the man with the twisted foot to commit the theft that Jack might be falsely accused and ruined, and who had subsequently attacked Brink because that spy had been robbed of the reward he had been promised.

All who had helped Jack on the island amid the ice were richly rewarded, and Joe did not know himself when he received his share.

But as for Jack English himself, he thought nothing of any reward in comparison with the restoration of his name and his reinstatement in the glorious British Navy, which he had risked all to serve.

THE END.

(*Tom Merry's Sub* in next week's "Gem" Library—usual price.)

You can Start Reading this Story now.



Read this First.

Oswald Yorke, a young ex-highwayman, joins the Navy as a midshipman under the name of John Smith. His ship, the *Cynthia*, is dispatched to the Island of San Andrado, to investigate the conduct of a certain family of planters named Wilson, who are suspected of complicity with the notorious pirate, Kester. The warship lands a party of bluejackets, who find the island laid waste and the Wilsons fled. Amidst the general ruin, however, a negro is found, who informs them that the Wilsons have left the island in company with the pirate Kester. The bluejackets then return to their ship. Oswald and his friend Maxwell are making their way to their quarters, when a sailor named Dicky Davis comes hurrying after them.

(Now go on with the story.)

Before the Captain.

"Smith, the skipper, has sent me to bring you," said Davis.

"They could tell by the expression on his face that there was something wrong.

"The captain wants me on the quarter-deck?" asked Oswald quietly.

"Yes. And that little brute has been reporting you for something or other. What have you been up to?"

"Nothing," said Oswald quietly.

Davis turned to Maxwell.

"Has he been up to something, or hasn't he? Whether

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

NEXT

THURSDAY:

he has or not, the skipper is in a fine way. If that's really serious, I mean?" asked the little chap eagerly.

"That depends how the captain takes it," said Maxwell.

Meanwhile, Oswald had walked to the quarter-deck, finding himself in the presence of his superior officer saluted.

Captain Garvin was there, with Mr. Briggs and Lancing.

The captain looked at Oswald fixedly. "Mr. Briggs has been obliged to report to me your gross insubordination on your part, Mr. Smith," said the captain, in a cold, level voice.

"To my knowledge, I have not been guilty of any act," said Oswald quietly.

"He lies!" cried Mr. Briggs excitedly.

A shade of annoyance passed over the captain's face, and the manner of the accused was decidedly more dignified than that of the accuser.

"Will you repeat your accusation, if you please, Mr. Briggs, in order that Mr. Smith may hear it?" said Oswald.

"As I told you, sir, a negro lad was found by some of our men skulking in a dark corner of the house. The fellow was brought before me, and I questioned him about the matter. My questions, kindly put, were met with obstinate

sullen silence and looks of defiance. I happened to have a small twig in my hand—it was no more than a twig, but I threatened the youth that, unless he answered me, I would strike him. Scarcely had I uttered the words

Order In Advance.

USUAL SIZE—USUAL PRICE.

Mr. Smith flew at me, and wrenched the twig out of my hand, and hurled it out of the window."

"And then?" asked Captain Garvin gravely.

"I reeled round, dumbfounded by this sudden attack. Mr. Smith had been standing behind me at the time. I told him that I would report his conduct the moment we set foot on the frigate, and he laughed in my face. The act was really insulting. Had we been alone, it would have been sufficient bad; but, as it was, the men were standing round, and they took their cue from Mr. Smith's behaviour, and they began to laugh and jeer."

"Captain Garvin's face darkened.

"And the negro youth?"

"I took the opportunity to escape, assisted, I believe, by the fact, while my back was turned. The whole occurrence was a breach of discipline; and, though it pains me to have to bring a charge against one of the younger officers of the ship, I have done so now, sir, feeling it my bounden duty."

"You did your duty, sir," said the captain. Then he turned to Oswald.

"You have heard what Mr. Briggs has said. What have you to say in reply?"

"I have nothing to say in reply, sir," said Oswald quietly.

"You admit the truth of the charge, then?" said the captain sternly.

"The captain stamped his foot, with a gesture of irritation.

"You say you have nothing to say, but you insinuate that Mr. Briggs' statement is false. This makes your serious breach of discipline only the greater. Have you nothing to say in defence?"

"I ask Mr. Briggs a question, sir?"

"I returned to Mr. Briggs.

"I ask you just now, sir, of the negro as a lad and a sailor. Have you no idea of his age, sir?"

"I do not know." "Do you think I study the age of every nigger that comes in my path?" shouted Mr. Briggs.

"Captain Garvin interrupted.

"I ask Mr. Smith the right to ask you a question. I am entitled to answer it, sir."

"I cannot answer it. I had no opportunity of judging the man."

"Oswald," said Oswald, turning to the captain, "the child is no more than five or six years of age."

"Oswald," spluttered Mr. Briggs.

"He was a baby, sir—no more. He was cowed and terrified. It was not defiance, but fear. And Mr. Briggs spoke roughly and threateningly, and had already

"Oswald shot a swift glance at Mr. Briggs. The captain, however, did not turn towards the second-lieutenant.

"Is it true what you say, Mr. Smith," he said, in a stern voice. "Mr. Briggs was your superior officer; you were in his sight of the men. The crime—for it it is a crime—of the most serious in the Service."

"Oswald bowed his head.

"Do you say nothing further to say?" asked the captain.

"Nothing, sir," said Oswald, in a low voice.

"The captain turned to Mr. Lancing, and muttered a few words. Then the first lieutenant turned to Oswald, and held up his hand.

"You are under arrest, Mr. Smith," he said. "Your

"The captain unbuckled the dirk and handed it to Mr. Lancing, who called up a couple of Marines.

"Mr. Smith in a cell," he said shortly.

"The Marines pivoted, but he said nothing. Then, with a bow to the captain, and then to Mr. Lancing, he walked off, with a Marine on either side of him, walkoist

"I say that, even in that moment of disgrace, he was fully alive to the seriousness of his position. In the eyes of a superior officer was a crime for which there was but one punishment, and that punishment was

"As to what the provocation, the crime established by the facts, and the offender's life paid the penalty.

"The offender was marched between his guards to the bowels of the ship, his thoughts were not of his position, but of the girl who had been his life to save his.

"The other officers on the quarter-deck watched his retiring with a glance.

"The man Mr. Briggs who broke the ellence first. This is very painful. Had not the assault been so sudden and so daringly, I would never have reported anything else was left for me to do. The whole discipline of the ship depends upon such outbreaks being instantly

dealt with and put down. For, Smith himself I am sorry, and I hope it will not go too hard with him."

"Your kind heart does you credit," said Lancing, with a most palpable sneer.

"Your own conduct, sir," said the captain sternly, "is not credible. You apparently terrorized this black child; you had already struck him, because that I sent you in charge of this expedition. I feel sure that, had Mr. Lancing gone in your place, this would never have occurred."

"I trust, sir, that you do not think that I am capable of inflicting injury on an inoffensive child, and thus earning for myself the contempt of the crew?" said Mr. Lancing.

"The contempt of the crew! How dare you say—"

"spluttered Briggs.

"Date is a strong word to use here, sir," said the captain. "You will kindly retire."

"Mr. Briggs turned away; but before he had reached the steps young Garvin, with flushed face, sprang up them, and approached the captain.

"Sir, may I speak?" he asked breathlessly.

"The captain and Mr. Lancing glanced at the boy's excited face curiously.

"On what subject?" asked the captain.

"I understand that, Smith has been placed under arrest."

"Mr. Briggs had already descended the steps, when the captain asked him to return.

"Mr. Garvin has something to say on the subject of your complaint against Mr. Smith. You had better stay to hear it."

"May I tell my story in my own way, sir?" asked Garvin.

"You may. I presume it bears on this matter?"

"If Mr. Briggs has charged Smith with snatching a stick from his hand, it does, sir," said Garvin.

"He told the true story of the occurrence in the house of the Wilsons rapidly but intelligibly. He described how the covering and trembling child had been dragged out of its place of concealment; how Mr. Briggs had shouted at it and intimidated it until it was beside itself with terror. He told how Briggs had ordered the boatsman to cut a stick, in order that he might whip the child, and so force him to speak; how the old man had feigned deafness; how Oswald had flatly refused; and how one of the men had finally gone and brought back a stick about as substantial as a blade of grass.

"And was this the twig with which Mr. Briggs struck the child?" asked the captain.

"No, sir. Mr. Briggs flung it away from him, and went out and cut one for himself—a stout stick. He returned with it; and because the child could not answer him he struck it a blow with the stick."

"Garvin's face was flushed; he was panting with excitement.

"It was a cruel and cowardly thing to do. I looked at the men, and I could see that they could hardly restrain themselves. That man—I mean Mr. Briggs—raised the stick the second time. I was just behind him; the stick almost grazed my face. Without a thought, I grasped it and jerked it out of his hand, and flung it out of the window behind me."

"You?" cried Captain Garvin and Mr. Lancing in a breath.

"Yes, sir, I did, and that is why I have come to tell you the truth."

"I do not believe it! I believe this has been invented to shield Smith!" cried Briggs.

"The captain swung round on his heel and faced Briggs.

"Silence!" he said sternly. "Mr. Garvin is my nephew, and I know that he comes of a race that finds lying a difficult art to acquire. You have evidently behaved in a manner in which no officer should. Your brutal violence aroused the feeling against you which you endeavoured to persuade us was caused by Mr. Smith's defiance and opposition. You have brought a charge against Mr. Smith, and he was content to submit to the penalty rather than shield himself at the expense of his messmate. You acted in a manner unworthy of an officer and a gentleman, and your disgrace was well merited."

"Captain Garvin turned to his young namesake.

"You say that the stick passed close to your face, and you seized it and jerked it out of his hand? You did not touch Mr. Briggs?"

"No, sir. I only caught the end of the stick. Mr. Briggs was standing some way from me."

"Then the captain turned again to the discomfited lieutenant.

"You complain of an assault. You said that Mr. Smith sprang at you. This, I think, is rather a different story. You were not touched by anyone. How, then, could you have been assaulted?"

"There is nothing for me to say," said Briggs sullenly.

"You have good reason for siding against me."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 145.

Captain Garvin flushed from brow to chin.

"You insinuate, sir, that because this young man is bound to me by ties of kinship, that I favour him unduly. That is an insult against my honour as an officer and a gentleman. I shall take an early opportunity of demanding satisfaction for this, sir. Meanwhile, I desire you to withdraw from this quarter-deck, and so long as I remain in command of this ship you shall not set foot on it again. You are relieved from your duty."

Mr. Briggs opened his mouth to speak, but hesitated, and then in silence shuffled away, looking like what he really was—a whipped and beaten cur.

The Light in the Night.

It seemed to Oswald that the door of his cell had scarcely closed on him before it was again opened, and a sergeant of Marines presented himself.

"The captain wishes to see you, sir," he said respectfully. Oswald arose and stepped out of the dark and noisome place with a feeling of intense relief. The cells on board the old wooden ships of those days were not pleasant places, and to exchange the gloom of one for the brightness of the deck was like the exchange from Hades to Paradise.

The captain and Mr. Lancing were still on the quarter-deck. Mr. Briggs was no longer visible, but in his place was Mr. Garvin.

"I have done you an injustice, Mr. Smith," said the captain. "I am glad that the whole truth of this matter has come to light before you have suffered much undeserved punishment. Your silence was foolish, perhaps, but I honour you for it. Mr. Garvin has admitted that it was he and not you who snatched the stick out of Mr. Briggs's hand."

"I knew that it would be unnecessary for me to defend myself, sir," Oswald said quietly. "I will admit that it was only an accident that prevented me from being guilty of the act, and that accident was Mr. Garvin was a fraction of a second quicker than I was."

Captain Garvin laughed outright; then held out his hand to Oswald with a frank, friendly air.

"The matter is ended," he said. "I shall be glad of the company of you two young gentlemen to dinner to-night."

"Such is life!" remarked Garvin philosophically, as he and Oswald made their way to the cockpit to receive the congratulations of the others. "One minute confined to cells, with the prospect of being hanged at the yard-arm, the next invited to dine with the captain, and the next very likely—"

At that moment his foot slipped, and he tumbled down the hatchway headfirst. At the bottom he cannoned against the bulkhead that divided off the midshipmen's quarters from the cockpit, and shot right into the midst of a small party consisting of Backridge, Davis, and Maxwell, who were busily discussing the affair of Briggs and Oswald.

Garvin sat up, and rubbed the back of his head.

"Just what I say," he remarked. "You never know one moment where you will be the next!"

To remain off the island was but to lose time. There was little probability of the pirates returning. It was, therefore, to judge from the manner in which the place had been ransacked, it was evident that they had taken leave of the place for good.

Before the light had waned they had weighed anchor and once more stood out to sea.

Over the dinner-table the captain and Mr. Lancing discussed the probable course that the pirates would take. Evidently their first attempt would be to dispose of the slaves they had taken from the island.

When the cloth had been cleared, the captain brought out his chart and maps; and he and Mr. Lancing got their heads together.

It was while they were engaged in this occupation that old Bigben presented himself at the door of the cabin.

"A sail, sir, over our lee bow!"

"A sail?"

"Well, sir, more correctly speaking, I should have said a light. We can't make nothing out of her at present."

A few minutes later the captain and Mr. Lancing finished their discussion, rose and went up on to deck, followed by Oswald and Garvin.

There, sure enough, was a tiny speck of light in the blackness. So small was it that at first it was indistinguishable until the sight became accustomed to the gloom. Now it would vanish altogether for a moment and reappear again.

"A ship's light, sure enough," said the captain. "Possibly one of the pirates. Pass the order to douse all lights. Mr. Lancing."

In a few moments every light on the Cynthia was out, and then like a huge, dark shadow, the frigate drifted slowly ahead.

"We'll keep the light in view, if they keep on until dawn. Mr. Bigben," said the captain. "Report to me at once if anything occurs."

He went below again, accompanied by Mr. Lancing, leaving the deck in charge of the master.

All through the night they kept the light in sight, during the short intervals that it vanished.

When dawn broke it revealed to the watchers on the Cynthia a curious-looking craft, that occasioned a good deal of speculation among the men. She was manifestly to be distinctly seen with the aid of a glass.

She was a taut-rigged hermaphrodite brig, of two masts and schooner aft; her hull was long and narrow, coppered to the bends; her deck was flush and broad, and on the forward-deck they could see the bright glint of a long gun. Very long and stout were her foremast and sprit, and her mainmast was of unusual height. In all she was a strange-looking, and therefore a suspicious, vessel.

It was evident that the sudden appearance of the vessel had had a great effect on the crew of the brig, for they could be seen scuttling here and there over the deck, and presently fresh sails were hoisted, and the brig set to work making every effort to get away.

The captain, who had come up on deck, ordered the vessel to be made in chase, and away the Cynthia went, with a strong breeze behind her.

Away, too, went the brig, under a cloud of sail. A stern chase is a long chase, and for hours the two vessels kept very much the same distance apart, but towards noon it was evident that the Cynthia was beginning to gain rapidly on the fugitive.

Something had evidently gone wrong aloft, for the masts of men could be seen busy in the rigging, hauling in the shrouds and stays like a swarm of ants.

But try as they might, they could not repair the damage

that had been done.

In an hour the Cynthia was almost within reach of the brig, extending up any further, and escape ran up the mast, flag, and bore of the wind.

At the word of command the crew of the Cynthia sprang to clear the vessel for action. Whatever it was, she sailed like a French flag, and, therefore, an enemy of the spirits of the men.

They could see the vessel almost within reach of the broad level of the crowded with men, gun forward, and distinctly seen at a moment later it was clear that the crew were firing like niggers. More guns up to the position with the and dexterity for long practice.

(This splendid story will be concluded shortly.)

How Do You Do?

WHOM TO WRITE TO—The Editor, "GEM" LIBRARY, 23-B, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, who will be pleased to hear from you.

"THE TERRIBLE THREE'S SUB."

Famously for their fondness for sport and fun, you will find that in our next issue (usual size and price) Tom Herry & Co. are also capable of exceptional thoughtfulness and kindness. This is, after all, nothing out of the way, but I am sure you will be pleased with "the manner" in which "they" really wound.

P.S.—Do likewise and order your GEM now.

The Editor

50/- SILVER LEVER
for 15/-.

Swiss Gold Silver Cases, Lever and Horizontal Jewelled movement, removable dust and anti-rust Cap, fitted ready for the pocket. Guaranteed 10 years. Just as an advertisement send this Watch to any address on receipt of 10/- and upon payment of the last of 15 weekly instalments of 1/- each, making a total of 15/- in all. A handsome Chain is given FREE.



This Jewelled Watch is worth double, send it to-day and we will pay you 1/- more than you need 1/- to-day postage 4d. extra.

CRAIG, CRAIG & Co., Dept. 5,
87, Dunlop Street, Glasgow.

IF YOU WANT Good Cheap Photographic Material or Cameras, send postcard for Samples and Catalogue FREE - Works: JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.

MINSTREL SHOW. Book full of Fun, comic songs, jokes, musical sketches, negro songs, dances, burlesque, and 12 illustrations. **WILKES & CO., STOCKTON, RUSSY.** "Story writing Guide," 2/6.

A SILVER WATCH FREE

For Postal Order 1s. (or 15 stamps) we will forward a massive 18-ct Gold Stimulation Chain, together with our generous offer of a Solid Silver Watch Free per return post (lady's or gent's). These watches have gold silver cases, reliable movements, and are guaranteed timekeepers. We are simply giving them away to introduce our goods. - (Dept. C) LONDON SUPPLY STORES, Invicta House, Swanscombe, Kent.

6d. DEPOSIT.

This Handsome Phonograph, with large Flower Horn and Two Records, complete, will be sent to any address on receipt of 6d. DEPOSIT and upon payment of the last of 18 weekly instalments of 6d. Two 1/- Records are given free. - (Dept. C) LONDON SUPPLY STORES, Invicta House, Swanscombe, Kent.

2/6 EASY TERMS

MONTHLY

and you wear the 30/- Watch while paying 2/6 monthly payments. **Masters' Veracity Lever** is famous throughout the world for true time-keeping. Not one day gaining, losing time, or stopping, but 24 years' true time-keeping. Lever movement, jewelled, constant motion balance, jewel-set cap, gold dial, gold silver case, gold hands. 27/- cash, or 30/- Easy Terms. Send 2/6 now, and (Receipt or Keyring) 30/- watch is sent from a pair 50/-s receipt, and 25/- same day. Also supplied with 10 gold cases. Keyring 30/- - same terms. **Catalogue Free.**

GOLD WATCH 30/- Monthly Catalogue POST FREE.

7 Years' warranty. Catalogue Free.



MASTERS, LTD., 7, Hope Street, Rye.

35/- GOLD 35/-



Jewelled Movement, Keyless Action, Finest Hair, Best Gold Case, beautifully engraved. Lady's size, true time-keeper, price 31/6 Cash, or 35/- Easy Terms. **SEND 2/6 NOW, 1/6 2/6 on receipt, and 2/6 monthly** and you have the watch to wear while paying for it. 7 years' warranty - Gent's size, 30/-.

MASTERS' GOLD 35/-

COIRAGE or BIRD'S WATCH. 35/- - any time engraved by hand with an INITIAL for 4/- extra. fancy dial. Jewelled Movement. Gold plate, polished.



35/- - any time engraved by hand with an INITIAL for 4/- extra. fancy dial. Jewelled Movement. Gold plate, polished.

THE 'MONARCH.'
THE SWEETEST OF ALL ACCORDEONS.

15/9 Cash 17/6 Easy Terms

A very superior instrument with 4000 Acorns, Proof Bottom Keys, Four Basses, Two Sets of Reeds. Price 15/9 Cash or 17/6 Easy Terms. Send 2/6 now, 1/6 2/6 on delivery, and 2/6 monthly. 42/- Phonographs on Easy Terms, 4/6 Monthly. **LIST FREE.**

MASTERS, LTD., 7, Hope Street, Rye.

Advertisement Sent Post Paid to your Door

2-2 suit
FOR **15/-**



Give name and address, and we will send you FREE Patterns of Cloth and 100 of fashion plates. You will see with what we send, and you will be satisfied with the samples, even if you do not order a suit.

CRAIG, CRAIG & CO.,
Dept. Office (Dept. 5),
87, Dunlop St., GLASGOW.

7/6 BOOTS
Lady's & Gent's **1/-** Per Week.
Send size.

EVERYTHING

you can possibly want to read will be found in the grand

CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER

of

"THE BOYS' HERALD"

NOW ON SALE.

Simply told. **"CONJURING TRICKS FOR CHRISTMAS"** Simple To do.

A Splendid Article

in the Grand Christmas Double Number of

"THE BOYS' HERALD"

Now on Sale.

'FULL SATISFACTION OR FULL-MONEY BACK'

That's the motto, and we say "have your money back in full" if you are not "satisfied to repetition" with any goods you purchase from us. Because we know we are offering "Great Big Bargains" and raised this one to celebrate the "Half Birthday of our business," we give you a "Free Gift" if you only spend 1. — and we have half a million—500,000—gifts all ready to give away, as described in the list here given. When sending your order, don't forget to write you to choose one of the gifts for each shipping point; for example, if you send 1.3, choose any one of the 13

LIST OF FREE GIFTS

- No. X31.—THREE 4d BOOKLET XMAS CARDS**
No. X32.—THREE 4d BOOKLET XMAS CARDS
No. X33.—SIX 4d BOOKLET XMAS CARDS
No. X34.—TWELVE 1d VIEW POST CARDS
No. X35.—TWELVE 1d ASSORTED BOOKLETS
No. X36.—STAINLESS STEEL THERMOMETER
No. X37.—GEM SET BRUSH

CHOOSE ONE FOR EACH 1/- YOU SPEND

- No. X38.—GENT'S WATCH CHAIN**
No. X39.—SET OF STUDS AND LINKS
No. X40.—NECKLET AND PENDANT TOGETHER
No. X41.—CIGARETTE CASE AND MATCHES TOGETHER
No. X42.—MONEY BELT
No. X43.—GEM BRACELET AND PADLOCK
No. X44.—LADY'S LONG GUARD
No. X45.—CHILD'S WRITING SET

gifts; or if you send 2d choose one of the 13 gifts; or if you send 1d choose one of the 13 gifts—that is, one gift for each shipping point you spend. If you spend more than you would like to pay, order more than one gift from our post free list. For full particulars of our "Free Gifts Offer" of presents for Christmas, send a list of thousands of bargains to all shipping agents, write for Illustrated Catalogue of "Bargains by Post" and send post free to the address "on earth," The London Dispensing Dept., 99, The "Present House," Hastings, Kent.



No. U118.—This postal Train and Bell will delight any child. When wound in it runs round and round and whistles the train. Runs all the time. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U119.—A Thermometer to tell you how warm or cold it is, and a pointer to show, in numbers, and letters, all the things which are of a general kind and use. 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U120.—Only think, how really useful tools combined in one! Hammer, pin-nails, wire-cutters, choppers, screw-driver, long-screw, flat-knife, and table-knife. 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U121.—This will give you a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U122.—The very thing to send to your friends. It is a card with a picture of a child and a message. Price, 1.2, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.

XMAS CARDS

This box, Assorted "Great Value" Christmas Cards, 100 of them, is a box of cards that are not only beautiful but also very useful. They are all the latest designs and are all the latest designs. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.

25 FOR 1/3

As a Christmas present, throw in 25 Pretty Stationery, Floral, Navy, and many other popular designs, all of the latest and most up-to-date designs. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U123.—Now, this clock should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.

BARGAINS!



No. U124.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U125.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.

Our motto is—'FULL SATISFACTION OR FULL-MONEY BACK.'



No. U126.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U127.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



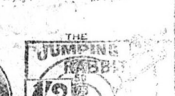
No. U128.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U129.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U130.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.



No. U131.—This is a clock that should be in every home. It is a clock with a green dial and a gold case. Price, 1.3, post free. **Free Gifts.** See list at top of page.

FREE Write to day for our Illustrated Catalogue of thousands of Bargains, and post free to the address **on earth.** **NOTE OUR ADDRESS: PAIN BROS., Dept. 996, The "PRESENTS HOUSE," HASTINGS, KENT.**