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A Grand Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.
Dusting D'Arcy.

"Is it wain?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, asked that question, as he looked out of the window of the School House.

"Looks as if it will wain!"

There was a drift of clouds on the winter sky, but the air was clear enough. It was a half holiday at St. Jim's, the first of the term, and most of the fellows were streaming down to the playing-ground.

Augustus D'Arcy, with his monocle jammed into his eye, was regarding the sky anxiously.

"Coming, old chap?" asked Jack Blake, coming out of the House and giving Arthur Augustus a mighty slap on the shoulder as he passed the question.

Arthur Augustus gave a howl as he staggered forward, and went flying down the steps of the School House.

He saved himself from falling, by hopping from one step to another, but by the time he reached the ground he had over-balanced, and there he sat down.

Blake looked down at him in astonishment.

"What did you do that for, Gussy?" he asked.

"If you do it again," exclaimed Monty Lowther, of the Shell, as he came out, "Blessed if I knew you were so fond of antarctica!"

"Really, Lowthah——"

"Come!" sang out Manners.

"Say, Mannahs——"

"Look here," said Blake heartily. "Stand on the top step, and look at the sky, and I'll give you another smack, and——"

"Pway wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet, and dusted his trousers. His aristocratic face was very wrathful.

"I wegard you as a wuffianly ass, Blake! I have half a mind to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"But——"

"You have thwown me into a fluttah, and made my clothes dustay!"

And the swell of St. Jim's flicked a few specks of dust from his almost immaculate "bags."

Jack Blake grinned.

"Well, if that's your gratitude for a chap greeting you in a friendly way, I can only say you don't understand friendship," he said. "I'm ashamed of you, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"No, don't apologise. It's too late now!" said Blake, in a very lofty way.

"You uttah ass!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I wasn't goin' to apologise. I should wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I considah——"

Blake waved his hand.

"Well, if you're really sorry," he said magnanimously.

"I'm not sowwy. I——"

"If you're really sorry, I can accept your apology."

"You uttah boundah——"

"Say no more about it," said Blake cheerfully. "I am prepared to overlook the occurrence. Let it drop."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was reduced to a speechless state. He tried to speak, but only gasps would come.

"Now that matter's settled," went on Blake, in his cheerful way, "I'll dust your jacket if you like, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, finding his voice. "Is my jacket dustay, too?"

"There are some specks on it."

"Pway dust them off, deah boy."

"Certainly. Here goes!"

Blake started.

Smack! The smack on D'Arcy's shoulder rang like a pistol-

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snot. If there was a speck of dust there, it must have been demolished.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt almost demolished, too. He gave a wild yell, and tottered forward.

"Don't run away," exclaimed Blake. "That's only one speck. There's another speck on the other shoulder."

"Ow!"

"Come a bit nearer."

"You—you ass!"

"Why, what's the matter now?" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

"You! Yawwoh!"

"My dear Gussy——"

Arthur Augustus turned upon his chum. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and glared at the Fourth-Former through it.

"You feahful ass! You did that on purpose!"

Blake nodded.

"Of course I did," he said. "You wanted me to knock that speck of dust off, didn't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther and Manners.

"Pway stop cackling, you Shell boundahs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's another speck on the other shoulder," said Blake. "Do you want me to knock it off? I can't wait here all the afternoon, you know. It's the first half in the new term, and I can't waste it wholly dusting your jackets."

"You uttah ass!"

"Let's get it over——"

Arthur Augustus backed away.

"If you lay hands on me again, Blake, I shall stwike you; I should be sowwy to have to do so, but if you play any more of your wotten twicks, I shall have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Tricks!" said Blake, in astonishment.

"Yaas, wathah."

"But I was dusting your jacket."

"I am quite aware that you were wottin', you wottah!"

"Oh, dear!" said Blake. "What is it Shakespeare says on this subject, Manners——"

"Blessed if I know."

"Oh, I remember. 'How sharper than a toothsome serpent it is to have a thankless child!'" said Blake sadly. "Oh, Gussy!"

"You uttah duffah! Keep off!"

"But I'm going to dust your jacket."

"You're not!" shouted D'Arcy, backing away. "I warn you—ow!"

"Yow!" said another voice, as D'Arcy backed into somebody, and trod upon his foot. "You silly ass!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Yow!" said Figgins of the New House, dancing on one foot. "You duffer! What do you mean by walking backwards like a blessed crab?"

"I wefuse to be compared to a cwab——"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Oh, don't mind Gussy, Figgy," said Blake. "He's always a bother. He's worrying me to dust his jacket for him now, and he won't keep still."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Coming down to the footer, Blake?" asked Figgins. "As it's turning out fine, we might scratch up a match."

"Good egg!"

"Speakin' of footah," said Arthur Augustus, "I was wondahing if it would wain, when that silly ass came and stwuck me on the shouldah! I——"

"Doesn't look like rain," said Figgins.

D'Arcy raised his monocle, and gazed at the sky. Certainly, in spite of the drift of cloud, the heavens gave promise of fine weather.

"Yaas, wathah! Upon the whole, I wathah think it will be fine," said Arthur Augustus. "Under the circs, I have decided to take you fellows for a little wun."

"Eh?"

"You are pwobably aware," said D'Arcy, "that St. Jim's seniors are playing Wayland Wamblahs on Saturday."

"What about it? It's only a senior match," said Blake.

"Yaas, but I suppose we take some interest in it, although it is not, of course, of so much importance as a junish match," said Arthur Augustus. "I know it will be a feahfully tough match—I heard Kildare say so."

"Well, if they'd play a few chaps out of the Fourth, we'd help them out," said Blake, with a yawn. "If Kildare knew his binney as footer captain——"

"Well?" said a quiet, pleasant voice.

Jack Blake swung round in dismay. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, had just swung out of the School House and he had passed as he heard the words of the Fourth-Former.

CHAPTER 2.

The Wayland Winger.

KILDARE, the big, handsome Sixth-Former, was football captain of St. Jim's. He was the most popular fellow in the Sixth, and the idol of the juniors. In spite of Blake's cheeky remark, he was one of Kildare's most devoted worshippers, and everything that Kildare did was right in his eyes. According to the St. Jim's juniors, there never was a fellow who kicked for goal as Kildare did; there never was such a swimmer, never such a walker or runner, never such a cricketer. And, indeed, Kildare deserved most, if not all of the admiration with which the youngsters regarded him.

Blake coloured as he met the captain's eyes.

Kildare smiled, grimly.

"Well?" he repeated.

"Ahem!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Let me see," remarked Kildare. "You were saying that if I knew my business as a footer captain——"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Blake resignedly. "I—I—I mean, I can stand it!"

"How many what?"

"Lines?"

Kildare laughed.

"None," he said. "But you should be a little more careful, Blake. That is all."

And Kildare walked on.

Blake ran after him impulsively.

"I say, Kildare, I'm sorry. I was only joking, you know. We all know you're the best footer captain St. Jim's ever had, or could have."

"Thanks!" said Kildare. "If you're satisfied, there's needn't have any doubts about it, I'm sure."

Blake grunted as the St. Jim's captain walked away. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy regarded his chum disapprovingly through his monocle.

"Well, I must say that I wegard you as an ass, Blake!" he said.

Blake snorted.

"Yaas, wathah—an awful ass!"

"It was all your fault, you chump!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "What on earth did you want to let him on the subject of the Wayland match just then for?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You're always putting your blessed foot in it!"

"I wefuse to wegard it in that light, if you were so jolly impertinent, and had I been Kildare, I should have thwashed you."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Blake——"

"Oh, millions of rats!"

"I wegard you as an ass. Howevah, your wemark that Kildare should play some of the Fourth was certainly justifiable. I feel that if I were played in the First Eleven, I should do things a little bettah for St. Jim's."

"Br-r-r!"

"That is a silly ejaculation, Blake, and not an argument. Howevah, to weturn to the point, the St. Jim's Seniors are playin' Wayland Wamblahs on Saturday, and it's goin' to be a vewy tough match. Now, I know that the Wamblahs are at pwactice to-day, on Wayland Common, and I think it would be a good ideah to go ovah and see them, and see what sort they're in. I've nevah seen Wayland Wamblahs play, and I'm curwious to see how they shape, you know."

Jack Blake nodded.

"It's not a bad idea," he exclaimed. "I'll come over with you, Gussy. You Shell bounders coming?"

"I'll come," said Monty Lowther. "I don't see any use in beginning footer practice to-day. Do you, Manners?"

Manners shook his head.

"No," he said, "and for the same reason, I think."

Blake looked at them.

"Still thinking about Tom Merry?" he said.

Lowther nodded.

"Can't help it," he said. "It seems so rotten to be having footer this term without Tom here. The team won't be the same without him."

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm sure we all miss Tom Mewwy as much as you fellows do, and I wish he could have come back to St. Jim's. I wonder when he shall see him again?"

"I wonder!"

"I'll come over to Wayland, too," Figgins remarked. "It's fine enough for the bikes. Shall we go on wheels?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Then the sooner we start the better," Figgins said. "They'll be doing their practice early, as it gets dark."

"Let's get off, then."

The juniors went round to the bicycle shed for their machines. Kangaroo, the Cornstalk junior, joined them, and

"THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S." A Grand New School Tale, by Charles Hamilton, is in the "EMPIRE" Library this week. Price One Halfpenny.

...alling out of the gates of St. Jim's. They had just ...hen there was a breathless shout from behind.

...gins! I say, Piggy!"

...unior stopped, and looked back.

...junior was standing in the gateway, waving his hand ...

...Piggy!"

...shouted Figgins. "What's wanted?"

...Wynn came running after the cyclists. They waited ...to come up.

...might wait for a fellow!" he gasped.

...to Wayland?" asked Blake.

...You're going to Wayland?"

...not Rylcombe?" said Fatty Wynn, persuasively.

...stared at him.

...the good of going to Rylcombe, when the Ramblers ...at Wayland Common?" he asked.

...Fatty Wynn's turn to stare.

...Ramblers!" he repeated.

...!"

...are they?"

Wayland team the First Eleven are playing on ...

Are you going to see them?"

...ublish."

...Fatty?"

...Wynn snorted.

...can see them when they come to St. Jim's on Satur... Blow 'em! I thought you were going off to a ...

...!"

...burst into a roar.

...Wynn gave another snort, and tramped back to the ...evidently didn't care for a journey over to Wayland ...of seeing the Ramblers at practice. The juniors, ...mounted their machines, and pedalled away.

...was hard and frosty, the air cold and dry. It was ...day for a cycle run, and the St. Jim's juniors ...and fairly whizzed along the lanes. They were ...Wayland Moor in a very short time.

...sharp winter air several football games were going ...Wayland Common. But the size of the watching crowd ...juniors where to look for the Ramblers. Wayland ...an amateur team, and they had made quite a ...in the locality, and there was talk of their entering ...Cup at the next competition.

...exclaimed Blake, as he saw a thick crowd ...Ramblers' ground. "They're at it already, and there ...see them. I suppose there's no charge for admission ...ance, though."

...the case. "The gates were open, and people came in ...they chose. Only on match days the Ramblers reali... ...over expenses. The juniors ran their bikes into ...and leaned against the wall, and then made their ...front to see the teams.

...Ramblers were in full force for the practice, and they were ...scratch team in blue shirts. The Ramblers them... ...in red.

...a pretty good crowd round the ropes, but the juniors ...places near up to the scratch team's goal. They ...the players with great interest. Although they might ...little notice of senior matches, the juniors as a ...knew that Wayland Ramblers were the hardest ...and his men ever had to meet, and they were ...the men who might lower the St. Jim's colours. ...them up and calculate what chance they had ...Jim's First.

...a good lot," Monty Lowther remarked.

...what."

...of them only lads, too," said Blake. "I suppose ...age is a year or two older than St. Jim's seniors."

...like it," said Figgins. "But there's one chap there ...a day over fifteen, if he's that! My only summer ...

...'s the matter?"

...k at that chap!"

...chap?"

...ehind right!"

...looked more closely at the winger in the red shirt, ...whom Figgins had judged at a distance not to be ... He was closer now, and they could see his face ...

...amazed exclamation of amazement burst from all the ...

...Tom Merry!"

...dear!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Ramblers' Practice Match.

TOM MERRY did not hear the exclamations of the St. Jim's juniors.

He did not even know they were on the ground.

He was too intent upon the game.

It was close upon time for the interval, and the team were keeping well up to their work.

The scratch team was composed mainly of the Wayland reserves, and in part it was very nearly up to the form of the first team.

In the first half of the match the Ramblers had scored only one goal, the scratchers giving them a very hard run for their money.

Tom Merry was playing inside right, with Blane at outside. Carter at centre, and Yorke at inside left. Yorke was the Wayland captain.

The Ramblers were making a hard run up the field, and the scratch team were doing their best to hold them.

But it was in vain.

The Ramblers came on, and Tom Merry had the ball, and brought it right up, and then passed to the centre.

The centre, tackled by the backs, sent it on to Yorke, who rushed it forward and slammed it in.

The ball lodged in the net.

"Good old Ramblers!" shouted the crowd. "Goal!"

Then the whistle rang out.

The two sides trooped off for the interval.

Tom Merry's face was flushed and happy as he went off the field with the Ramblers. He had done very well in the first half of the scratch match. He knew that himself, and, besides, Yorke had told him so.

Mr. Philpot, the manager of the Wayland Club, was waiting at the gate, and he clapped Tom Merry on the shoulder as the junior came off with the rest.

"Very good, Merry!" he exclaimed. "I wish you were playing with us for good."

Tom Merry smiled brightly.

"I wish I were, sir," he said.

In the handsome dressing-room of the Ramblers it was noticeable that the other players were very kind to Tom Merry.

There was only one exception. That exception was Blane, who stayed outside right. He said nothing to the boy, and when his eyes dwelt upon Tom Merry, they gleamed with dislike. There was bad blood between the outside winger and the latest recruit to the Ramblers.

It dated from the day when Tom Merry had offered to play for the Ramblers at Rylcombe, taking the place of a fellow who was injured before the match.

Tom Merry had accepted Mr. Philpot's offer to stay with him as a guest for a week or two, and to play for the Ramblers in the meantime.

There was no reason why he should not accept it, and the play ones more on the footer field did him good, especially after the trials and anxieties he had been through since the loss of his fortune compelled him to leave St. Jim's.

"You have been playing up rippingly, Merry," Yorke said, in the dressing-room. "That last goal belonged half to you, you know."

"It's very kind of you to say so," said Tom Merry.

"It's true! I wish you were permanently in the team," said Yorke. "Perhaps if Mr. Philpot finds you a post in Wayland somewhere, you may play regularly for the Ramblers."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I should like to," he said.

"Oh, he won't go," you needn't be afraid of that," said Blane, with a sneer. "He knows when he's dropped into a soft corner."

"Shut up, Blane," said Yorke angrily.

Tom Merry turned towards the outside winger with flashing eyes.

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Blane?" he exclaimed.

"I mean what I say," replied the winger coolly. "You've wormed yourself into Mr. Philpot's good graces, and you're not likely to get out of your own accord."

Tom Merry's cheeks burned.

"I have no intention of playing for the Ramblers after the match next Saturday," he said. "That is what I am staying for."

Blane shrugged his shoulders.

"We shall see!" he sneered.

"Hold your tongue, Blane," said Yorke angrily, "and, look here, I warn you to be more civil to Tom Merry. He's a more valuable member of the team than you are, and if I had to leave one of you out to keep the peace, you're not the one I should keep in the team."

Blane bit his lip savagely. But he said no more. He did not care to enter into a wordy conflict with Yorke, who was quite capable of dropping him from the team in the middle of a match if he kicked over the traces.

The brief interval over, the Ramblers and the scratch team lined up once more in the clear, frosty air.

NEXT THURSDAY: "MR. MERRY."

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of The Chums of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford.

"Good old Merry!"

"Buck up, Tommy!"

"Play up!"

Tom Merry started.

Yorke laughed.

"Some friends of yours in the crowd, I suppose," he remarked.

"Fellows over from St. Jim's, I expect," said Tom Merry with a flush of pleasure in his cheeks. "They haven't forgotten me there."

He looked round quickly for his old friends. The whistle had not sounded for the beginning of play.

The sight of a silk hat waving in the air indicated where Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood. Tom Merry waved his hand, and the chums of St. Jim's waved back.

There was no time for more. The whistle rang out, and the play restarted.

The Ramblers were having things pretty much their own way now, the scratch team being very nearly on their last legs. The chums of St. Jim's watched keenly.

"Fancy seeing Tom Merry here!" Monty Lowther remarked, still in great wonder. "I thought he had started for Southampton when he left Gussy's place."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And here he is at Wayland," said Manners. "He's changed his mind, that's clear. But the surprising thing is, his playing for the Ramblers. It's an amateur team, so he can't have got a job with them."

"I wonder—" began Blake, and then he paused.

His chums looked at him.

"You wondah what, deah boy?"

"Why, Wayland are playing Kildare and his lot on Saturday! Will Tom Merry be playing for them then?"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

Monty Lowther gave a whistle.

"Not likely!" he remarked.

"I don't know," said Kangaroo. "He's a member of the team now, anyway. This is a practice match, the last before they play St. Jim's, I believe. It looks to me as if it will be Tom Merry against St. Jim's on Saturday afternoon."

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

It was a curious question. It could not be decided with certainty till after the practice match was over, when the juniors meant to see Tom Merry.

"Let's get round towards the gate," said Blake. "We can see Tommy as he comes off after the match, and they may let us into the dressing-room."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums made their way round towards the exit from the field. The match was nearly at its finish now. Tom Merry had taken a goal, and Yorke had scored another, and the "scratchers" were hopelessly beaten. They had been in good form, so it was plain that the Ramblers were very fit.

"Hallo, Tommy!"

Tom Merry paused as he was going off with the other players. From the crowd his chums were grinning at him.

"Hallo, old sons!" said Tom Merry.

"We want to speak to you, you know," Blake remarked.

"Wait a minute; I'll join you."

"Righto!"

The juniors waited while the crowd cleared off; and five minutes later Tom Merry came out of the dressing-room and joined them. He shook hands all round with the juniors with great pleasure.

"It's jolly good to see you again!" he exclaimed. "I did not know any of you fellows would be on the ground here."

"It's jolly wippin' to meet you once more, Tom Mewwy!"

"Yes, rather!"

"You're playing for the Ramblers now?"

"Only for a time," said Tom Merry.

"Are you playing against St. Jim's on Saturday?"

"What?"

"Are you playing against St. Jim's?" asked Monty Lowther. "I suppose you know that the Ramblers are playing our First Eleven on Saturday?"

"My hat!"

CHAPTER 4.

Against St. Jim's.

TOM MERRY looked at the juniors in astonishment. It was evident that the announcement was news to him.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Didn't you know, deah boy?"

"Certainly not!"

"But it is a fixture, you know; it's been awwanged some time."

"You forget that I've been away from St. Jim's," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"Bai Jove, I forgot that!"

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"But are you playing for the Ramblers on Saturday?" asked Lowther.

"Yes."

"Then you're playing against St. Jim's."

"Oh!"

"You didn't know?"

"I had no idea."

"Bai Jove! It's odd, you know."

Tom Merry was looking dismayed. He had been glad to oblige Mr. Philpot by playing for the Wayland Ramblers, but he did not know that a match against his old school was included in the programme. If he had known that, his acceptance of the manager's offer, kind as it was, would have been much more doubtful.

"How did you get to be playing for the Ramblers?" asked Manners.

Tom Merry explained.

"It was after I left you fellows at Gussy's place in the train. You see, the Ramblers were playing Rimdale, and I stopped there, and one of their men was hurt before the match, and I offered to take his place just for a chance to play a bit of footer again. Mr. Philpot—he's the Ramblers' manager—liked my play, and as he found that I was looking for work, he asked me to stay with him for a week or two. He said the Ramblers had another match on before the time when the injured man could be well enough to play, and asked me to keep his place for the time. He also said he might be able to find me a post of some sort in Wayland."

"I see."

"I mentioned to Mr. Philpot that I had been at St. Jim's, and left owing to losing all my tin," Tom Merry explained. "I don't know that he thought much about it, and he didn't have any idea that I should object to playing against my old school."

"But you would?"

"Yes; rather. Here's Mr. Philpot now; I'll speak to him."

The handsome, stout gentleman in the silk hat and frock coat, who was coming from the club-house, paused as he passed the juniors. Tom Merry presented the chums of St. Jim's to him.

Mr. Philpot greeted them very kindly.

"I hear the match next Saturday is against St. Jim's, sir," Tom Merry said.

Mr. Philpot nodded.

"Yes. Did you not know that?"

"It wasn't mentioned to me, sir."

"No?"

Tom Merry coloured. His chums drew away and started up the road, to give Tom an opportunity of speaking alone with the manager.

Mr. Philpot looked at him.

"I did not know you were not aware of it, but I did not suppose it made any difference, Merry," he said. "Have you any objection to playing?"

"Well, sir, you see, St. Jim's is my old school."

"Does that make any difference?"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I don't know that it does," he said, at last.

"Why, you might play in an Old Boys' match against the school, and you might meet your old schoolfellows any time in any team you play!" said Mr. Philpot, with a smile.

"Yes, I suppose so, sir."

"But if you have any real objection to playing, of course, I should ask Yorke to leave you out," said Mr. Philpot quickly. "I hope you will think over it before deciding, however. As you know, Grey will not recover from his injury for some time, and in the meantime I have depended upon you instead of looking out for another winger."

"Of course I wouldn't think of disappointing you, sir," Tom Merry said hastily. "Of course I shall play if you wish

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It came as a surprise at first, that is all—the idea of playing against St. Jim's."

"Is it long since you have left the school?" asked the Wayland manager.

"Sir; I was there last term."

"Ah, I did not know it was so recent as that! Do you think that you would not be able to put your heart into a game against St. Jim's?"

"No, sir! If I play, I shall play my hardest, of course."

"I want you to play, Merry. Your friends at the school would resent your playing under the circumstances. And you are not in the First Eleven, I understand?"

"No, sir; a Shell fellow hasn't much chance of getting into the senior eleven."

"I suppose not, though from your play you are quite fit for it. Perhaps you could go over to St. Jim's, and explain there that you are playing for us."

"I was thinking so myself, sir."

"Then go and not you to play."

"Then I shall play, sir. After your kindness to me, I should be unlikely to leave you in the lurch, Mr. Philpot."

The manager shook hands with him.

"That is settled then, Merry?"

"Quite!"

And Mr. Philpot, with a nod to the group of juniors, walked away. Tom Merry rejoined his chums.

"We're playing on Saturday," he announced abruptly.

"Against St. Jim's?"

"Yaas!"

"I don't see that it matters," said Blake thoughtfully. "It's a bit of a surprise at first, that's all."

"Bai Jove! Wathah!"

"Are you free for the rest of the afternoon, Tom?" Monty Lowther asked.

"Yes. I was thinking of coming back with you fellows and seeing Kildare, to explain the matter to him," said Tom Merry.

"That was what I was going to suggest."

"Then I'll come."

"Have you got a bike here, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Bike are things of the past with me, Gussy," he said. "If you're still riding, I'll stand on behind a machine, as we used to!"

The juniors of St. Jim's took their machines out into the road, and Tom Merry mounted behind Lowther on his machine, standing on the foot-rests and keeping a hand on Lowther's shoulder. He had often had a lift in the same way when he was a junior himself. They pedalled off down the frosty road.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, "the fellows will be wild to see Tom Merwy again!"

"Yes, rather" said Kangaroo. "We'll have a bit of a celebration this afternoon in honour of the occasion."

"Good idea!" said Figgins. "I can tell you the New House will be there!"

"It would be a good ideah to have a bwass band, deah boy."

"What?"

"A bwass band," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly. "I was head to play 'See the Conquewin' Hewo comes,' or something of that sort."

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha!"

"Really, deah boys——"

"We could have ordered out the local Territorials, and met him with full military honours if we'd known in time," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think a bwass band would be a good ideah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"At any wate, I considah——"

"Hilloa! Here we are!"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"I'm aware of that, Gussy. Here we are at St. Jim's."

"Look Blake, jumping off his machine in the old gateway.

"Blake——"

Figgins," roared Figgins, in his stentorian tones. "Hallo, Figgins! Here's Tom Merry come to visit you!"

There was a shout from the quadrangle, and a crowd of fellows came up at once, and in a moment Tom Merry was having both hands shaken, on all sides.

CHAPTER 5.

Kildare Does Not Object.

"HURRAY! It's Tom Merry!"

"Good old Tommy!"

"Here we are again!"

"Hurray!"

There was no doubt about the warmth of Tom Merry's welcome. Fellows of the Shell, and the Fourth, and the Third came back and shook hands with him, and thumped him on the back till he was sore. Even Fifth Formers forgot for the moment that they were great and dignified in comparison with Shell fellows, and greeted Tom Merry heartily.

"Jolly glad to see you again," said Lefevre of the Fifth.

"That's what I say. Jolly glad to see you!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hip-pip!" shouted Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form.

"Bravo!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bwavo!"

And Tom Merry was marched to the School House amid a joyous crowd. Fatty Wynn dug Figgins in the ribs.

"Figgy, old man, we shall have to stand a jolly good feed to celebrate this."

Figgins chuckled.

"Trust you to think of a feed," he remarked.

"Well, have you got a better idea? We stood a feed the last time Tom Merry came to St. Jim's, and I don't see that we could do better than stand another now."

"Oh, all right, my son; go ahead."

Tom Merry stopped when he entered the School House.

"I've got to speak to Kildare," he said.

"This way, old son," said Monty Lowther.

And a crowd of juniors marched Tom Merry to Kildare's study. Blake and D'Arcy and Manners tapped at the door at once, and the captain of St. Jim's called out to them to come in.

Blake opened the door.

"Here's Tom Merry, Kildare."

Kildare, who was having his tea and chatting with Darrel of the Sixth, rose to his feet at once, and held out his hand to the hero of the Shell.

"Glad to see you, Tom Merry," he exclaimed.

"Same here," said Darrel, shaking hands with Tom Merry in his turn.

"I want to speak to you, Kildare, if I may."

"Certainly. Sit down. You youngsters cut off."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused in the doorway.

"Weally, Kildare——"

"Buzz off."

"Yaas, but——"

"Clear out, D'Arcy!"

"I wish to wemark——"

"Do you want D'Arcy to stay, Tom Merry?" asked the captain of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not particularly," he said.

"Then cut off, kid."

"Yaas, but——"

"Do you want my boot?"

"I want to observe, Kildare, that I object to the term youngstahs. I considah——"

Kildare made a movement towards the door, and Blake dragged Arthur Augustus into the passage. The door was closed, but the sound of D'Arcy's voice in expostulation could be heard for some minutes.

Kildare turned to Tom Merry with a smile.

"It's very pleasant to see you here again," he remarked. "Does this mean that you are coming back to St. Jim's for good, Tom Merry?"

The junior shook his head.

"I'm sorry not, Kildare."

"Well, I wish you were. Your friends miss you a great deal; and the junior footer won't be the same this term without you. But it can't be helped, I suppose. How have you been getting on? I've heard that you spent the Christmas vac. with D'Arcy, after all."

"Yes. I'm staying with Mr. Philpot, in Wayland, now."

Kildare looked a little surprised.

"Mr. Philpot, the banker!" he asked.

"Yes."

"He's manager of the Wayland Ramblers," said Kildare. "Our First Eleven are playing them on Saturday."

"That's what I want to speak to you about, Kildare."

"Yes!"

"I shall be playing for the Ramblers."

Kildare started.

"What!"

"That's news," said Darrel. "How does it happen?"

Tom Merry explained the circumstances. The two Sixth-Formers listened attentively; and Kildare nodded when Tom Merry had concluded.

"I don't see how you can do anything else," he remarked.

"You don't object to my playing against St. Jim's, then?" asked Tom Merry, eagerly.

Kildare laughed.

"Why should I object? You don't belong to the school now."

"I still look upon myself as a St. Jim's chap."

"Quite right, so you are. But when a team visits us, you know, we've sometimes lent them a substitute, one of our own fellows to play against us. It will be all right, Tom. You are playing for the Ramblers now, and all you've got to do is

to play your hardest on Saturday, and help to beat us if you can."

Tom Merry gave the St. Jim's captain a grateful look.

"I'm glad you've put it like that," he said. "It would have seemed ungrateful to Mr. Philpot to draw out; but I wouldn't have played against St. Jim's if you had objected."

"That's all right, my son."

"Thank you, Kildare."

Tom Merry rose.

"It's all serene," said Kildare. "We shall see you on Saturday, then. I'd make you stop to tea now, but I know your friends in the lower forms have some celebration on for you, and it would be too hard to disappoint them. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Kildare!"

Tom Merry left the study with a light heart. It seemed like old times to be back at St. Jim's. The old passage was so familiar. He knew every inch of it. There was a gash on the oaken floor in one place which he remembered making by dropping a pocket-knife the week before he received the fatal news from Huckleberry Heath. Nothing at St. Jim's was changed: it seemed like getting back into his own skin again to be at the old school.

Blake and D'Arcy were waiting for him at the end of the passage. The swell of St. Jim's was looking a little excited.

"Here you are, dear boy!" D'Arcy exclaimed. "Is it all wight?"

"Yes; Kildare's a brick!"

"Yaas!" said Arthur Augustus slowly. "Kildare may be a bwick, but he is certainly wathah impertinent in the way he allows himself to address Fourth-Formahs. I expect to be tuhned a youngstah in that wegardless way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Manners and Lowther are getting tea in the study," said Blake. "We're all coming. Figgins & Co. are bringing in some of the grub. This way!"

"Yaas, wathah, it will be a wippin' celebwation, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!"

"It's awfully kind of you chaps——"

"Wats!"

"And many of 'em," said Blake. "It does us good to see your cheerful chivvy again. It won't look so cheerful, by the way, on Saturday, when you get a licking from our First."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, this is the first occasion when I can't say that I hope St. Jim's will win," he said.

"But Jove, yaas!"

There was a scent of cooking in the Shell study as Blake and D'Arcy piloted Tom Merry in. Manners and Lowther were looking very warm and busy, and Fatty Wynn was lending a helping hand.

"Nearly ready," said Monty Lowther, cheerfully. "You fellows amuse our guest while we're finishing."

"Shall I sing a tenah solo, Lowthah?"

"You'll get slain if you do."

"Weally, deah boy——"

"I'll help," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you still keep the things in the same old places, eh? The bread in the bookcase, and the jampot in the desk?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Tom Merry helped cheerfully; and as he moved about the study, which was so crowded that everybody got in everybody else's way—just like old times—Tom could scarcely believe that the late events were not all a dream, and that he was not a Shell fellow at St. Jim's as of old.

CHAPTER 6.

A Cry for Help.

TOM MERRY enjoyed that tea-party in the crowded study, and he stayed as long as he could with his old chums, and when the time came to depart they easily obtained a pass from Kildare to walk with him half the way to Wayland. Tom Merry could not leave his departure too late, as he wanted to get to Mr. Philpot's house before the usual bedtime. The whole party of juniors tramped down the lane from St. Jim's, and turned into the footpath by the stile, and tramped along under the frozen branches of the trees in Rylcombe Wood.

It was a bitterly cold night, with a clear moon shining through the frosty branches. In sight of the Wayland road, the juniors bade farewell to Tom Merry. Their good-byes said, they parted, and Tom Merry tramped on alone. The other fellows turned for the walk back to St. Jim's.

"Jolly cold!" exclaimed Blake. "Walk sharp!"

"Hold on, deah boys!"

"Oh, buck up, Gussy!"

"Pway stop a minute——"

"What's the matter?"

"I've dwopped my eyeglass!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Lowthah——"

"Rats—I mean wats!"

"You uttah ass——"

"Now, come on, Gussy," exclaimed Herries. "We can't stay here all night while you slang that Shell bounder, you know."

"I've dwopped my eyeglass."

"We don't mind," said Digby. "I suppose you can leave it there, can't you?"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Now look here, Gussy——"

"I'm lookin' for my beastly monocle, don't you know."

The juniors glared at the swell of the Fourth. He was looking in the footpath under the trees, trying to discover the fallen monocle by the aid of the moonlight—a somewhat hopeless task.

The night was very cold indeed, and a chill wind blew through the leafless trees, and it was not pleasant to stand about watching the elegant junior groping for his eyeglass.

"Can't you strike a match, you ass?" exclaimed Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Well, why don't you light one?" asked Figgins.

"Because I haven't one. I find that cawwyin' a match box has an effect of bulgin' out a fellow's pocket."

"You—you chump!"

"Weally, Figgy——"

"Here's a match!" said Kerr, striking one. "Here you are!"

Arthur Augustus took the match, and scanned the gutter by its light. The little flame flickered and waved in the nasty wind.

"Bai Jove! I don't see it."

"Better leave it there, then."

"Wats!"

"Chump!"

"Weally, you know-ow-wow-yow!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Yawoch!" gasped Arthur Augustus, springing back.

"Yow! I've burnt my fingah! Yow! Why couldn't you tell me that the match was burnin' down? Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs! Pway stwike some matches for me, Kerr, deah boy, and you can hold your time."

"What for?" demanded Kerr.

"In case I should burn my fingahs, deah boy."

"Suppose I burn mine?" howled Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr, you are wastin' time with all this argument. Are you goin' to light the matches, or are you not goin' to light the matches?"

"Here's the box," said Kerr. "Catch!"

Whiz!

"Yaweoh!"

"What's the matter now?"

"Yowp! That bow-wid wottah has hurled that wotten match-box at my nose! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I told you to catch it," said Kerr. "I didn't say catch it with your nose. You should look out."

"You fearful ass——"

"Rats!"

"I wegard you as a dangerous chump, Kerr!"

"Go hon!"

"I am sowwy to delay you in this cold night, deah boys, but wegard the circs, I have no wesource but to give Kerr a feahful thwashin'."

"Ass!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Go it!" said Kerr cheerfully.

"Unless you instantly apologise——"

"Rats!"

"Then I have no othah wesource——"

"More rats!"

That was enough for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He went at the Scottish junior, brandishing his fists in the air.

"Stop him!" howled Blake. "We shan't be home in the morning at this rate."

"Collar him!"

"I utterly wefuse to be collahed!"

"It's all right," said Kerr, with a grin. "I'll collar him."

"Weally, Kerr——Ow!"

Kerr had dodged the elegant junior's furious attack and closed with D'Arcy. He had a strong grip round Arthur Augustus, and held him fast.

"Welease me, you uttah wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fearful outsidah——"

"Will you make it pax?"



Tom Merry turned to the outside winger with flashing eyes. "What do you mean, Mr. Blane?" he exclaimed. "I mean that you've wormed your way into Mr. Philpot's good graces, and you're not likely to get out of your own accord," replied the winger coolly. (See page 3.)

...only not! Wolease me! You are wumpling my ...!"

"...!" suddenly exclaimed Kerr, as he felt his hand come ...contact with something that dangled behind D'Arcy as he ...ed him. "The giddy monocle!"

"By Jove! What!"

"The eyeglass, you chump!"

"Great Scott!"

It released the swell of St. Jim's. It was the monocle, ...enough. The cord it was attached to had swung behind ..., and the eyeglass had been hanging down his back. ...was all.

"By Jove!" said D'Arcy.

"...you unspeakable ass!" said Jack Blake, in measured ... "You ought to be frog-marched all the way from here ...im's!"

"Really, Blake——"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"I wefuse to be bumped! I——"

"Collar him!"

The juniors made a threatening movement towards D'Arcy. In a few seconds more Arthur Augustus would have been ... and bumped on the muddy ground. But just at that moment a sound came ringing through the wood. It was a cry, and it came from the direction Tom Merry had taken towards the Wayland Road. The cry echoed eerily among the frozen trees.

"Help!"

"By Jove!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "Did you hear?"

"Yes. It was Tom Merry!"

"Come on!" shouted Lowther.

He dashed away at top speed up the footpath, and the rest of the juniors followed pell-mell.

CHAPTER 7.

In Deadliest Peril!

TOM MERRY, leaving the St. Jim's juniors in the woodland path, had tramped on cheerfully towards the Wayland Road. He was feeling very cheered by his visit to St. Jim's, and the kindness and friendship he had met with there. He whistled as he went, to keep himself company. As he reached the stile which gave access from the footpath to the Wayland Road, he saw that someone was leaning upon it. It was the figure of a man, and as Tom Merry drew nearer he recognised the man, in spite of the uncertainty of the moonlight. It was Blane, the outside right of the Wayland Ramblers' team.

Tom Merry was far from pleased at the meeting. There was no love lost between him and Blane, and many times the outside winger had shown his deep and unreasonable hatred. And a lurking smell of strong liquor showed that the man had been drinking. He straightened up a little as Tom Merry came up, but did not offer to move, so that the junior could get over the stile into the road.

"So it's you!" he said, in a husky voice, with a leer.

"Yes, Mr. Blane, it's I," said Tom Merry civilly. "Would you mind letting me get over the stile?"

The winger did not move.

"It's very late," said Tom Merry.

"Late, is it?"

"Yes. Please let me pass."

Blane laughed. His laugh sent a breath of spirituous fumes into Tom Merry's face, and the lad receded a step, with an involuntary expression of disgust.

Tom Merry had not suspected Blane of being a drinker before, but he was hardly surprised. This was the cause, probably, of the fellow's bad temper and unreasonable nature. The strong drink acted upon his system in that way, making him savage and quarrelsome while he was intoxicated, and irritable and peevish when he was sober. Tom Merry realised that Blane was in a humour now for a dangerous quarrel, and he meant to do the best he could to keep the peace. He was not afraid of Blane, but he did not want any open quarrel with a member of the Ramblers' team. It would not be long before he left the Ramblers, and he wanted to go without any open enmity. Blane was watching him with drunken seriousness.

"Well?" he stuttered.

"Please let me pass," said Tom Merry.

"You don't pass while I'm here!"

"But I want to get home," said Tom Merry persuasively. "I shall be shut out at Mr. Philpot's if I don't get in soon."

Blane chuckled.

"I don't care, do I?"

Tom Merry made no answer. He could not move Blane from the step of the stile without a struggle, and he moved along to step over the top bar, as far from the intoxicated winger as possible. Blane saw his object, and sprawled along the stile to stop him.

"No, you don't!" he snarled.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Will you let me pass, Mr. Blane?"

"No, I won't!"

"I cannot remain here."

The winger sneered.

"We'll see about that," he replied.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"If you stop me, I shall have to shift you," he said. "I don't want a row, Mr. Blane. Will you let me pass?"

"No!"

Tom Merry wasted no more time in words. He had either to remove the winger from his path by force, or spend as long a time in the frozen wood as Blane chose to keep him there—an alternative that was not to be thought of, in spite of his desire for peace.

He grasped the outside right by the shoulders, and dragged him away from the stile. Blane seemed surprised by the attack, so much so that he made no resistance for the moment, and Tom Merry dragged him away without a struggle. Then he stood unsteadily, swaying from side to side, while Tom Merry moved quickly towards the stile. But before he could reach it Blane had recovered himself. With a hoarse cry of fury he threw himself upon Tom Merry, grasping him round the body, and endeavouring to throw him to the ground. Tom Merry returned grasp for grasp, and struggled fiercely.

"Let me go!" he cried.

"I'll smash you, you young cub!"

Boy as he was, Tom Merry might not have had the worst of the tussle, but as he struggled in Blane's grip his foot caught in a root, and he went heavily to the ground. The fall dazed him, and Blane, falling upon him, knocked almost all the breath out of his body.

A dark, savage face loomed over Tom Merry in the moonlight and a foul, brandy-laden breath fanned his face.

"I've got you now!"

And a heavy fist crashed down upon the boy.

It was a cowardly blow; perhaps Blane would not have struck it if he had been sober.

Tom Merry's head reeled, and lights danced before his eyes. He clenched his fist and struck out, fiercely, blindly.

Blane gave a yelping cry.

Tom Merry's knuckles had crashed upon his mouth, and there was a spurt of red from cut lips.

"Oh! I'll choke you for that!"

The man's hands grasped at Tom Merry's throat.

The boy looked up in startled horror.

It was the face of a madman that looked down at him—a man mad with rage and drink, and no longer responsible for what he did.

"You mad fool!" gasped Tom Merry. "Let go!"

"I'll choke you."

"Help!"

Tom Merry shouted out the cry desperately as he felt the hands grasping at his throat. He had no time for more.

The grasp closed upon him, and utterance was choked off. Tom Merry's brain reeled.

He strove fiercely, but in vain, to throw off that terrible grip. The savage, drink-inflamed face above him seemed to dilate, to grow larger in size, and swim before his startled eyes. A mist swam before him.

Then suddenly, in the midst of the gathering darkness, there was a sound of rushing feet, and the grasp upon his throat relaxed, and he gulped in air—gasp after gasp, as it he would never cease.

CHAPTER 8.

Late Hours.

"BETTER, old chap?"

It was Monty Lowther's voice.

He had Tom Merry's head on his knee, and Manners was fanning him with his cap.

Blake and Figgins and Kerr were holding Blane down. The drunken ruffian was not struggling. He had already discovered that that was futile.

Tom Merry passed his hand across his brow, and looked round wildly.

"You—you here!" he stammered.

"We heard you call!"

"Thank heaven! I believe that drunken fool would have murdered me," gasped Tom Merry.

Lowther caught his breath.

"I—I almost thought you were gone when we ran up," he said. "We yanked the end off in no time. Better, old chap?"

"Yes; I'm all right now."

"Bettah have a bit of a west, old chap," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sagely. "You look wathah wotten, you know."

Tom Merry breathed deeply. The colour was slowly coming back to his cheeks. His heart was beating more evenly.

He rose with the assistance of his chums.

"I'm all right," he repeated. "As for that rascal—"

"We'll take him to the police station."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, no!" he exclaimed quickly.

"Why not?"

"I don't want him locked up."

"But he's a dangerous character," exclaimed Figgins. "I suppose he was going to rob you?"

"Oh no."

"What did he want, then?"

"It was spite—and he was drunk."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, catching sight of the prisoner's face in the moonlight. "I've seen that bwute was playin' for Wayland this afternoon."

"Not one of the Ramblers!" exclaimed Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My hat!"

"Yes, he's Blane, the outside right," said Tom Merry. "We're on pretty bad terms, though goodness knows it's not my fault. I can't bring any disgrace upon the Ramblers by showing him up. If I mention the matter to Mr. Philpot he will be enough, and he can act about it as he thinks fit."

"Yaas, wathah, I weally think that is the wight and pwopah way to look at it, Tom Mewwy. Pewwaps we ought to give the wascal a little."

"He's too drunk to understand now," said Tom Merry. "Let him go."

"He may go for you again."

"Oh, I'll keep clear of him."

Monty Lowther shook his head decidedly.

"We'll let him go, if you like," he exclaimed, "but we'll see you home as far as Mr. Philpot's house, before we leave you. You're not safe with that scoundrel around."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked dubious.

"It will make you very late back," he said.

"That's all right; we can explain to the Housemaster."

"All serene, then."

"You can go, you scoundrel," said Monty Lowther, turning to Blane by the shoulder. "If I had my way you'd be in prison, you brute."

The outside right gave him a stupid stare, and slouched away.

ANSWERS

Tom Merry & Co. clambered over the stile, and with the help guard of juniors, Tom made his way to Mr. Philpot's house. At the door the chums left him.

"Good-night," said Tom Merry. "I'm pretty late—every-body seems to have gone to bed. You'll be jolly late in your-self."

"It's all wight, deah boy."

The juniors took their leave.

The door closed, and the comrades of St. Jim's tramped off through the wood. They clambered over the stile once more, and as they entered the footpath, a dark figure lurched by them. It was Blane.

The winger gave the juniors a stare, and muttered some-thing, and then went lurching on into the shadows, and dis-appeared.

"Phew! That chap's making a night of it," remarked Kangaroo, as the party took their way through the wood.

"Looks like it," said Kangaroo. "Jolly lucky we saw Tom Merry, I think—and lucky we heard him when he yapped."

"Yaas, wathah! All thwough me, too!"

There was a general exclamation from the juniors.

Tom Merry jammed his monocle into his eye and looked at them severely.

"I wemarked that it was all thwough me that we came to be able to wescue Tom Mewwy fwom that feahful wottah," he said.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"How do you make it out, Gussy?"

"I hadn't stopped to look for my monocle——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, don't you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors' merry laughter rang through the wintry wood. And next time that Arthur Augustus tried to explain that it was due to him and to his monocle that Tom Merry had escaped, there was a fresh roar, and the swell of St. Jim's gave it up at last.

They reached the school, and Blake had to peal three times on the bell before there was a glimmer of a light, and Taggles the porter came down to the gates.

He had on his lantern and blinked at the juniors through the bars.

"It's you!" he said grimly.

"It looks like it, old son," said Blake cheerfully. "Open the door, Taggy. You're awfully nice to look at, I know; but it's cold to stand here long."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Open the gate, Taggy," said Kerr; "I suppose you don't want me to report you for disrespect to your elders."

Taggles snorted.

"I think these is nice goings hon," he remarked. "Do you know it's past midnight?"

"I know you were in bed, Taggles," said Kangaroo. "Naughty boy! Open the gate, will you?"

Taggles slowly unlocked the gates.

"Some hin," he said; "nice goings hon, I must say. You're to report yourselves to your House-master as soon as you get in, mind."

"Yes, Taggy. I know how sympathetic you feel."

Taggles gave another snort.

"I think I saw Mr. Railton take out a cane, a nice thick one," he said, "which I consider——"

"Don't we stay here to listen to what Taggles considers, or does he want?" asked Monty Lowther in his blandest tones.

"No," said the juniors with one voice.

The key buzzed.

There was a light in Mr. Railton's study, and a shadow on the blind. The juniors knew that shadow. The Head was there.

"My hat!" said Blane. "I'm jolly glad we've got a good excuse this time. There's Dr. Holmes in Railton's den."

"Phew!"

"Yaas."

The juniors entered, and Blake tapped at Mr. Railton's door. As soon as their excuse was, they trembled a little as they entered and faced the stern gaze of the Head and the School House-master stood upon them.

"So you have returned!" said Dr. Holmes severely.

"Yes, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, Doctah Holmes."

"And what is the meaning of this conduct?"

Blake explained.

The Head's face changed as he listened, and so did Mr. Rail-ton's.

"Ah, that alters the case," said the Head.

"Entirely so," said Mr. Railton, pushing away his cane in an irritated sort of way.

"We thought we'd better see Tom Merry home, under the circumstances, sir," said Blake, encouraged.

The Head nodded.

"Quite so," he said. "You are excused. I will give you a note to your House-master, Figgins, and Mr. Ratcliff will over-look the matter. There, you may go. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir!"

And within five minutes the juniors were in bed; and in one minute after that, fast asleep.

CHAPTER 9.

The Quality of Mercy.

"MR. BLANE wishes to see you, Master Merry."

Tom Merry looked sleepily out of bed.

The grey winter dawn was creeping in at the windows of his room, in Mr. Philpot's house in Wayland.

Tom Merry was sleeping later than usual, after staying up the previous night; but it was now only eight o'clock, an early hour for a call.

"Mr. Blane?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir."

"Ask him to come up, please."

"Very good, sir."

Tom Merry jumped out of bed as soon as the door had closed, and threw a coat about himself. He was not the possessor of a dressing-gown in these days. The door re-opened, and Blane came in.

Tom Merry had gone to bed the previous night without considering fully what he was to do in the matter of Blane. It seemed inevitable that he must mention to Mr. Philpot the attack the Wayland winger had made upon him.

He had slept soundly until awakened by the announcement that the winger had come to see him, and so he had had no time to think over the matter.

It was easy enough to guess Blane's motive in calling.

He was sober in the morning, and he realised that he had ruined himself by his drunken folly if Tom Merry chose to speak.

The man was looking very white and worn now. Reckless indulgence in strong liquor overnight had turned him into a ruffian then; it had turned him into a limp rag now. He looked as if he had hardly nerve enough to stand upright.

Tom Merry looked at him, but did not bid him good-morning. He could not bring himself to extend a friendly greeting to a man whom he both disliked and despised.

Blane tried to meet his eyes, but failed.

"I dare say you're surprised to see me," he muttered.

"I'm surprised at your cheek in coming here, after what happened last night," said Tom Merry coldly.

"That's why I've come."

"Why?"

"Because—because I want you to look over it."

"In what way? I don't mean to bring any charge against you, if that is what you mean?"

Blane shook his head.

"No, I didn't think you would do that, Merry."

"What do you want, then?"

"I—I was mad last night," said Blane hoarsely. "I was with some fellows, and they made me drink."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

He had heard that sort of excuse before. It was no excuse.

"I should think a man of your age would know what was good for him," he said.

"Well, I took too much, and some of them chipped me about your playing better than I. Then I met you in a lonely place——"

"And tried to strangle me."

"I didn't mean that—I don't know what I meant—I was too drunk to think," said Blane. "I'm sorry enough for it now."

"You'd be sorrier still if you'd woke up in a prison this morning."

Blane bit his lip.

"Look here," he said. "Will you look over it, and say nothing about the matter, if I promise you that nothing of the kind shall ever occur again?"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Say nothing."

"To Mr. Philpot, you mean?"

"Yes. It would ruin me if he knew," said the winger hoarsely. "He wouldn't let me stay in the team, for one thing, and I'm hoping to work my way on and get taken on by a big club as a professional."

Tom Merry was silent.

He did not want to be hard upon Blane, or upon anybody. But the man had proved himself to be an unscrupulous ruffian, and Tom Merry felt instinctively that he was not to be trusted. And, besides——

"Don't say anything to Mr. Philpot," said Blane. "It would injure me in my prospects in every way if he dropped me. I suppose you know I'm in his employ at the bank?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"You don't want to ruin me, Merry?"

"No," said Tom Merry slowly; "I don't. But it seems to

me that Mr. Philpot is entitled to know the kind of man you are."

"I tell you I was drunk."

"You may get into the same state again."

"I promise——"

Tom Merry made a gesture.

"Don't promise me anything; I don't for a moment believe you'd keep your word, if you are a drunkard."

"Look here——" began Blane fiercely. Then he broke off. He realised that he was not in a position to bluster, but his eyes gleamed with malice as he dropped into a quiet tone. "Sorry. I know I'm in your hands, and you can say what you like."

The lad felt decidedly uncomfortable. Blane had contrived to place him in the position of hectoring one who was at his mercy, a thing Tom Merry would have been the last fellow in the world to do.

Blane saw his advantage, and pressed it.

"You're not the kind of chap to be hard on a man when he's down," he said.

"I hope not."

"Let it pass this time. Nothing of the sort shall ever occur again, I assure you of that. I'm as glad as you are that those leaks came along last night before any harm was done."

"Well, perhaps——"

"Promise not to say anything to Mr. Philpot."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I won't promise," he said. "But I won't say anything to Mr. Philpot so long as you let me alone."

"You might give me some assurance——"

"That's enough assurance. I won't bind myself to keep it secret. But if you let me alone, you've nothing to be afraid of as far as I'm concerned. That's all I can say."

"Thank you for that," said Blane. And he quitted the room. But when the door was closed upon him, his face became dark with rage and spite, and he gritted his teeth.

"The young prig!" he muttered fiercely, as he went downstairs. "So he's going to lord it over me—to hold me at his mercy! If I don't get rid of him——"

Blane pursued that train of thought as he walked away from Mr. Philpot's house, and a deadly determination grew in his scored mind.

Meanwhile Tom Merry, only half satisfied with his concession to the winger, dressed and came down to breakfast.

Mr. and Mrs. Philpot greeted him with their usual cordiality.

"You were in late last night, Tom Merry," Mr. Philpot observed.

"Yes, I stayed a little too long at the school, sir," said Tom Merry. "You told me I might."

Mr. Philpot smiled.

"It's all right, Tom. You feel fit this morning?"

"Fit as a fiddle."

"Very good. I shall come down to see you practise. You told your old captain about your playing against St. Jim's on Saturday?"

"Yes, sir. Kildare is a splendid sportsman. He told me to go ahead."

Mr. Philpot laughed.

"Very good, then."

"It will be a tough match for the Ramblers, sir," Tom Merry observed. "Kildare and his men are splendid players."

"I know it, Tom, but I think the Ramblers have a very good chance," said Mr. Philpot. "By the way, I think Blane came to see you this morning?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"I hope that means that you are getting on better terms. You two ought to be as friendly as possible, as you are together on the right wing."

"I shall try my best, sir."

And Tom Merry felt glad that he had not, after all, mentioned the incident of the previous night to Mr. Philpot. Not that he trusted Blane. But he was agreeably surprised when he came down to practice on the Ramblers' ground that morning, to find that Gerald Blane was in the best of tempers, apparently, and inclined to be very cordial. Friendship it was impossible for Tom Merry to feel for such a fellow, but he was glad enough to accept outwardly the olive branch for the sake of the team. And during that morning's practice, the two wingers pulled very well together.

CHAPTER 10.

A Misunderstanding.

"WHAT about the bwass band?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy propounded the query in Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim's, on Friday evening.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were discussing the morrow's match. Blake had said that in honour of the unique occasion, the juniors ought to cut their own play that afternoon, and watch the senior match.

Digby fully agreed. Herries would doubtless have agreed, but Herries was thinking very deeply about a most important subject to him—a new collar for his bulldog, Towser. So Herries's replies were a little absent-minded.

The Fourth-Formers stared at Arthur Augustus, and then, without replying to his query, continued the discussion.

"I think we'll be better off junior play," said Blake. "After all, Tom Merry is a St. Jim's junior, really, and it's not often we get a chance of seeing a St. Jim's junior play against St. Jim's seniors."

"Quite right," agreed Digby.

"What do you think, Herries?"

"I was thinking of a brass one."

"What!"

"You see, the old one is leather——"

"Eh?"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Now there's Gussy beginning——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"One ass at a time," said Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"My idea is that we get good places to see the senior match," said Blake. "Under the peculiar circumstances of the case——"

"Exactly," said Digby.

"But what about the bwass band?"

"Hey?"

Herries looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with much credulity. He imagined that the swell of St. Jim's was referring to Towser's new collar.

"You think a brass one would be all right?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I was thinking so, too, but the expense——"

"Oh, that's all wight, deah boy."

"I don't know," said Herries, with a shake of his head. "We're not all rolling in money like you, Gussy."

"I wepeat that it's all wight. I've had a fivah fwom my governah this mornin', deah boy, and I shall stand the expense."

Herries stared. As a rule, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was good set against Towser. He accused Towser of having no respect for a fellow's trousers, and he was certainly right. Towser had accounted for a great deal of damaged clothing at St. Jim's.

"You'll stand the exes?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's awful decent of you, Gussy."

"Not at all, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with a gracious air. "Not in the least, Hewwies. I shall be delighted if my fellows are agweeable."

"Well, I don't see that it matters to Blake or Dig," said Herries. "I'm agreeable, as far as that goes, but it will be expensive."

"That is weally all wight."

"It may run into fifteen bob."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"I know about these things, you see."

"My deah Hewwies, impose. It stands to weason that it must cost at least a coupie of pounds for a weal bwass band."

"Blessed if I know what you call it a band for," said Herries. "You call things by such queer names. I suppose a coupie of hand, though, when you come to think of it."

D'Arcy stared at him. Then he adjusted his eyeglass, and stared again. Herries's remark puzzled him very much.

"Weally Hewwies——" he began.

"Anyway, you can get one for fifteen bob," said Herries. "Of course, it won't be entirely brass. That wouldn't be any good."

"I weally do not see why. Stwing bands are more expensive."

"Oh, you're off your rocker," said Herries. "You wouldn't catch me having a string one. What would be the good?"

"Well, it would sound bettah, pewwaps; but, on the other hand, a bwass one would make more noise. And that's exactly what we want on such an occasion."

"Blessed if I can see how a brass one would make more noise unless it happened to fall."

"Eh?"

"But look here, if you want to stand it, Gussy, there's no need to give so much as all that. Fifteen bob will be ripping."

"It couldn't be done at the pwice, Hewwies."

Blake and Digby listened, grinning. They fully understood that D'Arcy and Herries were driving at different things, and it had not yet dawned upon Herries or D'Arcy.

"I say it could," said Herries, "I know."

"Wats, deah boy! Besides, I'm goin' to stand it."

"I'll come with you to buy it, then," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"I don't want you to be done,"

"I weally do not undahstand what you mean about buying the bwass band, Hewwies. I am thinkin' of havin' it for the mowwow, that is all."

"What? Only for to-morrow!"

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose we don't want such a thing permanently," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a very superior tone.

"THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S." A Grand New School Tale, by Charles Hamilton, is in the "EMPIRE" Library this week. Price One Halfpenny.

"I jolly well do want it permanently. I'm blessed if I understand you at all, D'Arcy!" said Herries irritably.

"I wwust I make myself plain," said D'Arcy. "As for your desiah to have a bwass band permanently, Howwies, I wegard it as ridiculous. I suppose you wouldn't pwopose to keep it in the stable?"

"Of course no. I should keep it in Towser's kennel."

"What!"

"Towser, of course."

"Oh Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake and Digby.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon them.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm utterly to see any weason for wibald laughtah. I wegard Howwies as an ass. I suppose there is some wotten joke in the wattah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bosh! I see any joke," said Herries. "If you think it's right to propose to buy a brass collar for Towser, and then to pretend to hire it for one day only, I can only say that I don't understand that kind of joke."

"What did you say, Howwies?"

"I asked Herries pleasantly.

"Certainly not. You weferred to a collah for Towsah. I imagine that Towsah was bein' discussed. I should be glad to know whethah you are wight off your silly wockah.

"Bosh!

"Bosh of all the chumps——"

"Really, Howwies——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake and Digby.

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys. I wegard Howwies as an ass. I was talkin' about a bwass band——"

"Bosh for Towser."

"Towsah!"

"Yes, Towser, fathead! What on earth is the use of a brass collar unless it's for Towser?" demanded Herries, getting quite excited. "I suppose you're not thinking of wearing one?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Howwies, I wegard you as a chump. I was talkin' about a bwass band, and I was not talkin' about a brass collah."

"Same thing. I don't mind your calling it a band, so long as Towser and looks all right. That's the chief thing."

"Bosh ass!"

"Fwabjous chump!"

"I wefuse to be called a fwabjous chump. I was talkin' about a bwass band——"

"Guess that."

"I was a musical band—a German band!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

Herries glared at him.

"Well, you utter ass!" he exclaimed. "What would be the use of a German band to Towser?"

Blake and Digby shrieked. It was difficult for Herries to get it off Towser.

"I wasn't speakin' of Towsah!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I was speakin' of a bwass band to play a triumphal march when Tom Mewwy comes to-mowwow."

Herries snorted.

"Well, fancy wasting a fellow's time talking that rot!" he shouted. "I was talking about Towser."

"I was talking about Tom Mewwy, you ass!"

"The question is, whether I shall get Towser a brass collar or——"

"Bosh!"

"Look here, D'Arcy——"

"The question is, whethah we shall get a bwass band for Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys. I was quite willin' to stand the cash to stand a bwass band for the occasion."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you fellows would be sewious. I don't care if the band comes to a couple of pounds, I can stand it."

"Ha, ha! We couldn't stand a German band at any price!"

yelled Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"German bands are off."

"I wegard it as a good ideah."

"Ha, ha, ha! Bury it."

"I put it to the vote," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Those who are in favah of a bwass band to gweet Tom Mewwy kindly signify the same in the usual mannah."

And the juniors did. They shouted:

"Bah!"

"I wegard you as a set of asses," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall go along and pwopose it to Mannahs and Lowthah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus quitted the study, with his nose very high in the air, to propose his ripping idea to the Shell fellows. It was about five minutes later that he came back.

There was dust on his jacket, and a smudge on his face.

"Well?" shrieked Blake. "What did the Shell fish think of the wheeze?"

"I wefuse to discuss the uttahly wude and ungentlemanly conduct of those wude bounduhs," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

And the chums of the Fourth yelled again. Nothing more was heard on the subject of the brass band.

CHAPTER 11.

A Villain's Deed!

SATURDAY morning was bright and clear, and the Wayland Ramblers turned out for an hour's practice—such of them, at all events, as could leave their occupations. Half the team were employed in Mr. Philpot's bank, and the genial manager always arranged for them to have the time necessary for practice. There were eight of the team on the Ramblers' ground, and half a dozen other members, who were playing to give the first team practice. A match of seven aside had been arranged.

Tom Merry looked very fit as he came down to the ground with Mr. Philpot. He was feeling very well indeed, and his eyes were sparkling at the prospect of a good hard match in the afternoon. It was an honour to be wanted to play against fellows like Kildare and Darrel of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's.

Mr. Philpot glanced at him with a smile.

"You are feeling quite in form?" he said.

"Quite, sir."

"You look like the war-horse in the story, snuffing the battle from afar," the banker said, with a laugh.

Tom Merry laughed and coloured.

"Well, I'm looking forward to the match, sir," he replied.

"Quite right, my lad; that's the proper spirit. I'm glad to see, too, that you are on so much better terms with Blane lately. Cut in and change."

Tom Merry went into the dressing-rooms.

He was on the ground a little later than the rest of them, and he had the room to himself while he changed. It did not take him many minutes.

He ran out into the field in the red shirt and white knickers of the Ramblers, looking very fit and very handsome. He glanced over the players. Blane had not yet arrived. Tom Merry did not know whether he was expected.

There were a few dozen people in the field, who had come to see the practice, and many more intended to follow the Ramblers over to St. Jim's in the afternoon to see the match there. The Ramblers were very popular in Wayland.

Among the crowd were several faces Tom Merry knew, and one extremely aristocratic visage decorated with an eyeglass, met his eyes first.

"Gussy, by George!"

Tom Merry ran across to see his chum.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his silk hat cheerfully.

"Jolly glad to see you," said Tom Merry as he shook hands with the swell of St. Jim's. "But how did you get here?"

"Came by twain, deah boy."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I mean, have you got leave? Lessons aren't over yet at St. Jim's."

"Mr. Lathom gave me leave, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Wathah decent little chap, old Lathom. I explained to him that I wanted to see you on a most important match, and he let me come."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "But what's the most important matter?"

"I've a letter fwom Cousin Ethel!"

"Good!"

"She'll be down to see the match this afternoon."

"Jolly good!" said Tom Merry heartily.

"I thought you'd be glad to see her," said D'Arcy. "She'll be glad to see you, too. Cousin Ethel is a wippin' gal."

"You're right, she is."

"What is that chap waggin' his fingah at you for, deah boy?"

Tom Merry glanced round. Yorke, the Wayland captain, was signing to him that he was wanted. Tom Merry grinned.

"That's my skipper," he said. "They're ready for me. I must be off."

"Very well, I'll stay and watch you, deah boy."

"Come round to the dressing-room presently, and wait for me to come off," said Tom Merry. "You can come in there. We're not playing a full match, you know; this is only a short practice with seven a side."

"Vewy good!"

Tom Merry ran off to join the players. Yorke was frowning a little, and Tom Merry thought at first that the frown was for him. But he was mistaken.

"Blane hasn't come yet," said Yorke. "He has leave from

NEXT THURSDAY "MR. MERRY." A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of The Chums of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford.

the bank, too. He ought to be here. We shall play without him." And the rules lined up.

They were soon playing very merrily. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy watched them from the ropes. The grass was cold to the feet, and D'Arcy soon remembered Tom Merry's invitation to wait for him in the dressing-room. He strolled away in the direction of the building.

Gerald Blane came in at the gates, and looked round the field. He knew he was late, and he expected some strong remarks from Yorke. As he glanced at the players, he saw the ball fly into the net, in spite of the utmost efforts of the goalie, and Yorke clapped Tom Merry on the shoulders.

"Bravo, my lad!" he exclaimed. "That was a ripping goal."

Blane scowled darkly to himself.

It was his fate, the jealous winger thought, to arrive on the scene just in time to see Tom Merry score, and to hear him praised by his captain.

He swung into the dressing-room with a scowl upon his face. He was alone there; the other players had not even seen him arrive. Blane took his cap off, and looked round for a nail to hang it upon. Then a sudden gleam shot into his eyes.

Tom Merry's coat was hanging close to him, and next to it was Yorke's. From the latter came a clink as Blane touched it.

"My hat!" muttered Blane.

His eyes were burning.

The opportunity he had longed for had come at last, and thrust itself into his hands, as it were, without his seeking it.

He gave a quick glance towards the door; he was alone. The voices of the players could be heard in the field, that was all. No one was likely to come in to the dressing-room.

Blane ran his hand through Yorke's coat pockets. From an inner pocket he drew the money he had heard to clink. Yorke, in changing his clothes had shipped his money and his watch and chain into the inside breast pocket of his coat, and then hung the latter up.

He had not expected the coat to be disturbed, of course.

Blane drew the watch and chain, and three sovereigns, from the pocket. He thrust them into the inside pocket of Tom Merry's jacket.

His face was white, and his hand trembled, as he did so.

A footstep at the door startled him.

His heart leaped to his mouth; his brain almost swam with terror. If one of the fellows had seen him——!

It was a youth in an elegant coat, a silk hat, and an eyeglass, who presented himself to Blane's view.

Blane drew a deep, quick breath. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a stranger to him, and he only thought that some impertinent investigator had penetrated into the place without leave.

D'Arcy had seen Blane draw his hand from Tom Merry's jacket. He would have thought nothing of the action, but for Blane's pallid, guilty look, and the spasm of terror that flashed across his face.

Then, in spite of himself—for D'Arcy's was the most unsuspicious nature in the world—a gleam of suspicion shone in his eyes.

But he had no time to speak.

Blane sprang towards him angrily.

"How dare you come in here?" he exclaimed.

"Wally——"

"Get out!"

"That is not the way to address me," said the swell of St. Jim's, with dignity. "I will thank you to be more civil."

"Strangers are not allowed here," said Blane, a little more quietly. "You must go outside."

"But——"

"Come now, outside. I tell you you can't stay in here."

"I should wefuse to stay with a person of such extwemely wude mannahs, in any case," said the swell of St. Jim's, with a great deal of dignity.

And he turned on his heel, and walked away. Blane pressed his hands to his temples, which were throbbing wildly.

"Thank my good luck it was a stranger," he muttered. "If it had been Yorke, or one of the fellows——"

He dared not follow out that reflection. But he felt that all was safe now. He changed his clothes, and ran out to join the players.

CHAPTER 12.
Black Suspicion.

YORKE slipped his arm through Tom Merry's as they came back towards the stand. The Wayland captain was looking very gratified and cordial. He liked Tom Merry—there were few persons Tom Merry met who did not like him—but that was not all. Tom Merry had been playing up splendidly, and, in spite of his youth, Yorke knew that he was one of the most valuable members of the team. What he lacked in weight, in playing against older opponents, he made up by his wonderful pace, and his great agility and quickness in close play. He would dribble the ball fairly round the feet of an opponent, and in trapping it from an opposing forward or back, there was no one in the Ramblers' team to beat him.

"My hat," said Yorke, "I wish you were staying with us for good, Merry. Mr. Philpot wants us to enter for the Cup next season, and I'm blessed if I wouldn't play you every time, even if we had to meet teams like Tottenham, or Newcastle United, or Manchester."

Tom Merry coloured with pleasure.

"You're very good to say so," he replied.

"It's the truth!"

They entered the dressing-room.

Tom Merry changed his clothes, after a good rub down. He was rather surprised at not finding D'Arcy waiting for him in the dressing-room. He expected the swell of St. Jim's to come in at any moment, however.

He put on his coat, naturally enough, without noticing that anything had been placed in his pocket. He would never have dreamed of such an occurrence, unless he had seen it with his own eyes.

Yorke felt for his watch and chain to put them on in the usual place, after he had donned his waistcoat.

He looked surprised.

There was nothing in the pocket into which he had put the watch and several coins.

Thinking that he might have made a mistake, he examined the Ramblers felt in the other pockets.

But neither watch nor money was to be found.

The expression upon Yorke's face had attracted attention this time, and several of the fellows were looking at him.

"Anything wrong, Yorke?" asked Carter.

"It's a joke, I suppose," said the Wayland skipper. "I must say I don't see any fun in such jokes, myself.

"Anything wrong with your togs?" grinned Carter. "A practical joking rotter pinned up the sleeves of my jacket to-day in the dressing-room."

"Well, that was idiotic; but this is worse."

"What's happened?"

"Who's got my watch?"

"Your watch?"

"Yes."

"You don't mean to say you've lost your watch?" said Williams, the goalie.

"No, I haven't lost it—somebody's taken it—from my pocket," said Yorke. "I'll thank him to hand it over."

There was a general silence.

Yorke looked round at the grave faces. Some of the Ramblers were looking very uncomfortable.

"Hang it!" said Carter, uneasily. "I don't like this sort of joke, any more than you do, Yorke. It's silly to meddle with other people's valuables."

"Rotten!" said Blane.

"Well, whoever's got it, hand it over, and we'll say no more about it," said Yorke.

No one replied.

Yorke grew red in the face.

"Will you own up?" he asked, addressing no one in particular.

Nobody seemed to know anything about it," and Yorke, after a long and uncomfortable pause.

"That's not!" Whoever took it out of my pocket must have seen it."

"Who was it?" asked Carter, looking round.

Silence again.

"Sure you haven't got it in the wrong pocket?" said Brown, the centre-forward of the Ramblers, after a long pause.

"I know I haven't!"

"Have you searched?"

"Yes."

"Sure you brought it here this morning?"

"Quite sure."

"Sure; I saw Yorke take it off before we went on the field," said Maguire, the outside left, a burly, handsome lad. "I remember asking him the time."

"I remember," said Yorke. "I had it drop out of my waistcoat pocket once, and it broke the glass, and I remember I shove it into my coat pocket for safety."

"Not very safe this time, it seems," said Blane.

"Well, I suppose somebody's taken it for a joke."

"Rotten kind of joke, I think."

"So do I, rather," said Carter.

"Come, don't let's be jawing about it when Mr. Philpot comes in," said Yorke. "Hand it over, the chap who took it!"

No reply!

"Well, if the chap won't own up, I think he's a fearful fool!" said Yorke. "I suppose it's hidden about the room somewhere. Will you fellows help me to look for it?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

And the footballers, half-dressed as they were, searched for the missing watch high and low, but no trace of it was discovered.

Yorke stopped at last, with a very red and angry face.

"THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S." A Grand New School Tale, by Charles Hamilton, is in the "EMPIRE" Library this week. Price One Halfpenny.

k here, this has gone far enough," he said. "We shall
t of fools if Mr. Philpot finds us at this, like a set of
schoolboys. Where's my watch?"
celess knows."
" said Yorke with deliberation, "when a chap takes
ut of another chap's pocket, I think he's several sorts
ol, if he does it for a joke. But if he doesn't own up
back, there's only one conclusion to be drawn—that
to keep it."

ve no room for a thief in Wayland Ramblers," said
in cutting tones. "I give the fool-idiot one minute
back my watch, or tell me where it is."
dence in the dressing-room.
than a minute elapsed. But no one had spoken.
well," said Yorke, compressing his lips, "I take it
ever has taken my watch, means to keep it!"

s nothing else to think." Yorke stood near the door.
ly one thing to be done."
at's that?"
tively here to turn out his pockets."
ng," said Carter, growing very red. "That's rotten,

r or send for a policeman."
heavens! We don't want to make Wayland Ramblers
the town!" exclaimed Williams.
turn out our pockets," said Blane. "Unless the
found, there will be a rotten suspicion attaching to
me I us."
and you're right!"
e three sovereigns with the watch and chain," said
they're all gone together. Now, then."
momentary hesitation, Williams started by turning
ckets. He drew every pocket inside out.
ers followed his example slowly.
and you needn't trouble, lad," said Maguire to Tom
an Frinsman's natural courtesy to a guest, for that
Tom Merry really was in the Ramblers' dressing-
ing a regular member of the team.
er do as the others do," said Tom Merry.
it all, what's right for one is right for another!"
. "Let Merry turn out his pockets like the rest."
ing it!" said Tom Merry quietly.
suddenly paled.
had gone into his breast pocket inside, and it had
ing there which he knew had not been there when
his pocket off before play.
watch.
ch seemed to freeze him. He stood almost petrified,
ame and startled. Blane was watching him like a

r pockets, Merry!" he cried.
alone, Blane!" exclaimed Yorke angrily. "Of
will turn out all his pockets. Why should he object?"
druggist his shoulders.
this is a trick," said Tom Merry, in a forced, un-
ice. "There—there is a watch and chain in my

Merry, with a trembling hand, drew out the watch and
and laid them down. Then he groped in the pocket
and laid the three sovereigns beside the watch. There
tless silence. A pin might have been heard to drop
room-room.

CHAPTER 13.

The Shadow of Guilt.

MERRY was white as death.
None of the footballers spoke, but Tom Merry knew
their expressions meant.
ed white and silent.
ke broke the deadly stillness at last. The Wayland
voice was a little shaken as he spoke.
What does that mean, Merry?"
don't know."
don't—know!"
Blane sneered. The other footballers exchanged
glances. Yorke scanned Tom Merry's face hard.
Tom Merry! That is my watch!"
know it is."
money is mine."
know."
How did it come to be in your pocket?"
don't know."
Merry!"
say I don't know. I didn't put it there."
ke compressed his lips.

"Look here, Merry, if you own up that you did it for a joke——"
"I did not do it for a joke!" Tom Merry was recovering a little, though the discovery of the watch in his pocket had seemed to freeze his blood for a moment. "I did not do it at all. I had no idea the watch was in my pocket."
"Then how did it come there?"
"It must have been placed there."
"My dear lad——"
"Don't you believe me?"
Yorke was silent.
Tom Merry looked round wildly at the accusing faces.
It was easy to see what conclusion the footballers had drawn. Indeed, was it possible for them to draw any other conclusion?
If the junior had taken the watch for a foolish joke, he would have owned up. That any one in the Ramblers' team could have been wicked enough to put it into his pocket to incriminate him seemed beyond belief.
They all knew Tom Merry's circumstances; that he had been rich, and that he had become poor; had had to leave his old school to face the world, and that he had little, if any, money to stand between him and want.
"You don't believe me?" said Tom Merry huskily.
Silence!
"Bai Jove, that's vewy kind of you, sir," said a voice outside.
"I weally want to see Tom Mewwy, you know. He's an awful old fwiend of mine. I don't mean he's awful, you know, I mean he's an awfully old fwiend; that is to say, I've known him an awfly long time, you know."
It was D'Arcy's voice. He was coming in with Mr. Philpot. Tom Merry recognised the tones, and he shivered. He did not want D'Arcy to come in and see him accused of theft. But he could not stop it now.
"I say," said Blane, looking round. "We all know how hard up Merry is, and I think Yorke might look over this. Merry can get away, and nothing more need be said about the matter. After all, Yorke's got his money back, and we don't want to disgrace the Ramblers in public."
"Right," said Carter.
And Yorke nodded.
"Goodness knows I don't want to be hard on the kid," he said. "I'll only say I'm horribly disappointed in him. I——"
"I am not a thief!" said Tom Merry in a hard, clear voice.
"That watch was put into my pocket by somebody."
"What's that?" exclaimed Mr. Philpot, looking in at the door. "What's that, Merry? What is the matter here?"
And Mr. Philpot came in, looking very anxious and alarmed.
He had heard Tom Merry's words, and they were enough to alarm him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had heard them, too. He crossed over quickly to Tom Merry.
"What's the matter, deah boy?" he asked.
Tom Merry was silent.
"Sowwy I wasn't here before," went on Arthur Augustus. "I came in, but a chap turned me out, so I waited till I could see Mr. Philpot."
Blane drew back behind some of the other fellows.
A deadly fear had gripped at his heart at the sight of D'Arcy. He had not known before that the elegant junior was a friend of Tom Merry's, or that he had visited the dressing-room to see the young winger.
He remembered the suspicious attitude he had been in when D'Arcy saw him on that occasion, and he feared to meet the junior's glance.
Mr. Philpot was looking from one to another of the players.
"What has happened?" he asked. "Please explain, Yorke."
"It's rotten enough, sir," said the Wayland captain reluctantly. "Somebody took my watch from my coat, and it was found in Tom Merry's pocket."
"Bai Jove!"
"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Philpot. "Can you explain, Tom Merry? It would be very hard for me to believe that you were a thief."
"Thank you, sir," said Tom Merry, with a grateful look at the Wayland manager. "But I can't explain. I can only say that the watch must have been put in my pocket."
"Good heavens!" said the manager again.
"Bai Jove!"
"I hung my jacket near Yorke's coat," said Tom Merry. "I didn't even know Yorke had his watch in his pocket. I am not a thief. Somebody has changed the watch into my pocket, for a horrible joke, I suppose."
"Can you suggest anybody?"
Tom Merry hesitated.
"I'm on good terms with everybody here excepting Blane," he said. "And I don't like to suggest that Blane would do such a villainous thing."
The manager looked round for Blane.
"Is Blane here?"
"Yes, sir," said Blane, coming forward unwillingly enough:

and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye glinted behind his eyeglass.

"Do you know anything about this, Blane?"

"Nothing more than the others."

"I believe you haveb een on better terms with Merry lately!"

"Yes, sir," said Blane, with an appearance of great frankness. "Merry did me an act of kindness the other day, and I told him then that I was grateful, and that I should prove it."

"Blane said that, Merry?"

"Yes, or something like it," Tom Merry confessed.

"Of course, someone may have slipped into the dressing-room and played this trick," said Mr. Philpot slowly.

The suggestion was received in silence. No one regarded such a theory as being in the smallest degree probable.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass very tightly into his eye, and gave Blane a look that made the winger simply shrink.

D'Arcy might have a simplicity of character in many ways; but he was no fool, and he knew how to put two and two together and make a total of four.

"May I be allowed to speak, sir?" he said.

"Certainly," said Mr. Philpot. "I do not see what you can know about the matter, however."

"I came in here while the men were playin', sir."

The manager started.

"You played that trick?" he exclaimed.

"No sir! I was ordahed out by a chap here, who wefused to listen to me," said Arthur Augustus. "I believe I have alweady mentioned that circumstance to you, my deah sir."

"Yes, yes."

"The chap who ordahed me out was this chap," said Arthur Augustus, taking off his eyeglass, and indicating Gerald Blane with it. "He was alone here. I wegarded his mannahs vewy waste, and in fact quite caddish."

Blane moved his lips, but did not speak.

"When I looked in," went on D'Arcy, replacing his monocle, and speaking with a leisurely ease which was somewhat exasperating under the circumstances, "that chap—I must call him a chap, as it would be a misuse of words to refer to him as a gentleman—that chap was fumblin' among the coats——"

"Ah!"

"He had his hand in the inside pocket of a jacket," said D'Arcy. "I wegarded it as wathah cuwious, at the time. But as it was not my bizney, I took no notice of it. But now that I see Tom Mewwy dwessed, I wecognise it as his jacket. That person had his hand in the pocket of Tom Mewwy's jacket. Pewwaps he will be kind enough to explain what he was doin'."

Blane was white as death.

"It's a lie," he said huskily.

Mr. Philpot looked round.

"Blane was alone here for a time, I believe?" he said.

"Yes," said Yorke. "He came late."

"Then he had time and opportunity to do as stated?"

"Certainly."

"What have you to say, Blane?"

Blane felt his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth. Bold, brazen effrontery might have afforded him a chance even then. But he had not nerve enough to meet the eyes of the crowd of footballers. He knew that his face was white, and he could not help his knees trembling. D'Arcy's statement carried truth on the face of it. What use was a wretched lie against the patent truth?

"It's—it's false, sir," he muttered thickly. "It's—it's a tale got up between the two of them."

"That is nonsense," said Mr. Philpot coldly. "Tom Merry and D'Arcy have not seen each other, excepting here and now, since the game. You should think of a better story than that, Blane."

"I—I——"

"Keep that man here," said Mr. Philpot, "while I telephone to the police-station."

He moved towards the door.

But at the threat, what little courage Blane possessed deserted him, and he broke down.

"Stop, sir!" he gasped in a strangled voice. "I—I—I did it! Don't be hard on me! It was a—a joke!"

Mr. Philpot regarded him sternly.

"You confess, Blane?"

"Yes," muttered the miserable plotter.

"Tell me the truth! You did this for revenge upon Tom Merry—you wanted to brand him as a thief?"

A lie trembled upon Blane's lips, but he did not venture to utter it. His head drooped low under the scornful looks that were cast upon him from all sides.

"Yes," he muttered.

"You hound!" said Yorke.

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Mr. Philpot stepped aside from the door.

"Get out!" he said. "Don't show yourself here again, or at the bank, either. We don't want a coward and a scheming scoundrel in Wayland Ramblers. Get out!"

Blane staggered to the door, and went without a word. Words could not have been of much use to him now. His cowardly plot had recoiled upon his own head, and he was a marked and ruined man.

Mr. Philpot turned to Tom Merry and held out his hand.

"I ask your pardon," he said. "If I doubted you for a moment it was because that scoundrel had laid his plans so carefully. I am shocked and very much pained that you should have been treated like this in the Ramblers' quarters, Merry. I hope you'll do your best to look over it."

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as vewy handsome, Tom Mewwy—quite the wight and pwopah thing, you know."

Tom Merry smiled, a little tremulously.

"It's all right, sir," he said.

"We're all sorry," said Yorke.

"It's all right."

"Yaas, wathah! Jollay lucky for you, deah boy, that I happened to be awound, though," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "I believe I generally turn up in the wight place at the wight moment, you know."

"So you do, Cussy, old son. You're a brick."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, Tom Mewwy, undah the circs. I weally consida that you are wight in wegardin' me as a bwick!" he agreed.

CHAPTER 14.

The Ramblers at St. Jim's.

TOM MERRY had been cleared, and the Wayland footballers were only too anxious to do anything they could to remove the impression of the unpleasant incident from his mind. He had never been so popular with them—not even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in for a share of attention.

Gerald Blane had gone at once. He would never be seen on the Ramblers' ground again, and he was not likely to remain in Wayland at all. He was ruined there, and the punishment he had certainly been heavy, though no heavier than he richly deserved.

But the Wayland captain had to find a new outside right at a few hours' notice. He selected a winger with care from

The Editor has a Special Message for you.—See page 28.

reserves, and although the new man was not quite up to the form, there was no doubt that he would get on better with the inside right, and that was a gain.

Upon the whole, Yorke was not dissatisfied with the change. Blane had been a good player when he chose, but always uncertain, especially as regards temper.

And Tom Merry, having shown his quality as a winger, the Wayland captain realised that what was chiefly wanted was an outside who would co-operate heartily with the young forward which Blane never would have done.

Mr. Philpot asked D'Arcy home to lunch with him, an invitation which the swell of St. Jim's readily accepted, and the junior made a very favourable impression upon Mrs. Philpot.

"I'll come ovah to St. Jim's with you in the bwake, deah boy," D'Arcy remarked, at lunch. "I twathah like your missis, Philpot."

"They would be very flattered," said the banker, with a smile.

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I am wathah good as a judge of chawactah," replied D'Arcy innocently. "I fail to see why you are gwinning, Tom Mewwy. By the way, I had an invitation fwom Gussy to gwace you when you came to St. Jim's. The fellows wefused to back me up."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Wats, deah boy. Howevah, the ideah has been carried out for the pwesent, but I shall pewwaps wevive it when I come to us anothah visit."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked with Tom Merry and Manners ground to meet the brake which was to take the footballers on to the gates of St. Jim's.

There was room for him in the brake, and he took a seat beside Tom Merry, the Wayland footballers receiving him amongst them with great good-humour.

D'Arcy was kind enough to give Yorke a good many hints about playing the game during the drive over to the school, all of which the Wayland captain received with smiling humour, and the swell of St. Jim's was in the middle of an exposition of the offside rule when they reached their journey's end.

A crowd of juniors met the brake at the gates, and among them was a graceful figure which Tom Merry knew at once.

He raised his cap to Cousin Ethel.



The juniors looked more closely at the winger in the red shirt, the fellow whom Figgins had judged at a distance not to be over fifteen. He was closer now, and they could see his face clearly. A simultaneous exclamation burst from all the juniors. "Tom Merry!" (See page 3.)

"There's Cousin Ethel wavin' her hand to me!" Arthur Augustus. "Let's jump down heah, deah

Merry glanced at Mr. Philpot. The manager smiled

down by all means, Tom," he said.

juniors jumped off the brake.

Merry shook hands with Cousin Ethel warmly. Figgins after her, a duty that Figgins performed with a of pleasure.

glad to see you," Tom Merry exclaimed. "It's have you watching a match again, Cousin Ethel."

olly to see you play," said Ethel with a smile, "though wasn't, instead of for St. Jim's."

against St. Jim's seniors," said Blake cheerfully. really doesn't count, when you come to think of it. Now been against St. Jim's juniors——"

wathah, that would have made a gweat deal of

Ethel laughed.

a matchah of fact," went on Arthur Augustus seriously, gard this as a match between juniahs and seniahs—'s team on one side, and Tom Mewwy's on the othah. land chaps can be wegarded as backin' up Tom Mewwy against the seniahs. That is weally the pwopah way to look at it."

"Yorke would be flattered," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Well, that's how I wegard it."

Cousin Ethel and the juniors walked with Tom Merry to the pavilion, where the hero of the Shell went into the dressing-room assigned to the Wayfarers. Kildare met him as he went in, and greeted him with a kind smile.

The kick-off was timed early, and there was not much time to cut to waste. The St. Jim's fellows were already crowding round the ground.

Blake's advice, to throw up junior play for the occasion and watch the senior match instead had been taken by all the lower school, of both Houses.

Both Houses were represented in the senior team, six School House and five New House fellows wearing the colours of St. Jim's.

They looked a very fine team, too, especially Kildare and Darrel of the School House, and Monteith, the head prefect of the New House.

The St. Jim's fellows were on the ground first, and the growing crowd greeted them with a cheer.

They looked very fit indeed.

Younger than the Ramblers, as a team, they had the advantage

of more continual practice, and they were certainly quite as fast, if not so heavy.

Blake & Co. were standing in a group close up to the ropes, having won the position by the free use of knees and elbows.

A crowd of New House fellows had been there, but they had been ousted, and Blake and Digby and D'Arcy, and Lowther and Manners and Kangaroo, and half a dozen other School House juniors, stood in a compact group.

"Stick here," said Blake. "A lot of people are coming over from Wayland, and there will be a crush."

"What-ho!" said Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"These New House chaps are growling," observed Herries. "They seem to think they have some sort of a right to be here."

"They were here first," D'Arcy remarked.

The other fellows glared at him.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Isn't the School House cock-house of St. Jim's?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Isn't it our bounden duty to put the New House fellows in their place on every possible and impossible occasion?"

"Yaas, certainly."

"But we've just put them out of their place," suggested Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny."

"Yaas, weally, Lowthah, I don't think you ought to be funny at a time like this. You see, deah boy——"

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Here, out of it, you School House kids!"

It was the great Figgins.

The dispossessed New House fellows had called in the aid of their chief. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn came up, looking very business-like, with a crowd of New House fellows at their heels.

"Out of it!"

"Clear!"

"Buzz off!"

"Shoulder to shoulder," said Blake. "If these New House bounders are going to kick up a row on the footer ground on an occasion like this, it's our duty to put it down."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Look here——" roared Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins, I am surpwised at you. The Wanglers may come on the gwound at any moment, and surely you do not wish them to see us wowin'."

"Clear out, then."

"I decline to clear out."

"All the other front places are taken," said Kerr. "Half the blessed country seems to have come in to see this match. Pratt was keeping open a place for us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now then, are you going?"

"Rather not."

"Wats, deah boy!"

"Rush them!" roared Figgins.

"Hurray!"

The New House juniors made a rush all together.

Jack Blake and his chums met it sturdily, but the force of the rush sent them against the ropes, and some of them rolled underneath upon the playing-field.

There was a shout from a linesman.

"Off there, you juniors! Do you hear?"

"Order there!" shouted the prefects.

"Bai Jove!"

The linesman ran up, and began booting all the juniors within reach in a really broad and impartial way.

They scrambled out again under or over the rope in a remarkably rapid manner. New House and School House were mixed up now indiscriminately. The linesman, who was a New House prefect, eyed them with a glare.

"Any more row here, and I'll have you all turned off the field," he exclaimed. "Bear that in mind, now."

"Weally, Evans——"

"Shut up!"

And the linesman walked away.

"Keep quiet, you chaps," said Figgins, who had secured a front place, and he grinned at Blake, who was beside him. "It's all right. Order!"

"I can't see anything, said Pratt.

"It's all right," said Lowther, who was also in the front, "you keep your eyes on me, Pratt, and cheer when I do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Pratt. "I—here, come on, French, there's a place lower down."

And Pratt and French ran off.

Well placed or not, the juniors had to keep order, and there was little more disputing in the ranks. The St. Jim's seniors were punting the ball about, keeping themselves warm. And now the Wayland Ramblers appeared in sight. They were in red shirts, and the Saints, in courtesy to their visitors, had changed their own red shirts for blue. St. Jim's were in the habit of playing in red.

There was a shout as Tom Merry ran out into the ground with the rest.

"Tom Merry!"

"Here he is!"

"Give him a cheer!"

"Bwavo!"

"Hurray! Hip-hip-hurray!"

The cheer rang over the ground, and it brought a flush of pleasure to Tom Merry's cheeks. There was no doubt that the Saints were glad to see him, and that they liked him when he was, though on this occasion he had appeared on the opposing ground to play against St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 15.

The Match!

KILDARE won the toss, and gave his opponents the choice to play against.

"Good for the start," commented Blake. "There's plenty of wind."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There seems to be blowin' wewy strongly. I weally cannot keep my hat on stwaight."

As a matter of fact, Lowther, who was slightly bald on the crown, was finding his hat over with a hand nearly every few minutes, and D'Arcy, who attributed it to the wind, put it straight again every time with great patience, unconscious of the reason for the grinning that was going around him.

Wayland Ramblers kicked off against the wind. It was somewhat keen, though by no means so strong as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy imagined.

The kick-off was followed immediately by sharp and fast play.

Both sides were very keen, and in good condition.

Wayland Ramblers tried their usual tactics, of heavy rushes and short passing, but they found the Saints quite up to the mark.

Baker, of the New House, in goal, was in splendid form, and he saved several times in the first ten minutes of the game.

Jack Blake gave Arthur Augustus a slap on the shoulder to express his satisfaction.

"Jolly good game!" he exclaimed.

"Ow!"

"What's the matter now?"

"I weally wish you would not thump me in that beastly way. You thwow me into a fluttah, and there is dangah of wuinin my coat."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Blake——!"

"There goes Tom Merry!"

"Bai Jove!"

All eyes were turned upon the St. Jim's junior who was playing in the ranks of the visiting team.

Tom Merry had received the ball from his outside, and as there was no opportunity to centre to Brown, he was going on with it. Brown, at centre, was well marked, but the St. Jim's senior made the mistake of paying less attention to the junior. Tom Merry beat the halves easily.

Blake's eyes blazed with excitement.

"Watch him—he's through!"

And he was through!

The backs were beaten, and only Baker in goal stood between the junior and a score. Baker was watching like a cat. Tom Merry was one too many for him. He feinted to kick in the middle, and suddenly changed his foot and sent the ball rolling into the far corner of the net.

Baker clutched wildly after it a second too late.

There was a deafening roar.

"Goal!"

"My hat! Goal!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hurrah!"

The cheers were deafening.

The Ramblers' backers, of whom there were some hundreds on the ground, were stentorian in their efforts. But the juniors joined in heartily. Tom Merry's score was a popular one with them, they all felt that, and School House and New House united to give him an ovation.

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Hurrah!"

"Goal! Goal! Hurrah!"

Baker looked a little sheepish as he tossed the ball out. He did not wholly like being beaten by a Shell fellow.

Yorke's eyes gleamed as he walked back to the centre of the field.

He slapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

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for you, kid," he exclaimed. "I knew you would do
, but I never expected the first goal of the game from you!
Merry's face flushed with pleasure.
"There was a lot of luck in it," he said.
laughed.
"There is in pretty nearly every goal," he said. "It was
, and it was ripping," said Maguire. "He's a broth
entirely. We shall beat St. Jim's."
lined up again.
had heartened the Ramblers very much, though
they would have preferred one of the Wayland men to
it. But a goal was a goal, so long as it counted
did not look much disturbed. His men were in good
and he reflected that one swallow did not make a summer.
Saints played up again well.
fully held their own now, and the tussling was more in the
half than in the St. Jim's territory.
St. Jim's did not score.
minutes ticked off, and the time for the interval drew
nearer, and the score remained unchanged, one to
"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "They want waking
now, deah boys. I say, you know, play up there!"
Saints!"
"Look lively!"
"Look how the wind's blowin'," said D'Arcy, putting
it right again. "That is about the tenth time my
has toppled ovah, you know."
"Ha, ha!"
"I do not see any cause for mewwiment, Blake, in the
the wind is blowing my toppah ovah!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Hewwicks——"
"Ha, ha!"
"Was one of you chaps might like to wun up to the house
me a cap, and then one of you could wun in with the
suggested D'Arcy.
"Good!" said Manners.
"Manners——!"
"Why can't you go yourself?" demanded Figgins.
"I should miss the game, deah boy."
"Bosh, Kildare!" roared Lefevre of the Fifth. "Go it!
Here, man! That's what I say! Go it, Kildare!"
"Look!" exclaimed Blake.
Saints were massed round the Ramblers' goal now.
Washer was pelting in, and Williams had all his work cut
The third shot came from Kildare, and it shot past
and lodged in the net.
Saints roared!
"Goal! goal!"
"Hurrah!"
"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "That was wippin'!
have kicked a bettah goal than that myself, you know."
"Speakin' seriously, Blake. It is quite twue. I wegard
as bein' done vewy well. Bwavo, deah boy!"
was level, but it did not remain so. Almost on the
Darrel slammed the ball in. Then the whistle
half-time, amid a storm of cheering, and St. Jim's
first half with a score of two to one.

CHAPTER 16.
Four to Three!

"We shall have to buck up, lads!" said Yorke.
Wind was against us, bedad," said Maguire, as
sucked a lemon. "We'll give them socks in the
"That shooting is good," Williams remarked. "Especially
Kildare. He goes for you like a bullet."
"But you saved well, old man. But the honours are with the
Merry's got a point; Tom Merry has scored the only goal," said the
captain.
"Good for the kid," said the Ramblers heartily.
"Time's up!"
players trooped into the field again.
were in high spirits over their success, and the
were in a determined humour.
change of ends brought the wind in the faces of Kildare
men. They had to play against it now, but, as Kildare
judged before the match, it was dropping a little.
was kicked off, and the game restarted.
Excitement among the spectators was very keen now. St. Jim's
had them an advantage, and if they kept it through the
half, the game was theirs.

But Wayland evidently meant to equalise if possible.
The Ramblers pressed hard.
For some time the Saints were penned in their own half by the Ramblers and the wind together, and failed to get going.
"But the wind's going down," Blake remarked. "Kildare knew it wouldn't last. Trust old Kildare to think of that."
"Weally, Blake, the wind seems to me to be worse than ever, I assure you," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as his silk topper tilted over again.
"Why, it's falling."
"It is blowin' my hat off, I know that."
"Hm, ha, ha!"
The swell of the School House turned his eyeglass upon his hilarious chum with a freezing stare—only Blake did not seem frozen.
"I fail to see anythin' comic in my hat bein' blown ovah in this extwemely inwitatin' mannah, Blake."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bai Jove! There it goes again."
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's hand went up to save his hat, and it came in contact with another hand which had just knocked against the topper.
The truth dawned on Arthur Augustus at last.
He swung round quickly.
Monty Lowther's bland face looked at him innocently.
"You're not watching the game, Gussy," remarked the Shell fellow.
"Weally, Lowthah——"
"They're getting away."
"You knocked my hat off."
"I!" exclaimed Lowther, in astonishment.
"Yaas, wathah."
"But it's still on!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I should say you twied to knock my hat off, Lowthah."
"I didn't!"
"Of course, I don't doubt your word, Lowthah, but I certainly had the impwession that you touched my hat."
"So I did," said Lowther blandly, "but I didn't try to knock it off. I tried to knock it a little sideways."
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.
"I wegard you as an impertinent ass, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus, fixing his monocle upon the Shell fellow.
"Go hon!"
"A decidedly impertinent and wude beast."
"Hear, hear!"
"I say, Gussy——"
"Pway don't intewwupt me, Blake."
"But——"
"Pway wing off, deah boy."
"I tell you——"
"I am speakin' to Lowthah."
"Oh, very well, if you don't want to know that Cousin Ethel is waving to you——"
"Bai Jove! Where is she?"
And Arthur Augustus swung round from Lowther, forgetting his dispute with the Shell fellow, and immediately raised his topper in the direction of Cousin Ethel. Cousin Ethel had a seat close by the pavilion with Mrs. Holmes and the Head's niece, who had come down to see the match. Whether Cousin Ethel's keen eyes had seen the trouble that was brewing in the junior crowd we cannot say, but certainly she waved her hand to her cousin in the very nick of time.
D'Arcy's topper was untroubled by the wind after that. The joke had afforded Monty Lowther considerable amusement for an hour.
But now the game was growing so keen that all eyes were bent upon the players to the exclusion of everything else.
The Ramblers were determined to equalise, and the Saints were resolute that they shouldn't, and so the play was hard and keen.
Twenty minutes remained to play before the score was changed, and then it was changed in the favour of St. Jim's, Monteith sending in a long shot that beat Williams in goal.
Three to one!
St. Jim's felt that all was over bar shouting. But the shouting was not over by any means. They shouted, and roared, and yelled.
But that third goal seemed to wake the Ramblers up. They threw themselves almost fiercely into the game, broke the St. Jim's defence down, and, passing splendidly, came up the field for goal.
Tom Merry had the ball from centre, and he took it on without an instant's pause, and passed it to outside right just in time and received it back from him well up in front of goal. Two Saints were close on Tom Merry, but he tricked them both, ran on, and passed across to centre just before he was charged over by a back. Centre sent it out to Yorke on the left wing, and Yorke rushed in and scored with a clear ground.
The ball was in the net!
Then the Wayland folk roared.
"Goal!"

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"Never mind," said Blake, "we're still ahead, and only a quarter of an hour more to play. Kildare will pull it off."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't know," remarked Kangaroo. "The Ramblers are going strong now, and they're hot stuff."

"Bai Jove! Look there!"

Yorke was on the ball again, and, in spite of all the efforts of the St. Jim's defence, he sent it whizzing in.

Three to three!

Wayland Ramblers had equalised!

Ten minutes more to play. There was time for all things yet, and it was anybody's game. As the teams lined up after the goal Yorke gave his men the word.

"Buck up! One more for Wayland! Go for them!"

And the Ramblers "went" for them.

But the Saints were in a grim fighting mood. The play was hard and fast, sweeping up to one goal and then down to the other, and good play was seen on both sides.

But the score did not change.

Five minutes more! Fellows were looking at their watches; they had seen Mr. Railton, the referee, look at his.

"Looks like a draw," said Figgins.

"Play up, St. Jim's!" roared Blake.

"Hurray, Ramblers! On the ball!"

"Bai Jove! Look at Tom Mewwy!"

"Bravo, Merry!"

Tom Merry had trapped the ball, taking it away from the mighty Kildare himself. He was off with it like a shot.

The play had been up at the Wayland goal, but as Tom Merry ran, dribbling the ball with unfailing skill and wonderful swiftness, the press broke up, and the field streamed after him.

A roar arose.

"Go it, Merry!"

"Stop him, Saints!"

"Oh, well passed, well passed!"

Only one Wayland forward was well up enough to take the pass as Tom Merry was marked down, and that was Yorke at inside left. Tom Merry sent the ball across with a long pass that quite beat the Saints, and Yorke rushed it on. The field broke away from Tom as Yorke pelted for goal, and Tom Merry dashed on, keeping pace with the Wayland captain. The rest were nowhere. Time was close now; all could see that this was the last throw of the dice.

"Go it, Ramblers!"

"Buck up, St. Jim's!"

Yorke dashed on. He eluded the halves like lightning, but two backs were closing on him, and foes were close beside. All depended upon Tom Merry and whether the young forward would understand what was wanted. Yorke made a feint of kicking for goal which deceived the enemy, and then suddenly passed across to Tom Merry.

As if by intuition Tom Merry knew what was working in his skipper's mind. He was ready for the pass. It found him with a clear field before him and nobody to beat but the goal-keeper, who had his eyes upon Yorke.

Two seconds would have been enough for Tom Merry to be robbed of the ball. But he kicked in one second.

Whizz!

Right into goal, over the shoulder of the astonished goalie, went the leather.

"My hat!" ejaculated Baker.

There was a roar.

"Goal!"

"Tom Merry!"

"Bravo!"

Yorke was clapping the lad on the back. High above the clamour rose the shrill phip of the whistle. It was the finish.

The game was over, and Wayland Ramblers had won a hard match by four goals to three. And the Ramblers could not make enough of Tom Merry as they crowded round him and marched him off the field.

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CHAPTER 17.
Tom Merry Stays.

TOM MERRY came out of the dressing-room in his ordinary clothes, with a flush from the exercise in his cheeks and a sparkle in his eye. His chums were waiting for him outside. As soon as he appeared they rushed upon him.

"Here he is!"

"Bravo, Tommy!"

"Good old Tom!"

"Bai Jove! That was a wippin' goal, deah boy! I could not have kicked a bettah goal myself, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Congratulations, old chap! You've beaten the seniors," Tom Merry laughed.

"Thanks," he said. "It's been a ripping match, anyway; but it's the last time I shall play against St. Jim's—the last and the last."

"Come and see Cousin Ethel; she's waiting for you."

Cousin Ethel greeted Tom Merry with a bright smile.

"It was splendid!" she declared. "My heart was in my mouth when you made that last rush for goal. It was splendid!"

"Yaas, bai Jove! I couldn't have done it bettah."

"Mr. Railton wants to speak to you, Tom Merry," said Cox, coming through the crowd. "He wants you to go to his study."

"I'll come."

"I fancy it means something for you," said Cox. "Mr. Railton was talking to the Head, and it looks to me as if some-thing's on."

Tom Merry nodded.

"We'll have tea in the study," said Lowther. "Cousin Ethel's coming to tea, aren't you, Cousin Ethel?"

"Certainly," said Ethel, with a smile.

"I'll join you in the study, then," said Tom Merry.

He walked away towards the School House.

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, who had refereed the Ramblers' match, was in his normal attire again now, and waiting in his study. He nodded kindly to the junior as he came in.

"Sit down, Merry," he said. "I want to speak to you."

"Yes, sir."

"I understand that you are staying with Mr. Philpot temporarily, and that you are leaving him after this match to seek some employment?"

"Yes."

"You have not decided upon any post yet!"

"I have not been able to do so, sir."

"The Head and I have consulted about it, Merry, and we think that some post might be found for you at St. Jim's if you would care for that. What do you say!"

Tom Merry started.

"A post at St. Jim's!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly."

The lad's eyes danced. A post at St. Jim's—where he could earn his living without leaving the old school, without breaking off all old associations, and plunging alone into the wide world! It seemed too good to be true.

But a sudden uneasiness fell upon him.

"Oh, sir! You—you mean it? It—it is not merely kindness. I could not live in idleness, sir, and be supported even by the kindest of friends."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"There is no danger of that, Merry. I should be the last to ask you to make a sacrifice of your independence. You will have to work, you will have serious duties to perform, and you will be independent. It rests with you to accept the post. What do you say?"

The tears started to Tom Merry's eyes in spite of himself.

"What can I say, sir," he faltered, "except that I'm glad—that I accept, and that I thank you from my heart!"

Mr. Railton smiled, and held out his hand.

And so it was that when the Wayland Ramblers left St. Jim's Tom Merry stayed behind at the old school.

THE END.

NEXT THURSDAY.

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THE IRON ISLAND



— BY —

Robert W. Comrade.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RE-WRITTEN.

Philip Graydon is a young Englishman, who for eight years was marooned on an uncharted island in the Pacific —the Iron Island—by a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, of which he was once a member. A lucky chance brings to his aid Dolores de las Mercedes, a beautiful Parisian actress, who has incurred the displeasure of the French Government. Graydon escapes from the Iron Island, and lands in England with Dolores. As Frank Kingston and Miss O'Brien, the two begin a secret campaign against the pernicious Brotherhood. With amazing ingenuity, and remaining himself wholly unsuspected, Kingston brings about the ruin of Don Sebastian, Detective-Inspector Caine, and Sir Robert Gissing, all Inner Councillors of the Brotherhood. Out of regard for Gissing's little daughter Ivy, however, Kingston effects the escape of the ruined baronet from Dragmoor Prison by means of kidnapping Colonel Marsden, the governor, and then impersonating him.

"It now only remains to get Gissing out of the country on board my yacht the Coronet," muses Kingston, when he has regained the privacy of his rooms at the Hotel Cyril in London.

[Now read on.]

On the Coronet.

"Ah, Fraser, everything all right?"

"Yes, sir," answered Frank Kingston's faithful ally. "I took the car to a garage in the Euston Road, sayin' I'd call for it to-night, an' walked away. As you told me, I went to the station, got in an empty compartment, and in two minutes I was myself. Here's the disguise, sir."

And Fraser laid the tawny wig and beard he had worn in the personality of "Stewart," on the table. His master stowed them away.

"You're done well!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you despatched the telegram before changing?"

"Oh, yes, sir! As soon as I left the garage, I sent the wire off to Cragmoor. I only said 'Look in old Jenkins's hut.' O' course, there was no danger, sir. Stewart's gone for ever now, an' the police'll find the toughest problem before 'em they've had for years."

"They'll never get to to the bottom of it, Fraser, never," smiled Kingston. "Sir Robert Gissing—otherwise No. 145—has vanished for all time, but to-morrow an old friend of mine, Mr. Malcolm Coates, with his little daughter, are to join me on the Coronet for a long voyage."

"I understand, sir. Shall I go, too?"

"Well, Fraser, I couldn't say at this minute. I shall have to let you know later. At present just fetch my macintosh and hat."

A few minutes later he was bowling through the streets in a taxi, smiling languidly at the numerous placards, which were full of the "audacious escape of Sir Robert Gissing." So far the governor had not been found, and he was thought somewhat enlightening.

At the docks, Kingston had no difficulty in finding the steam-yacht. It had just arrived, and Dolores, as "Miss Beck," had made herself comfortable in the cabin. Captain Morrison had received instructions from Kingston to obey any orders which he might receive from either Miss Beck or Miss O'Brien. The skipper would have been considerably surprised had he known that the two were one and the same person—Dolores.

"Ah, Morrison, I shall want to start on a long voyage in a day or two," drawled Kingston, as he shook the captain by the hand. "I suppose you can be ready?"

"You have only to give your orders, sir."

"I'll let you have definite instructions later, then. At present I want to see Miss Beck."

As soon as Kingston had told Dolores all that had happened since her departure, he went seriously into the matter in hand.

"Affairs stand in this way at present," he said. "As promised, I have rescued Sir Robert from prison, and restored his child to him. Strictly speaking, the Gissing affair is over, and I am free to bring about the downfall of the next Inner Councillor."

"But you promised Sir Robert you would land him in some foreign country where he would be free from detection," put in Dolores, looking at Kingston's thoughtful face interestedly. "Do you mean to fulfil your promise?"

"Of course. What I said I will do, I will do. In a day or two's time I set sail for New Zealand, where I intend settling him. Somehow I respect that man. When I think of the villain he used to be, and the manner in which he advocated my death—when I was Graydon—I grow bitter towards him. Then comes another thought—the thought of his little child, and the way Sir Robert has been converted. The change that has been wrought is marvellous. He is truly repentant, and although he only knows me as Frank Kingston, I believe, if I revealed my true character to him, he would beg my forgiveness and whole-heartedly endorse my work against the Brotherhood."

"And although you have disgraced the name of Gissing for ever," said Dolores, "he is, and will be, a true father now—a better man than he ever was before."

"I shall land him in New Zealand, and give him a new start in life. I forget all his wrongs, and see him only as he is—a repentant sinner. But enough on that point. New Zealand is, as you know, merely a few days' run from the Iron Island."

"You mean——" began Dolores.

"I mean it would be better if I could kill two birds with one stone, and pay a visit to my old abode."

"But Sir Robert must not know."

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"Of course not. He thinks I am simply an eccentric Englishman with plenty of money, and he must know nothing further. Now, if I went out to the Iron Island, I should want some good reason for going."

"What could you do there?"

"That remains to be seen. But it seems rather a pity to pass so near and miss the opportunity. And, of course, I should want a stronger reason for visiting the island than mere curiosity with regard to our friend Don Sebastian."

"What other possible motive could you have?" asked Dolores. "I can see none, Mr. Kingston."

"I have been thinking for a long time that a very effective way to treat some of the councillors would be to simply pick them up and dump them on the Iron Island beside Don Sebastian."

Dolores opened her eyes in surprise.

"This punishment would be, of course, for those men who are only comparatively bad. There are several of them—Colonel Marsden for one—and it would be rather good if I could land Gissing in New Zealand and Marsden on the Iron Island at the same time!"

"Oh, but that would be impossible, Mr. Kingston!"

"Not impossible, Dolores," drawled the other. "Difficult, I grant you, but not impossible! If I make up my mind to do a certain thing, I'm going right through with it. And I've half made up my mind on this."

But just then, pursued Dolores, her beautiful eyes wearing a puzzled expression, "How can you take Marsden on the ship when Sir Robert will be here? The two mustn't meet!"

"Of course not!"

"The crew, too, would see him, and he would hardly bear the appearance of a visitor, for if you kidnapped him he would have to be a prisoner, and that would be impracticable with all the sailors about."

"I admit it would," murmured Kingston. "Yet there must be some way in which to accomplish it—there must be. It could not be done openly, for the crew could hardly be taken into my confidence."

"There is another thing; difficulties crop up everywhere, Mr. Kingston. Even if you got Colonel Marsden as far as the Iron Island in secret, you could not land him without Don Sebastian making his presence known to the crew. If the ship went near the island, he would lose no time in attracting attention."

"I fully agree with you, Dolores, that the point is a knotty one, but a little thought will reveal the one course we must follow. Now let me see, the problem is this—how to kidnap Colonel Marsden, take him to the Iron Island, and land him there without either the officers, crew, or Gissing even suspecting his presence, or the presence of Don Sebastian on the island itself."

"There can be no solution!" cried Dolores. "The thing is an impossibility! You cannot make the man invisible, and even if you hid him away till the last, there's always the Don to ruin everything."

Kingston was silent. He was staring steadily out of one of the windows, and a far-away look was in his eyes. Dolores could see that he was thinking deeply. Suddenly the far-away expression vanished, and he started, gazing now at an object in the near distance. Then a smile crossed his lips, and his eyes became lazy and sleepy.

"Yes," he murmured, "it's as simple as A B C."

Dolores looked at him in astonishment.

"Which is?" she inquired.

"The problem we were discussing a moment ago," he replied. "I have been thinking it over, and the way in which it can be done is simplicity itself."

"No!" cried Dolores. "You can't mean it!"

"I do mean it! There is one way, and one way only, in which it can be done. There's no sense in denying it's risky, because it is risky; but carried out properly, it cannot fail."

"Tell me your idea," said Dolores eagerly. "For myself I cannot see any way whatever."

"Well, the only thing I shall need is a submarine," drawled Kingston.

"A submarine?"

"Precisely. I have just briefly planned out the details, and find that by means of that little acquisition I shall be able to carry out my wishes with comparative ease."

"You must think me very dull, Mr. Kingston," exclaimed Dolores, "but really, I am at as great a loss now as ever!"

"Then I will explain roughly what I mean."

And Kingston told her of his idea. When he had done, her eyes were shining eagerly.

"It's splendid, Mr. Kingston," she said enthusiastically. "And I thought the idea would be impossible to carry out! But when do you intend to make the first move in the new game?"

"As soon as possible, Dolores—as soon as I get the chance.

Gissing—or, rather Malcolm Coates, as he will henceforth be called—will arrive to-night, after having journeyed to the north of England to make his arrival from Scotland genuine, and there will be nothing to prevent me sailing immediately."

"So the quicker you get to work, the better," put in his fair companion. "Sir Robert will be anxious to get away."

"He will be safe enough," answered Frank Kingston, rising to his feet. "Nobody will look here for him—that's certain. The Gissing case is completed, however, and I have now to deal with another villainous member of the Brotherhood of Iron—Colonel Marsden. His punishment will be the same as Don Sebastian's—exile, and very soon that little rock will have another inhabitant. They shall be my prisoners, and the Iron Island will hold them more securely than twenty Cragmoors!"

Frank Kingston's jaw set firm and hard, and Dolores knew—knew perfectly well—that Colonel Marsden's fate was settled. For when this most remarkable of men definitely stated he was going to do a certain thing, that thing was as good as done.

The Submarine.

"Then the first thing you must think about is the submarine?" asked Dolores, breaking the silence.

Frank Kingston seated himself, and his eyes resumed their normal sleepy appearance.

"Yes," he said languidly; "that is the first thing I ought not to be a very difficult matter to get hold of."

"It is hardly like a motor-car, you know. Submarines are not articles of everyday use. And a naval one would be over so much too large——"

"Of course, Dolores. I shall have to get hold of a smaller vessel. Perhaps Morrison will know something of the subject, for it is my intention to do the whole thing openly—to let the general public know I am experimenting with a submarine-boat. I always maintain that publicity is the safest and surest method in an enterprise of this sort."

"It is no good unless carried out properly!" exclaimed Dolores. "But, of course, it will be carried out properly. Shall I be with you on this voyage, Mr. Kingston?"

"I sincerely hope so!" he replied. "I was thinking that in your capacity as Miss Beck, the nurse, you would take charge of little Ivy. She must have somebody to attend her."

"I shall be delighted to go!" cried Dolores. "My only fear is that I should, perhaps, be in the way."

"In the way!" echoed Kingston. "Of course, Dolores, you know I owe everything to you—my liberty, my——"

"And my liberty I owe to you," she smiled. "So we are quits. But when do you intend to leave England? You simply can't purchase a submarine to-night, and leave to-morrow!"

"Hardly. Nevertheless, the matter ought to present difficulties. Fraser and I can manage the purchase of the vessel; and while we are learning the controls and handling the Governor of Cragmoor, the yacht can be cruising about the South of France somewhere, with orders to meet us on a certain day. It's all a mere matter of arrangement."

"I really believe nothing could upset you, Mr. Kingston," she said, realising more than ever the terrific power he possessed.

Although there was no outward indication of it present, it was there; and Dolores knew that he would deal with every member of the Inner Council as relentlessly as he had dealt with him.

There would be no escape; one by one they would receive their punishment, until at last the Brotherhood of Iron was wiped out of existence. And this one man, seemingly weak and fatuous, was capable of dealing with double that number. The Iron Island had made him what he was—the strongest man, mentally and physically, in the British Kingdom!

Yet he looked a fool and acted a fool's part, thus hiding himself open to scornful laughter and rather pitying scorn. No man with sense would ever Kingston had power; therefore, he could do almost anything he liked without anybody caring to inquire into his business.

"Well," he exclaimed, rising from his cushions, "I'll be up to see Morrison, and hear what can be done. He ought to be on deck."

Captain Morrison was. In his well-cut uniform he looked smart and business-like, every inch a sailor. The decks were clean and tidy, holystoned so white that it seemed a pity to walk over them. The brass and nickel work glistened brightly in the sunlight.

"Ah, Morrison!" drawled Kingston. "I've just been struck with an idea, and I want your assistance."

"Yes, sir," said the skipper respectfully.

"It occurred to me that, as we are very soon starting for the Pacific, it would be a good opportunity to carry out

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plan I've been thinking of. I'm going in for a sub- to tell the truth."

ain Morrison stared.

submarine, sir?" he exclaimed in ill-concealed sur-

That's it," smiled Kingston. "It would be a good unity to experiment with one—eh?... Most people to be going in for aeroplanes, so I thought I'd make

It's risky, sir; and there's not one made to sink far water——"

Morrison! Surely not so risky as trusting your- frail framework of wood and canvas! Anyhow, I my luck. The question is—where can I get

leaned against the rail, and looked at Morrison's face. the captain tried to conceal them, there were plain of disfavour there. The idea seemed hair-brained to but, of course, he could say nothing of what he

He isn't one small enough, sir," he began. "The boats are—— Wait a minute, though——"

I thought has struck you?" asked Frank Kingston, Morrison paused and looked at his master rather

I suppose it's nothing, sir; only, about three months since I first got to London with the Coronet, I met a man told me he was building a submarine."

Kingston nodded.

He was about it," he said.

He came across him quite by accident, sir, one day when I was on the quay. His name's Wynne, and he's an old friend of mine—one I worked under years ago. He was in the engineering line, and told me he had retired, and was on a new idea in submarines—a small, experimental craft to start with. But, of course, sir, you know what these experimental things are. As likely as not it's a failure; indeed, it was three months ago."

"Never-the-less, Morrison," said Kingston, "I should like to see that boat. What is this man's address?"

Kingston had very little faith in the submarine proving a success, but there was no harm in seeing it and trying to demonstrate. To miss the chance would be foolish.

Morrison obtained the address from the captain, and straightway took steps in the direction of the nearest station. Mr. Wynne lived in Woolwich, and it was some little time before Kingston found himself knocking on the door of a large riverside house.

A servant answered his summons, and looked somewhat surprised to see the well-dressed dandy standing on the doorstep.

Kingston handed his card in, and shortly was ushered into the presence of an elderly man, whose very appearance denoted his calling.

"Mr. Wynne?" drawled Kingston.

"My name, sir," replied the other, looking at his visitor keenly. "What can I do for you?"

Hastily into the details of the ensuing conversation it is unnecessary, as well as being tiresome, so let it suffice to say that Kingston found in Captain Wynne the man he had been looking for.

The submarine Morrison had referred to was a reality—a working model. According to the inventor, it was far superior to any existing under-water boat in the world! Kingston did not believe all he heard, and decided to examine immediately.

He was absolutely enthusiastic, and referred to the submarine in loving terms for having refused to let him criticise his boat's superiority over others already in use.

As it had been lying idle in the private dock at the back of the house, the old skipper having no money to go to extensive advertising. The building of the vessel had drained his resources fairly dry; so, when Kingston arrived, offering spot cash if the thing was at all suitable, Wynne jumped at the opportunity.

"This way, Mr. Kingston!" he cried. "It's no trick I'm going to show you; it's one of the neatest little craft you've ever set eyes on!"

"I suppose she's ready to sail immediately?"

"In ten minutes if you wish it. She's fitted with the finest engines on the market—all British, sir—and was built by the most reliable firm in the world. She's not big, but, by gad, she's swallowed up a few thousands—money I had!"

"Long as it'll travel under water in safety it will suit me," drawled Kingston, feeling that he was on the right track of regaining the fortune he had sunk in his invention.

Wynne talked on with growing enthusiasm, for he saw a chance of regaining the fortune he had sunk in his invention. He knew Kingston by name well enough, for he was often mentioned in the papers.

There was a short garden at the back of the house, well-kept and tidy, and at the bottom a long wooden building. Having unlocked the door, Wynne passed inside, followed by his visitor, who found himself inside a building which was, in fact, a dock.

The water stretched almost at his feet, there being merely a narrow pathway to walk on. As it happened, the tide was almost at the flood, and floating in the dock was the submarine.

"There she is, sir!" cried the old captain. "I thought out her design during the hundreds of times I've crossed the Atlantic, and I claim her to be better than anything you've ever seen."

"She certainly looks serviceable," remarked Kingston, examining with searching eyes the exterior of the vessel.

It was small, and very much like any other submarine-boat in appearance, painted a dull grey. A little conning-tower protruded from the hull, with a manhole at the top.

"To judge by outward appearances," exclaimed Kingston, "it's the very article I'm looking for. The main thing, however, is, whether it will perform all the feats you claim for it."

"Every one of them, Mr. Kingston—every one! If I had the money, I'd built a fleet of them; but it's no use approaching the Government with one. They probably take me for a crank. Still, the patents are mine, so I'm protected."

"How many men does it require to manage her?"

"I can drive her myself—that's the beauty of it," replied Wynne. "The mechanism is so simple that a man can learn all the controls within a day—provided, of course, that he understands petrol motors."

"Could you give me a demonstration now?" asked Kingston, meaning to have no delay, for if the boat proved useless it was foolish wasting time over it.

"That's my very intention, sir. She's all ready for work, for I was testing her only yesterday. The water's high, so everything's in our favour. There's nothing like proof."

In a few moments, Kingston, really interested, was clambering down the narrow ladder of the conning-tower. Wynne had preceded him, and had switched on the electric light, so that the interior was brilliantly illuminated. To Kingston, the experience was quite novel, for he had never been inside such a vessel before.

It was small—capable of carrying three men only—and had but one compartment. A powerful petrol motor attracted Kingston's attention, and he noticed it was a well-known British make. In a few moments the engine was buzzing musically. Captain Wynne, who was proving to be quite a practical man, busied himself with other matters.

"We will travel on the surface, to begin with," he said. "The water's not very deep here, but as soon as we get out into the river I'll show you the boat's capabilities."

As he spoke, he pulled a lever, and the submarine moved forward smoothly, passing out of the building—the door of which had been opened previously—into the daylight, her dull-grey plates cleaving the water silently, and with hardly a splash.

Kingston Gets to Work.

"By Jove, captain, but you've given me a surprise!" exclaimed Kingston an hour later, as he stepped on dry land once more. "There's no doubt about it; your boat is a little marvel, and I'll certainly purchase it."

Kingston was really delighted. Captain Wynne had proved by practical tests that the little submarine was a really efficient vessel. It was fast—much faster than an ordinary submarine—and could dive to a considerable depth. In addition, the supply of air was perfect, the safety of the boat absolute, and the steering and diving capabilities without equal.

Kingston was not a man to waste time, so completed the transaction then and there. He had only thought of the idea that same day, and his one fear had been that he would have to have a vessel specially built. Thanks to Captain Morrison he had been sent to the right man immediately.

The next day he took Fraser over to Woolwich, and Wynne explained the whole mechanism. The controls were so simple, however, that practically no teaching was necessary. At any rate, Kingston and Fraser proclaimed themselves capable of taking charge at any moment.

Meanwhile, the Coronet was being fitted with special davits to accommodate the vessel. The crew were vastly interested in their master's latest idea, and were eager to commence the voyage.

Sir Robert and little Ivy were safely installed on board, while the police all over the country were searching night

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and day for them. The situation was really novel; but Sir Robert was rather nervous, in spite of his magnificent disguise. Dolores had charge of Ivy, and she took care that the child did not appear much in public.

On the second day after Gissing had come aboard, and while he was having a stroll on deck—for Kingston had advised Sir Robert to show himself as much as possible—a rather peculiar incident occurred.

The sun was shining brilliantly considering the time of year, and the usually murky waters looked more sparkling than usual. No one was on deck save Gissing and the first officer, and the former was interested in the unloading of a large steamer opposite. The river was clear at the moment and fairly still.

Suddenly the officer riveted his attention on a certain spot of the river, and a puzzled frown crossed his brow. From some unknown cause the water was being disturbed to such an extent that two long ripples were sent from the centre to either bank.

"What on earth——" murmured the officer. "Ah, by Jove, that's it! It must be the guv'nor!"

He hastened to the bridge, pointing out the phenomenon to Gissing as he passed, and informed the captain. But before Morrison could get on deck there was a sudden splash as the glittering hull of Kingston's submarine appeared above water. It lurched heavily to port, then on both sides of the water, and they watched interestedly.

Sir Robert hastened to the rail and found himself looking into the smiling countenance of Frank Kingston, as he ascended the ladder. With truly surprising exactness the little submersible slid against the Coronet in such a position that Kingston was able to clamber up the accommodation-ladder with ease.

"Well, Mr. Coates," he cried, wringing the baronet's hand, and addressing him by his assumed name, "you hardly expected me to arrive in this fashion, did you?"

"Upon my soul, Kingston, you're a wonder! I certainly never dreamed of your appearing from beneath the Thames in this abrupt fashion. But you can't have been driving that—that——"

"My man has helped me, I admit," replied Kingston, looking down upon his fanciful clothes, which hardly seemed the attire for submarine work. "Ah, Morrison," he added, as the skipper approached, "you're ready for immediate departure, I suppose?"

"Absolutely, sir. I wouldn't give the men more than an hour's leave at a time, in case you wanted to start. You may remember you told me to be in readiness."

"Well, captain, I want you to sail immediately. Take the route I told you of previously—to the south of France—and be at Plymouth on Saturday, that is, four days from now."

"Very good, sir; but how about yourself? Will you——"

"I shall remain here, Morrison. It is my intention, as you know, to take Mr. Coates to New Zealand and experiment, incidentally, with this little submarine whilst in the tropics. Before starting, however, I must get accustomed to the controls, so I mean to cruise around the coast."

"But, Mr. Kingston," began Sir Robert, "it is too risky; you surely are not going to trust yourself—your life—to that little egg-shell?"

Kingston smiled.

"Have no fear, Mr. Coates," he drawled coolly. "Although it looks so insecure, I give you my word it is perfectly safe. There is no question of danger at all."

Captain Morrison said nothing, but his looks plainly told Kingston that the removal of this new venture. But neither Sir Robert nor Morrison knew what was behind it all. They were unaware of the fact that the fatuous-looking young man was working—that he was meting out justice to the villainous members of the Brotherhood of Iron. To them his acquisition of the submarine was a mad freak. And Kingston, knowing well enough what they—and the general public—thought of him, smiled contentedly. Nothing would have suited his plans better.

He did not remain on the yacht long. Dolores, with Ivy by her side, came on deck just as he was about to depart. Kingston, of course, was merely formal to her, for she was on the Coronet, simply "Miss Beck," the nurse.

With no more waste of time he descended the ladder, stepped on to the tiny deck of the submarine—which he had named the Dart—and spoke a few words down the open manhole to Fraser. The next second the little boat slid away from the Coronet, turned round like a fish, and made off down river at an amazing speed—faster than any ordinary motor-boat.

Kingston waved his hand and disappeared into the interior, closing the door above him. And in this manner the Dart scuttled down the Thames to Woolwich, Kingston steering from the conning-tower, in the sides of which were several little look-out windows.

He was simply delighted with the vessel. The manner in which it answered to his touch was a revelation. As he said, it was almost like steering a motor-car. The design of Captain Wynne's house was useful and handy, so he kept the submarine there.

Fraser had become quite expert in handling the motors, so Kingston felt quite justified in starting his campaign immediately. That same day, in the Hotel Cyril, he discussed the whole matter with Fraser, who was to be his sole helper on this occasion.

"What we have to do," he said, "is to get the scoundrel Marsden safely aboard the Dart without a soul being the wiser. He was discovered, as you know, immediately the prison authorities received your wire. It is doubtful whether he has recovered his temper even yet. The police have drawn blank everywhere, which can hardly be called consolation."

"It'll be a more difficult job, sir, to get the governor clear away without anyone knowin'," said Fraser. "I don't know it can be done."

"Oh, yes, Fraser, there are ways! What I want to do is to get him to a certain spot, alone, and without telling soul where he's going. And that spot will have to be a lonely one; somewhere on the moor, out of sight of all habitation."

"Well, sir, if you ask me, it's a tough job."

"On the contrary, Fraser, it is a singularly easy one," claimed Kingston quietly. "A plan which can be arranged without the slightest risk. Evidently you have forgotten a very important point. By the way, can Marsden manage his own car?"

"Well, sir, he don't like it except in very fine weather, but he can certainly drive."

"Good!" murmured the other. "Now for that you have overlooked. Both of us, Fraser, are—of course—members of the Brotherhood of Iron, and as such, are fully acquainted with the secret sign which must appear in all communications."

"I know that, sir, but I don't see——"

"Come, Fraser, you are dull! I am going to resort to well-worn ruse. I generally find the old ones even a bit beaten. I shall merely send Marsden a typewritten note, ordering him—ordering him, mind—to be at this certain lonely spot with his motor-car, at a particular time on Thursday evening."

"By gum, sir!" cried Fraser.

"Don't forget, Fraser, that it is boldness which wins the day. Audacity is my one maxim, and there's nothing like it. Marsden will have to go, for he will not know where the note is from. I shall meet him, and the rest is simple."

"But the risk, sir. You can't tackle him alone."

"My dear Fraser, please think a moment. I am not going to tackle him at all. You may be sure I shall be disguised, and simply say that my orders are to take him to a certain spot on the coast. You will be there, and the two of us can settle him. You see, the plan is simplicity itself."

"How about the car, sir? You can't desert it."

"Of course not. That is, however, merely a trifling detail. It is the principal facts we are dealing with now. Our advantage lies in the fact that we know the ins and outs of the Brotherhood. It gives us a very powerful weapon which to fight. Without knowing the secret sign we would have been extremely difficult to attain our end."

"I don't see how it can fail, sir, 'cos Marsden must read the letter. It's one o' the principal rules of the Brotherhood."

"There's no doubt on that score, Fraser. The only thing to fear is the possibility of bad weather. If it is rough it will be practically impossible to get Marsden aboard the Dart."

Fraser looked at his master thoughtfully.

"It is a matter you can't be certain on, sir," he said.

"I'll have to be left to chance."

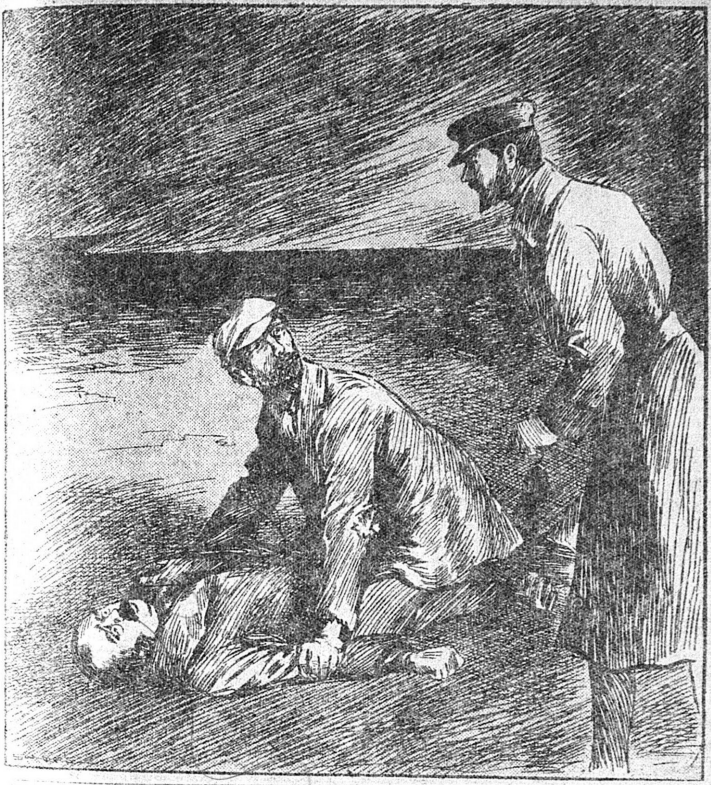
"We can only hope the elements will be kind to us. If they are not, I shall have to devise some scheme whereby the journey is postponed. We will take it for granted however, that the weather will be favourable. I never worry about imaginary difficulties; it is a foolish thing to do."

Kingston's plan seemed likely to succeed. Colonel Marsden would be forced to obey the summons, and once aboard the Dart all hope of escape would be gone. He would be whisked out of England and dumped on the Iron Island without a second's warning. He would be totally unprepared, and would be in absolute ignorance as to where he was and where he was being taken, or who his captors were going to be.

It would be a fitting punishment. The Inner Council had marooned Kingston on the lonely rock for life, and it was but justice for Kingston to turn the tables and give his time captors a taste of their own medicine.

The Brotherhood thought him dead—thought the Iron Island was deserted. And Kingston conducted his campaign

"THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S." A Grand New School Tale, by Charles Hamilton, is in the "EMPIRE" Library this week. Price One Halfpenny.



"Who are you?" gasped the prostrate man. "Hang you! who are you?" "I'm afraid I cannot stop to answer questions," retorted the disguised Kingston, sitting astride of his prisoner. "Fraser, your assistance would be welcome." (See page 25.)

...cisely that not one member of the Inner Council ...eamed that he was alive and working against them. The ...chment of three of them, Don Sebastian, Detective-...rector Caine, and Sir Robert Gissing, had been brought ...ut in such a manner that no outside hand was traceable. ...And in this manner the avenger meant to deal with them ...all. He was keeping his great strength and his enormous ...nerve and brain-power in check, until they were needed. For ...they would be needed at the end. As he lessened the number ...of councillors so his task would become harder.

But Frank Kingston, the dandy, the rich young man about ...town, was capable of almost anything. His severest tests were yet to come, and instead of dreading them, he was looking forward to them; waiting eagerly for the day when he would have to expend every ounce of energy to hold his own.

At present, however, there was the governor of Cragmoor Prison to deal with—a man who had already tasted the lash of Kingston's whip. Even yet he had not recovered from the shock. The feeling of total ignorance as to who his enemy was, was maddening, and to make matters worse, Marsden had been severely censured for his laxity, and the Press generally passed sarcastic remarks at his expense.

But it was the Brotherhood he dreaded most. He knew that Gissing was dangerous, and now that he had escaped, Marsden was afraid—very much afraid.

Exit Colonel Marsden.

"Ah, Richard, good-morning!"

Colonel Marsden descended the stairs of his private house at Cragmoor Prison, and found Richard, the butler, in the hall.

"Good-morning, sir! Nice clear day, sir."

"Any letters?"

"Yes, sir. I've laid them on the dining-room table."

The governor entered the dining-room, and stood for a

NEXT THURSDAY: "MR. MERRY." A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of The Chums of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford.

moment before the crackling fire, thinking. Then he turned and picked up the letters which lay on the white cloth.

"Humph, there's nothing!" he muttered, tearing open one of them, and glancing at the enclosure. It was an advertisement, and he threw it into the fire impatiently.

"Another one, I suppose," he went on, as he opened the flap of a second envelope. There was nothing inside but a little slip of paper on which were typewritten a few words. But the mark at the foot caused Colonel Marsden to pale a trifle, and utter an exclamation.

"The Brotherhood!" he murmured. "What can it be about?"

Glancing at the door to see that it was closely fastened, he held the paper to the light and read the few words it contained:

"To No. 14. Most important work for you. Do not fail to be at the foot of Bellstone Tor at 7.30 exactly to-morrow night (Thursday). Come in motor-car, alone. The matter is urgent. Chief's orders."

Marsden looked up thoughtfully. Never for a moment did it enter his head that the order was a bogus one—that it had not come from the Brotherhood at all. How could he be suspicious? The sign was absolutely accurate, the same as appeared on all letters he received from headquarters.

"Bellstone Tor," he thought. "What on earth have I to go to that desolate spot for? It's fifteen miles from here if it's an inch. I suppose the matter is something secret, otherwise all these precautions would scarcely have been necessary."

He glanced at the letter again, noticed the address, then dropped it into the fire.

"No sense in keeping it," he thought. "There's nothing to remember—merely to be at Bellstone Tor to-night at half-past seven in the car, alone. It's a confounded nuisance, because I was going to Exeter to-night. However, it can't be helped; it's evident there is something big in the air."

When Richard brought the breakfast in, his master was seated at the table reading the morning paper. Suddenly he smiled contemptuously. He had seen a paragraph to the effect that Frank Kingston, instead of going in for an aeroplane, was carrying out experiments with a new make of submarine.

"The fool!" mused the governor. "I never can realise how he obtained all his money. A man with such little sense as he possesses, could never have come by it through sheer hard work. The submarine is about all I'm certain."

And Marsden's opinion of Kingston was similar to thousands of others. Certainly nobody would give him credit for anything daring or clever. He had acted his part so well that by now he was recognised as a harmless kind of eccentric fool.

Much to Marsden's satisfaction, the weather remained favourable. Towards evening it became dull and misty, but there was no rain. The roads were fairly good, and although the colonel disliked driving the car himself, he certainly would have to do so on this occasion. His new chauffeur was considerably surprised when he received orders to get the Daimler ready for a journey, but that his services would not be required.

At half-past six, with the acetylene lamps blazing brilliantly, the car stood at the front entrance. Marsden was ready. He was attired in a huge fur coat and top boots, for the air was chilly.

"I can't say exactly when I shall be back," he said to the butler, as he stood in the hall. "It may not be until to-morrow, however. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The governor took his seat in the landaulette, and accelerated. The powerful engine under the huge car was gliding down the drive, with Marsden in happy ignorance of the fact that he would not see Cragmoor Prison, or his own home, for many a long day to come.

The road to Bellstone Tor—a giant hillock which towered above the moor near the high road—was a roundabout one, as well as being fearfully hilly. As the motor-car glided over the highway, the colonel could not help noticing the utter loneliness of the place. The night was not very dark, and on every side could be seen the undulating moor, without a single house or shanty to relieve the monotony. The horizon, against the sky, was jagged and uneven, and presently Marsden noticed a high and abrupt hill outlined.

"Bellstone Tor," he muttered, sending the car along a little faster. "What in the world can the mission be which causes the Chief to take all these precautions? Something important, for certain. I wonder who'll be there? It's no use conjecturing, though. I shall find out for myself in a few minutes."

There were no hedges to the road, the grass growing on either side. Bellstone Tor sloped downwards right to the road, on a corner, so it was impossible to mistake the spot.

The governor stopped the car with a jerk, and switched off. He sat for a moment, and listened. After the hum of the engine, and the roar of the tyres on the rough road, everything seemed strangely quiet. Not a sound broke the stillness save the rustling of the wind in some neighbouring bushes.

Marsden glanced at his watch.

"Twenty past," he muttered. "Hardly time yet. Jove, but it's a lonely spot. It's the first time I've been by night. Ah!"

He strained his eyes in the darkness, for his ears had heard what sounded like a footfall, or, rather, a shuffle. At first he could distinguish nothing; then a strange figure detached itself from the gloom. It was a rather disreputable tramp, and Marsden muttered something beneath his breath.

He naturally took the new-comer for an ordinary tramp, never expecting he was the man he had come to meet. The fellow came into the circle of light for a moment, and it was, of course, Frank Kingston, but his disguise was perfect that he knew it would stand the test. He addressed Marsden.

"Are yer alone, guv'nor?" he asked hoarsely.

"I am," replied the colonel; "but I don't see that it concerns you, my man."

Before he could say anything further, he opened his mouth in surprise, for Kingston rapidly made the secret sign of the Brotherhood, and gave utterance to the password. Kingston had learnt through Fraser's friend, Crawford.

"You are," began Marsden—"you are the—"

"Yes, sir," said Kingston quickly, in more refined tones, still disguised tones. "I was detailed to meet you here to-night. I'm a common messenger, sir, but the Chief didn't get rigged out like this, so's it wouldn't look suspicious."

"I understand. Well, what are your orders? What am I to do?"

"I don't know what the job is, sir; I've only got to tell you to a place on the coast where we're to meet our councillors."

"One of the councillors! Who?"

"That's more than I can say, sir. It ain't far from here, not more than a dozen miles, near Plymouth."

"Is there a boat there?" asked Marsden, somewhat surprised.

"Yes, sir; and you're to go aboard for a short time, I understand," replied Kingston, smiling inwardly at the success of the words.

"It's the Night Hawk, for certain. You know the exact spot to go to?"

"Oh, yes, sir! It's a little cove that's sheltered from the open water. They'll be waiting from eight till nine."

"Well, get in at the back, and take care not to show yourself. Any directions I want I'll ask through the tube," he added.

"Yes, sir," said Kingston, and he climbed smartly on the body of the car. As they whizzed along the deserted road, he sat back on the cushions, Kingston smiled upon himself. He could see the governor's back as he sat at the wheel.

"Well, my dear Marsden," he murmured, "I'm afraid it is your last motor ride for some little time to come. In an hour you will be a captive, as good as passed out of civilisation, and your only companion during the next few years will be our estimable friend, Don Sebastian. The Island is by no means a desirable spot, and I dare say you will suffer some of the agonies I have suffered."

It afforded Kingston real pleasure to be engaged in work. The man he had declared war against were within, and it was a blessing to be out in the fresh air.

On the Daimler went through the night, and as it sped over half an hour, after having received numerous directions from Kingston, the colonel drove his car through a village, and proceeded down a rather narrow lane, which led to the beach. Marsden could just see the sea and the lights of passing shipping showing clear and distinct.

The lane at the bottom widened out, and here he stopped. Kingston jumped out quickly and listened a moment. He knew that Fraser was somewhere close, although no ordinary man could have heard. He distinguished a soft footfall behind him. Marsden was already looking up and down the lane.

"A desolate spot, and no mistake," he declared. "No house for miles by what I can see. But where's my colleague——"

"This'll be him, sir," interjected Kingston, as he walked rapidly towards them from behind, and out of the darkness. Instinctively the governor moved forward to meet him, as Kingston had intended he should, so also, was out of the glare of the searchlight.

The instant he had done so, Kingston took three long strides forward—so light as to be unheard—and held up his hand, signalling to his faithful servant.

Then, before Marsden could possibly realise what was coming, Kingston lifted him up like a feather, twirled him round, and laid him on the sand in such a position

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was impossible. Kingston sat astride him, pinioning

gag, Fraser," he said coolly. "There's not much of anyone hearing, but it's best to be on the safe n sorry, Marsden, to inconvenience you, but it's essary."

was staring in amazement; and there was every his surprise. The manner in which Kingston had governor into the air and deposited him on the sand ing. The strength necessary for such a feat must almost superhuman. Kingston had used no more than an ordinary man would use to lift a child.

the——" began Marsden, in half-frightened, half- accents. "Good heavens, what does this mean?"

s, Marsden, that your punishment has come," ston coldly. "It means that your days of villainy

you?" gasped the prisoner. "Hang you, who

and I cannot stop to answer questions," retorted pearing to sit at ease astride Marsden. "Fraser, ance would be welcome."

short space of time the governor of Cragmoor and foot—for the second time within a few each occasion, though Marsden knew it not, been his captor.

ston," said the latter briskly, "to the boat. I have it in readiness?"

replied Fraser; "and the Dart is moored just ards out."

ater was a little boat—a collapsible affair, which on the submarine—into which Marsden was ngston turned to Fraser.

know what to do," he said. "Take the car and garage it at the smallest place you can, el Marsden's, and will not be required for After that, remove your false beard, and be at seven o'clock to-morrow. I hope this is the you'll have to wear for a long time. I suppose ow what it's like to be yourself?"

and busied himself with the car. For a was to leave it in a garage and desert it. The London, it had been easily traced by Marsden; Marsden would have vanished off the face of the

he was out of sight, Kingston had hoisted his to the deck of the lissing Dart. It did not necessary to lower him down the manhole and aboard. This done, he descended the ladder ed the door, and switched on the electric light. ying on the floor, glaring up at him in fear and for the surroundings hardly gave him con-

ht you are wondering who I am!" exclaimed "You will have guessed that I am not all I that I am no friend. Well, to tell the truth, I enemy, although I do not mean to harm a hair One moment!"

down and picked up a slip of paper which had from one of Marsden's pockets. Carelessly he then his languid eyes gleamed for a second. softly.

soul, Marsden, how fortunate! The very thing very information I wanted!

was a note from Lord Mount-Pannell himself to be at headquarters for a general meeting Council on the following evening at eight sharp. ficent stroke of luck for Kingston.

munny! I've been looking for for months," he ntly. "By Jove, it's ripping! I'll attend in the guise of Marsden, and learn all the future ossibly can. It'll be risky—deuced risky—but, by I will be well paid for my trouble!"

In the Enemy's Camp.

musical hum filled the air as the engine of the vessel forward at half-speed. Kingston stood ring-wheel in the little conning-tower, gazing out ook out window over the tossing Channel.

marine was almost submerged, and no lights were Kingston found it quite easy to manage her alone. so small, and the controls so perfect, that it was task.

platform below him on which he stood—it was really of the ladder—vibrated gently as the powerful pro- nt the Dart through the water. Being partly on the ace, she tossed unceasingly.

Down below, in the body of the vessel, nothing could be seen but the smoothly working petrol motor, the powerful propeller shaft, and numerous other mechanical devices. Not a sign of Colonel Marsden was apparent. Yet he was in the boat; he was in the place he was destined to occupy for several weeks.

They were terribly close quarters, but it was the only way in which Kingston could carry out his plans. And he was not harming his captive. On the contrary, he had taken care to provide everything possible for his comfort during the coming voyage.

At the rear of the submarine was a little compartment, designed by Captain Wynne for the purpose of storing petrol, oil, and the necessary tools. Kingston, however, had cleared the place of all this matter, and converted it into a prison. On the door were two strong bolts, in addition to a lock, the sides being of sheet aluminium.

In this cupboard-like compartment Colonel Marsden was destined to spend many days. It was not large enough to accommodate a bed, so Kingston had placed an easy-chair for his prisoner to sleep on. Marsden sat there now, bound to it by special fastenings, which, although holding him perfectly secure, also allowed him to enjoy the comfort of rest. To rise from the chair was, however, impossible.

The only real discomfort Marsden was to experience was the gag which covered his mouth. Kingston considering this precaution absolutely necessary; for when the Dart was hoisted on to the Coronet, Marsden's presence would have to remain unknown to all, except Fraser and Dolores.

Fraser would practically live in the submarine; this, apparently, by his own wish, as he wanted to be near the motor, which was so everybody would understand, being taken down for repairs. Of course, in reality, Fraser would look after the prisoner.

Until early morning the Dart lay close to Plymouth harbour, Kingston never relaxing his vigilance one second. At seven o'clock he entered the harbour, and found Fraser waiting for him.

"I shall leave the Dart in your charge now, Fraser," he said, after a few moments. "I think I can trust you to see that everything is all right."

"You can, sir," said Fraser earnestly.

"Don't move from this spot until midday, or don't leave the vessel. You have received your instructions concerning the prisoner, and on no account remove the gag while the boat is here. He will have to suffer that discomfort until you make out for sea. Stay in the open just long enough for Marsden to have some food, and then re-gag him and put back."

"When will you return, sir?"

"To-morrow morning, Fraser, early. The Coronet will be here by to-morrow midday, and the voyage will commence straight away. I mean to have no waiting, for the sooner Sir Robert is clear of England the better. Now, good-bye, Fraser; expect to see me in the morning."

He extended his hand, and Fraser grasped it eagerly. He knew that his master was going on a dangerous errand, and there was a possibility of his never returning.

"Good-bye, sir, and good luck!"

Kingston caught a quick train to London, and soon after noon he was whizzing through the metropolis in a taxi, bound for the Cyril. His habits were very eccentric, so no notice was taken of his sudden arrival.

"The general meeting," he mused, "is to be at eight. It is now a quarter-past one. I have good heaps of time, so there's no reason why I shouldn't pop down and have some luncheon. It would be a good notion, too, to run round to Gamage's and make an ass of myself. There's nothing like keeping up appearances."

He laughed softly, and glanced at the note from the Chief to Marsden. The sign at the bottom was torn off, but Kingston understood the purport of the words.

As dandified as ever, he lounged down into the restaurant, and seemingly his whole topic of conversation was submarines. At the club he bored everybody to distraction, and the other members were heartily glad when he took himself off.

Kingston went straight to the Cyril, and closeted himself in his rooms. Then, as if by magic, his languid, foppish manner vanished, and in its stead came a brisk, keen activity. His face wore a look of eager expectation, and his eyes, usually so sleepy, were as sharp as needles.

At last he was embarking on a mission which made his blood race through his veins with anticipation. He was about to walk boldly into the lion's cage—to venture right into the enemy's camp. It was a tremendously daring undertaking, but one Kingston revelled in.

He knew not the meaning of the word fear; he only

gloated over the luck which had given him the opportunity. It was a chance in a lifetime; perhaps he would never again be able to gain access to the Council Chamber.

"Nearly nine years," he thought—"nine years since I was in that villainous room. Heaven only knows what robberies, what swindles, what murders have been planned within its walls since that day! If I manage to come out of it alive—if I don't the Council will be diminished considerably—I shall have obtained valuable information. And the best of it is, they'll never know I'm a fraud; they'll take me for Colonel Marsden, and never be enlightened."

Quietly, methodically he set about his task. He opened in his bag the complete make-up Dolores had used at Craigmoor, and, being an expert in the art himself, he had no fear that he would fail to complete his task satisfactorily. His memory was marvellous, but the additional aid of a photograph enabled him to convert himself into an absolutely lifelike copy of Colonel Marsden.

He stirred himself in evening-dress, wearing over it a light mackintosh. Even the colonel's closest friend would not have detected the deception, so clever was the make-up.

Not until about seven o'clock did he make a move; until that hour he spent his time imitating Marsden's voice, manner, and gestures. Having switched the light off, he quietly opened the door which gave out on to the corridor. A swift glance up and down assured him that no one was in sight.

In a moment he was outside, the door snapping to quietly behind him. Not a second did he waste, but hurried along the corridor to the stairway. Once there he was safe. In that vast hotel his presence could never be questioned; he would be taken for an ordinary visitor. Arriving in the entrance, he glanced at the clock, and ordered a hansom, for Kingston had taken care to notice that Marsden preferred such a vehicle, as a relief from his own car.

The nerve required for Kingston's undertaking was considerable, yet this most singular man appeared to be quite cool and collected. The prospect before him did not even cause his pulse to beat faster. He took it coolly, as a matter of course. He knew it was more than risky, but to Kingston it was the very essence of pleasure. The adventure had a spice to it something out of the common.

It had passed the half-hour when the hansom pulled up at Lord Mount-Fannell's mansion in Grosvenor Square. As usual, the mansion was a blaze of light, the largest looking residence in the square. Kingston stepped out on to the pavement, paid his fare, and strolled up to the door. It stood wide open, with a powdered footman on either side.

Another took his card and ushered him into the great banqueting hall where several members of the Council were congregated, the others not yet having arrived. Marsden was welcomed rather coolly, for the happenings at Craigmoor—the escape of Gissing—had not enhanced his popularity.

Lord Mount-Fannell, however, treated him as usual. He had not yet heard Marsden's own story, so reserved his judgment. There were no indications that Marsden did not look, behave, and talk the same as usual, for nobody was suspicious; nobody, when talking to him, noticed any change.

"There's no danger," Kingston told himself, as he slowly smoking a cigar. This was necessary, as the colonel himself indulged in the habit. "I'm as safe as can be among all these scoundrels. Heavens, but I feel my blood boiling when I shake them by the hand, especially that greatest of all rogues, Lord Mount-Fannell! They're all here—all the same. And I was expected to join them, to become one of their contemptible band! What would they say if they knew I was Graydon, if they knew I was the man they thought had died on the Iron Island?"

He smiled at the thought. Even if he did disclose himself, he would probably be disbelieved. But Kingston had not the slightest intention of making his real identity known until he had dealt with every member—until he had avenged the great wrong which had been done him.

By eight o'clock all the members of the Inner Council were present—that is, twenty-two, including Kingston. Following No. 1, as the Chief was called, the councillors passed down the stairway to the cellar, and then into the massive strong-room, into which no common-member was ever allowed.

"Just the same!" thought Kingston. "I've only been here once, and that was eight years ago, but there's no apparent change."

With no delay Lord Mount-Fannell opened the safe, pulled forward the little table or altar which signalled to the doorkeeper on the other side, and awaited developments. Hardly a second elapsed before the rear wall swung bodily outwards, revealing the well-lighted passage beyond, with the artistic decorations

At the little gate sat the doorkeeper, the wizened old man, whose face was lost in creases. Now, Kingston was not absolutely certain of the password; it was possible it had been changed during the last few days.

And here his marvellous hearing stood him in good stead, the hearing he had cultivated during his stay on the Iron Island. The man in front of him, a German, was speaking in a very loud voice, and Kingston, although looking straight ahead, and apparently lost in thought, distinctly heard the murmured password. It is not too much to say that no ordinary man could never have heard the words.

After passing the gate, Kingston breathed a little more freely, for the password had indeed been altered. He glanced casually at the Council Chamber as he took his seat in an easy-chair, and noted that it had been redecorated recently. Otherwise, however, it was the same.

"Now, gentlemen," exclaimed Lord Mount-Fannell, "there are two reasons why I have called this meeting. One I had better say three. The first is because nearly everything that happened to be in London this week, and the other is to discuss two important matters, viz., the escape of Gissing from Craigmoor, and the affair of the Island Liner, Colston."

The Chief paused and glanced at Kingston, who had started forward in his seat. The other councillors noticed him coldly, but Lord Mount-Fannell held up his hand.

"Please remember, gentlemen, that Colonel Marsden had no opportunity so far of exonerating himself from the charge I am now about to make—that of letting slip Gissing, his most valuable prisoner, escape."

"I am in no way to blame for the occurrence," Kingston. "It was absolutely unavoidable."

"Tell us the story!" exclaimed the Chief.

Kingston, in agitated tones, did so, and as he proceeded telling the full details—which had not appeared in the papers—so the expressions of disfavour vanished. Kingston, although speaking in Marsden's exact manner style, put his case so that condemnation was impossible. Finally, after a long discussion, he was declared free from blame, and the Chief passed on to the other matters.

"It has come to my knowledge," he said, "that the Star Liner Colston—sailed by the company's smallest and fastest boats—is bringing over to England the very cream of Australia, a considerable amount of bullion—close on a million, I am told!"

A murmur went up from the councillors. Half a million! It was a magnificent sum. No. 1 proceeded:

"This information is, of course, quite exclusive. Melbourne agent called up by cypher earlier in the week. The matter is an absolute secret; and the newspapers, after all, must not obtain an inkling of the news. The steamer is chosen as being the least likely to attract attention. Colston starts from Melbourne, I believe, in six or seven weeks from now. There is no doubt about the matter, agent says."

Kingston listened, seemingly as interestedly as the rest. He was, in reality, committing to memory every word the Chief said. This news was important, for he could see what was coming.

"As it happens," continued his lordship, "the Night Hawk is in London with Captain Shaw in command. Now, Herr Braubmann, are the arrangements complete?"

"Yes, through. I want you to sail immediately for the Pacific, ing command of the Night Hawk, and hold up the Colston. It should not be a difficult task."

And the Chief went into a long, detailed account of how the job could be carried out; the others members offering suggestions. Kingston was really surprised at the matter-of-fact manner in which these men treated the subject. It was nothing less than rank piracy.

To hold up an ocean liner! And in the twentieth century! Why, the idea was monstrous! Yet, the Inner Council, the Brotherhood of Iron were discussing it as though it were an every day occurrence. But their valuable secrets were shared by an outsider—by their greatest and most powerful enemy.

Frank Kingston's feelings of satisfaction were carefully concealed. Yet he was almost hugging himself, for it seemed as if Providence had sent him here to-night. The trip of the Night Hawk coincided almost with his own voyage. If he laid his plans well he would be able to frustrate this great venture. He would be able to save the Blue Star liner from that iron grip.

"It is about the very time I shall be returning to the Iron Island," he thought exultantly. "By Jove, it hasn't been fruitless, after all! But it's a big thing, and not so sure the Coronet will be equal to the task. But there's no time for alterations; I shall have to rely entirely on my own knowledge. Ingenuity will have to be my ingenuity and the Dart! Jingo, but that submarine will be useful! It's this confounded German I'm up against

"THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S." A Grand New School Tale, by Charles Hamilton, in the "EMPIRE" Library this week. Price One Halfpenny.

Well, if I'm not equal to any German on the face of the earth, I'll give up the fight and settle down!"

Herr Bruckmann was now in close conversation with his chief, the others listening interestedly; for they knew that if this had come off all right, it would mean a considerable rise in each of them. The discussion was of long duration, and definite arrangements had been made—and Kingston, the avenger, had heard them all—had committed them to memory.

Bruckmann, in charge of the Night Hawk, was for the Pacific on his villainous mission under seemingly favourable circumstances. He would find, however, that he had a man to contend against who was all-powerful—who knew nothing, and who was possessed of the most remarkable skill and ingenuity in the world!

His chance of success was infinitesimal!

Three Birds with One Stone.

Mr. Kingston's visit to the Brotherhood's Council Chamber was an entire success. He got away as safely as he had arrived, changed back to himself at the Cyril, and took a train for Plymouth, which landed him in that port at eight o'clock the following morning.

His appearances in he was still the languid young man he had been when he left. There was nothing to indicate the years he had passed through since he left Plymouth—to show with what triumphant thoughts his brain was filled.

Soon the Coronet arrived, and by five in the evening was out to sea again. Kingston hadn't wasted a second. The bunkers had been filled to the top, provisions had been stowed aboard, and the Dart headed on to the special course she had steered absurdly small in that position—her deckhouse smothered with thousands of bolt-heads. A rope-ladder gave access to her, and Kingston had given strict orders that no one was to enter except himself and who slept in the vessel.

Kingston, Sir Robert, Dolores, and little Ivy, dined together in the saloon, sat together on deck, and to the crew formed a merry party. Yet Kingston was on as serious a journey as he had ever attempted. This was no pleasure to all knew that.

It was not until the Coronet had been a week at sea that Kingston found an opportunity of telling Dolores everything. Naturally, she was astounded and rather awed at the attitude he meant to adopt and resolved to take up, at the daring with which he meant to attack the Night Hawk.

Of the journey to Australia there is nothing to relate: nothing, that is, except that which would be wearying reading. Colonel Marsden was as good as non-existent. Even if he had the determination to make an outcry he never had the chance.

Kingston had made his identity known to the wretched Colonel Marsden, while cursing his luck, knew very well that if it were discovered by the crew of the ship his life would be even worse than it was now.

He would be denounced by Kingston, thrown into prison, and murdered by the Brotherhood afterwards, even as Gissing had been murdered. Marsden knew this so naturally chose a life of exile on the Iron Island with Don Carlos.

There was no trouble whatever, being really as anxious as Kingston to keep his presence secret. It was a peculiar state of affairs.

But Kingston had the upper hand—Kingston wielded the sword.

The days grew into weeks the weather became soft and balmy. Fine, clear skies and light evenings favoured the journey from the start. Even the navigation of the Horn was accomplished under splendid atmospheric conditions. Both Kingston and Dolores had grown very fond of Sir Robert's little child during the considerable time they had been acquainted, and the parting would be rather hard.

Sir Robert himself, too, was another man altogether to the struggling banker who had been at the head of Gissing's Bank in London. He was reformed, and looked upon Kingston as the one instrument of foolishness and cleverness, for he had proved himself to be decidedly possessed of brains of no ordinary merit. There was no denying that fact.

But, after all, Gissing was a member of the Brotherhood; one of the men Kingston had sworn to ruin. That he had killed him was certain; but in doing so, he had opened his victim's eyes. As Mr. Malcolm Coates, Gissing looked a much younger man. His grey hair had been dyed, he was cleanshaven, and any stranger would say his age was no more than thirty-five.

Before even getting to New Zealand, Kingston had through his influence, obtained for Sir Robert a really good post—manager to a large bank in Christchurch. The baronet knew all that was to be known about banking, so was quite capable of filling the situation. His gratitude to Kingston was overwhelming, but the latter would hear none of it. He would listen to no thanks.

At last the day came when the Coronet, spick and span, steamed into Christchurch harbour. Both Dolores and Kingston felt a little the strain of parting, and the former was nursing Ivy in her lap for the last time.

"Well, Sir Robert," said Kingston, "I've carried out my promise to you. I've restored your child and conveyed you to a spot where you will be absolutely secure. Please don't try to thank me; you have done that already. Besides that, I can honestly say that I've enjoyed this trip."

"If there were a few more men like you in the world——" began the other, with shining eyes. But Kingston held up his hand.

"Please don't," he smiled. "Look here. I have a little pocket-book which I shall be glad if you will accept. It contains five hundred pounds, and will be enough, I imagine, to purchase furniture for a little house. Before I leave Christchurch I want to see you set up for yourself, Sir Robert—I want to see you started on a new life."

"Indeed, that is my wish, too," said Dolores earnestly. "Although your title is taken from you, and you are commencing life as a new man, you still have by your side the dearest little daughter a man could wish for. On this voyage, Sir Robert, you've learnt to love her more than ever you did before. I feel sure that in her you will find the sweetest companion a man ever had. And I, too, wish to see you embarked on a new career—one which your child will grow up to honour and respect."

The Coronet stayed at Christchurch for a week altogether, and during that time "Malcolm Coates" embarked upon his new life. But more than a week could not be spared. Kingston had other work to attend to—serious work. There was not a day to be wasted. He had yet to visit the Iron Island, land Colonel Marsden, and be a couple of hundred miles to the southward to foil the plot which Herr Bruckmann was detailed to put into execution.

Therefore, on the sixth day Kingston and his beautiful assistant bade the last farewell and departed on their long journey—a journey which the captain thought was for mere pleasure. Morrison had asked Kingston why he had not experimented yet with the Dart, and Kingston had declared his reason to be, because he wished to get into a certain latitude before doing so.

For Kingston, usually so active and energetic, it was weary work waiting and waiting while the hundreds of miles of water were passed over. But at last, one day as he and Dolores were sitting on deck quietly discussing the situation in its many aspects, Captain Morrison suddenly drew their attention.

"Land on the port-bow, sir!" he cried. "I don't know what it is. One of those little rocks, I suppose. Still, it isn't quite the spot I expected to find 'em——"

"Land, Morrison?" drawled Kingston, though his pulse beat quickly. "I wonder what it can be? We're clean out of the track of ships here. Let me look through the telescope."

He ascended the bridge leisurely, Dolores on deck admiring his wonderful self-control, for she almost knew that the land was the Iron Island. Kingston took the glass and directed it towards the black smudge which was apparent on the horizon between the clear blue of the sea and sky. After a moment he handed it back, smiling.

"Yes," he exclaimed, with a yawn. "It's only a little coral-or rock islet. Nothing worth bothering about. Phew! But it's deuced hot to-day!"

He strolled back to where Dolores sat, apparently as unconcerned as ever. Yet every fibre of his body was quivering with anticipation. He had looked through the telescope and had seen—the Iron Island!

Yes, at last the governor of Crapmoor Prison was to get his deserts; at last he was to join the lonely Don Sebastian in exile! Sir Robert Gissing was dealt with; and very soon the plans to hold up the Blue Star liner Colston were to be frustrated, and Herr Bruckmann secured as the next victim.

Frank Kingston was killing three birds with one stone!

(An exciting instalment of this thrilling serial next Thursday, relating how Frank Kingston disposes of Colonel Marsden, and what happens when the "Dart" falls in with the "Night Hawk."

NEXT THURSDAY: "MR. MERRY." A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of The Chums of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford.

Concluding Chapters of this Great Sea Story.

In the Service of the King.

By LIEUTENANT LEFEVRE.

Happy Days—The Parting.

While Norah sat beside Oswald, holding his hot hand in her cool, slim one, she told him of all that had passed since that morning when he had said good-bye to her in the saloon of the house on the island—how the pirates had returned, and how her uncle and cousin, fearful lest Oswald had escaped, and carried the news of their treachery to headquarters, had gone and taken her with them on board the Rattler; how the wretched slaves had been seized, and thrust into the stifling hold of the Albatross, and how they had sailed away.

"Kester was a villain—a bloodthirsty murderer; but he was good to me," she said. "And because the others feared him, I suffered no indignity while I was on board the Rattler. And now he is dead, and my uncle and cousin are dead, and I am alone in the world."

"Your uncle and cousin are dead?" Oswald asked.

She nodded her head.

"My uncle poisoned himself. He drank the poison before my eyes that day. He was dead when they found him lying outside the cabin door. And my cousin, when he recovered consciousness, managed to elude the men who were taking him on board the frigate, and leaped overboard. He was never seen again." She paused for a moment. "They have all been good to me here—the admiral, and your father and sister. Someone must have told them about—about that night you spent at my uncle's house. Your father has asked me to go back to England with them, and to make his house mine."

"And you will?" Oswald cried eagerly.

"If you wish it," she said gently.

* * * * * * *

The days that followed were the happiest that Oswald had ever known. Between himself and his father a better understanding and sympathy had sprung up than had ever existed before. Anxious to atone for the injustice he had done his son, Sir George allowed himself to display more affection and tenderness than Oswald had ever received from him before. It was with unfeigned delight that he listened to praises of Oswald from Captain Garvin and Mr. Lancing.

But Captain Garvin's frequent visits were not always for Oswald's sake, and soon Oswald began to understand why the colour would come up into Eva's cheeks when they heard the captain's footsteps on the stairs.

Between Eva and Norah Wilson a warm friendship and affection had sprung up. Both Eva and her father knew that they owed Oswald's life to Norah. They knew, too, through what suffering the girl had gone, and did all in their power to make her feel that they would endeavour to pay their debt of gratitude by making her future as bright and happy as her past had been the reverse.

The island, which had been the elder Wilson's private property, was sold, the admiral taking the proceeds of the sale in trust for Norah; and, as the island was one of the most fertile in the group, and was well cultivated, the price secured for it was no inconsiderable sum.

It was one evening when Oswald was so far recovered that he was able to leave his bed and take his ease on the sofa beside the window, that Captain Garvin came into the room with a face beaming with joy.

"Congratulate me, Oswald!" he said, holding out his hand. "Your sister has made me the happiest man in the world."

Oswald gripped the captain's hand tightly.

"I am glad!" he said simply.

The captain sat down beside Oswald's couch.

"The Cynthia is to sail in three weeks for England," he said, "and your father and sister will come with us as passengers. We are to be married on our arrival in England."

"Only my father and sister?" Oswald asked.

Captain Garvin smiled.

"I know there is someone else you would like to come with us," he said; "but the admiral won't allow it. He has conceived a great affection for Miss Norah, and no wonder, for a more beautiful and noble girl I never met in my life—one excepted. He is a lonely old man; you will not begrudge him her companionship for a few years to come?"

"I owe too much to him," said Oswald earnestly, "to begrudge him any happiness."

"You are both young yet; you can afford to wait. In a few years' time you should have secured your commission, and then it will be time enough to talk of leaving a wife and settling down—that is, settling down as far as a sailor can in these stirring times. Meanwhile, you will know that the girl you love is safe and happy."

"Yes, she will be happy with him," Oswald said.

"Remember, in three weeks' time we sail," Captain Garvin said. "You will make haste and get your strength back, for we cannot sail without you."

Then he went out, and presently Norah came in and seated herself on the chair Captain Garvin had vacated.

"They tell me that you are going away," she said, with a break in her voice—"going home to England."

"I had hoped that you would have come with us," Oswald said. "But—but the skipper tells me that you are to stay here."

"The admiral has asked me to stay with him. He has been so good to me."

"And to me, Heaven bless him!" Oswald said.

"I think it would have hurt him if I had refused," she said. "But—but it will be hard to say good-bye to Eva and you."

"You will miss me? You will not forget me when I am gone?" Oswald asked eagerly. "You will wait for me, Norah, until I come to claim my wife?"

"I will wait," she said softly.

It was a sad parting that took place three weeks later, when the Cynthia was ready for sea.

The admiral and Norah had come on board to say farewell. The old man laid his hand on Oswald's shoulder.

"Heaven has been very good to all of us," he said fervently. "It has given your father back his son, it has given to me a daughter—for Norah has come to fill the place of a daughter in my lonely home. I do not begrudge me the happiness of having her with me a little while?"

"How could I, sir! I would give my life to serve you," Oswald said earnestly.

"I know—I know—I know it would." For a few moments the admiral was silent; then he smiled. "I see that Captain Garvin is anxious to be off on board. He is impatient to get to his island again now; and one can scarcely blame him. He is a good fellow, and deserves the happiness that has come to him. Now, we must say good-bye, last, but not least, you are in the way you have begun. Be true to your God and King, and to yourself, and years will pass quickly, perhaps; they will bring you honour and happiness. Good-bye. Heaven bless you!"

And so they parted, to meet again when the admiral had been fulfilled and the tried and honoured servant of the king came to claim the hand of the girl he loved.

THE END.

How Do You Do?

WHOM TO WRITE TO—The Editor, "GEM" LIBRARY, 23-9, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, who will be pleased to hear from you.

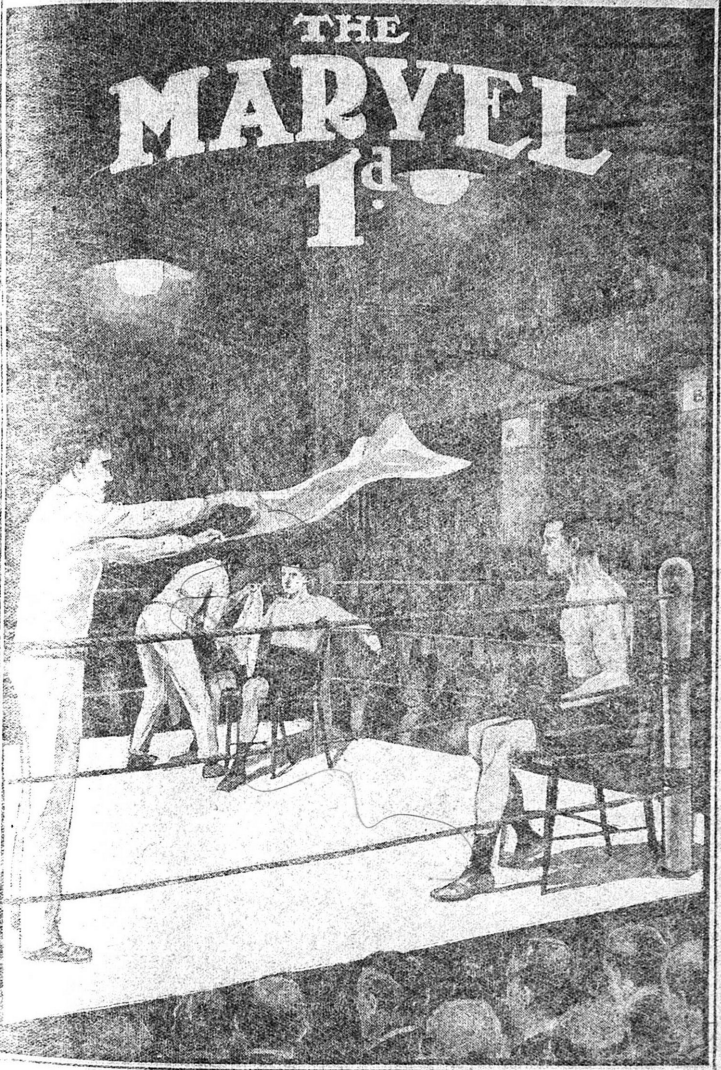
"Mr. MERRY."

Next Thursday I am sure you will be glad to find that there is a turn for the better in the tide of Tom Merry's affairs. The popular junior, leader of the Terrible Three, comes into his own again. Hurrah!

The Editor

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