

# THE GEM 2<sup>d</sup>

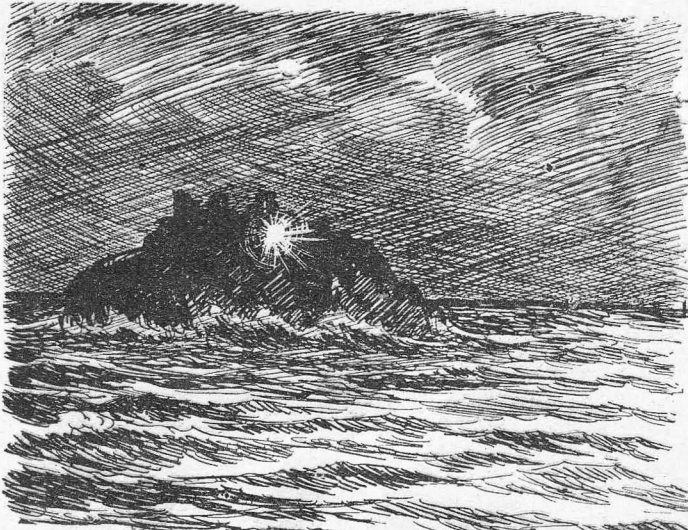
EVERY  
WEDNESDAY.



## THE PRISONER OF THE ROCK!

*(Read the amazing Holiday Adventure Story, dealing with Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's—inside.)*

THRILL, DRAMA AND ADVENTURE ARE ALL CONTAINED—



# The PRISONER of the ROCK!

by  
MARTIN CLIFFORD

It will be a long time before Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's holiday house-party in Cornwall forget their quest for the treasure of Penperro Rock. From the first, the mysterious island and the lure of its hidden gold had seemed to Tom Merry & Co. and their girl chums to hold the promise of adventure; but none dreamt of the startling surprises and fearful perils that were in store for them before their search came to an end!

## CHAPTER 1.

### "Help!"

"POOR old Baggy!" It was Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell at St. Jim's, who spoke, and his face was glum as he made the remark. It was not very often that anyone felt sorry for Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth.

Baggy was the fattest junior at St. Jim's—not even excepting Fatty Wynn, of the New House! Baggy was greedy, and he was generally selfish, and Monty Lowther of the Shell had more than once remarked that Baggy's code of honour would shame a pickpocket or a Hottentot. Altogether, Baggy was not a very popular member of the Lower School at St. Jim's, and so it was seldom indeed that anyone was to be heard saying: "Poor old Baggy!"

But Tom Merry had just said it, and yet no one seemed surprised. In fact, the faces of his companions showed that they agreed with Tom's unusual sentiment concerning the Falstaff of the Fourth.

"Yes, poor old Baggy!" nodded Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth. "It would be rotten if anything's happened to him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,123.

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swell of St. Jim's, shaking his aristocratic head dismally.

"I feel sure he'll turn up," put in Talbot of the Shell, jumping restlessly to his feet.

"But where the dickens can he have got to, if an accident has happened?" interjected George Figgins, of the New House.

No one answered Figgy's question, for the simple reason that no one had any suggestion to make concerning Baggy's whereabouts.

It had been early that evening, before dinner, that the juniors staying with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at Penperro House, the big house in Cornwall that Lord Eastwood—Arthur Augustus' father—had taken for the holidays, had first begun to feel anxiety over Baggy.

They had had a bone to pick with Baggy concerning a picnic-basket, of which Baggy had scoffed the contents. They had been searching for him everywhere, intending to make Baggy pay for his misdeed, and they had not been surprised at first when they had not found him.

It had seemed natural enough that Baggy, knowing he was in for trouble, should have made himself thoroughly scarce!

But when he had not appeared at dinner, and when he had still failed to put in an appearance, Lord Eastwood and the juniors and Ethel Cleveland—Arthur Augustus' pretty cousin—and her two chums, Doris Levison and Lady Peggy Brooke, had begun to feel seriously alarmed.

Penperro House was situated on great rugged cliffs in one of the wildest parts of Cornwall. If Baggy had left the house that evening, and sought a hiding-place from the wrath of his fellow-juniors on the wild cliff heights, it was quite possible that an accident had happened—that Baggy was lying somewhere on a lonely ledge, with a broken leg or other injuries.

It was an alarming possibility, and Lord Eastwood had sent out search-parties to hunt for Baggy. But the searchers had returned to report failure.

Baggy was not to be found anywhere along the cliffs near the house.

An hour later, when it was dark, and the last search-party had returned, the juniors and Lord Eastwood and some of the menservants had gone out again with lanterns.

Most of the searchers had now returned to the house again, after their second fruitless quest. Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners, Reginald Talbot, Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Figgins & Co. of the New House, were gathered in the library, waiting for the return of Lord Eastwood and the other four juniors, Herries and Digby, Levison and Clive.

Ethel & Co. had gone to bed long since, worried and anxious, and so had Wally D'Arcy of the Third, and his two chums, Reggie Manners and Frank Levison.

The faces of the group in the library were grave and anxious.

What had happened to Baggy?

Baggy might not be one of the most popular figures at St. Jim's—in fact, it had been only by means of a trick that he had managed to get himself included among the party at Penperro House! But Baggy, despite all his faults and failings, was such a well-known figure in their lives that the thought of him lying injured somewhere out there in the lonely darkness was one that chilled the hearts of everyone.

At sound of a step in the hall Tom Merry swung open the door eagerly.

Lord Eastwood had just entered the house, carrying a lantern. With him were Levison and Clive, Herries and Digby, and Roberts, the chauffeur.

## —IN THIS TOPPING STORY OF THE FAMOUS CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

But Baggy was not with them. Tom Merry's heart sank.

"No luck, sir?" he muttered.

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"None."

"No sign of poor old Baggy anywhere," said Levison quietly.

Lord Eastwood turned to Roberts.

"I am afraid it is not much use our searching further to-night," he said, in a voice that betrayed his troubled anxiety. "To-morrow, early, as soon as it is light—"

"Very good, sir."

Roberts, looking as grave as anyone, vanished in the direction of the servants' quarters. Lord Eastwood turned into the library, followed by the four juniors who had been with him on the cliffs.

"This is wotten, patah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Do you think there is any chance of Baggy turning up even now, sir?" asked Manners hesitantly.

"Yes, a bare chance," nodded Lord Eastwood. "We must continue to hope, my boy. It is possible that Trimble has cycled into the town and had a puncture, which might mean his having to walk a dozen miles or more."

The juniors did not look very hopeful over that possibility, however. They knew Baggy too well. It was highly improbable that Baggy would exert himself to the extent of

cycling all that distance over the hilly Cornish roads. Baggy was not a glutton for exercise.

Tom Merry turned restlessly to the window and stood staring out into the darkness.

A wind was beating in over the sea, and the great window was rimmed with salt.

The moon had not yet risen, but in the dim starlight the captain of the Shell could make out the dark top of the cliffs, and the foam-capped waves that thundered in towards the land, far below. Across the seething channel opposite the house he could see the black mass of the high, rocky island that rose from the waves nearly half a mile out to sea.

Penperro Rock, as the island was called, had been an object of great interest to the St. Jim's juniors and their three girl chums ever since their arrival in Cornwall at the beginning of the holidays. It was a romantic-looking pile, crowned by the gaunt ruins of an old monastery, and according to legend the treasure of the old-time monks still lay hidden somewhere amid those crumbling walls.

The juniors had, in fact, found a chart that had seemed to reveal the position of the treasure. But the chart had mysteriously vanished before Lord Eastwood and his youthful guests had had an opportunity of attempting to follow it up; for Penperro Rock was inaccessible except in the calmest weather, and as a rule the great Atlantic breakers, foaming round the treacherous hidden rocks at the base of the island, made a landing upon it impossible.

On one day only since their arrival in Cornwall had the St. Jim's party been able to land upon Penperro Rock. And on that occasion, without the stolen chart to follow, their search for the old monks' treasure had been fruitless.

"Is everyone else back?" asked Lord Eastwood, breaking the troubled silence in the library. He glanced round. "All

you youngsters are here, I see. But where is Gilbert Renfrew?"

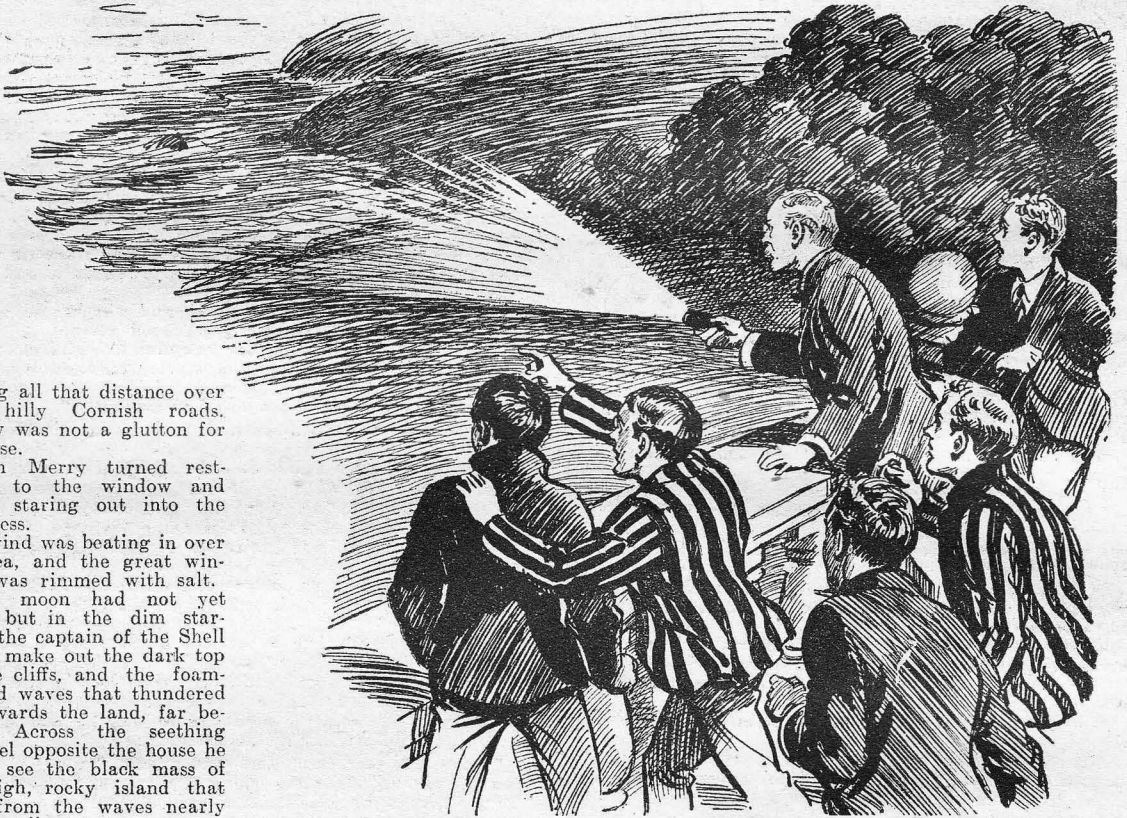
"He went out with us, looking for Baggy, sir," said Talbot. "But we got separated in the dark, and I haven't seen him since. He'll be back soon, I suppose."

Gilbert Renfrew had been the last to join the house-party under Lord Eastwood's hospitable roof.

He was a young man in the twenties, and he had arrived at Penperro House in dramatic circumstances.

One wild, stormy night, soon after the arrival of the St. Jim's party at the house, Figgins & Co. had seen a small yacht in distress among the surging breakers at the base of Penperro Rock. With heroic pluck the New House trio had taken a boat out in the teeth of the storm, and had succeeded in rescuing the doomed yacht's occupant—the young man who had proved to be, strangely enough, a son of an old friend of Lord Eastwood's, named Renfrew, who was at present abroad. Lord Eastwood had invited Gilbert Renfrew to stay at Penperro House, and at first he had been popular enough with his fellow guests.

Lately, however, largely owing to a scene on the cricket field during a match between a team captained by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Lord Eastwood's XI., in which Renfrew had shown himself to be anything but a sportsman, the juniors had begun to change their opinion of him!



Lord Eastwood glanced at his watch. It was nearly midnight.

Though he felt sure that further search for Baggy was useless in the darkness, among all the treacherous rocky ledges and chasms of the great Cornish cliffs, Lord Eastwood felt very loath to give up the hunt for the missing junior till morning.

"Arthur," he said abruptly, "I am going out for another search for this boy Trimble. Will you come with me?"

The swell of St. Jim's nodded eagerly.

"Yaas, wathah, patah!"

Reginald Talbot stepped forward.

"I should like to come, too," he said quietly.

"I, too, sir!" put in Tom Merry quickly.

"Same here!" said Figgins and Blake and Levison together, and there were murmurs of assent from the others.

But Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"No," he said; "most of you had better go to bed, I think, to be fresh for a renewed search first thing in the morning. I will take only a few of you. Merry, Talbot, and you, Figgins—come along!"

Lord Eastwood turned to the door, and Arthur D'Arcy, Tom Merry, Reginald Talbot, and George Figgins moved quickly after him.

But as they were about to go from the room, they were arrested by a sudden excited shout from behind them.

Monty Lowther was standing by the window, staring out into the darkness with wide eyes.

"What's up?" cried Tom Merry.

"Look!"

Monty Lowther flung out a pointing hand.

The others crowded to the window. There were gasps of breathless astonishment.

For, through the darkness, from the black mass of Penperro Rock, a tiny point of light was flashing.

Across the channel of foaming waters to the eyes of the staring juniors, the flashing light gleamed and wavered.

"There's someone on the island!" breathed Manners, in a wondering voice.

"There can't be!" ejaculated Clive. "The island is inaccessible in this weather—"

"But there is!" cried Talbot. "Look!"

The tiny point of light was flickering brightly through the darkness.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry excitedly. "It's Morse code!"

Flicker, flicker—in short and long flashes, the far-off beam of light stabbed the darkness continuously as the juniors and Lord Eastwood stared across towards the distant shape of Penperro Rock.

Most of the juniors knew Morse code; the patrol of Boy Scouts did not exist at St. Jim's for nothing!

P . . . H . . . E . . . L . . . P . . . H—

"Help!" breathed Tom Merry. "That's what the message is—again and again! 'Help!'"

Again and again the letters of that startling word came flashing across towards the lighted windows of Penperro House.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Mystery of the Night!

"**H**ELP!" repeated Tom Merry.

His voice was strangely tense.

"Good gad!"

Lord Eastwood was staring across at that flickering point of light, as though he could not believe his eyes.

Like everyone else, Lord Eastwood had believed that Penperro Rock was utterly unapproachable during the rough weather that had surrounded the mysterious island with mad, raging seas for the last few days.

And yet here was proof enough that someone was on the island!

It was a staggering discovery.

"Great pip!" muttered Manners. He gripped Tom Merry's arm. "Do you remember that light we saw the other night—as if someone were on the island with a lantern? We thought it must be some will-o'-the-wisp—"

With quick strides Lord Eastwood turned to a desk near by, and dragged open a drawer. From it he took a big electric torch.

He swung open the big french windows, and hurried out on to the terrace beyond, with the juniors at his heels.

"Whoever it is, we'll show we've seen his signal!" muttered Lord Eastwood.

He sent an answering beam of light stabbing through the gloom.

Almost instantly the repetition of the word "Help" stopped abruptly. There was a brief pause, in which the group on the terrace stared in excited silence across towards the dark shape of the great rock. Then again the flashing light began to spell out a message.

Flicker, flicker!

"T," read Talbot of the Shell aloud, "R-I-M-B—"

"Trimble!" shouted Monty Lowther excitedly. "It's Trimble!"

Slowly the name of the missing junior was spelt out by the far-off glimmering light.

The juniors on the terrace stared at one another in blank amazement. Then someone started an excited cheer.

Though how Baggy Trimble could come to be on the island was a staggering mystery, the fact that he was safe enough, and that no accident had happened to him brought a surge of relief to the swell of St. Jim's and his guests.

For that it was Trimble himself who was signalling it was clear enough.

"Some of you youngsters know Morse better than I do," muttered Lord Eastwood. "Ask him how he got there! If it was not that I have the proof of my own eyes, I should have sworn it was utterly impossible for anyone to have got on to Penperro Rock to-day!"

There was utter bewilderment in Lord Eastwood's eyes.

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Baggy's evident presence on the island was certainly a strange enough mystery to baffle anyone!

Tom Merry took the torch from the tall, soldierly man beside him, and began to send an answering message.

"How did you get on the island?" he spelt out, letter by letter, with the powerful torch.

The message finished, all waited expectantly for the answer.

"If he could get there in some extraordinary way, why can't he get back, I wonder?" muttered Lord Eastwood, with a puzzled frown.

"And why hasn't he signalled before now?" exclaimed Blake, in bewilderment.

"Look!" breathed Levison. "He's answering!"

"Dot—dash—dot!" muttered Herries. "That's R—"

Tom Merry, his eyes riveted on the flickering light, began to read the answering message from the rock aloud:

"R—E—N—"

He broke off.

"He's stopped!" ejaculated Figgins.

The flashing light had ceased abruptly.

In eager silence the group of excited juniors and Lord Eastwood stared through the darkness, expecting at any moment to see the point of light stabbing the gloom once more.

But it did not come.

"What on earth—" muttered Fatty Wynn.

"He hadn't finished," breathed Tom Merry. "R—E—N—Ren! There's no sense in that! Why's he stopped?"

The bewildered group looked at one another in astonishment.

It seemed amazing that Baggy should break off in the middle of his message! There was something strange behind his sudden silence, and faces were anxious as they watched vainly for further messages.

It almost looked as though someone had surprised Baggy on the island in the middle of his communications with the big house on the opposite cliffs—as if Baggy had been forcibly prevented from carrying on.

"If Trimble can get to the island, so can someone else," muttered Tom Merry. "It looks jolly well as if he's been stopped from signalling."

"But how can he have got there—and why has he gone?" cried Lord Eastwood, with a bewildered gesture.

Those were questions that no one present could answer.

"R-E-N!" Arthur Augustus murmured the mysterious letters slowly. "I wondah what word Twimble was twyin' to send across when he bwoke off so wummily."

There was a sudden excited exclamation from Fatty Wynn.

"Renfrew!" he ejaculated. "I wonder if he was trying to send 'Renfrew'?"

"But what could Mr. Wenfrew have to do with it all?" objected the swell of St. Jim's, shaking his head.

"Perhaps Baggy was going to signal 'Render aid!' suggested Kerr doubtfully.

"Where is Renfrew, anyway?" muttered Jack Blake.

"He's not back yet, from hunting on the cliffs for Baggy. I wonder why?"

But no one had time to wonder about Gilbert Renfrew just then. The amazing knowledge that Baggy Trimble was on Penperro Rock, which till then had always been supposed to be inaccessible in such weather, occupied the thoughts of all—and the riddle as to why he had stopped so abruptly the sending of his last message.

"Anyway," said Lord Eastwood quietly, "we shall know the answer to all these riddles when we have rescued Trimble from the island. It is evident that he is unable, for some reason, to return by the way he came, since he distinctly signalled for help. Instead of taxing our brains as to how he got there, and what it all means, we had better think out how we can get to the island ourselves."

"If Baggy got there this evening, despite the sea, we can get there ourselves, it's certain," nodded Talbot.

From the room behind them the mellow tones of an old grandfather clock began to strike the hour.

"Midnight!" muttered Levison.

"Well," said Lord Eastwood briskly, "we know now, at any rate, that Trimble has not had an accident on the cliffs. And since it is clearly impossible for us to discover to-night the mysterious means that Trimble employed to gain access to the rock, we had better turn in, to be fresh in the morning for our attempt to get across to him. A night on the island won't do the boy any harm—it is warm enough. Arthur, you and your friends had better get to bed."

"All wight, patah."

The juniors re-entered the library, with deeply puzzled faces.

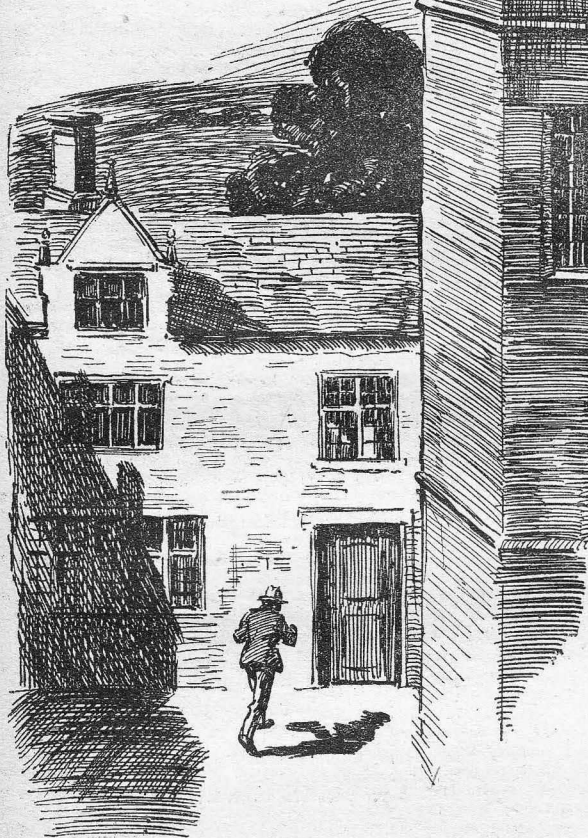
Baggy Trimble was certainly the centre of an amazing mystery.

CHAPTER 3.

Talbot is Suspicious!

"It beats the giddy band!"  
 "Yaas, wathah!"  
 The swell of St. Jim's and his guests had gathered in the bed-room that Jack Blake shared with Arthur Augustus, preparatory to turning in.  
 The problem of Trimble's seemingly uncanny presence on Penperro Rock seemed to them to need discussion.  
 But none of the juniors could make so much as a sugges-

"My hat!" Peering down from the passage window, Reginald Talbot saw the figure of a man creeping stealthily along the path below. Next moment, as the mysterious individual stepped into a patch of moonlight, the watching junior recognised him. "Renfrew!" he exclaimed.  
 (See Chapter 3.)



tion as to how Baggy had succeeded in getting on to the island, despite the great waves that thundered and churned around it, and which would have spelt destruction for any boat attempting to approach the mysterious rock.

"I'll tell you what," said Tom Merry; "I think some of us ought to take it in turns to sit up to-night and watch for any further message from Baggy. Goodness knows why he stopped signalling in the middle of his message; but it's possible he may start again—in which case, somebody ought to be on the look-out."

"Hear, hear!"  
 "Good wheeze!"

"I suppose we shall all be up by about six," went on Tom. "So for six hours we want a chap on the watch. Half-hour spells would mean a dozen of us on the job. There are thirteen of us, so we'd better draw lots for turns—and the last chap will be lucky enough to miss altogether."

"That's the idea!"  
 "Good egg!"

Lots were drawn by means of scraps of paper in a hat, each of which had a time written upon it, except for one blank. Monty Lowther drew the first watch.

"I should think you'd better sit by the window at the end of the passage," suggested Tom Merry. "You must



keep the light on, too, for Baggy to see that there is someone up."

"At half-past twelve, come and wake me, old hoss," said Clive, who had drawn the second turn on watch. "I'll have a doze till then."

"Right-ho!" nodded Monty Lowther cheerily, and left the room, while the others dispersed to their various bed-rooms to turn in until they were wanted.

Fatty Wynn, who had drawn the blank, chuckled as he drew up the blankets around his neck.

"Don't you two bounders wake me up, when you're changing sentry-go!" he murmured sleepily. "I'm going to sleep like a blessed lug, after all this excitement over Baggy."

Figgins and Kerr grunted.

It was not a very pleasant prospect to be awakened in the middle of the night for half an hour's watch over Penperro Rock, and though they were willing enough to do it under the circumstances, they could not help envying their fat chum his luck.

"Br-r-r!" growled Kerr, who had to watch from half-past three to four in the morning.

Fatty Wynn chuckled, and snuggled down contentedly between the sheets.

"Oh!"

"Show a leg!" murmured Tom. "It's three o'clock!"

"Aw right!" yawned Talbot.

He slipped out of bed and drew on a dressing-gown. He followed Tom from the room. In the passage outside Tom turned with a nod towards his own room, and Talbot made his way to the window at the end of the passage, where a small electric-light was burning.

He stood staring thoughtfully out at the great rock for a minute or more. It was looking dark and forbidding under the newly-risen moon. There was no sign of a light upon it.

"Poor old Baggy!" muttered Talbot. "I'm glad I've not had to spend the night on there! Wish I knew how the dickens the fat porpoise had managed to get over there, though."

He sat down on the chair by the window, and began his watch.

Round and round the mystery of Baggy's presence on the island his brain revolved.

"Anyway," he told himself, "however Baggy got there,  
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it seems clear enough that he's got himself stranded on the giddy rock. And it's up to us to rescue him. But how the dickens we are to do that, goodness knows!"

The minutes crawled by Talbot yawned. From somewhere below a clock struck the quarter-hour.

Then suddenly Talbot started.

It was very quiet, except for the distant sound of the waves beating against the foot of the cliffs, and Talbot had grown so used to that noise that he scarcely heard it.

It had been the sound of a footfall on the gravel below that had caused him suddenly to sit up in his chair on the alert, and peer out and down.

A figure was moving along the path below, in the shadow of the wall of the house.

Talbot rose quickly to his feet.

The window was open at the bottom, and he could hear the soft, furtive footsteps passing by beneath the window, even though for a moment or two the mysterious prowling figure was lost to sight beneath the sill.

"Who the dickens—"

The stealthy figure came into sight again. Evidently the mysterious individual below had not the faintest idea that he was being watched. From where he was creeping along the path, the dim light in the window above would be unlikely to be noticed.

"My hat!"

Talbot had recognised the man.

The gliding figure had stepped into a patch of moonlight, revealing to the intent eyes of the watching junior at the window above that it was the man whom Figgins & Co. had rescued from the sea who was stealing past.

"Renfrew!"

Talbot peered down from the passage window in astonishment.

He had forgotten Renfrew, as had everyone else before going to bed.

The fact that Gilbert Renfrew had not returned to the house after going out with one of the search-parties along the dark cliffs, in search of Baggy Trimble, had been completely forgotten in the excitement of Baggy's strange message from the island.

And now the man was back—at nearly half-past three in the morning!

Why he should have stayed out such a long while was a problem that had brought a puzzled frown to Talbot's face. And that the man should be stealing along the path so softly, as if anxious to avoid being discovered returning to the house at such an hour, was a problem even more mystifying than the first!

The man vanished into a small side door, admitting himself with a key. Talbot's frown deepened.

"The chap must have meant to stay out till the small hours," he told himself. "He didn't take the key of that door with him for nothing."

He stood in puzzled thought.

Talbot did not like Gilbert Renfrew. He did not like Renfrew's silky voice, or his thin, smiling face; and his vague dislike had become a certainty ever since the day when Renfrew had shown himself a rotten sportsman on the cricket-field. On that occasion Renfrew had been given out l.b.w., very rightly; but instead of accepting the umpire's decision the man had lost his temper and made a scene. To a fellow like Talbot such behaviour was unforgivable.

"He's been up to something—"

A faint noise somewhere downstairs caused Talbot to turn his head, listening. On a sudden impulse he reached out a hand to the electric-light switch, and snapped out the light, plunging the passage into utter darkness but for the ray of moonlight that fell through the window on to the opposite wall.

In the darkness Talbot stood waiting and listening.

The silence was oppressive. After that slight sound that had caught Talbot's quick ears, Renfrew had made no sound as he stole across the big hall and up the broad staircase.

Not till the man was near the top of the stairs did Talbot hear him again.

A stair creaked slightly, and the listening junior knew that soon Renfrew would be stealing along the passage past him on his way to his room.

What Renfrew had been doing out on the cliffs during all those hours of darkness Talbot could not imagine. But he felt instinctively sure that it had been something "shady"—the man's furtive entry into the house convinced him of that. It was certainly unlikely that Renfrew had been hunting alone for Baggy Trimble all that while.

Talbot stood still as stone.

Soft, cat-like footsteps were to be heard now, not far away, drawing nearer. He heard the man within a yard or two of him—heard his soft breathing.

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Talbot's hand went out to the light, and he snapped over the switch, flooding the passage in brilliant electric-light.

There was a choking cry from Renfrew.

Utterly taken aback, and unnerved by the sudden blaze of light and the sight of Talbot's dressing-gown-clad figure standing within a few feet of him, Renfrew seemed to reel as if to ward off a blow, with his hand up across his face.

"Hallo, Mr. Renfrew!" said Talbot quietly.

The man's arm dropped from his face. He stared at the tall St. Jim's junior with ashen face and wild, staring eyes.

Gradually the terror left his face. He straightened himself and forced a shaky smile. He licked his dry lips. Talbot saw that the man's hands were shaking.

"Sorry if I startled you," said Talbot coolly.

"I—I—I—"

Renfrew's voice was oddly thick. He mastered himself with a supreme effort.

"You startled me all right, young 'un," he said in a low voice.

He smiled. But his eyes were fastened on Talbot's with a queer, hunted look, a wondering, suspicious look, as though he was trying to find out from the junior's face how much, if anything, Talbot knew!

"I—I've only just got back," went on Renfrew jerkily. "I've been looking for that missing youngster, out on the cliffs. I lost my way hopelessly—it's very confusing out there—"

He broke off, his eyes still fastened upon Talbot's.

As if he read there that the St. Jim's fellow did not believe a word of what he had said his own eyes dropped to the floor, and his smooth voice became stammering and uncertain once more.

"I was coming in quietly," he went on confusedly, "so as not to wake anyone, of course—"

"I see." Talbot nodded. "Of course! That's why you took the precaution of taking the key of the side door with you before you went out, Mr. Renfrew?"

Renfrew started.

"How did you know that?" he exclaimed unguardedly.

"I saw you from this window."

It was clearly a shock for Renfrew to learn that! His face went startled. But he controlled himself the next moment and smiled.

"Indeed? May I ask how it is you happened to be up here watching me?"

"I was not watching for you," said Talbot quietly. "I was watching for a message from Trimble."

Briefly he explained what had taken place. Renfrew stared at him as if incredulously.

"Impossible!" he muttered. "The island cannot be reached in this rough weather, everybody knows! You must have all been dreaming!"

"I don't think Lord Eastwood and the whole lot of us would have dreamt it at just the same time," answered Talbot dryly.

"But it's an amazing story."

"I'll admit that," agreed Talbot, nodding.

His eyes were fixed upon Renfrew's face very intently. There was a queer look there. And Talbot found himself wondering—could it be possible that Renfrew knew something?

He remembered those three letters of the unfinished word that Baggy had been signalling when he had so unaccountably broken off. R-E-N. The first three letters of Renfrew's name!

Renfrew shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it beats me!" he said coolly. "Anyway, I think I have done my share of searching for the kid. I'm going to get to bed."

With a nod he turned and moved off along the passage on noiseless feet. Talbot stood watching him go, with a puzzled shadow in his eyes.

He was suspicious, though he scarcely knew why. He did not believe that Renfrew had been out on the cliffs searching for Baggy all this time—his every instinct told him that the man had been lying.

And yet—

"Perhaps I'm mistaken, and he was telling the truth," he told himself with a frown. "I may be making a mountain out of a blessed molehill, I suppose!"

He sat down on the chair and turned his face towards the black shape of Penperro Rock, lit now with bright moonlight in a silver sea.

There was still no sign of a flashing light—no message from Baggy Trimble—nothing after those three letters of an interrupted word—R-E-N—

With a whirl of puzzled thoughts Talbot sat watching and waiting till the half-hour of his strange vigil should be finished.

#### CHAPTER 4. The Kite!

"WELL, that's rum!"

It was Tom Merry who spoke. Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners had risen early, and soon after six they emerged on to the terrace, to stare across at the mysterious island. They had not been there many minutes before they had been joined by Talbot.

Talbot had told them of Renfrew's curiously late return to the house.

"That's rum!" repeated Tom Merry. "As a matter of fact, when I did my turn before you, I thought of the chap, but it never occurred to me that he had not already got back to the house!"

"Past three when he got back?" murmured Manners thoughtfully. "Well, I'm blessed!"

"He's a late bird, isn't he?" put in Monty Lowther. "Remember that time we saw him visiting the old tower after giddy midnight? Gone there to look for a key, or something, he said—"

"Yes, he's a queer chap all right!" grunted Talbot. "I didn't dislike him at all at first, but I'm hanged if I can stick him now, somehow!"

"Well, blow Renfrew!" said Manners, with a shrug. His eyes turned towards Penperro Rock, with the waves that stormed round it flashing white in the morning sun. "The thing just now is to puzzle out how Baggy got across to the island, and how we can get across to rescue him from being marooned there. Though why the fat ass can't get back the way he went—"

Manners did not finish his sentence.

Through the french windows a hurrying figure had appeared.

It was Jack Blake, with Herries and Digby at his heels. Their faces were excited.

"What's up now?" muttered Tom Merry.

Blake ran up, waving a newspaper excitedly. He halted, breathless, by the four Shell fellows, and thumped the newspaper with an eager fist.

"Here you are!" he cried. "We've got it—"

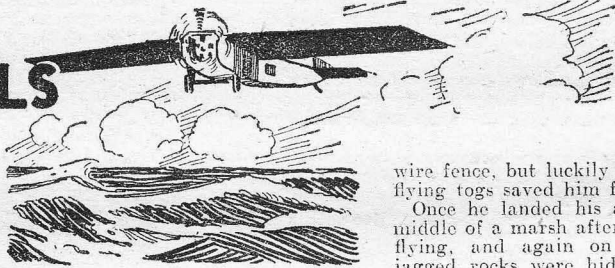
"Got what?" inquired Monty Lowther, in bewilderment. "If you're talking about bats in the belfry, we knew you had 'em long ago!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Reginald Talbot chuckled. Blake glared.

(Continued on next page.)

## FAMOUS DAREDEVILS



With steadfast courage and strength of purpose a young man named Lindbergh set out in his machine, "The Spirit of St. Louis," alone and unaided, to blaze the first air trail from New York to Paris. He won through!

#### COLONEL CHARLES A. LINDBERGH.

WHEN a smiling, bronzed-faced young man named Lindbergh arrived back in New York Harbour in the U.S.S. *Memphis*, after his epic Atlantic flight, America went mad with enthusiasm. Never before had such scenes been witnessed in Washington as when Lindbergh drove through streets lined by yelling, cheering crowds, on his way to meet President Coolidge and receive his congratulations.

Fresh from his triumphal visits to France, Belgium, and Great Britain, where honours and decorations, including our own Royal Air Force Cross, were showered upon him, Lindbergh returned to the land of his birth to be acclaimed a national hero, and one of the greatest daredevils of his day.

With steadfast courage and strength of purpose he set out in his machine, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, alone and unaided, to blaze the first air trail from New York to Paris. He won through! Thirty-three hours and thirty minutes from the time he commenced his perilous journey he arrived at Le Bourget Aerodrome just outside the French capital. He had flown no less than 3,600 miles in a single air-cooled engine of 220 h.p., consuming approximately ten gallons of petrol an hour. A wonderful feat, and one that will be remembered for all time, even when the Atlantic crossing is no longer fraught with peril, and when in years to come, great air-liners flash from London to New York in a few short hours.

Lindbergh's magnificent achievement was the culmination of years of flying experience. From his earliest days his ambition had been to fly, and eventually become a famous airman. That he achieved his ambition beyond his fondest dreams, forms a romance of the skies

that has never been surpassed or equalled in the annals of flying history.

The story of his life in a nutshell was told by President Coolidge in a public speech he made when Lindbergh returned home, on June 11th, 1927.

"Twenty-five years ago," he said, "there was born in Detroit, Michigan, a boy representing the best traditions of this country, of a stock known for its deeds of adventure and exploration.

"Too young to have enlisted in the World War, Lindbergh became a student at one of the big State Universities. His interest in aviation led him to an Army aviation school, and in 1925, he was graduated as an aeroplane pilot. In November 1926, he had reached the rank of captain in the Officers' Reserve Corps.

"Making his home at St. Louis, he had joined the 110th Observation Squadron of the Missouri National Guard. Later he became connected with the United States Mail Service, where he exhibited marked ability, and from which he is now on leave of absence."

Lindbergh commenced his adventurous flying career by "barnstorming." Barnstorming means flying about the country and taking folk for joy-rides at a fixed fee. This expression also embraces stunt showmanship, such as wing-walking, parachuting, and climbing down a rope ladder from the wing of one plane to that of another flying beneath.

During the years he spent as a barn-stormer, his life was full of thrills and adventures. Several times he was obliged to abandon his machine in mid-air for one reason and another, and parachute to earth through a heavy ground mist, so that he could not see what sort of country lay beneath. On one occasion he landed astride a barbed

wire fence, but luckily his thick leather flying togs saved him from injury.

Once he landed his aeroplane in the middle of a marsh after a spell of night flying, and again on a field, where jagged rocks were hidden in the long grass.

One of his biggest thrills was when he ran short of fuel during a cross-country flight, and was obliged to land in the town square of Camp Wood, near the Rio Grande. Owing to the comparatively small space in which to take off, Lindbergh couldn't fill his tank very full because of the extra weight, and therefore he wanted to reach a field some six miles away where it would be possible to take the air with the full load of fuel.

One of the streets in Camp Wood was long enough to permit the plane to rise, except for a couple of telegraph poles. Lindbergh measured the space between these poles and found it to be about forty-five feet. He determined to pilot the plane through them!

Alas, just as he was approaching the poles, one of the wheels of the machine bumped a rut. The right wing of the plane tapped the pole, swinging the machine round, and sending it straight for an ironmonger's shop nearby.

Pots and pans flew in all directions. Tools and mangles clung together lovingly in confused heaps all over the floor. It was really wonderful what one small aeroplane could accomplish in the way of damage in a matter of seconds. An earthquake, cyclone, and blizzard seemed to have descended on that little shop.

Out jumped Lindbergh full of apologies, as the shopkeeper came running to see what on earth had happened. The airman immediately offered to pay for the damage, and waited for the storm of wrath to burst. But did that shopkeeper get angry? Not a bit of it! He almost fell on Lindbergh and kissed him.

"Say, boy," he beamed, "this little bust-up will be the finest boost I've had for a long time!"

"You cackling dummies! This is no time for assing about!" He thumped the paper again. "We've got it!"

"Just the thing!" grinned Herries excitedly.  
"Absobally-lutely!" chuckled Digby. "Read it to 'em, Jack!"

"What on earth are you chaps gassing about?" roared Tom Merry. "Explain, for goodness' sake!"

Blake chuckled, and thrust the paper into the hands of the captain of the Shell.

"Read that!" he cried, jabbing a forefinger on to an advertisement in the centre of the sheet.

Tom glanced at the top of the paper, and saw that it was a copy of a Cornish periodical. Then he turned to the advertisement that had caused Blake & Co. so much excitement.

"For sale," he read aloud, "'man-lifting kite. Good condition. Real bargain for sportsman.—Wade, 16, Ilchey Street, Penzance."

Tom stared at Blake's eager face.

"What about it?" he said. "I don't see——"

"My hat!" There was a sudden exclamation from Monty Lowther. Monty's eyes were shining. "I do! You mean, if we got this giddy man-lifting kite, we could get across to Baggy on the island?"

"Of course!" nodded Blake. "That's the idea! Here's that fat ass Baggy on Penperro Rock, and it seems he's got himself marooned there—though goodness knows how he ever got there at all. We want to get to him, of course, but we can't, because it's impossible to get there in a boat at present! What we want is this giddy kite—a man-lifting kite!"

"Rather!" chimed in Digby enthusiastically. "One of us can go over to the island on the kite, and land there, and Baggy can come back on it; and then send the kite across again, and the chap that went over to see to Baggy comes back, too!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

It was a daring suggestion; but it was feasible enough!

"Great pip!" he breathed. "It's a ripping scheme!"

"Of course it is!" grinned Blake. "Isn't it a bit of luck I saw this ad?"

A step on the terrace heralded the appearance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's joined the group, instantly to have the newspaper thrust into his surprised hands by Jack Blake.

"What do you think of that, old moke?" cried Blake.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus eyed Blake very frigidly.

"Weally, Blake, I uttaly wefuse to allow anybody to address me as a moke!"

"Well, read that, anyway, you ass——"

"Gweat Scott! I wefuse to be called an ass——"

"Read that!" roared Blake.

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and read the advertisement. He looked a trifle blank when he had finished. But Blake hastened to explain his great idea, and in a minute later the swell of St. Jim's was as enthusiastic as the others.

"Wippin' scheme, deah boy!" he beamed. "I will suggest it to my patah as soon as he comes down——"

Even as he spoke, the tall figure of Lord Eastwood came into view at the library windows. The juniors hurried to him, and it did not take long to explain to him the cause of their excitement. When they had told him of the daring idea they had in mind for getting to Baggy Trimble, Lord Eastwood looked very doubtful at first. Then he nodded, suddenly resolute.

"Very well," he said. "I am willing for us to make the attempt. At any rate, we can send food to the poor boy by means of this kite, if we are not too late to purchase it. I see that this paper is a day or two old, unfortunately."

"Can I tell Woberts to get out a car now, patah?" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's eagerly. "There is no time to waste. Somebody ought to go ovah to Penzance at once, I considah. We can take some gwub with us, and have breakfast on the way!"

"Yes," nodded Lord Eastwood. "There is certainly no time to waste!"

Only a few minutes later, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Jack Blake, Tom Merry, and Talbot were seated in a big car, with Roberts at the wheel, speeding away from Penperro House, and all its queer mysteries, on their way to distant Penzance.

The riddle of what lay behind all the strange happenings of the last twelve hours was forgotten for the time being!

All the juniors were considering now was that Baggy was marooned on Penperro Rock, and they were off to get hold of an amazing means of rescuing him!

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## CHAPTER 5.

## On the Brink!

NO. 16, Ilchey Street, Penzance, proved to be a quaint little sailmaker's shop.

Mr. Wade, the proprietor, was a weather-beaten old Cornishman, who proudly led the four St. Jim's juniors to the big shed at the back of his premises, where the great man-lifting kite was leaning against the wall.

It was a splendid-looking structure, built of sailcloth and stout poles, and was so constructed as to take to pieces and fit together again with ease.

The old man wanted four pounds for it.

"Wippin'!" nodded Arthur Augustus, producing a little wad of notes. "And we want wope—plentay of wope——"

Mr. Wade scratched his grizzled head.

"Wope?" he echoed. "Fraid I haven't any. Why, I never heard of it!"

It was the swell of St. Jim's turn to be surprised.

"Bai Jove! Nevah heard of wope?" he ejaculated, surveying the old man through his eyeglass as though he were some strange freak.

"Never!" said the old Cornishman, with conviction.

"He means rope," explained Tom Merry quickly, with a grin.

A light of understanding appeared on old Wade's face. He chuckled.

"Oh! Rope—eh? Yes, I can let you have all the rope you want. Thin, light stuff, but strong as a wire cable—that's what you need."

Five minutes later, with the kite in pieces packed on the roof of the car, and with a big quantity of strong, slender rope, rolled up in a great ball the size of a barrel on the luggage-carrier, the juniors set off on their return from the picturesque old town to Penperro House.

"Here they come!"

The man crouching in the shadow of a big rock by the roadside gave that muttered exclamation, as the distant shape of a big closed motor-car swept into view on the lonely cliff-road a mile or so from Penperro House.

Gilbert Renfrew had been waiting for an hour or more for the arrival at that spot of the car on its return journey from Penzance.

The man's thin face was set in hard, desperate lines.

The news that Arthur Augustus and the other three juniors had gone off to purchase the man-lifting kite had been a shock for Renfrew when he had come down that morning. Renfrew had very strong reasons for wishing to keep anyone from visiting Penperro Rock that day.

Just beyond the point where he was lying in hiding the road twisted sharply, with a sheer drop of more than two hundred feet to the sea on one side. Renfrew had chosen that point on the treacherous cliff-road with purpose.

The car vanished from his sight as it dropped into a little valley to cross a bridge over a turbulent stream. But he heard the hum of the engine as it came racing up the hill towards him at the fastest speed that Roberts, the chauffeur, dared travel on the winding, dangerous road. It swept into view again three hundred yards away, and purred swiftly towards the group of rocks where Renfrew crouched.

"Now for it!" muttered Renfrew thickly.

His face was oddly pale.

Peering out through a crevice in the great boulders that hid him the man could see the huge kite packed in sections on the roof of the car, and that sight steeled his resolution. That man-lifting kite should never arrive at Penperro House if Renfrew could prevent it. His hand went to his pocket, and a moment later he was clutching a blue-black automatic in his hand.

The sinister little weapon was fitted with a silencer. Slowly Renfrew raised it.

Slowing up for the imminent bend, but still travelling fast, the car swept past him.

Renfrew pressed the trigger.

His aim was a good one. The bullet found one of the big rear tyres, and with a terrific report the tyre burst. Renfrew heard a faint cry from the chauffeur—and with churning wheels the big car skidded, swinging out towards the cliff edge.

Now that he had carried out his dastardly plan the scoundrel's heart went suddenly cold. He clutched the face of the rock that hid him, staring wide-eyed at the skidding car that seemed doomed to go crashing over the brink into the waves below.

He closed his eyes, not daring to watch further, listening for the sounds of the car plunging to destruction.

But instead there came a heavy crash, a cry, and a wild shout. Then the sound of Tom Merry's voice.

Renfrew opened his eyes.

The car was standing with its front wheels on the road,



As the car bearing Tom Merry & Co. swept past him, Gilbert Renfrew pressed the trigger of his automatic. The bullet found one of the big rear tyres, and with a terrific report the tyre burst. With churning wheels the big car skidded, swinging out towards the cliff edge! (See Chapter 5.)



its back wheels on the grass at the roadside, within a dangerously close distance of the cliff edge. Tom Merry had scrambled out, and Jack Blake was jumping to the ground, white-faced, beside him. Talbot and Arthur Augustus, looking equally shaken, were following, while Roberts was still sitting in the driving-seat looking like a man in a dream. Roberts, with wonderful skill, had corrected the skid in the nick of time!

Renfrew heard the voice of Reginald Talbot:

"That was a narrow shave," Talbot's voice was amazingly cool. "About the worst spot on the road where we could have got a puncture! If it hadn't been for you, Roberts—"

"I thought we were done, sir," answered Roberts thickly, passing a hand across his eyes.

Roberts had looked death in the face during those terrible moments, and he still looked like a man just awakened from a nightmare.

Renfrew staggered to his feet, out of sight behind the roadside rocks. He turned and stole away. He was safe from being seen, but not till he had reached the shelter of the sand dunes did he break into a stumbling run in the direction of Penperro House.

He was almost in a daze.

He scarcely knew whether he was sorry that he had failed, or whether he really wished that his ghastly plan had succeeded.

Deep in his heart, perhaps relief was the uppermost emotion that he felt; but he could not think clearly yet.

All he knew as he stumbled blindly on was that he had failed!

## CHAPTER 6. In Mid-Air!

"UP she goes!"

"Let her go, deah boys!"

"What-ho!"

Quite a big crowd was gathered on the cliffs by Penperro House.

In addition to the St. Jim's juniors and Lord Eastwood, Cousin Ethel, Doris Levison and Lady Peggy were there, and so were George and Henry, the footmen, and Roberts, the chauffeur. Gilbert Renfrew was there, too, standing beside Lord Eastwood, watching with smiling face the experimental flight of the great kite.

With the juniors and George and Henry and Roberts clinging to the rope the great kite had been launched over the cliff edge, and was now sailing merrily on the strong wind that swept over the cliffs.

Soaring like a strange bird the kite rose higher, out over the sea, as the party clinging to the rope paid it out foot by foot.

Lord Eastwood watched it anxiously.

But as he saw how easily and steadily the kite rose the anxious look in his face vanished gradually, to be replaced by a smile of satisfaction.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed.

A ten-stone boulder had been roped to the kite, to represent the weight of a man. The kite bore it without effort—it was clear enough that it would be perfectly safe for a daring junior to make the journey across to the island.

"Splendid!" repeated Lord Eastwood, shading his eyes as he stared up at the gleaming white object that was now high over the narrow channel that separated the mainland from the great rock. "Flies like a bird, eh, Gilbert?"

"It's fine," nodded Renfrew.

"The thing is," muttered Lord Eastwood thoughtfully, "to know whom to send across by it. Somebody ought to go, since it is quite possible that Trimble is ill, or weak from want of food—he is not strong, I imagine. I am afraid that all these youngsters are anxious to make the journey."

His eyes roamed over the excited group, and came to rest on the athletic figure of Tom Merry.

"I think perhaps I shall let Tom Merry go," he murmured. "He is a cool-headed youngster."

Lord Eastwood stared across at the island, and the anxious look returned to his face.

He raised the powerful field-glasses that he held in his hand and studied the great rock closely. Then he lowered the glasses with a shake of his head.

"Still no sign of Trimble on the island," he said. "It's queer."

"Surely that flashing light must have been a delusion," put in Renfrew quickly—"some will-o'-the-wisp that seemed, by a coincidence, to represent some letters of the Morse code as it flickered. For how could Trimble possibly have got to the island? Not by boat—"

"My dear Gilbert," interrupted Lord Eastwood impatiently, "I can assure you that the light we saw was no will-o'-the-wisp! It was certainly a message for help from the missing boy. How he got on to the island I confess baffles me as much as it does you. But that is a problem that will be solved as soon as we have rescued the unfortunate youth."

Renfrew shrugged and did not reply. But there was a strange, almost desperate, look in his dark eyes as he stared out towards the island.

That the kite could reach the island with ease was soon  
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clear, and at Lord Eastwood's direction it was hauled back for its second flight—this time with a junior as passenger.

The boulder was cut away, and a dozen pairs of eager eyes were turned towards Lord Eastwood.

"May I go, sir?" cried Figgins eagerly.

"Let me go!" put in Herries.

There were quick, eager murmurs from several others. But Lord Eastwood turned to Tom Merry.

"Will you go?"

Tom's eyes shone.

"Rather, sir!"

The prospect of that flight across the yawning chasm where the sea churned and thundered was one that might have unnerved a good many people, though the kite had already proved itself to be stable enough. But Tom Merry had iron nerves, and the prospect of that dizzy journey through the air simply thrilled him.

There was a rope "chair" suspended from the centre of the kite, at the point where the rope was attached to it. It did not take Tom Merry long to make himself comfortable in it. A basket of food was handed to him, for even if Baggy were well enough, he was likely to be ravenous after his night on the lonely rock!

On the outskirts of the little crowd Gilbert Renfrew stood watching.

"Ready, Tom?" asked Manners, a trifle anxiously.

"All ready!" grinned Tom.

"Good luck, old chap!" sang out Figgins.

The rest of the juniors, including Wally & Co., took hold of the rope, together with the three menservants. They ran back at a given signal from Lord Eastwood, and the kite lurched into the air, dragging back on the strong wind.

Tom Merry gave a gasp as he felt himself jerked upwards, and the ground seemed to sway from beneath his feet, dropping rapidly. He clung tightly to the supporting ropes, and the wind whined past him.

The party clinging to the rope began to pay it out slowly. The kite swept higher, riding steadily. Tom Merry waved a cheery hand.

"So long, everybody!"

"Cheerio!" cried Lady Peggy.

There was a very anxious light in the eyes of both Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison. But they soon saw that Tom was safe enough. Borne on the wind, the giant kite pulled steadily out over the cliff-edge, as safely as an aeroplane. And the cool, confident grin on Tom Merry's face was reassuring.

Up and up into the wind, out towards the towering shape of Penperro Rock, across the channel of raging waters!

"It's as easy as going by train!" murmured Levison, as he paid out rope busily between Fatty Wynn and Jack Blake.

"It must be ripping up there," breathed Blake enviously, staring after the dwindling figure on the giant kite, well out over the water now.

Despite their numbers, the party on the rope could feel the kite tugging powerfully.

Suddenly Renfrew, standing a little apart, moistened his lips in a queer way. He stepped forward abruptly.

"Let me help with the rope," he said, in a voice that seemed a little unlike his own.

But everyone was so intent upon watching the kite that they scarcely noticed Renfrew. The man moved along the line with quick strides, and stepped in front of Monty Lowther, who was the foremost figure on the rope. Renfrew took hold of it, bracing himself for the pull from the upper air.

His eyes were staring up the great curve of slender rope, riveted as if fascinated upon the tiny figure of Tom Merry. Again he moistened his lips.

For a moment something glittered in his hand, hidden from those behind—the sharp blade of a knife.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Severed Rope!

RENFREW glanced over his shoulder uneasily.

Monty Lowther, just behind him, could not see his hands, he knew. He saw, too, that Lord Eastwood had now taken hold of the rope, and so had Lady Peggy. Ethel and Doris' were the only eyes he had to fear.

But the two girls were staring, like the others, after Tom Merry and his strange aircraft. Renfrew felt sure that they would never see.

He closed his hand. The blade of the pocket-knife bit into the rope.

The toughness of it dismayed him.

For a moment he wondered whether the knife would prove incapable of its terrible task. Then, as he worked covertly, feverishly, he felt one of the strands part.

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He caught his breath.

His face was pale, and his heart was beating faster than he liked. Scoundrel though he was, even Gilbert Renfrew could not carry out his evil plan without a qualm.

Even now, as he felt that first strand break, he hesitated in sudden panic. What if he were found out? Then he told himself roughly that there was a fortune at stake—that he could not afford to be squeamish, and that discovery was almost impossible.

Again the keen blade bit into the already weakened rope. Renfrew was taking the opportunity afforded by an unexpected tangle in the rope which was preventing it being paid out farther for the moment. But he knew that his time was short.

The giant kite was not far from the island now.

The point on the cliffs that Lord Eastwood had chosen for the launching of the kite was comparatively low, being a deep hollow in a gorge that ran down to the beach below. When the kite was over Penperro Rock, it would be only a short distance above the highest point of the island, where the ruins stood. For an agile youngster like Tom Merry it would be fairly easy, if he waited his chance, to drop safely on to the island by means of a rope that had been fastened to the kite for that purpose. By means of this dangling rope he could secure the kite, too, for the return journey.

But if Renfrew succeeded in his villainy Tom Merry would never even reach Penperro Rock!

He heard Lord Eastwood's voice:

"All clear! Pay out that rope!"

Renfrew set his teeth, and with all his strength he dragged the blade across the remaining strands.

Some of them were severed, but not all. Renfrew felt his heart go sick. If he paid out the rope now the damage done to it would be clearly visible.

Again with a covert movement he made to cut the rope through. But it was not necessary.

The powerful drag of the giant kite was too strong for the remaining strands. They parted suddenly, and the broken end of rope went whisking away from him. For a dozen yards it dragged over the grassy cliffs, before anyone but Renfrew realised what had happened. Then it sailed away on the wind, trailing high over the raging sea.

In a moment Renfrew's knife was back in his pocket, and he was tearing with feverish fingers at the end of rope in his hands, obliterating the marks of the knife.

There was a scream from Ethel Cleveland, and shouts and cries from the juniors and the three menservants. Then a deathly silence of dazed horror as the eyes of all saw the great kite soaring away, free, with the tiny figure of Tom Merry clinging to it.

"Good heavens!" The voice of Talbot of the Shell came to Renfrew's ears, hoarse and shaking. "The rope's broken!"

There was a despairing cry from Manners.

"Tom—Tom—"

"He's done for!" panted Monty Lowther in a sobbing voice.

The great kite, carried away on the wind, was tumbling and twisting in the air now that the check of the rope was no more. But the long trailing section attached to it steadied it to some extent.

From the hollow in the cliffs fascinated eyes watched it being swept away.

It dived suddenly, swooping down towards the sea. But it lifted again and soared on.

Not a word was spoken on the cliffs—a spell of horror had rendered everyone dumb.

The watchers knew that the kite would dive again; and probably its next dive would send it crashing into the rock-bound waves at the base of the island.

The dive came.

The freed kite swerved on the wind, turned downwards, and swooped.

Ethel Cleveland shut her eyes, and there was an audible groan from the others.

But the kite did not reach the waves!

The wind had taken it above the island, and with a crash the giant kite came down among the ruins of Penperro Rock, vanishing from sight!

From Ethel Cleveland there broke a stifled sob.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Rescued!

TOM MERRY dragged himself to his feet dazedly.

His left hand was cut and bleeding, and there was a bruise in store for one of his knees. But, as if by a miracle, he was otherwise unhurt. The kite, lying now in utter wreckage across a low archway, had broken his fall by dropping across between two walls. Tom Merry had been tossed out on to the bushes that choked that corner

of the ancient ruins, and after some moments of dazed amazement at finding himself still alive, he had scrambled out from the bushes, and stood surveying the wrecked kite with the beginnings of a twisted smile on his face.

"My only aunt!" gasped Tom, dabbing at his bleeding hand with a handkerchief. "That was about the nearest shave I ever want to have!"

For some minutes, in the air, after he had realised that the rope no longer held him, Tom Merry had believed himself as good as finished. But now that he had come out of his perilous adventure practically scot-free, it was beginning to seem utterly unreal.

"I— I ought to be dead as mutton," he told himself wonderingly. "Phew! What a wonderful fluke!"

His senses, still rather dazed, turned to his chums on the cliffs.

In a moment Tom shook the haze from his brain. That the others would believe him to be terribly injured at least, he realised. He must let them know of his miraculous escape at once.

He hurried, rather unsteadily, from the ruins, and stared across towards the hollow in the opposite cliffs.

He could see tiny figures there. Plunging a hand into his

pocket, he took out the powerful electric-torch that Lord Eastwood had provided him with for signalling purposes, without having realised how badly it would be wanted.

Choosing a dark, shadowed wall for a background, Tom sent a flashing light gleaming across towards the cliffs. He grinned rather unsteadily as he thought of the surprise with which his signal would be received.

"O. K.," he signalled, in Morse, and repeated the message when no answer came. But after the second time a flickering light, faint in the sunlight, answered him.

"Good egg!" muttered Tom. He returned the torch to his pocket, and glanced about him.

Where was Baggy Trimble?

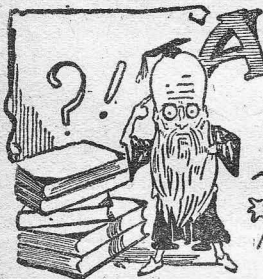
"Oooough!"

With a sleepy grunt, Baggy Trimble, the missing junior, sat up and rubbed his eyes.


He blinked about him, and gave an exasperated sniff. Baggy did not quite know how long he had been a prisoner on Penperro Rock, for in the dark lantern-lit

(Continued on next page.)

## ASK THE ORACLE!



During the past month the Oracle has received several inquiries about missing relatives, lost dogs, and where jobs from 30s. a week and upward may be obtained by boys just leaving school. Such queries and all requests for loans of a bob till next Saturday are consigned to the waste-paper basket.—Ed.



**Q. What is the flag of the Royal Air Force?**

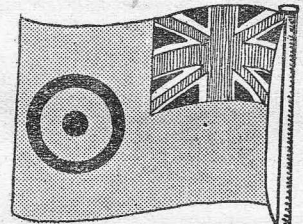
A. I am glad you sent in this query, "Jock," of Dunfermline. I give a picture of this very striking and comparatively new flag, but, of course, it looks a heap better in colour. The "ground" on which the "target" is set is of pale blue. The centre of the "target" is red and the outer ring dark blue.

**Q. Who was Watt?**

A. An inventor. He invented the steam engine.

**Q. How did the American coin, the dollar, get its name?**

A. Dollar is a corruption of the name of a German coin, "thaler," used in America long ago.



The flag of the Royal Air Force.

**Q. Where is the "Charing Cross" of the Atlantic?**

A. This is the name sometimes applied to those islands known as the Azores, where numerous cables meet, linking up all parts of the world.

**Q. Are there any prehistoric animals still in existence?**

A. Obviously not, "Anon," or they would be a few tens of thousands of years old! Nor—so far as we scientists are aware—are there any of their descendants living in exactly the same form. In prehistoric days long-tusked mammoths of gigantic stature roamed the earth, and this is known definitely because bones have been unearthed and skeletons reconstructed. To-day we have the elephants which probably descended from some form of the mammoth species. Animals change in form according to their requirements over the passing centuries. It is believed that giraffes were not long-necked creatures in the days before history. Lack of food and the necessity for reaching higher and higher on trees for sustenance, gradually produced the change in them. This is the reason why a giraffe's neck is long, and not merely—as the old conundrum states—because its head is so far from its body! The answer to your second query is "No."

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**Q. Is the bloodhound bad-tempered?**

A. No, Wilfred Powel, of Hammer-smith, quite the contrary. In spite of the fact that a bloodhound can be used for tracking fugitives, he is of a sensitive and affectionate nature. He is very intelligent, acute of smell, and has the doggedness of the bulldog when on the trail. A full-grown bloodhound stands over two feet in height and weighs over a hundred pounds.



Such a noble beast is the bloodhound—as sensitive and generous a dog as you'd ever wish to have.

**Q. Are any flowers poisonous?**

A. Queer questions some of you fellows send in! However, Charlie Mears, of Weston-super-Mare, without embarking upon a lecture on this curious and interesting subject, I can tell you that certain kinds of tropic blooms are distinctly poisonous. That is to say, their scent and pollen have bad physical effects on people. Nor is it generally known that some of our English flowers, although not dangerous to life, can produce ill effects on those susceptible. For instance, there are species of primroses which will give a kind of skin disease to people, and the scent of violets in a stuffy room will cause a form of throat trouble. Some singers have been known to lose voice through wearing a bouquet of violets during a concert. A flower called the daphne in a closed room has been known to get folk half-intoxicated!

**Q. Where in London can original songs be sold?**

A. Nowhere, Gus Mosenstein—at least not of the sort such as you have sent samples! Here's the best of our musical chum's efforts:

Chorus: "Son of a sheik,  
What a shriek! What a shriek!  
Urging his camel to the mountain peak,  
His foe to seek.  
(repeated) What a shriek!"

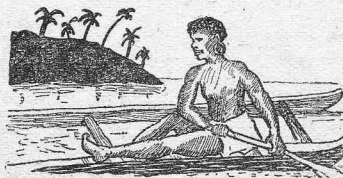
And it jolly nearly made me shriek, too, Gus! Ye snakes, you can't do this sort of thing, you know. In the first place "sheik" doesn't rhyme with "shriek," "seek" or "peak." It rhymes with "brake"—and I advise you to put the brake on with this kind of stuff or you'll be found one night, my lad, with a crimson-stained saxophone lying beside your poor still body. Also, camels are not of the same genus as mountain-goats. For the sake of your relatives and friends don't do this sort of thing again!

**Q. What is a catamaran?**

A. A raft of logs tied side by side or two boats fixed together. This type of raft—or craft, as it is really intended to be—is much used by natives off the coast of India and elsewhere.

**Q. What is Soho noted for?**

A. Its foreign restaurants. It is a district in the West End of London, E. N. C., rather to the north of Piccadilly.



Here's a queer-looking craft—it's a catamaran, and, in spite of the length of its name, it floats!

vault where Renfrew was keeping him, he could not keep track of time. But one thing Baggy knew—that he was fed up with it.

Hence his exasperated sniff as, on waking, he saw the damp, crumbling walls of his prison still around him.

Baggy was comfortable enough. With plenty of blankets, and an old mattress, with which Renfrew had provided him, and nothing to grumble about concerning the quantity of food with which his captor supplied him from time to time, even though it was not such varied fare as he had been enjoying at Penperro House, the missing junior had soon grown reconciled to his imprisonment. At any rate, there was no work to do.

After his first terror of the man, he had come to realise that Renfrew had nothing to gain by doing him any harm, and so he had nothing much to worry about in the old vault beneath the ruins.

Once only had Gilbert Renfrew ill-treated him—and on that occasion Baggy had learnt his lesson. That had been on the night when Baggy had taken advantage of a careless moment when Renfrew, after bringing him food, had left the door of his prison improperly fastened, and Baggy had sneaked out with the lantern, and by darkening it with his coat, had used it for signalling for help to the house on the opposite cliffs.

Renfrew had surprised him in the middle of it all, and had almost knocked him out with a blow on the jaw that Baggy was not likely to risk being repeated.

Baggy yawned and kicked the blankets aside, and reached out for a large leg of mutton that stood on a plate at his elbow.

But he did not enjoy that contemplated snack after all.

He turned his head suddenly, listening. From somewhere beyond the heavy door of his prison he had heard a voice, faint and muffled, calling his name. "Baggy! Baggy!"

Baggy sat up, the leg of mutton completely forgotten. For a moment or two he thought he must have imagined the voice. But then it came again, a little louder and nearer—"Baggy! Where are you?"

"M-my hat!" mumbled Baggy, in astonishment rather than anything else. "That's Tom Merry!"

How Tom Merry came to be on the island, searching for him, he could not make out, for even in his vault Baggy could hear the echoing-boom of waves round the base of the island, telling him clearly enough that no boat could possibly have approached the rock.

"He must have found the secret tunnel!" gasped Baggy. "That blessed tunnel under the sea—"

He staggered to his feet excitedly, and rolled across to the heavy door. He beat a fat fist upon it.

"Hi! Here I am! Hi—"

Baggy's voice echoed in the vault, but it was only a very muffled, breathless squeak that penetrated beyond.

But apparently it was sufficient. A few moments later he heard Tom Merry's hurrying footsteps in the ruins.

"Hi! It's me—Trimble—"

"Where are you?" came an answering shout. "Down here, you ass!" roared Baggy, not exactly gratefully or politely. But it was never Baggy's way to be either particularly grateful or very polite.

He heard Tom descending the crumbling steps beyond the door, and the next instant there was a thud upon it from outside.

"Are you in there, Baggy?" cried Tom Merry. "Of course I am!" snorted Baggy. "How the dickens do you think I can be yelling in here if I'm not?"

"Are you locked in?"

"Yes! That cad Renfrew's been jolly well keeping me here," granted Baggy.

He heard Tom's exclamation on the other side of the thick door.

"Wait a jiff, old chap! I'll soon have you out!"

There came a crash on the door. Tom Merry had evidently picked up one of the loose lumps of masonry that were scattered everywhere in the ruins, and was getting to work on the heavy old timbers. Baggy withdrew hastily to a safe distance.

Crash, crash!

The door shook and splintered beneath Tom's powerful blows. A chink of light appeared in a long split in the iron-bound wood.

"Shan't be long now, Baggy!" sang out Tom's cheery voice.

Crash!

With a final smashing blow Tom Merry drove in a huge section of the door. Daylight streamed in, and Tom's broad-shouldered figure was revealed with the lump of masonry in his hands.

"Out you come, old chap!"

"I can't get through there!" snorted Baggy indignantly.

"Can't you make the blessed hole bigger?"

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Tom Merry chuckled, and with a few more heavy blows succeeded in widening the broken opening sufficiently for even Baggy's fat figure to climb through with ease. Baggy scrambled out into the unaccustomed daylight, and stood breathing in great gulps of the fresh morning air, and blinking owlishly in the sunlight.

Tom Merry gripped his arm. His face was grim. "Thank goodness you're all right, Baggy! You've no idea how anxious we've all been! You say that Renfrew has kept you imprisoned here?"

"Yes," grunted Baggy. His eyes gleamed suddenly. "I say, he's an awful dark horse! He pretended not to believe in the treasure, or the chart; but it was him that bagged the blessed chart!"

Tom Merry jumped. "Great pip!"

"Yes, and he's out to collar the treasure all for himself!" went on Baggy, fairly bursting with importance at being the supplier of so much exciting news. "That's why he kept me here, because I found out all about the rotter, and he meant to keep me a blessed prisoner till he had got safe away with the treasure!"

Tom Merry stared wonderingly at Baggy. He drew a deep breath.

"Great Scott!" he muttered.

"He's an awful beast!" went on Baggy vindictively. "I hope he's made to sit up. That time I signalled across to you all with the lantern he caught me, and knocked me about terribly. I—I fancy I have a few ribs broken even now—"

"So that's why the message stopped in the middle," broke in Tom, almost to himself. "But, Baggy, how the dickens does Renfrew get to the island at will—how did you get here?"

"There's an underground tunnel," grinned Baggy. "It leads from the old tower at the house, and right under the blessed strip of water, and up on to the island. We'll get back that way and split on that rotter Renfrew—"

Baggy's words froze in his throat.

His eyes were staring past Tom Merry, up the steps, to a point beyond. His jaw dropped, and his face went suddenly sickly in colour.

Tom Merry swung round.

Standing in the ruins at the top of the crumbling steps that led down to the door of the vault was the figure of Gilbert Renfrew, his eyes fastened upon the two St. Jim's juniors with a malevolent gleam.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Over the Cliff Edge!

TOM MERRY'S face went tense and set. For the first time since learning the truth about the scoundrel, he and Renfrew were face to face.

There was a squeal of fright from Baggy Trimble. It was quite clear that Renfrew had heard every word that they had been saying—had heard Baggy's eager proposal that they hurried back to Penperro House at once to denounce him.

And at the knowledge that his words had been overheard by Renfrew himself, Baggy's heart seemed to sink into his very boots!

With a gasp, he turned and bolted into the cover of the vault behind him, leaving Tom Merry standing alone, with clenched fists and gleaming eyes.

"So it's you, you scoundrel!"

Renfrew's lips lifted from his teeth in an animal-like snarl.

"Yes," he answered malevolently. "So you are going back to tell Lord Eastwood of my little schemes, eh?"

He laughed softly.

Tom Merry strode up the steps, and halted in front of the man. The captain of the Shell was not afraid of Renfrew, scared though Baggy was.

"Yes," he answered steadily; "I am afraid your little plan to steal the treasure won't work, after all, you black-guard!"

"That's not a pretty word!" purred Renfrew.

"It's pretty enough to suit you!" said Tom contemptuously.

"Thanks!"

"Don't bother to thank me!" said Tom Merry coolly. "I suppose, if the truth were known, your name is not Renfrew at all?"

"You're dead right!" sneered the man who had called himself Gilbert Renfrew. "No reason why I shouldn't tell you, I suppose! My real name happens to be something quite different. But I happened to know that Lord Eastwood had a friend named Renfrew, who was abroad, and therefore could not deny my claim to be his son. So I made that little claim, hoping to be invited to stay at Penperro House on the strength of it. And it worked excellently."

Again he laughed softly.

"If you are wondering what my real name is I'm afraid you will be disappointed," he grinned. "I prefer to keep that to myself."

"I suppose it is well enough known to the police, anyway!" Tom retorted.

The shot told. The man whom the St. Jim's juniors had known as Renfrew glared savagely for a moment—then shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"You are a clever guesser, my young friend," he said silkily. "I don't mind admitting that my real name is not unknown to our excellent police!"

His gleaming eyes were fixed upon Tom Merry's.

Tom's brain was working swiftly.

He knew that Renfrew did not mean him to leave the island. If Renfrew could, he would capture Tom Merry and keep him a prisoner with Baggy until his plan to secure the treasure of the rock was completed.

But the captain of the Shell had no intention of allowing himself to be imprisoned as easily as Baggy had done! Though Renfrew—as Tom could not help but still think of him—was a grown man, Tom Merry was the champion fighting man of the Lower School at St. Jim's. If Renfrew thought he had an easy task before him in preventing Tom from getting back to Penperro House to denounce him he was very much mistaken.

"So you intend to go back and tell all you know?" went on Renfrew in the same silky voice.

He took out a cigarette.

"I don't mind telling you I took a good deal of trouble to prevent you getting on here at all," he continued, with a sudden savage note creeping into his voice. "You didn't know I cut the rope of that infernal kite, did you?"

Tom stared at him dumbly. Renfrew laughed.

"Well, you know now! You see, I am pretty determined. So if you think you are going to leave this island before my work here is done, you are very much mistaken!"

His eyes gleamed.

"Listen!" he jibed. "I've found the treasure! Understand? That's news for you! The chart told me where it was, and I've got a copy of that chart, though the chart itself is burned! Treasure worth thousands—thousands! And it's mine!"

His eyes had lighted up with a gloating, covetous gleam. It was clear that the man was so obsessed with his triumph that he was only too willing to boast of it to someone whom he considered it safe to tell.

"Thousands!" he repeated hoarsely. "Thousands! Gold and precious stones—"

It was at that moment, when the man was off his guard, that Tom Merry seized his chance.

He took a quick stride forward, and straight from the shoulder his left fist flashed out. It crashed upon the man's jaw, and he went over like a sack of coals. In a moment Tom had dropped upon him, a knee on the dazed scoundrel's chest, his hands at his throat.

"Baggy!"

Baggy Trimble's scared face peered out from the shadows of the vault.

"Quick! Get off!" cried Tom breathlessly. "Back to the house by that under-sea passage you told me about!"

Baggy did not need a second bidding. The sight of Renfrew struggling dazedly in Tom Merry's grasp was enough for the Falstaff of the Fourth. He scuttled up the crumbling steps, past the pair, and vanished through the broken archway beyond.

From where he lay on his back beneath Tom's kneeling figure, Renfrew glared up at the captain of the Shell with a murderous hatred in his eyes.

"You young hound—"

He writhed desperately; but Tom's grip tightened on his throat, and he gasped for breath.

"Better lie still!" muttered Tom. His face was grim as fatal. "You tried to murder me when I was on the kite. I don't want to have to choke the life out of you in return!"

Renfrew lay still, panting.

But he was not beaten yet.

The knowledge that Baggy was already on his way back to the house on the cliffs, through the secret tunnel, lent him almost a madman's strength. He knew that if Baggy once arrived at Penperro House, his hopes of the treasure were doomed.

"Let me go!" he muttered. "We'll split the treasure, fifty-fifty—"

Tom laughed.

"Do you really expect me to make that bargain with you, you hound?"

As a matter of fact, Renfrew did not. But he was waiting to get back his breath, after that throttling grip upon his throat.

Suddenly he exerted every ounce of desperate strength in his body. Despite the fact that he was by no means powerfully built, he was a grown man; and Tom Merry, though an athlete, was a schoolboy.

The captain of the Shell strove to retain his grip, but with a terrific heave the man sent him reeling sideways. A fist smashed up into Tom's face, blinding him.

Renfrew struggled to his feet and darted out through the archway, his first thought being to prevent Baggy's escape from the island. But Tom Merry was on his heels, and the man was forced to turn and grapple with the pursuing youngster.

He struck out savagely, but Tom neatly side-stepped and closed with Renfrew.

A fist came crashing into Tom's face, jerking back his head; but he held on doggedly, his arms entwined round the desperate scoundrel's waist, holding him fast.

At whatever cost, he must keep Renfrew from overtaking Baggy Trimble before the fat junior reached Penperro House.

Already Baggy had vanished into the deep gorge that split the island on the landward side.

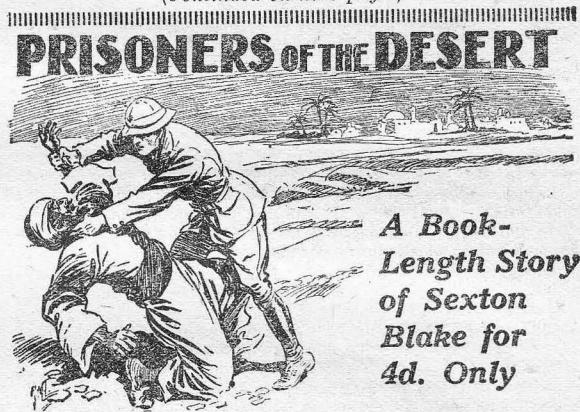
Renfrew was breathing hard and fast, struggling madly to escape from the youngster's clutches. The pair reeled and staggered; and suddenly Renfrew realised that he and Tom Merry were within a few yards of the cliff-edge.

A stone slipped beneath Renfrew's feet, and, with a gasp, he staggered sideways towards the brink. He cried out in terror.

Only with a supreme effort did he regain his balance and turn again to fling himself at the captain of the Shell.

Tom faced him squarely, and again they grappled in a grim embrace. But Renfrew had a foot between Tom's, and with a twist of his leg he threw Tom sideways.

(Continued on next page.)



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He heard Tom Merry's choking cry as the St. Jim's junior reeled over the dizzy brink; saw the figure of the youngster drop like a stone and vanish.

Dazedly Renfrew stood there panting and gasping, a hand at his throat. There was horror in his eyes. The sight of Tom Merry's terrible fate had shaken his nerve. Though he had tried to murder the youngster before and failed, the knowledge that Tom had gone over the cliffs, to be smashed on the jagged rocks far below, sent his heart strangely cold.

He had forgotten Baggy now.

For nearly a minute he stood there breathing heavily, the beads of sweat standing out on his clammy brow; then he crept forward, his mouth sagging open, and forced himself to peer over the knife-edge brink.

Far below, on the dark rocks where the waves washed in foaming madness, he could make out a crumpled shape, one arm outflung, lying in a cleft of two rocks. The sea half covered that grim shape lying there so very still.

A hoarse exclamation broke from Renfrew's dry lips.

"Well, he asked for it!" he told himself thickly and turned away.

But the thunder of the waves below echoed in his ears, maddening him—that and the mournful cry of sea birds. The man who had called himself Gilbert Renfrew shuddered and pressed his trembling hands over his ears.

But the sudden thought of Baggy Trimble, already on his way back to Penperro House by way of the under-sea tunnel, steadied his broken nerve.

He began to run towards the gorge with fast, panther-like strides.

There was time yet to overtake the escaped prisoner of Penperro Rock. And more than ever now must he prevent Baggy telling his story at the big house on the cliffs.

"Oh dear!"

Baggy Trimble was puffed.

He had scuttled off to the hidden entrance of the secret tunnel that would lead him back to the mainland at top speed, and by the time he had started to descend the winding stone steps that led down to the end of the tunnel he was very much out of breath indeed.

Fear alone enabled him to hasten on down the stairs in the utter darkness that now hemmed him in.

Baggy would have given a good deal for a torch now; but Renfrew had robbed him of the torch he had had when he had found his way along the tunnel before from the east tower of Penperro House.

In the pitch-darkness Baggy slowed down almost to a crawl.

He was afraid of missing his footing; besides, the eerie blackness was beginning to unnerve him. But for the fear that Renfrew might have succeeded in winning his struggle with Tom Merry, the fat Fourth-Former would have turned back and sought the daylight once again.

But as it was he kept on, though with ever-increasing slowness; and at last he came to the end of the tunnel itself.

Even his own heavy breathing seemed rather terrifying in that forbidding darkness. His face was white in the gloom as he began to roll nervously along the tunnel, feeling his way with groping hands.

And then suddenly he halted.

From somewhere behind him echoing footsteps had sounded. Baggy glanced back fearfully and gave a squeal of terror as he saw a gleam of yellow light appear by the foot of the steps.

"Ow! Who's that?" quavered Baggy.

The footsteps were near the bottom of the steps now. The light was flooding brighter.

"Is—that y-y-you, Tom Merry?" gasped Baggy.

And then in the glow of light he saw a shadowy figure jump into view, and he knew that it was the figure of Renfrew.

Utter panic gripped Baggy.

With a choking scream, he began to rush down the sloping tunnel as fast as his fat legs would allow him. A glow of light from behind lit up his ungainly figure, and behind came the footsteps of his pursuer.

Relentless following footsteps—nearer and nearer yet—

"Got you, you little cub!"

A clutching hand caught Baggy's shoulder, dragging him to a standstill. Baggy glanced round with wide, staring eyes and found Renfrew's face glaring down at him, dimly revealed in the light of the torch.

"So you thought you'd get away?" snarled Renfrew.

"I—I—I—" stammered Baggy. "Where's Tom Merry?" he blurted desperately. His voice rose to a scream, for he fancied that Tom Merry might have been following Gilbert Renfrew. "Help, help!"

There was a harsh laugh from his captor.

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"You'll get no help from Tom Merry!"

And the look in the man's eyes, glaring down at him out of the gloom, sent an icy chill down to Baggy's heart.

"Why—why—" he panted. "Where is Tom Merry?"

The man turned, dragging Baggy back towards the foot of the steps that led up on to the island. For a moment or two he did not answer. When he did his voice was oddly thick.

"Tom Merry is dead!"

## CHAPTER 10.

### At Penperro House!

"WHAT the dickens can have happened to Tom?"

It was from Monty Lowther that the sudden exclamation came.

Monty Lowther's voice was impatient with anxiety.

"He's all right, anyway," said Manners, for about the tenth time. "He signalled O.K. after the kite crashed; he wasn't hurt, thank goodness, or he wouldn't have sent that signal."

"But why hasn't he signalled since?" muttered Jack Blake, voicing the question that was in the mind of everyone.



The St. Jim's juniors, Lord Eastwood, and the three Spalding Hall girls were gathered in the long dining-room overlooking the cliffs.

Lunch was laid and ready, but no one had thought of eating.

Tom Merry's inexplicable silence since his "O.K." signal upon his hazardous landing on the mysterious rock was utterly bewildering to all.

They had expected that Tom would soon signal again, telling them in Morse something about Baggy Trimble—if Baggy was all right, and how he had managed to gain access to the supposedly inaccessible island. But no message had come.

Nothing! Penperro Rock's forbidding pile had remained as if deserted, lifeless.

At the open window Lord Eastwood stood with glasses directed towards the island. But he lowered them with a disappointed gesture.

"I can see no sign of anyone!"

"Can I have a look, patah?"

The swell of St. Jim's, his face worried and anxious, took the glasses from his father's hand and lifted them to his eyes. But after a minute or so he lowered them and shook his head.

"Nothin' at all, deah boys! It's vewy extwaordinawy!" An almost continuous watch had been kept upon the island; but Tom Merry's struggle with Renfrew had been hidden from view on the farther side of the ruins.

"What ever can have happened?" cried Doris Levison in an unsteady voice. "It is so strange, so uncanny—"  
She shuddered as she stared out towards Penperro Rock. "There is something weird and horrible about that island," she breathed. "I wish we had never even heard of



Locked in a grim embrace, Tom Merry and Gilbert Renfrew reeled and struggled desperately on the cliff-edge. Suddenly, with a twist of his leg, Renfrew threw Tom sideways. There was a choking cry from the junior as he reeled over the dizzy brink and vanished! (See Chapter 9.)

the treasure there—I feel sure that it is the treasure that is in some strange way the cause of all these mysterious happenings—"

She broke off with another shudder. Ernest Levison put a comforting arm round his sister, but did not speak.

"Where is Gilbert Renfrew?" asked Lord Eastwood abruptly. "Hang the fellow, he seems always to be disappearing!"

"I saw him go off to the house after Tom had signalled that he was safe," put in Talbot. "But I did not see him anywhere when we came back here."

"Well, let us have some lunch," said Lord Eastwood, turning from the window. His face was still deeply perplexed and troubled. "After all, Tom signalled that he was all right. He is sure to send another message soon! No need to starve ourselves."

There were three empty places now as the party sat down very half-heartedly to the meal. Tom Merry was missing, as well as Baggy Trimble; and Renfrew's place beside Lord Eastwood was empty, too.

"I wondah where the dickens Mr. Wenfrew has got to?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus irritably, a minute or two later, as there was still no sign of the man.

Even as he spoke, the door swung silently open, and Gilbert Renfrew stepped into the room.

"Did I hear my name mentioned?" he murmured, smiling. He went to his seat and sat down. "I am sorry I'm

late. Had to—er—change my togs; tore them out on the cliffs."

The juniors saw now that Renfrew was wearing a different suit; but the explanation seemed oddly inadequate.

"How long does the chap want to change a suit in?" breathed Herries to Digby, with a grunt.

"Even longer than old Gussy!" answered Digby dryly.

Arthur Augustus, who had overheard the low-spoken remark, glared at Digby, but said nothing.

Across the table Talbot watched Renfrew curiously. Renfrew helped himself to salt, and Talbot saw the man's hand shake. When he picked up his knife and fork they rattled oddly on the plate for a moment.

Despite his cool, smiling mask, Renfrew was labouring under some stress or excitement, Talbot felt convinced.

All Talbot's old suspicions of the man came rushing back. What had Renfrew been doing when he had been missing so long?

But Talbot had something of a shock when somebody mentioned Tom Merry's name a minute later.

There was a violent clatter of a fork dropping on to a plate. Renfrew's fork had fallen as if from suddenly nerveless fingers. He picked it up again, and smiled with an effort—rather a ghastly smile. Everyone stared at him curiously.

"I—I am a little upset," said Renfrew hoarsely. "I think the sight of that youngster on that kite, when it had broken loose—it—it has shaken my nerves—"

He jumped up suddenly, as though he could not stand the surprised glances that were fixed upon him any longer.

"Excuse me, Lord Eastwood—I am not well!" muttered the man almost incoherently. "I will go to my room—"

He turned towards the door. Lord Eastwood jumped to his feet.

"My dear Gilbert, I am so sorry! Can I send your lunch up to your room?"

"No, thanks," answered Renfrew thickly.

He hurried to the door. One of the footmen moved to open it for him, but Renfrew's hand was already on the handle. He swung the door open.

The next moment a terrible scream broke from him. He staggered back into the room his arms up as if to ward off a ghostly apparition.

Standing in the doorway was Tom Merry.

## CHAPTER 11.

### In His True Colours!

**I**N an instant everyone was on their feet.

"Tom!" yelled Monty Lowther.

Slowly Tom Merry entered the room.

His eyes were gleaming, riveted upon the ashen face of the trembling scoundrel before him. He was without a coat, and his shirt was torn down one side. His hands were cut and bleeding.

Renfrew stared at him in utter terror.

To Gilbert Renfrew it seemed that this was an apparition from another world.

He had seen Tom Merry go over the cliff, had seen that crumpled shape on the rocks, two hundred feet or more below. He had known that Tom was dead—of that he had been certain!

Yet here was the figure of the boy he had thought dead, standing silent before him, watching him with accusing eyes.

Again there was a trembling cry from the scoundrel. He swept an arm before his face.

"Go away!" he shrieked. "Go—go! It wasn't my fault—"

"It's all right, Renfrew," said Tom Merry, and his voice was cold and grim. "It's I—Tom Merry! Not a ghost!"

The man's shaking hands went behind him to grasp support. They clutched the back of one of the chairs. He gave a foolish laugh, and seemed to straighten himself a little with a supreme effort. The panic died from his eyes as he got a grip upon himself.

"Tom Merry!" he stammered. "Why, I—I thought—"

"You thought I was dead," said Tom, in the same grim tones, his eyes never leaving Renfrew's face.

"No—no! I—I thought you were on the island. I thought you landed there from the kite—"

"Despite your cutting of the rope!" Renfrew licked his ashen lips.

"I thought you were on the island," he repeated. "It—it was a shock, seeing you there in the doorway. What do you mean—cutting the rope? The rope broke—"

"Tom!" Manners stepped quickly to his chum's side, taking his arm. "What's the matter? How did you get here? Why are you talking like this?"

Tom gave a short laugh. It was not a pleasant sound—

least of all for Gilbert Renfrew. The captain of the Shell put out a hand and pushed the door shut.

His gaze swept round the room—from Manners' set face to the stern, wondering features of Lord Eastwood, to the white faces of the three girls, to the bewildered faces of his fellow juniors. Again he laughed.

"How did I get here? Through a tunnel that runs under the channel that separates these cliffs from Penperro Rock." Heedless of the gasp of amazement that followed his words, Tom went on:

"Yes, through the undersea tunnel. The same way that Baggy got to the island—the same way that this man has been visiting the island time after time during the last few days, in search of the treasure there! The treasure that he has succeeded in locating, thanks to the chart he stole from the safe in the library that night!"

He flung out a pointing hand at Renfrew. The man seemed to shrink back before that accusing finger. But he said no word.

"Trimble happened to find that tunnel. He went to the island, and there he surprised Renfrew at his secret game! So Renfrew kept Baggy a prisoner, lest he should tell us what he knew! Once Baggy got a chance of signalling to us, but Renfrew interrupted him. I call him Renfrew, but that is not his name. He is an impostor, who has repaid his rescue from drowning by Figgins and Kerr and Fatty Wynn, and the hospitality of this house, by trying to steal the treasure of Penperro Rock for himself!"

There was a tense silence in the long room, following Tom Merry's bitter, accusing words.

Lord Eastwood's face had gone dark. His eyes were gleaming in a way that none of the juniors had ever seen before.

When he spoke his tone was harsher than they could have imagined possible from the genial old earl.

"Renfrew—or whatever your name may be—is this true?"

Renfrew turned a twitching face towards him. He shook his head dumbly.

"Then how do you account for all that Tom Merry tells us?" rasped Lord Eastwood, crashing a hand upon the table. "Let us hear what you have to say."

"He is mad," cried Renfrew, with sudden violence. "Mad, I tell you! His ordeal, when he was nearly killed on the great kite, has turned his brain. He is imagining all this."

Tom Merry laughed quietly. "If it is all untrue," he said in remorseless tones, "how is it that I am back here at this house, after I got to the island by the kite? Only that tunnel under the sea could have brought me back."

"I—I know nothing about how you got back," muttered the man who had been known as Renfrew.

"No, it must have been a bit of a shock for you," nodded Tom coolly. "After I had gone over the cliff, you thought you would never be troubled with me again."

He laughed softly.

"You're a clever scoundrel, whoever you are. But I fooled you that time. You didn't see me on the ledge just beneath the brink, when you looked over the cliffs for my body? That's where I was—close in under the overhanging brink, out of your sight. But you saw something else, and you thought it was me. My coat. Yes, I thought I'd made you believe me dead. I threw my coat down on to the rocks, and at that distance you took it for me, didn't you?"

Renfrew gave a hoarse exclamation. He understood now.

"And you never saw me hiding in the ruins when you brought Baggy back from the tunnel, and tied him up and left him there, did you? Poor old Baggy! He's still trussed up where you left him, I'm afraid. I had no time to free him—I couldn't take the risk of losing track of you, when you hurried off to return to the mainland by the undersea tunnel."

Tom chuckled.

"Yes, I followed you all the way."

There was a sudden grim exclamation from Reginald Talbot.

"Well, I fancy it is all clear enough now," he said, with an abrupt step towards Renfrew. "You're beaten, you scoundrel—"

Renfrew seemed to awake from a stupor.

He sprang away from Talbot, putting his back to the door. His face was working with savage fury and bitter hate.

"Beaten, am I?" he snarled. "Not yet, I fancy."

His hand flashed to his pocket.

"Look out!" yelled Levison.

He and Talbot and Figgins and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sprang forward. But they were too late.

Already a blue-black automatic was gleaming dully in the scoundrel's hand. He swept the sinister weapon round the ring of his enemies.

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"Back!"

The juniors fell back dumbly. There was a squeak of fright from Reggie Manners, and a cry from Lady Peggy. The man by the door laughed his old silky laugh.

"My win, I think," he purred.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Under the Sea!

"YOU scoundrel!" cried Lord Eastwood. Renfrew—as he had called himself—bowed mockingly.

"Many thanks!"

His dark, glittering eyes swept over the ring of faces around him.

"Yes," he said sardonically, "Tom Merry has spoken the truth. I admit everything—if that'll please you. I am not the son of your friend Mr. Renfrew, Lord Eastwood. I pretended to be in order to gain the convenient hospitality of this house. It may surprise you, in the circumstances, that your friend did not at once write back from France to tell you that his son was not at present in Cornwall. It is not really surprising, for the letter you wrote to Mr. Renfrew, telling him of my arrival here, was never sent. I was kind enough to offer to post it for you, Lord Eastwood, you may remember. I destroyed that letter."

He laughed.

He was very cool and triumphant now. "Yes, it was the treasure I wanted all along," he went on. "Keep back, you fool!" he rapped out suddenly, as one of the footmen made a half-hearted movement towards him.

The man halted as if turned to stone.

"Yes, I had heard of the legend of the treasure," purred the impostor. "I had reason to believe that it had a foundation in fact. I was making a rash attempt to gain access to the island, in order to search for it, on the night when the storm caught me unawares in my little yacht, and but for the—heroism of three of our friends here, I should not be with you now. In the circumstances, I dare say they are almost wishing they had not been quite so heroic that night."

His mocking glance fell for a moment upon Figgins & Co. "You cad!" breathed Blake. "After they saved your life!"

"When that chart was found, I realised it was the key to the treasure, and I resolved that I alone should profit by it," went on the man, ignoring Blake's interruption. He tapped his pocket with his free hand. "I have the copy of it here. Thanks to its invaluable information, and thanks to the fact that I was lucky enough to discover that secret way to the island, I have already unearthed the treasure of the old monks, Lord Eastwood, you may or may not be glad to hear."

He nodded triumphantly.

"I have already begun to transfer it to a place where none of you will ever find it, even supposing that you are lucky enough to set foot on Penperro Rock before I have taken the treasure far away from that romantic little island," he continued in a silky tone. "For there is still time for me to get away with it, I can assure you."

He swung open the door, backing a few steps.

"And let me tell you this," he cried, with a strange, sinister ring in his voice. "If you value your lives, don't use the undersea tunnel."

With a quick spring he was out of the doorway, and the door slammed behind him. They heard his racing footsteps crossing the hall.

"After him!" panted Figgins.

It was Wally D'Arcy who flung open the door. But the man whom Lord Eastwood and his guests had known as Gilbert Renfrew had vanished.

The open front door showed clearly enough the way he had gone. In an instant the St. Jim's juniors were pouring across the hall, and out down the broad steps into the garden.

"Look out for his blessed gun!" gasped Fatty Wynn warningly.

"There he goes!" cried Monty Lowther.

A racing figure could be seen disappearing in the direction of the East Tower. Even as the juniors pounded in pursuit, they saw the man slip into the tower and close the door with a slam behind him.

"What's he gone in there for?" cried Arthur Augustus excitedly. "We've twapped him!"

"Never!" said Tom Merry bitterly. "That's the way to the secret tunnel."

"Oh, great Scott!"

The commanding figure of Lord Eastwood had appeared on the steps. He raised an imperative hand.

"Stop!"

The streaming crowd of juniors came to a standstill.



staring back in surprise. Lord Eastwood hurried down the steps towards them.

"Stop!" he repeated. "The scoundrel is armed—I can't allow you to run this risk!"

"But we can't let him get away, patah!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"I don't intend that he shall," returned his father grimly. "It is clear that the man has gone to the island, in a last desperate attempt to get hold of some, at any rate, of this treasure. No boat can leave the island with the sea as rough as this, so that even if he has a boat over there he is trapped like a rat once he is on the island."

"Bai Jove, yaas!" A look of great relief came into the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Yaas, of course. We've got him pwopahly twapped, I wealdy do believe!"

"Rather!" chuckled Monty Lowther.  
 "Some of you must guard the tower," went on Lord Eastwood swiftly. "See that he does not change his mind and try to get away on to the cliffs. Tom Merry—Talbot—Figgins! Will you come with me to the island, after him?"

"Rather, sir!" cried Talbot.  
 "What-ho!" grinned Figgins.

And Tom Merry nodded a grim assent.  
 Some of the other juniors looked disappointed. But Lord Eastwood shook his head to pleadings that others of them might be allowed to go, too.

"No," he said quietly. "We are dealing with an utterly unscrupulous scoundrel, and I cannot allow more of you than is necessary to run into danger at his hands. Arthur, you had better come, too. But you others must stay behind."

Lord Eastwood hurried into the house, to return a few moments later with a swelling in his hip-pocket that the juniors rightly guessed to be a revolver.

He thrust a powerful electric-torch into Tom Merry's hand.

"You know the way, Tom. You had better take this torch and lead the way, if you will."

Already some of the other juniors had crowded into the tower, and were very mystified to know where Renfrew had vanished. But when, after a little hasty search, Tom Merry found the spring of the secret stone that concealed the entrance to the under-sea route to the island, there were gasps of amazement.

"Cheerio—and good luck!" cried Jack Blake, as Tom Merry scrambled through into the darkness beyond the opening.

"Give Renfrew one on the boko for me!" sang out Wally D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Despite the gravity of the situation, the juniors chuckled. One by one, Lord Eastwood, Talbot, Figgins, and the swell of St. Jim's climbed through after Tom Merry, and vanished from the others' sight.

It certainly seemed as though the scoundrel they were pursuing had put himself into a hopeless trap by going again to the island.

But there was an uneasy foreboding in Tom Merry's mind as he led the way swiftly down the winding stone steps, hewn out of the rock years ago by, probably, the monks of old.

He was remembering Renfrew's strange last words to them: "If you value your lives don't use the under-sea tunnel."

What had the man meant?  
 Was it just an idle threat? Knowing what he did of the man, Tom Merry felt instinctively that there had been some real sinister meaning behind that warning.

He guessed that it was largely because of those strange words that Lord Eastwood had insisted that only a few of them should venture along that secret way, to use the under-sea tunnel that Renfrew had warned them to avoid!

But he shook the uneasiness from his mind. They had to follow the man; they could not trouble to bother about that queer warning, that might mean nothing at all.

Down, down, down—the steps were carrying them deep through the heart of the cliffs.

Lord Eastwood was close behind Tom, and Figgins came next. Then Arthur Augustus, with Talbot bringing up the rear.

Glancing round, Tom saw that Lord Eastwood had taken out his revolver and was carrying it ready in his hand.

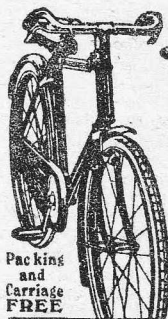
They came at last to the foot of the steps, with the dark opening of the rocky tunnel vanishing into the gloom before them.

There had been no sign of their quarry. By now, doubtless, the man was far ahead of them, though it seemed unlikely that he could have yet reached the island.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "What an ewwie place this is!"

"Eerie as a blessed tomb," grunted Figgins.

(Continued on next page.)



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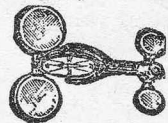
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"Don't be a giddy Jeremiah," complained Talbot. The four juniors and Lord Eastwood pressed on into the gloom, the light of the torch in Tom's hand flashing far ahead down the rocky passages, with the glistening drops of moisture glittering on the roof like diamonds. They reached the point where the passage began to slope upwards again. It was an uncanny thought for the juniors that they were out beneath the centre of the sea-channel now, with giant waves lashing far above their heads.

They hurried on.

It was deathly quiet but for the sound of their own footsteps, which seemed to echo mysteriously into the dim distance in front and behind them—as though they were following other feet and were pursued in their turn.

The foreboding at the back of Tom's mind was growing stronger now. He tried to dismiss it, but in vain.

"If you value your lives don't use the under-sea tunnel—"

The words hammered in his brain, despite himself.

He quickened his steps, longing to see the foot of the stone stairway at the farther end of the long tunnel, the stone stairs that would lead them up to the light of day once more.

"If you value your lives don't use—"

This time Tom Merry did not finish the words in his mind. From somewhere along the passage behind them there had come a deafening explosion.

Tom Merry felt himself reeling, felt his ears singing with the tremendous concussion. He was hurled against the wall of rock beside him, and a great sheet of flame seemed to sweep past from the darkness behind.

"Good gad—"

Lord Eastwood recovered his balance and stared back along the tunnel.

After that blinding flash of light the darkness seemed blacker than night. And out of the darkness came the rumbling of falling rock and the faint splashing of water—a splashing that seemed to increase to a torrential rush as they listened, staring at one another in the torchlight with balanced faces.

"My hat!" breathed Figgins.

They could hear water sweeping towards them out of the darkness. A foaming wave of it came surging round their feet.

In a moment Tom Merry understood the meaning of the words that had haunted him.

Where the man they had known as Renfrew had procured the explosive he could not imagine just then—though later it transpired that it had been stolen from a quarryman's hut along the cliffs. But one thing, at any rate, was clear—the scoundrel had set this trap ready for just such an emergency as this.

By means, evidently, of electric wires he had detonated the charge from the island as soon as he had reached it, with the intention of barring the way of his pursuers. And the great hole torn in the roof of the tunnel had opened the way for a mad torrent of sea-water to come pouring in.

They could hear it surging in the dark with ever-increasing volume. It had risen to their ankles before they could gather their senses together again, after that deafening concussion in the narrow confines of the tunnel.

Above the surging of the waters rose the voice of Lord Eastwood:

"Run for your lives!"

A moment later the five of them were racing for the distant steps, with the pursuing waters rising round their knees!

### CHAPTER 13.

#### A Race for Life!

"RUN for your lives!"

Lord Eastwood's grim words seemed to drum in Tom Merry's brain as he floundered on through the swirling waters that were now pouring into the tunnel behind them in a steady, echoing roar.

The tunnel was sloping upwards fairly steeply at that point, though they still had fifty yards at least to go before they would reach the steps. Only that upward slope had saved them from being drowned already, like rats in a trap.

Even as it was, the water was rising with terrible rapidity around them, as they fought their way through the echoing gloom, with the light of the torch in Tom's hand wavering on white foam and black, rushing waters.

Figgins missed his footing and fell. Talbot seized him by the arm and dragged him up, and Figgins staggered on again.

The air of the tunnel was heavy with fumes from the explosion. Lord Eastwood and the four juniors felt their senses reeling.

The water was up to the juniors' waists, but the power-

ful, sweeping rush of it, at any rate, helped them on, difficult though it was to keep their footing.

Higher and higher the water rose.

A numbing horror gripped Tom.

He fought on blindly, with the water up to his armpits. But in his heart he felt that it was useless—that they were doomed to a horrible death in that subterranean tunnel!

And then, away ahead, the light of the torch that he still held above the water showed him the foot of the winding stone stairway at the end of the tunnel, with the water washing over the lowest steps.

The next moment the torch was swept out of his grasp, and Tom Merry found himself swimming, striking out in the desperation of despair through the utter darkness that had descended on them like a pall.

That the others were swimming behind him he knew. But in the blackness it was impossible to know what was happening to them. For all he knew, one or another of his companions had been swept against the rocky walls of the flooded tunnel, stunned, and lost for ever in the surging torrent.

It seemed an eternity to Tom before he found that he was dragging himself dazedly from the still rising water on to the steps—vaguely amazed to find himself alive!

He sent a quavering shout into the darkness. But the sound of his voice was lost in the roar of the waters.

In the darkness he felt someone come scrambling up beside him. His eager hand clutched a dripping shoulder.

"Who's that?"

"It's me—Talbot."

Talbot's voice was gasping and breathless. He had had a tremendous fight of it, after being swept against the wall and almost rendered senseless.

"Where are the others?" muttered Tom hoarsely.

To his intense relief, Figgins and Arthur Augustus and Lord Eastwood soon came scrambling out of the water on to the steps, too.

They were safe enough now. Though the water was rising rapidly, it could not catch them now!

Up the winding stairs in the darkness the five dripping figures climbed breathlessly, their one desire to see the light of day, and to breathe the fresh sea air above! But their faces were haggard as they emerged at last from the hidden entrance to the stone stairway in the gorge on Penperro Rock.

They had had a race with death! But they had won!

"There's one thing," muttered Talbot, as the five stood breathing in deep breaths of the keen air. "How do we get back to the mainland now?"

"Bai Jove!"

The face of the swell of St. Jim's went suddenly blank.

Now that the under-sea tunnel was flooded and destroyed they were utterly cut off upon Penperro Rock!

But there was no time to think of that now. Their chief interest was the man whom they had known as Renfrew—and the treasure which he claimed to have unearthed!

Keen though they were to capture Renfrew and hand him over to justice, the knowledge that the treasure of the monks really was concealed on the great rock thrilled the four juniors.

"We may be cut off on this wretched island, but Wenfrew is twapped heah, too; and so is the great treasure!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, glancing up thoughtfully from a rueful survey of his drenched garments.

"Hear, hear!" nodded Lord Eastwood. "We can think about how to get away afterwards. For the present, we have to deal with that precious scoundrel—and the treasure!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

He had forgotten the discomfort of his soaked clothes—had forgotten the terrible peril he had been through. All he cared about was that they were on the track of the treasure at last!

The mysterious island had fooled them in many ways. But it looked as though at long last Penperro Rock was about to give up its secret!

### CHAPTER 14

#### On the Track of the Treasure!

"BAGGY, old chap—"

"Trimble, my boy—"

"Oh! Yow! I—I say, buck up and untie me!"

Baggy Trimble, sitting bound and helpless amid the ruins, had seldom been so glad to see anyone in his life as he was to see Lord Eastwood and Reginald Talbot come into view through a broken archway near him.

Ever since he had been recaptured in the tunnel and dragged back to the island, he had been sitting with pins and needles racking his fat limbs, and a thin cord biting painfully into his wrists and ankles.

He gave a gasp of relief as Talbot stooped over him and sliced through his bonds with a sharp knife. With the Shell fellow's aid, he staggered painfully to his feet.

"Oh! Grooooh! Yooooooop! My foot's gone to sleep, and I think that beast Renfrew has broken some bones in my arm!" moaned Baggy. But a sudden bewildered look came into his face. He stared from Lord Eastwood to Talbot in growing astonishment. "But, I say, how did you find the way across through the tunnel? That's the only way to the island, so you must have come that way—"

"Tom Merry showed us the way," answered Lord Eastwood, dropping a kindly hand on Baggy's shoulder. "He and Figgins and Arthur have gone off to search for that scoundrel. We came here to find you. I wanted to be sure you were not hurt, my boy, after your ordeal. Tom Merry told us you were here, bound."

"T-Tom Merry?" gasped Baggy, staring at Lord Eastwood with wide eyes. "B-but Tom Merry can't have told you!"

"Why on earth not?" ejaculated Talbot.

Baggy gulped.

"Why, he—he's dead!" he stammered. "Renfrew told me so—"

"He was wrong there, Baggy!" said Talbot reassuringly. "Tom was never more alive than now—as Renfrew jolly well knows to his cost!"

"Oh, good!" breathed Baggy, an expression of great relief lighting up his fat features. "Oh, ripping!"

Baggy might be rather a selfish individual as a rule, who cared little about anybody but himself. But there was no mistaking the look of relief and delight that shone in his eyes now at the reassuring news about Tom Merry.

"Yes, Tom is very much alive, Trimble," smiled Lord Eastwood. "And he has told us everything about this scoundrel who has been imposing upon us for so long! The man is on the island now, and it only remains to find him and capture him."

Baggy blinked round nervously.

"Hem! I—I think I'll just scoot back to the mainland," said Baggy hastily. "I feel a bit peckish—"

"Afraid you can't do that—unless you swim it, old fat man!" said Talbot. "The tunnel's flooded. Renfrew blew it up!"

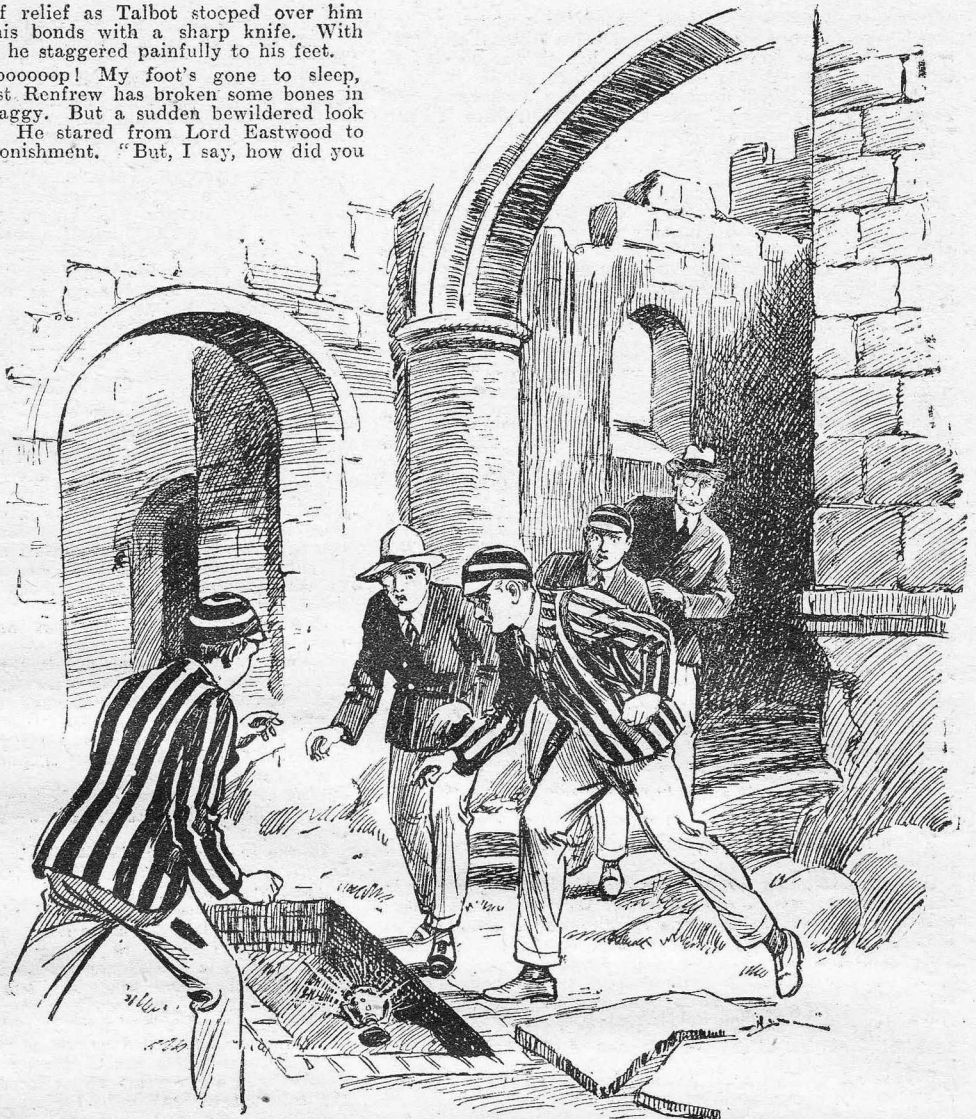
"Oh, lor'!"

It was a shock for Baggy, who had been looking forward to a speedy return to the comforts of Penperro House, while the others took the risks attached to hunting down the desperate scoundrel who, he had been told, was once more back on the island.

"Come!" said Lord Eastwood, his handsome face hardening suddenly. "We must rejoin the other three, and begin a systematic search for the villain. He must be skulking somewhere—with the treasure, probably, since he tells us he has uncarthed it, and it is evident that his sole purpose in returning to the island was to lay hands upon some of that treasure at any cost!"

"We'll rout him out all right," muttered Talbot grimly.

Baggy plucked nervously at Lord Eastwood's sleeve.



"Look!" An excited exclamation came from Tom Merry as he stared into a queer trough in the ground at his feet. Lying within it was an ancient, tarnished goblet, set with great gems that seemed to glow with a living fire. There was a shout from Figgins. "The treasure!" (See Chapter 14.)

"I—I think if—you don't mind, sir, I'll stay here!" gasped Baggy.

"Scared of Renfrew?" grinned Talbot good-naturedly.

Baggy drew his fat little figure up to its full height.

"Really, Talbot! Of course, I am not afraid, you know. I—I battled like a lion with the scoundrel when he captured me, and I'm only too jolly keen to lay hands on him again!"

"Come with us, then," suggested Talbot.

"Hem! I—I fancy I won't," mumbled Baggy hastily. "I'm afraid I might do him an injury if I tackled him. I'm pretty terrible when I'm roused, you know."

"Yes, you had better wait here, Trimble," said Lord Eastwood, smiling slightly. "When we have caught the man we will let you know, and you can then help us to hunt for the treasure!"

"Oh, good!"

And Baggy proceeded to make himself comfortable in the ruins, in a shady corner, while Lord Eastwood and Reginald Talbot hurried out through the broken archway to join the other three juniors.

They found Tom Merry, Figgins, and Arthur Augustus hurrying towards them across the grass.

"No sign of Renfrew in the gorge!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Suah he's not in the ruins, patah?"

"Gad! It's possible he is skulking somewhere among 'em!" ejaculated Lord Eastwood.

"If he is, we'll rout him out!" chuckled Figgins.

"Yaas, bai Jove!"

But though the five of them hunted for a quarter of an hour through every yard of the extensive ruins that spread over the highest point of the island, there was no sign of Gilbert Renfrew—as they had still to call him.

"No, he's not here," muttered Tom Merry, when they had gathered by the biggest arch after their fruitless search.

"Where the dickens—"

He broke off suddenly.

"My hat!"

"What's up?" asked Figgins quickly.

"Why, I remember that time we were here looking for the treasure that I and Manners and Monty spotted a bit of a ruin on a ledge on the cliff-side. We meant to explore it, but we never got down, because Renfrew nearly went over the cliff. He knows about it; perhaps that's where he's hiding now!"

"Show us the way to it!" said Lord Eastwood quietly.

Tom Merry led the way along the edge of the cliffs. After a hundred yards or so he halted, pointing down over the brink.

The others stared down.

Standing on a wide ledge some distance below the cliff top, with a perilous pathway leading to it, were some broken walls and archways.

It looked a likely spot for Renfrew to be hiding in!

"I'll go first," muttered Lord Eastwood.

His hand went to the pocket where his revolver was. They were dealing with a dangerous man, and if Renfrew were watching them from the cover of the little group of ruins on the ledge, he would be able to pick them off easily with his own weapon. But Lord Eastwood, except for that momentary movement to his hip-pocket, showed no sign of the fact that he knew he was taking his life in his hands as he stepped calmly on to the beginning of the narrow pathway.

Without hesitation the juniors followed.

It was a relief to Tom Merry, as to the others, when they reached the ledge without a sign of their quarry having manifested itself.

Cautiously they entered the shadowy ruins.

But they soon realised that their caution was unnecessary. The ruins were empty!

"He's not here!" muttered Figgins.

There was a sudden exclamation from Tom Merry.

"Look!"

Tom was standing by a queer trough in the ground, in the shadow of one of the walls. It was lined with stone, and a great, broken flagstone lying beside it showed that it had been hidden by the great flag until fairly recently, judging by the dusty interior of the trough.

But it was an object lying within it that had brought the excited exclamation from Tom Merry's lips.

An ancient, tarnished goblet, set with great gems that seemed to glow with living fire—rubies and emeralds and sapphires!

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, staring down at the jewel-studded goblet through his eyeglass.

"B-bai Jove!"

There was a shout from Figgins, whose eyes seemed to be almost starting from his head.

"The treasure!" he cried. "That must be part of the old monks' treasure!"

Tom Merry stooped and picked up the goblet with a hand that was a little unsteady with excitement. Lord Eastwood came hurrying up.

He gave a startled exclamation at sight of what Tom Merry held in his hands.

Glittering in the sunlight, the gems flashed and sparkled, and the old gold gleamed dully in the hands that held it.

"Good gad!"

"Yes," breathed Tom, "this is part of the treasure we've been trailing for so long. No doubt about that. But where is the rest of it? This is only a fragment!"

His lips set in a grim line.

"Renfrew told us he had found the treasure!" he went on slowly. "Evidently that was true enough. He's taken the rest and hidden it—left this by mistake in his hurry, I suppose."

"We'll find the rest of the treasure and the rascal with it before long!" said Lord Eastwood. "This rock is beginning to give up its secrets!"

He took the goblet from Tom's hands and examined it eagerly, turning it over and over in his hands.

"If this is a fair sample of the rest of the treasure, it must be of incalculable value!" he muttered. "This goblet alone is worth more than a thousand pounds, or I'm no judge. Gad! This will be a windfall for Emerson!"

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

Mr. Emerson, the friend of Lord Eastwood's, who owned both the island and the house on the opposite cliffs, was certainly in for a windfall if the rest of the treasure were

discovered—a windfall with which he could very well do, inasmuch as he was, and very impoverished.

But a vague doubt was beginning to creep over Tom Merry's mind.

What if they were too late? What if Renfrew—whoever he really was—had some last trump card still to play?

What if Renfrew would succeed in beating them even yet in their grim struggle for the treasure?

It looked as though the man were more or less at their mercy now, trapped on the island, only waiting to be routed out from his hiding-place—and the treasure waiting to be found, too, wherever Renfrew had transferred it. But the scoundrel had shown himself amazingly resourceful in the past. What if he could even now turn what looked like defeat into victory for him?

There was a vast fortune at stake, and Renfrew had already shown that he was sticking at nothing to gain it!

## CHAPTER 15.

### Renfrew's Last Bid!

"I—I'VE got to risk it!"

The man who had called himself Gilbert Renfrew spoke in a low, hoarse tone—a tone in which terror and desperate greed were allied!

He was crouching in the gloom of a long cave that ran deep in under the cliffs of the island. The water within the cave swirled and muttered at his feet, but beyond the bright entrance he could see the mad fury of the maelstrom of waters that swept through the channel separating the island from the mainland.

A small rowing-boat was floating on the water by the rocks on which he crouched.

It was a boat evidently left there by some fisherman, after a visit to the island some time ago. Perhaps there had been several men, and, the weather growing rough during their stay on the island, they had all gone back in a larger craft for safety's sake, leaving the smaller boat in the shelter of the sea-cave, safely moored there until an opportunity came for fetching it.

Whatever the reason, the finding of that boat there had been a slice of luck for Renfrew—so he had considered at the time.

It was to this boat that he had transferred the treasure. It was piled in the stern of the boat—a glimmering heap of gold and jewels!

Coins of a bygone age, gold plates and goblets, gem-studded ornaments, loose rubies, and caskets of precious stones. The treasure of Penperro Rock, glimmering and flashing even in the dim, greenish light of the cave, where the sea washed over slimy boulders around the feet of the man who was fighting now between fear and greed.

"I've got to risk it!" he told himself again.

But he still crouched where he was by the prow of the treasure-laden little craft, staring out with fear-haunted eyes to where the great waves lashed the maze of rocks at the cave-mouth with wild fury.

Unless he dared the stormy seas out there he was caught. There was no other way for him to escape from the island—his pursuers were searching for him even now, he knew, and in the end they were bound to find him.

That was the alternative! To be discovered there, skulking like a cornered animal in the cave, and to pay the price of his rascality; and lose the treasure, too! Or to stake all on a desperate attempt to escape from the island, taking the treasure with him.

If he got through with that vast treasure in his possession he was rich for life. At the thought of it his eyes gleamed with a strange, mad light.

But if he failed, if the waves overcame him— He shuddered at that thought.

He could hear the wind whining up the channel, beating in under the cliffs. The great green waves, rising and falling with ceaseless thunder outside the mouth of the cave, revealed as they fell the jagged heads of hidden rocks. He knew that the odds were all against him—but there was just the chance that he might win through.

A sudden shout behind him caused him to turn his head, pale-faced.

Framed in the narrow opening that gave access to the cave from the foot of the cliffs was the figure of Tom Merry.

A choking exclamation broke from the man's lips.

He was discovered!

"Here he is!"

Tom Merry's voice echoed down to Renfrew. Already Tom was scrambling down the rocks towards him. The figures of Lord Eastwood, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Figgins, and Talbot were to be seen now, hurrying to follow Tom.

In that moment Renfrew made up his mind.

He would risk everything in the playing of his last desperate card. In a moment he had scrambled into the

boat, and with a thrusting oar had sent it dancing out towards the opening of the cave.

"Quick!" roared Talbot. "Stop him!"

Heedless of the automatic that he knew the man had in his possession, Tom Merry, with Talbot at his heels and the others scrambling over the rocks after them, went tearing along the side of the cave in a desperate attempt to cut the boat and its occupant off as the little craft slid out past the cave-mouth.

The cavern was echoing noisily to the shouts of his pursuers. Renfrew flung himself on to the seat, and with rapid oars sent the boat shooting down the long water-channel towards the sunlight beyond.

Tom realised then that pursuit was useless.

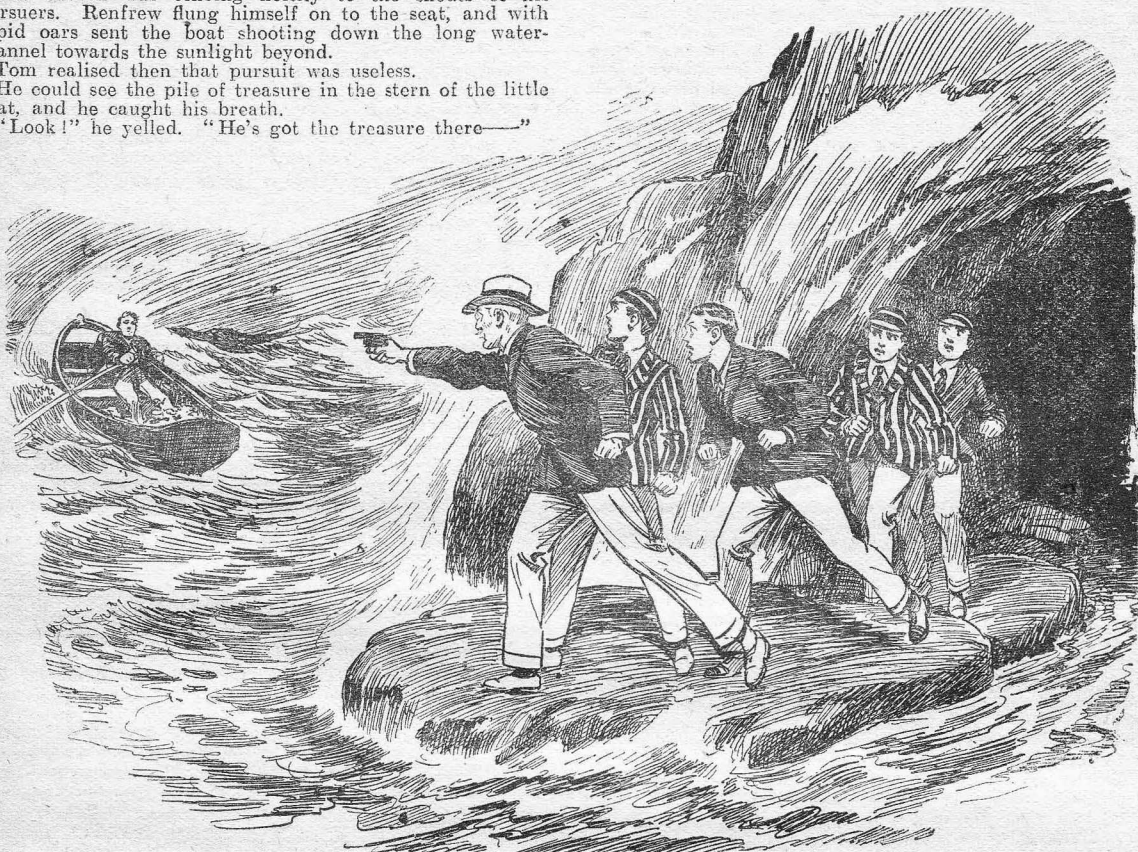
He could see the pile of treasure in the stern of the little boat, and he caught his breath.

"Look!" he yelled. "He's got the treasure there—"

a blow on the temple when he had been hurled against the treacherous rocks. He and the treasure he had striven so covetously to gain had sunk together beneath the sea!

Tom Merry, staring out from the gloomy interior of the great cave, with Lord Eastwood and the other three St. Jim's fellows near him, felt a sickening chill strike his heart.

Renfrew had played his last card, sure enough—had played his last card, and lost!



"Stop, you scoundrel!" cried Lord Eastwood, levelling his revolver at the fugitive in the boat. But even the sight of that grim-looking weapon failed to check Gilbert Renfrew, and he sent the little craft shooting out towards the open sea. "He's mad!" gasped Talbot. "He'll never get through that sea!" (See Chapter 15.)

On the edge of the lapping water Lord Eastwood dragged out his revolver and levelled it.

"Stop, you scoundrel!" he cried in a commanding voice.

But even the sight of the grim-looking weapon failed to check the fugitive now. He knew that Lord Eastwood was not a man who would shoot him down in cold blood, and he sent a mocking laugh ringing back as the little boat shot out suddenly into the sunlight.

"He's mad!" gasped Talbot. "He'll never get through that sea—"

"He'll be killed!" cried Arthur Augustus. "And he's got the treasure! Oh, bai Jove!"

The little boat was among the great waves now. It was flung high on the crest of a green mountain of water, and seemed about to overturn. But it righted itself and plunged on, like a cork in a mill-race.

The sunlight glittered on the pile of treasure dazzlingly. It vanished as the fragile little craft disappeared behind another huge wave that foamed upon it. Then it shot into view once more, high on the wave's crest.

Twisting helplessly, the boat was flung sideways. It struck a rock broadside on, and wallowed away from it half submerged, with Renfrew fighting like a madman at the oars.

"He's done!" breathed Figgins.

Another wave struck the boat, lifted it like an eggshell, and crashed it back upon the rocks. When the wave had swept by it revealed the broken bottom of an overturned little vessel caught among the half-submerged rocks, in the seething foam.

But of the man who had made that last mad, desperate bid for the treasure of Penperro Rock there was now no sign.

He had gone from sight, sucked down helplessly amid the turmoil of raging waters—gone down senseless from

## CHAPTER 16.

### Back to St. Jim's!

"ALL aboard!"

"Pile in, you chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"I say, Ethel, deah gal, come in this car, will you?"

"I'm afraid I've promised to go in that other car with Figgins—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced from his pretty cousin to the grinning face of George Figgins, and sniffed.

"Oh, vewy well, Ethel, deah gal! Then I will come in the othah car, too!"

And with a resolute expression on his aristocratic face, Arthur Augustus turned away from the motor-car he had intended to patronise and moved towards one of the others—that which was to have the honour of bearing Cousin Ethel!

It was some weeks later.

The St. Jim's party and the three Spalding Hall girls were leaving Penperro House, for the holidays had come to an end. Three large cars were waiting ready by the steps outside the big front door, to bear them all away to the distant railway station, for the long journey back to Sussex.

That evening would find Arthur Augustus and his guests back again at St. Jim's for the new term, and Ethel and Doris and Lady Peggy back at Spalding Hall, tanned and happy, like the juniors, after their holiday under Lord Eastwood's hospitable roof.

Two figures were standing at the top of the steps, watching with smiling faces the departure of the merry party.

One was Lord Eastwood, the other was a pale, elderly

man who walked with the aid of a stick—Mr. Emerson, the owner of Penperro House.

It had been wonderful news that had brought Lord Eastwood's invalid friend hurrying back from the South of France to the old house on the Cornish cliffs!

He had received a telegram—"Treasure of Penperro Rock has been found. Congratulations.—Eastwood." And little dreaming of the strange, grim events that had taken place in connection with the finding of the treasure, he had returned post-haste to England—to find the fortune that was rightfully his lying in a glittering heap in the safe at Penperro House!

For though, when the boat containing it had overturned in the waves, Lord Eastwood and the four juniors with him had believed the treasure lost for good, it had been found, when the weather had calmed, that it was possible to retrieve it all.

A diver had been employed, and had recovered from the watery depths the priceless gold and jewels.

But of the man who had so nearly succeeded in stealing them, and who had met death in the attempt, nothing was ever seen again.

From the description that Lord Eastwood gave to the police they had little difficulty in identifying the stranger whom Figgins & Co. had rescued from the sea, and who had claimed to be the son of Lord Eastwood's friend, as a scoundrel who had been wanted by the law for some time in connection with various swindles in London.

His true name, it seemed, was Crayle.

On the day of Crayle's end Lord Eastwood and Tom Merry, Figgins, Talbot, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been forced to spend a night on the island, utterly marooned there, together with Baggy Trimble.

But next day the sea had been calm, with the beginning of a change in the weather, and a boat had been able to cross for them.

Which was the first time, as Monty Lowther remarked, that the weather had been on their side!

The tragic end of the man they had known as Gilbert Renfrew had cast a shadow over the Penperro House party—even when the possibility of recovering the treasure from its watery grave was known.

But even that dark tragedy could not spoil the spirits of the St. Jim's party for long.

They had dismissed that unhappy business from their minds, and after a while it was as cheery a party as one could wish for that had occupied the big house on the cliffs!

There had been several weeks of holiday left, and they had enjoyed them to the full!

Not the least of the cheerful happenings that had taken place had been the fact that Mr. Emerson had insisted upon presenting each of the St. Jim's juniors, and the three Spalding Hall girls as well, with a handsome share of the treasure.

The fact that this had been put into the bank for them was a source of great annoyance to Baggy Trimble, who would have much preferred to be able to "blue" the lot, upon his return to St. Jim's, in Dame Taggles' little tuckshop under the elms!

But the others were very well satisfied! And Baggy's grumbles had met with very little sympathy.

In fact, the rest of the St. Jim's party had become annoyed with the grouching of the Falstaff of the Fourth, and had shown their annoyance by bumping Baggy heartily on the terrace one morning.

After which Baggy had kept his grumbles to himself!

To Tom Merry & Co. and their girl chums the remaining weeks of their holiday seemed to fly.

Even now the juniors could scarcely believe that the time had come to return to St. Jim's.

"But I suppose we really are buzzing back to the old

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shop!" chuckled Monty Lowther, eyeing the piles of baggage on the roofs of the three cars. "Looks like it, anyway!"

"Yes, and if you don't buck up and pile in we'll miss the blessed train!" grinned Ernest Levison.

Upon which, Monty Lowther "piled in."

Farewells had been said long ago. But while Mr. Emerson waved a cheery hand from the top of the steps, Lord Eastwood came down to the window of each car in turn, and once again bade them all good-bye; it was quite clear that he was as sorry to part from them as they were from him.

At last the three cars rolled smoothly away down the drive, and passed out of the gates on to the cliff-road.

"Well, here we go!" murmured Jack Blake in the front car.

"It's been a ripping holiday!" nodded Fatty Wynn.

"Tophole!" agreed Lady Peggy, who was sitting between them. "And it was splendid finding that treasure!"

"Mr. Emerson looks heaps fitter already!" chuckled Herries opposite.

Blake nodded.

"Lord Eastwood says that Mr. Emerson can now afford to go to some giddy specialist in Harley Street who is pretty sure to make him fit as a fiddle again!" he grinned. "It's great, isn't it?"

In the car behind Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was polishing his eyeglass in order to glance reprovingly at his minor, who had crowded into the same car with Reggie Manners and Frankie Levison. In the opinion of the swell of St. Jim's Wally was at an age when he should be seen and not heard.

But apparently Wally did not agree. For despite that chilly look from his major he continued to exchange noisy chaff with his two fellow fags. Arthur Augustus, who wanted a little pleasant conversation with Cousin Ethel, found it impossible to make himself heard.

But since Ethel was deep in cheerful talk with George Figgins, perhaps that did not really matter!

In the last car Tom Merry & Co., Talbot, Doris Levison, and her brother, and Sidney Clive were crowded very tightly. Manners, in fact, was making the best of a bad job by sitting on somebody's knee.

"And now for St. Jim's!" said Talbot suddenly, as the car sped along the high cliff-road, with the sea glistening like silver in the sunshine.

"And now for Spalding Hall!" laughed Doris Levison.

"Well, there are worse places, aren't there?" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I'm sorry the hols are over, of course, but I'm looking forward to the new term for lots of things."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Manners.

There was a chorus of agreement.

Behind them the grey pile of Penperro House was dwindling rapidly into the distance.

Tom Merry watched it disappear behind the rim of the cliffs, then turned his eyes out to sea, to where the gaunt shape of Penperro Rock rose from the flashing waves.

An absent, far-away look came into his face.

He was thinking of the strange things that had happened on that dark, ruin-crowned mass since first they had seen it from this same road, on the day when they had come down from St. Jim's, little dreaming of the startling adventures that the holidays were to hold!

"Penny for em, Tommy!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Tom laughed, and did not answer. The road curved just then, and Penperro Rock vanished from sight.

Tanned and cheery, the juniors were borne swiftly on their way to the station—off to Sussex and St. Jim's!

THE END.

## A BUMPER PROGRAMME FOR NEXT WEEK!

### "GRUNDY'S TREASURE HUNT!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

This is a rollicking long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. The summer holidays are over, and the heroes of the Fourth and Shell are back once again at the school. After their exciting and perilous vacation in Cornwall it is a relief when George Alfred Grundy steps forward and supplies them with something to laugh about. And you'll have a long laugh, too, when you read this yarn!

### "THE ROBOT MAN!"

In the next instalment of our stirring serial of adventures on the Amazon, we find Jack Carter and his pals involved in yet another dangerous situation.

### "ASK THE ORACLE!"

Our Wonder Man, the Office Oracle, answers a few more readers' queries in his own particular and interesting manner.

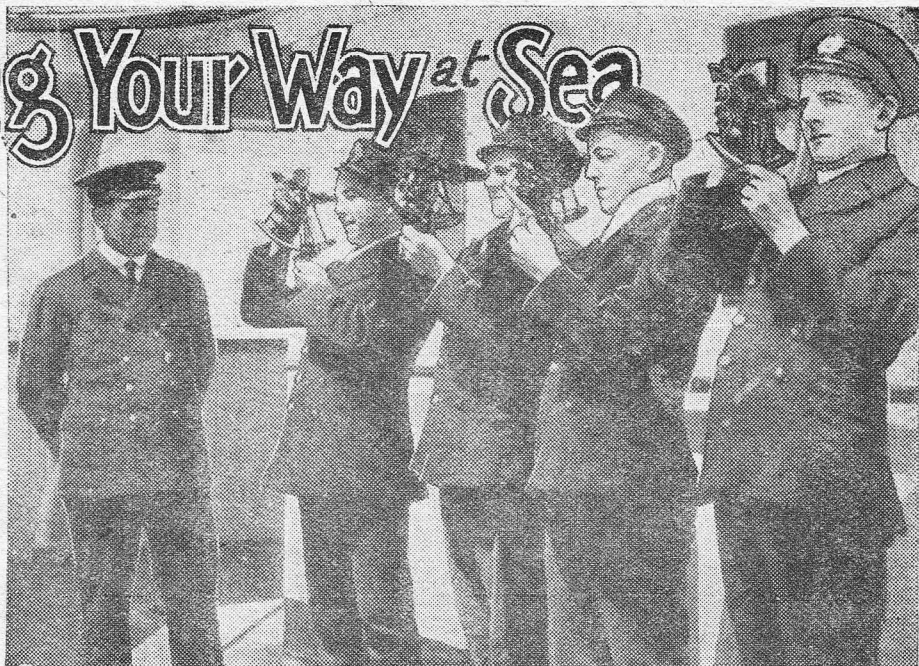
### "FAMOUS DAREDEVILS!"

In this interesting feature our contributor deals with the thrilling life of Colonel Lawrence of Arabia.

# Finding Your Way at Sea

North, East, South, and West and nothing but rolling stretches of sea; overhead a limitless expanse of sky. How, then, does the captain of a vessel manage to bring his charge safely to port?

In this bright and informative article our contributor tells you.



**B**EFORE men ventured to sail out of sight of land navigation was a simple matter. The position of a boat could always be taken from some prominent landmark. But once the land is dropped below the horizon estimating the position of a craft at sea calls for some other means. There are two ways of finding one's position at sea—(1) by dead reckoning; (2) by astronomical observation. The first is only resorted to in cloudy weather when the sun cannot be seen. for a sight of the sun at exactly noon is absolutely necessary for an observation by sextant—the only reliable way of finding one's position.

The science of navigation is far too complicated a study to explain in the space of a few words, for Jack London, when he was planning his famous cruise of the *Snark*, spent months studying navigation so that he could find his way across the Pacific. But though it is impossible to make a navigating officer of the reader without a course of hard study, something of the marvels of this fascinating science can be explained here.

First of all, as every boy knows, our globe is divided into horizontal lines called degrees of latitude, and vertical lines called meridians of longitude. In other words, latitude is the distance north or south of the equator, and longitude the distance (or time) east or west of a fixed point, which is always Greenwich. It follows, then, that if a captain can find out on what line of longitude and what line of latitude he is the intersection of these two lines will be his correct position. By referring to the ocean chart he will at once know exactly where he is. This seems easy enough, and it is—after you've found your latitude and longitude. Now, the first is found by getting the altitude of the sun at exactly noon, when it is in the zenith or highest point. This is done by the aid of a wonderful instrument, the sextant. The main parts of the sextant is a small telescope and reflecting lens through which to watch the sun, and a finely graduated scale called a vernier. After

getting the angle, or snapping the sun, as they say, the officer, or his assistant, refers to a book of astronomical tables, and after a rapid calculation he has found his latitude.

**T**O find the longitude, i.e., the time (or distance) east or west of Greenwich, he has the chronometer, an exceedingly accurate and consistently running clock, and also the ship's log, which gives the run, or speed, of the ship during a given time. The chronometer gives Greenwich mean time, and does not vary more than a second a month. Such a clock costs a great deal of money, and is naturally taken great care of. It swings in gimbals to keep it upright, and it is well protected against cold or heat, and also damp. The log is that instrument we may have seen fastened to a ship's taffrail. It may be likened to a speedometer or a cyclo-meter. It consists of a dial which records the revolutions of a small screw which trails astern at the end of a long line. By computing time and distance travelled in the preceding twenty-four hours since the last observation, the distance east or west of zero point (Greenwich) is at once known. It sounds comparatively simple, but in actual practice the astronomical observation with the sextant and the necessary knowledge of mathematics has completely stumped many a horny-handed third mate when he has been trying to pass for a second mate's certificate. He may be an excellent sailor, knowing by instinct the right thing to do on every occasion, and yet this "head work," as he calls it, may prove an insurmountable barrier to his ever getting a master's ticket. But any bright boy who has a leaning to mathematics, can learn navigation from the study of a learner's text-book.



A master mariner in the making becoming acquainted with the use of the sextant.

THERE'S A THRILL IN EVERY LINE OF THIS AMAZING SERIAL, CHUMS!

# The Robot Man!

By H.J. ALLINGHAM



A genius the mad Professor Rollins undoubtedly is—great is his power over the natives in the valley by the mighty Amazon. But he meets his master in young Jack Carter!

Free at Last!

FROM the mouth of that dark hole the thick, oily gas was rising in a noxious cloud. "Spare me!" screamed the man. "And I'll give you—"

He said no more. Jack released his hold, and the whirling body of Professor Rollins, with wildly whirling arms, was plunged into that oily cloud and went down into the depths of the radium pit, bumping against the sides as it fell.

Jack leaped back and pounced on something bright and shining which was lying on the floor of the cellar.

It was the R.D.R.—the Rollins' Death Ray, which for once had failed its inventor, but which still carried the power of life and death in its shining tube.

Crouching down on one knee, with his back to the wall, and the deadly instrument gripped in his right hand, Jack faced whatever danger might threaten.

Amazingly swift as he had been in all his movements, he was only just in time.

Gonzales, infuriated by the fate which had befallen his beloved and revered master, became like a madman, and with a scream of rage rushed at the boy.

"Stand back, or—" cried Jack sternly, raising his terrible weapon.

But the Spaniard took no heed. He did not even pause in his mad rush. Uttering a stream of foreign oaths he thrust out his lean, muscular hand to clutch the boy by the throat.

Jack pressed the knob of the R.D.R.

In one moment he saw that strong, living, brown hand leaping for him; in the next it shrivelled and became a dead, black, shapeless thing before his eyes.

With a gulp of pain and terror, Gonzales staggered back, his face distorted, his eyes bulging.

Cowering against the wall, his limbs trembling under him, his lips worked convulsively, and at last the words came:

"No more, senior! Don't kill me! Let me live!"

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(Introduction on next page.)

Jack gave a swift glance round the cellar. The half-breed had vanished. The place was filling with heavy, oily gas.

"Then lead me out of this hole!" commanded Jack. "Out into the sunlight! Do you understand? Quick, for your life! If you play me any tricks, you die!"

As he spoke, he advanced on the cowering wretch, and his blazing eyes were more eloquent and compelling than his words.

The maimed and tortured Gonzales was almost fainting from pain and fear; but he had no thought of resisting that stern command.

Here was a creature who had overthrown the master himself! Such a being could not be argued with; he must be obeyed.

Clutching his shrunken hand to his breast the Spaniard turned to the open door of the cellar.

"Come, senior!" he gasped. "I am your slave! Follow me! Do with me what you will!"

He staggered out of the poisonous cellar.

Jack's mouth was set in a grim, hard line; his eyes were alert and watchful. He was taking no chances.

"I am on your heels!" he muttered in a fierce whisper. "If you play me false, you die!"

"I know, great senior. Spare me, and I obey!" panted the other, as he went stumbling frantically forward without turning his head.

They went along corridors and up flights of steps roughly hewn out of the solid rock and earth, and at last came to a door, at the fastenings of which Gonzales wrestled frantically with one hand.

"One moment, senior!" he implored, the perspiration pouring from his face. "This is the secret way; the door is not often opened, and I—I am wounded! Ah!"

The door swung open, and the daylight flooded the dimly-lit corridor.

Gonzales staggered out and Jack followed.

The boy gave a gasp that was almost a sob as he found himself in the open air, with the cloudless sky above him and the broad, rolling plain spread before his eyes.

Gonzales twisted round, and, swaying giddily, turned towards him.

"Your commands now, my master?" he asked faintly.

For the first time a wave of pity for the poor wretch passed through Jack.

"Go back and attend to your wound," he said, not unkindly. "I need you no more."

Like a rabbit into its burrow the Spaniard dived back through the doorway, and the door shut with a clang.



Jack looked about him, still watchful, still clutching the dead R.D.R. in his right hand.

No living creature was in sight.

Away across the plain he saw the gloomy outline of the forest, and on his left the ranges of hills, with the jagged plateau of Rocky Ledge plainly visible.

Then he began to run, and, in spite of the clumsy garment he wore, he did not cease running.

He would find the dead bodies of his friends. Perhaps Harry was still alive! Perhaps even now he was lying unconscious on that desolate ridge!

He would find him.

And so he raced madly across the plain with the tropic sun beating down on his uncovered head.

**The Meeting on Rocky Ledge !**

**W**HEN Harry Frobisher, wounded by the assassin's bullet in his shoulder, crawled up the hillside and reached Rocky Ledge, he had just sufficient strength to give the death signal. Then he fainted.

When he came to his senses the sun was still beating down on him, and the rock beneath him was burning to the touch.

As soon as Harry could collect his thoughts he realised that somehow he must find shelter from the direct rays of that merciless sun.

Aching and stiff, he dragged himself back to the edge of the forest and lay for a while among the thick undergrowth.

In spite of his pain and discomforts, his thoughts turned away from himself, and he wondered, not very hopefully, whether his chum, imprisoned in the heart of the mountain yonder, had seen his signal.

No, it was not very likely, and now it must be long past mid-day, the hour agreed upon for the signal to be given.

Even if Jack had seen it, what could he do? He was a prisoner.

These and similar depressing thoughts assailed Harry Frobisher, as he lay there weak and weary in the shade of a drooping giant palm-leaf.

And yet he did not entirely lose heart. In spite of his wound, in spite of his awful loneliness, he was supported and saved from despair by his unshakable faith in the ability, resource, and courage of his chum, Jack Carter.

Harry's attitude towards Jack was one of whole-hearted hero worship.

There was no one like Jack in the world. No one could ever get the better of Jack.

Even that villain Paul Tench, firing from behind a tree at close range, would be sure to miss Jack; for Jack's luck, like his pluck, was proof against any human devilment or trick of fate.

Sick and giddy with pain as he was, Harry Frobisher comforted himself with these perfectly unreasonable arguments.

He was so soothed by them, in fact, that he was falling into a doze, when suddenly he was startled by the noise of someone crashing through the undergrowth and the sound of heavy breathing.

He crouched low, and the next moment an extraordinary figure passed quite close to him and leaped out on to the plateau before his eyes.

The figure was garbed from neck to heel in a strange, shapeless garment not unlike the dress worn by deep-sea divers.

The weird creature, whatever it was, moved swiftly across the plateau to the very verge of the Rocky Ledge, and then eagerly from side to side and out across the plain.

"It's a man, and it isn't Tench," thought Harry, peering cautiously out of his hiding-place.

Then suddenly the queerly-garbed stranger went down on his knees and began to make an examination of the ground at the very spot where Harry had collapsed after giving the death signal.

Then he began to crawl towards the forest, following the tracks which Harry had made when seeking shelter from the sun.

His head was bent low, and still Harry could not see his face.

He came nearer and nearer, and finally he looked up. With a startled cry Harry staggered to his feet, and the two chums were face to face.

With a laughing shout of joy Jack sprang forward. "Harry! It's you!" he cried almost incredulously.

Of the two Harry Frobisher seemed the least surprised. "Hallo, Jack!" he said. "You've been a jolly long while coming. Had any adventures? We've made a precious mess of it while you've been away. Steady on, old boy, that arm is wounded."

Jack who had been on the point of giving his chum a brotherly hug checked himself and stared.

"Wounded?" he said. "How?"

As briefly as possible Harry explained, and as he told his tale there came into Jack Carter's face that ugly look that the professor had seen just once, the moment before he was plunged into the Radium Pit.

"Paul Tench?" he said quietly. "All right, we will attend to him later. Now we must see to that wound, and we shall want water. Where had we better go?"

"The bungalow would be best if we can reach it," said Harry.

"The what?"

Again Harry explained and told of the house they had discovered in the forest.

"That's jolly queer!" exclaimed Jack in astonishment. "Is it far from here?"

"Not far if you can walk, but a tidy distance if you have to crawl," replied Harry, with a grimace. "Say a quarter of a mile. Down the hill and along the river."

He swayed unsteadily as he spoke, and in spite of his resolution not to give way he was nearly at the point of collapse.

In a moment Jack's arm was round him, supporting him.

"Show me the way, old boy, and I'll get you there," said Jack, and his voice had in it the old ring of confidence which Harry knew so well.

From that moment Harry ceased to worry.

"Jack will see me through," was the thought in his mind, as half-fainting in his chum's arms they began the descent of the hill.

**The Friends Get together Again—The Reward of Gonzales.**

**I**T was a long, slow and toilsome journey which the two chums made through the thick and tangled undergrowth of the choked and streaming forest.

Many times they had to rest, and when at last they emerged into clearer ground Jack was carrying Harry on his shoulders.

"Are you sure we are going right? This is new ground to me," said Jack, looking about him.

But even as he spoke he saw through the trees just ahead the glimmer of something which although he could not make out what it was did not seem to belong to the forest.

He pressed on eagerly, and a minute later they came out into the man-made, though neglected garden, which surrounded the bungalow of the ill-fated Dr. Henry Slater.

Jack stood stock-still and gave a gasp of surprise as he gazed at the pretty, picturesque house, with the smoke curling lazily from one of the chimneys.

He soon recovered himself, however, and advanced along an over-grown path towards the entrance of the building.

Just before he reached it a little figure carrying a rifle suddenly appeared on the veranda like a Jack-in-the-box, and cried out in a shrill, frightened voice:

"Halt—or I fires!"

Jack halted, and Harry slid from his shoulder to the ground.

"Another step and you dies!" repeated the gallant defender of the bungalow. "Man or demon or himp of magic, speak and say wot you want, or I blazes away!"

"Well, Teddy," said Jack, and his grin was cheerful, in spite of his weariness. "What we want most at the moment is a drink of water. And put down that gun, old boy. It might explode, and then you'd get hurt!"

"Master Jack!" gasped

Teddy White, dropping his

**THE OPENING CHAPTERS.**

*Captain Storm, a broad-shouldered man, in company with Teddy White, a middle-aged Cockney, and two youngsters named Jack Carter and Harry Frobisher, set off in search of Professor Rollins, a missing scientist who is reputed to be held in captivity somewhere within the vicinity of the regions through which the mighty Amazon flows. Headless of the dangers ahead, the four plucky adventurers push on into the unexplored forest until they reach a cave in the hillside where they make camp. Before very long, however, a huge steel monster, formed like a man, suddenly appears, seizes Captain Storm by the waist, and carries him away. Almost immediately following this, Jack Carter comes face to face with Professor Rollins, the inventor of the strange monstrosity known as the Robot. The professor insists on Jack accompanying him to his quarters in the rocks, where he asks the youngster to assist him in one of his experiments, promising that no harm will befall his chums. The bargain is sealed, Jack little realising that his task is to enter a gas-filled tunnel at the end of which the mad professor is convinced lies a deposit of radium worth untold millions. Jack carries out the task allotted him, however, although he nearly loses his life in the attempt. Meanwhile Captain Storm, White and Frobisher, back at their bungalow, are fired at and wounded by Paul Tench, a former member of the party, who has a grudge against Frobisher. Receiving the prearranged signal that danger has befallen his chums, and not knowing of Tench's treachery, Jack holds the professor responsible. Filled with a fierce desire to settle accounts with his enemy, Jack awaits his opportunity, then seizing the professor in a grip of iron he raises him aloft and staggers with his victim to the edge of the radium pit.*

(Now read on.)

rifle and dancing like a maniac. "Oo-er! Master Jack! You don't say! Oo!"

The next moment he came flying towards them, laughing hysterically and burbling incoherent sentences.

"You ain't dead?" he cried, as he came up. "You tell me that for a fact? I ain't dreaming. I ain't off me napper? And Master Harry, too! You got him? And he ain't dead! And I ain't dead! And the capt'n ain't dead! None of us ain't dead. It's all a mistake. And where hev you bin? And wot you bin doing? And what about them clothes you got on? Who's your tailor? I say, wot's 'appened?"

"We will have a talk presently," said Jack quietly. "But now help me get Harry into the house. He is pretty well done up. Be careful, he's wounded. Steady now!"

Harry indeed, who had only been semi-conscious for some time, now fainted clean away, overcome by pain and fatigue.

Tenderly the other two bore him into the house, and the next half-hour was spent in attending to his wound.

This proved to be a flesh wound in the shoulder, ugly to look at, but not really very serious.

When it was carefully washed and dressed Harry was put to bed, and with a sigh of contentment he went straightway off to sleep.

Not until then did Jack Carter think of himself. "What I really want is a bath," he said. "Any chance?"

"You bet!" replied Teddy eagerly. "Leave it to me. I've got a fire going for the cap'n and hot water ready. Jest you wait half a jiffy."

"The captain?" said Jack, as he peeled off the strange garment he was wearing. "You say he is all right. Where is he?"

Teddy raised a warning finger. "Not too loud, Master Jack, or you'll disturb him. He's in the next room having a doss, and, my word, he needs it! All right, did I say he was? Well, now, that ain't exactly true. He's got a bullet in his leg. Least-ways, he had, only he dug it out himself with his pocket-knife. Wot a nerve! You should hev seed him! But wait till I've got you your barf."

Jack had his much-needed bath in the kitchen, and finally got rid of the reek of the poison gas.

Teddy, who waited on him with unflinching devotion, produced a suit of white ducks which he had discovered in a chest belonging to the late owner of the bungalow, and Jack was glad to discard his own worn and grimy garments.

Then they went out on to the veranda, and while they sipped their glasses of refreshing fruit juices they swapped stories.

At first, however, Teddy White did most of the talking. His desire to unburden his mind of all that had happened to him was greater even than his curiosity. Moreover, his feelings towards the villainous Paul Tench were such that he would have exploded had he not been able to relieve himself by speech.

"Harry thought you were the first to be shot by Tench," said Jack, "how did you escape?"

"Ah," replied Teddy, "I was lucky. Likewise quick. Wot saved me was me presence of mind. The cap'n and Master Harry was going on jest ahead of me when I heard a rustling sound behind. I turned, and wot should I see but Paul Tench's ugly face a-glaring at me. He had his gun, and was taking aim at my head. Did I stop? Did I argue? Not so! I dropped on me stummick flat on a prickly bush. Bang! I heard the bullet whistle over me head. It was presence of mind wot saved me. Another bang! I heard the cap'n cry out. Did I look up? I did not. I kep' me head down, likewise me other parts so far as was possible. Then I heard Tench a-talking, but I was as you may say too excited to catch wot he said. Then another bang! Then someone rushing away among the bushes. I waited a bit. To be puffedly honest and above-board with you, Master Jack, I waited a long time. I warn't frightened if you understand me, but I was hurried."

"Quite so! And what happened next?" inquired Jack.

"After a bit I raised my head and had a peep cautious like," went on Teddy. "And the first thing I saw was Cap'n Storm standing on one leg and raving most awful. He wasn't raving at anybody or anything in particular, you understand, there being nobody else in sight. When I made sure of this I got up and went to him and give him a hand. And somehow I got him back here. It was a nasty trip, I give you my word, and the cap'n wasn't wot you might call friendly. Seemed to think I oughter hev run after Tench and done him in. But I ain't that sort, Master Jack. I'm a man wot hides his time. I'm waiting for the time when I sees P. Tench again—him

looking the other way, and me with a gun in my hand. Then you'll see something, I give you my word!"

Jack nodded. His strong, handsome face wore a very grave and thoughtful expression.

The story he had heard was startling in more ways than one.

After all, he had, for once, misjudged Professor Rollins. That scientific maniac was, it seemed, not responsible for the infamous attack on Harry and the others.

Jack's mind went back to that grim cellar with the oily gas rising from the Radium Pit, and he saw again the blanched, terror-stricken face of the professor as it disappeared into that well of death.

And for one brief moment he experienced a feeling of regret and remorse.

But almost instantly this feeling vanished, for he recalled the cold, cruel, inhuman eyes of the scientific monster he had destroyed. He remembered the broad, fertile countryside rendered barren and desolate, the people driven from their homes, the whole sunlit land darkened by the shadow of the Robot Man.

And remembering all this he ceased to reproach himself. "If I had known the truth I would not have killed him," was his last thought; "but now it is done I am glad."

But Jack Carter soon had other things to think of—things of more immediate importance.

With Captain Storm disabled, he himself was in command of the party and responsible for its safety.

What was the best thing to be done next?

Should they leave this ill-fated region forthwith and make a desperate attempt to reach the coast? Or should they remain in their present comfortable quarters until the two invalids were restored?

Each plan had its own peculiar dangers.

The journey to the coast in their present crippled condition would be a tremendous undertaking, quite apart from the fact that Paul Tench might still be lurking in the forest, lying in ambush and waiting for an opportunity to murder them.

On the other hand, the servants of Professor Rollins might be preparing even now to avenge their master. At any moment they might come crashing through the forest, bent on destroying the audacious boy who had overthrown their great employer.

Before coming to any decision Jack thought he had better consult Captain Storm.

It was towards evening when the captain awoke and found Jack seated by his bedside.

When assured that he was not dreaming his joy and amazement nearly overcame him.

He gripped the boy's hand and would not let it go, and it was some time before Jack could persuade him to discuss their future plans.

When at last he consented to listen and became acquainted with the doubts in Jack's mind he did not hesitate to give his opinion as to the course that should be pursued.

"We stay here, my lad!" he said emphatically. "After what you've done we ain't got no cause to fear anything or anybody. You've settled with the master-criminal. As for the rest, they are just half-breed scum. We ain't running away from them. And, speaking for myself, I ain't leaving this country till I've put a bullet into that rat, Paul Tench—and it won't be in his leg neither!"

Thus the question was settled, and Jack was not sorry. In spite of the horrors of this strange, deserted land, it began to have a curious fascination for him. He wanted to probe more deeply into its mysteries. He was secretly glad of any excuse to remain.

The next few days were curiously quiet. The little party was not molested in any way.

The dark and almost impenetrable forest which surrounded the bungalow had a solemn stillness, disturbed only by the monotonous drone of innumerable insects.

Rapidly the friends felt their spirits rising and their confidence increasing.

They were in comfortable quarters, with plenty of food. The captain and Harry were getting better every day. Moreover, they all had a lot to talk about.

Harry and Teddy White never grew tired of Jack's account of his experiences when in the hands of the amazing Professor Rollins.

It astounded them all that the magic-worker should turn out to be an Englishman.

"And yet we might have guessed it," said Jack. "No native could have conceived such marvels even in an opium dream, let alone carried them out into the actual fact. By the way, the Robot Man is being mended. I wonder if he will ever walk again?"

"Not likely!" declared Captain Storm. "By killing Rollins you have destroyed the brain behind all this

infernal jugglery. There will be no more of it. In my opinion, the professor's people have all scattered by this time. We have nothing to fear from them. Our only enemy now is Paul Tench."

And at that very moment in a well-guarded room of his mountain fastness Professor Rollins was lying on a narrow bed staring in front of him with fixed gaze.

His face was gaunt, haggard, and discoloured like shrunken, yellow parchment; but his terrible eyes had lost none of their cold, hard, penetrating brilliance.

By his bedside stood Gonzales, his right hand swathed in bandages.

The Spaniard's face was impassive, betraying no emotion whatever.

It was he who had saved his beloved master when the thing seemed utterly impossible.

It was he who had rushed back to the cellar, compelling a couple of half-breeds to follow him. It was he who had descended the Radium Pit and fastened the steel cable to the professor's unconscious form.

And it was he who had nursed him back to life, and was now awaiting his commands.

He had just told his story modestly and briefly, and in the recesses of his heart he was hoping for a word of praise from the great man whom he had served so faithfully and so well.

But for a long time the professor remained silent, staring in front of him.

Then at last he spoke:

"And so you let him go? You showed him the way of escape?"

His voice, though low and weak, still had that harsh, rasping note in it.

"It happened as I have said, master," replied Gonzales humbly.

"And now he is free," muttered the sick man—"that boy who has no fear, with the brains of a master and the strength of an ox. The very tool I needed! He is gone! He is free—free to work against me, and to bring down in ruin all I have achieved! And you—you blundering, cowardly fool—you let him go!"

Gonzales bowed his head in shame and wretchedness.

"What is your will that I do now, master?" he said miserably.

With a desperate effort of will the professor half-rose in his bed and flung out his hand in a gesture of contempt.

"Do?" he snarled savagely. "What do you think you can do? You are of no more use to me than an ass with a broken leg. Go! Get out of my sight and send me someone to take your place—someone who at least has two hands, for there is work to be done!"

At these words Gonzales staggered back as though he had been struck.

For a moment he stared at the speaker, his face working convulsively. Then without a word he turned and passed silently out of the room.

**Roderigo!**

**P**ROFESSOR ROLLINS was perhaps the greatest inventor of this or any age.

He knew a great deal about machinery, electricity, and mechanics, but about men he was not so well informed.

Almost devoid of human qualities himself, he could not understand that human beings could be so unreasonable as they undoubtedly are, and he had no knowledge of the mixed motives which control the actions of ordinary, common mortals.

Therefore, skillful as he was with machinery, he sometimes made a mistake in dealing with men.

Gonzales had been a faithful servant—a useful tool. But now the tool was broken, and, of course, had to be flung aside. That was obvious—a master craftsman does not work with broken tools.

But Gonzales was a man. He was also a Spaniard, and, in spite of his humility in the presence of the great man he served, he had the dominant characteristic of his race—pride.

And the pride of Gonzales was wounded to the quick.

That last contemptuous speech of dismissal which the professor had already forgotten rankled in the breast of the proud Spaniard and was destined to do what even the impetuous rage of Jack Carter had failed to achieve.

Nevertheless, Gonzales went from his master's presence



Jack released his hold, and the writhing body of Professor Rollins, with wildly whirling arms, was plunged into the oily poisonous cloud and down into the depths of the Radium Pit. (See page 24.)

without a word and without giving any outward sign of resentment.

He made his way through the network of corridors by which the mountain was honeycombed, and came at last to a very solid-looking door made of metal.

Gonzales raised his hand, the door slid noiselessly open, and he entered a small room or cove roughly hewn out of the rock and earth.

A man was seated at a bench working at some designs by the light of an electric lamp.

He sprang up as Gonzales entered, and revealed himself as a tall, powerful, dark-skinned fellow of mixed Indian and European breed.

"Well?" he demanded aggressively.

"The master commands you to attend him," said Gonzales simply.

The man's thick, dark eyebrows contracted, and he looked at the other suspiciously.

"The professor wishes to see me?" he said, hissing out the words from between his white teeth.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"You have two hands—two strong hands—and he has work for you to do."

The big half-breed gave an ugly laugh.

"Does the professor know that the only use I wish to put these strong hands to is to lay hold of his throat and squeeze the life out of him?" he snarled.

"He does not know that, and I do not think it would interest him," replied Gonzales, with studied contempt. "Your words are big, Roderigo, but your heart is small. Shall I tell the master that you will not come?"

"No!" replied the other hastily, turning a shade paler. "Take me to him. I ask nothing better."

Gonzales smiled faintly, and led the way along the many corridors back to the professor's room.

On reaching the door he opened it, and then stepped back and aside, motioning the half-breed to enter.

Roderigo was less aggressive now. The muscles of his dark face twitched nervously, and he had to brace himself with an obvious effort, before he could enter the room. Then he stepped forward, the door closed behind him, and he was alone with the great man he hated and feared. He had good cause to hate. He had been torn from his home and the sunlight which he loved, and buried in a gloomy mountain cave for two long years. For all that time he had slaved without reward in the service of this cold-blooded Englishman.

Hour by hour and day by day during his captivity he had nursed a furious anger—a fierce desire for revenge.

And now his chance had come. He would kill the tyrant who had treated him so cruelly. He was lying there weak and helpless at his mercy.

With murder in his heart he took a step towards the bed.

And then the professor turned his head and looked at him!

The strange mesmeric eyes were fixed on Roderigo, and from them there seemed to come a cold, hard white light which penetrated into the inmost recesses of the man's brain.

The half-breed halted still two paces from the bed, his blood was turned to water, his rage, his hate, his resolution, and his courage were all swallowed up by a great, animal-like fear.

He became suddenly weak and helpless, and, trembling in every limb, cinged before his master.

The professor surveyed him thoughtfully for a moment in silence, and then spoke:

"So it is you, Roderigo. That is well. I could have no better man for my purpose. Gonzales should have reminded me of you before. I fear I had forgotten you. I have not made sufficient use of your great gifts. You and I will achieve great things together. From this hour I make you my right-hand man."

He smiled graciously, and in that moment Roderigo was conquered.

"Come nearer," said the professor, "and listen carefully. I have work for you to do. You must act, and you must act quickly. You have strength, courage, and intelligence. That is why I have chosen you for this task. Do you know the bungalow in the forest by the creek where the English doctor used to live?"

"I know it well."

"Somewhere near there—perhaps in the bungalow itself—is camped a party of Englishmen. There are two men and two boys. The eldest of the two boys—Carter by name—was in my service, but he ran away. He must be brought back. I need him."

"Alive?"

"Alive and unhurt," replied the professor. "That is most important."

"And the rest of the party?" inquired Roderigo.

"They must be killed. Destroy them and throw their bodies in the river. They cannot escape you. They are surrounded by a ring of my people who have instructions to shoot them down if they try to break through and get to the coast. That is why you must act quickly. The boy Carter is a youth of resolution and resource, and he may attempt something desperate and get himself shot. This must be prevented. He must be brought back here to me alive and uninjured."

Roderigo leaped to his feet.

"It shall be done," he said.

"But be careful," warned his master. "Carter will put up a fight—he is no ordinary youth. You will have to trap him. Don't make the mistake of thinking your task an easy one. Take all precautions, and if you succeed your reward will be great, while if you fail—"

He paused, and the other answered quickly:

"I shall not fail!"

### A Strange Offer!

"VERY pleasant—very pleasant indeed; but it don't lead us nowhere. Wot's the end going to be? That's wot I want to know. Do we stay here allers a-looking at the pretty scenery? Quiet and peaceful, I grant you, but it ain't wot I calls seeing life. Give me King Street, Ammersmill, anyday, and a hour at the pictures."

Teddy White, lounging on the most comfortable hammock-couch in the biggest room of the bungalow, uttered these words and then yawned wearily.

Captain Storm and Jack Carter were seated at a table in the same room examining a pile of books and papers belonging to the late owner of the bungalow, Dr. Henry Slater.

Harry Frobisher was outside on the veranda, keeping guard.

"Don't be impatient, Teddy," said Captain Storm, leaning

back in his chair. "We shall be on our travels again before long. Frobisher's wound is almost healed, and I can hobble about 'ready.' I admit it's a bit slow just now, nothing happening—"

"Hallo! Stop! Don't move! Stand up! Put up your hands—quick, or I'll shoot!"

Harry's excited voice from the outside suddenly broke in upon the captain's remarks.

Instantly all three sprang to their feet, seized their rifles, and rushed out on to the veranda.

Harry was taking aim at something that had crawled out of the forest and was now crouching in the thick undergrowth of the neglected garden.

Jack Carter stepped forward, motioning the others back. "Who are you?" he shouted. "Don't move—you are covered. Just tell us who you are!"

Slowly, and as if with difficulty, a head was raised above the long, rank grass, and a ghastly face presented itself. It was a face gaunt and haggard, distorted with pain, in which the eyes were bright with fear.

"Water! I'm dying!" came a harsh, croaking voice; and then the head collapsed again in the long grass.

"Tench!" said Jack. "You chaps stay here! I'll go and have a look at him. Keep him covered!"

Before his chums could protest Jack had leaped from the veranda and was striding across the garden.

A few moments later he was returning with the unconscious form of Paul Tench slung across his shoulder.

"Don't bring him in here!" cried Teddy excitedly, his little face purple with rage. "Kill the varmint! The mean, murderous—"

"That will do, Teddy," said Captain Storm quietly but firmly. "The man is ill."

"Ill! Wot price you and me and Master Harry? It ain't his fault we ain't all dead, the murdering villain! I'm ag'in him being brought into the house—I'm ag'in it!"

But Jack had already borne the unconscious man into one of the inner rooms and placed him on the bed.

"We must do what we can for him," said Captain Storm, a little grudgingly.

Jack nodded gravely.

"Yes," he said quietly; "and when he is better we will give him a fair trial. And then if we have to punish him it shall be done in proper form."

Captain Storm gave a quick glance at the speaker, and in a flash he realised that Jack Carter had a stern side to his nature that he had not previously suspected.

And so Paul Tench, the would-be assassin, was carefully tended, only Teddy White refusing to do his share of the nursing.

But the other three, in spite of their natural feelings, were moved to pity by the sufferings of the wretched man, who indeed was pretty nearly all out, and who must have endured torments as he crawled half-fainting through the forest gloom.

That night Jack Carter insisted upon sitting up with the patient.

For some hours he had been feverish and delirious, but now he had fallen into a restless sleep.

Jack, as he looked down at the pinched and haggard face, wondered how this poor creature could have nerveed himself to commit such a hideous crime as firing from ambush on three defenceless men who had done him no harm.

There was a mystery behind it—probably one that would never be revealed.

Then just before dawn Tench opened his eyes and stared at the silent figure seated by his bedside.

His eyes were still feverish and wild, but his bodily restlessness had gone, and he lay quite still.

"Can I get you anything?" asked Jack.

By a scarcely perceptible movement of his head the man indicated that he wanted nothing. Then he spoke. His voice was feeble but charged with a passionate earnestness.

"All right, Carter," he said, "you and me have got to get down to the coast. You stand by me and I'll see you through. I know the country—we can do it—you and me. All the others are gone—dead—I been dreaming—queer in the head, you know. I thought I saw Captain Storm and young Frobisher. Dreams—beasty dreams! They are dead, both of them—and Teddy White, too! All dead—I know it! None better—you take it from me!"

He had half-risen in his eagerness, but now he fell back on the pillow, panting and exhausted.

But almost immediately he went on again after looking about him furtively.

"Stand by me, Carter, and we'll share what's coming. A tidy sum—and by Heaven I've earned it!"

*(That Paul Tench was delirious and did not know what he was saying Jack Carter felt assured. But by this confession much that had puzzled him was made clear. Mind you read the continuation of this fine story in next week's GEM, boys.)*