

NEXT
THURSDAY!

"NO CLASS!"

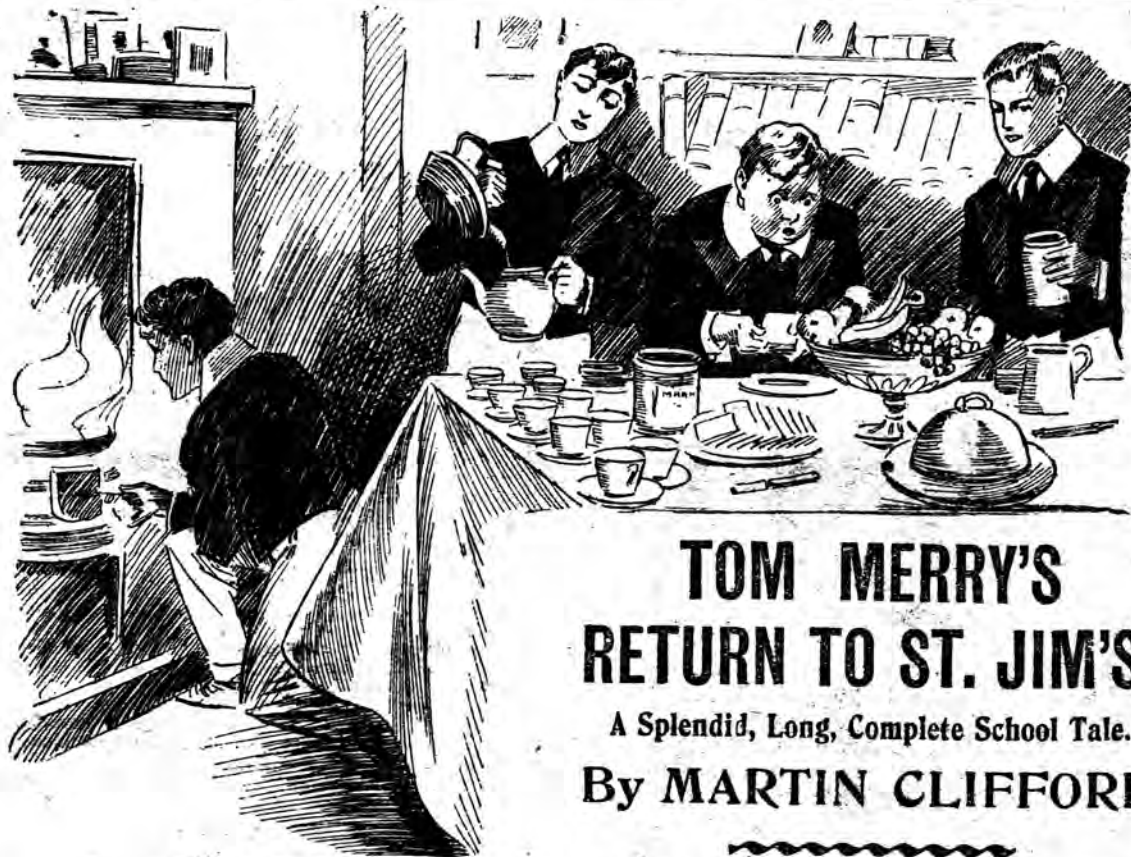
Another Splendid Tale of the Juniors
of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Every

Thursday.



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TOM MERRY'S RETURN TO ST. JIM'S.

A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.

A Really Great Occasion.

A BLAZING fire glowed and danced in Tom Merry's study in the School House. It gleamed upon a spotless tablecloth and an imposing array of crockery. The gas was lighted, and the curtain drawn. Outside, in the quadrangle, the early winter evening was dark and snowy, but in the study all was cosy brightness. The room was pretty well filled.

Monsters, with a face as ruddy as the fire, was making toast. Monty Lowther was warming the teapot, preparatory to making tea. Blake, of the Fourth Form, opened a tin of sardines with his usual skill. Fatty Wynn was cutting cake, and slipping a chunk into his mouth every few seconds. The sight of a feed always made Fatty Wynn hungry, and he had a substantial hunger that was not easily demolished. He could have finished that cake and another, and still have been quite ready for tea.

Digby was cutting bread-and-butter on a corner of the table. Herries was turning biscuits out of a tin into a dish. Figgins, of the New House, was there, making himself useful, and hesitating between a soap-dish and a china mug as a

receptacle for jam. Kerr had just come in with a paper full of ham, which he was piling on a plate, watched almost wolfishly by Fatty Wynn.

There were evidently great things in progress in that particular study in the Shell passage.

Something had apparently happened at St. Jim's which the juniors felt they were bound to celebrate in fitting style. New House fellows and School House fellows were mingling in perfect amity, as if the time had come when the lion and the lamb were to repose together in peace.

And indeed something had happened.

Tom Merry was back at St. Jim's.

He had not been away so very long, but it had seemed a long time to him and his chums. He had had to fight a grim battle with poverty. There had been dark days in London—darker days than he had ever known before. But that was all over now. The arrival of his uncle from America had changed it all. Tom Merry had come into his own again, as it were, and the chums of St. Jim's meant to celebrate his return to his old place in the Shell Form.

Such things, as Monty Lowther remarked, didn't happen every day. It was a reason for standing a ripping feed—a

"TOM MERRY & Co." and "THE IRON ISLAND."

feed that should mark an epoch in the history of the School House.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had nobly "blued" a fiver he had received from his "governor," and the other fellows had contributed liberally. Tom Merry had not been allowed to pay a shilling towards it, but all the others shelled out splendidly.

And the feed seemed likely to be a record. Good things were piled on the table, on the shelf, and on the bookcase, and the study cupboard was overflowing with them.

Fellows came along the passage, and looked into the study enviously.

"No room for more," said Monty Lowther to every fellow who looked in. "Beastly squeeze as it is."

"That is hardly complimentary to your guests, Lowthah, deah boy," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"Rats!" said Lowther cheerfully.

"Weally, you know—" "I mean it's a most happy and gratifying squeeze, then," said Monty Lowther gracefully. "All the same, we've no room for more."

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agree with you there. Pway pass along, Mellish, deah boy! There is no woom for you."

"Oh, I wasn't coming in!" said Mellish.

"Then you will have no objection to passin' on, I'm sure."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Mellish—" But Mellish had passed on.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at his big gold watch.

"Bai Jove, it's half-past five!" he exclaimed. "Tom

Mewwy will be here with his uncle in a minute, deah boys.

Buck up with the pweeps!"

"The what?" demanded Manners, turning a perfectly

crimson face from the fire, as he jerked another round of

toast off the fork.

"The pweeps.—the pwepawations, deah boy."

"Oh!"

"Better have all weady for the honahed guest, you know."

"Why don't you lend a hand, then?" asked Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—" "Buckle to!" said Kerr. "Look after the fire, for

instance. Shove some coal on."

"My deah chap, I'm exercisin' a genewal supewintendence,"

said D'Arcy loftily. "I'm asein' that you othah chaps do

things."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I do not wegard that as an intelligible wemark, Kerr,

and I wefuse to weply to it."

"Well, the toast's done," said Manners. "There's enough

for an army. Haven't you got the jam out yet, Figgy?"

"I was thinking—" "Pway don't stop to think, Figgay, deah boy. There's

no time for a slow pwecess like that."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Weally Figgins—" "Look here, where does the jam go?" asked Figgins.

"In the dish."

"Soap-dish or mug?"

"Well, we usually use the soap-dish," said Manners hesi-

tatingly; "but as we have a distinguished guest—" "Better use the mug," said Lowther.

"Yes; it's better to keep up appearances."

And Figgins excavated the jam-jar with a tablespoon, and

jerked out masses of jam into the mug.

Monty Lowther cast a critical eye over the table.

"Looks to me all ready," he said. "We shall want some

more spoons and knives, that's all. I think Gussy might have

fetched some."

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Well, you've been doing nothing."

"I have been exercisin' a genewal supewintendence."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Lowthah—" "Now, don't begin to argue at a time like this, Gussy,"

said Jack Blake persuasively. "Go and steal some spoons."

"Weally, Blake—" "Beg, borrow, or steal; it doesn't matter—only get some."

"Undah the circs—" "Exactly! Buzz off!"

"I wathah think—" "That's right. Go!"

"I considah—" "Yes, yes. Buck up!"

"That it would be justifiable—" "Fully! Off you go!"

"To bowwow a few things—" "Exactly! Hurry up!"

"Without askin' permish—" "Buzz off!"

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"THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S."

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"EMPIRE" Library this week. Price One Halfpenny.

"Of course, if they are westored undamaged to the ownahs

aftahwards—" "Are you going?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus went.

"All right now," said Monty Lowther. "My hat, this

will be a ripping feed! We're going to do the American

uncle down splendidly, I think."

"By Jove, yes!"

"Hallo! Here he is!"

"Come in, sir!"

"Come in, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry, of the Shell, appeared in the doorway of the

study, his handsome face flushed, and his eyes sparkling.

His uncle was beside him—a kind-looking, bronze-com-

plexioned man, who seemed to carry with him the airy

breeziness of the Western prairies.

"Come in, sir!"

"All ready, sir!"

"Well, I guess this looks comfy," said Mr. Poinsett. The

rancher was an Englishman to the finger-tips, but he had

lived long enough in America to "guess."

And he stepped into the study.

Tom Merry followed him in. There was a happier expres-

sion upon Tom Merry's face than had been there for many a

day. This was something like old times. The crowded

study, the merry faces and voices made him feel that he

was really and truly back at St. Jim's, and in his old

place again.

It was ripping!

"Here's your chair, sir," said Monty Lowther, "and

here's yours, Tommy, my son! Hallo! What on earth's

that?"

"That" was a sound of hurried footsteps in the passage,

mingled with a wild clatter as of metallic objects crashing

upon the floor.

"My hat!"

"Gussy!"

"What the—" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy burst wildly into the study, red

and panting, and shedding spoons and forks and knives on

all sides.

"Wescue, deah boys!" he gasped. "Bai Jove! Oh,

wescue!"

And he rushed round the table.

The next moment the doorway was blocked with infuriated

juniors.

CHAPTER 2.

A Study Feed

M R. POINSETT sat in his chair, gazing at the scene in astonishment.

He was not accustomed to the manners and customs of the juniors of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood gasping for breath, and turning out of his pockets upon the table such of the cutlery

as he had not dropped in his hurried flight.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, Bernard Glyn and Reilly,

Hancock and Gore and Macdonald, and a crowd more

juniors, crammed themselves into the doorway, furious.

"Where's that blessed burglar?"

"Where's that brigand?"

"Where's D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's the matter?"

"Matter!" roared Kangaroo. "He's raided our studies!

Collared all our knives and forks and spoons and things

just as we're going to have tea!"

"Yah!"

"Burglar!"

"We'll scalp him!"

And the indignant juniors made a rush.

But Tom Merry & Co. lined up inside the study, and the

rush was stopped. There wasn't much room for it, as a

matter of fact.

"Cheese it!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Order!"

"Stand back!"

"Yah! We're going to bump him!"

"Order!"

"Yaas, ordah, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus,

adjusting his eyeglass, and looking severely at the juniors

from behind his defenders. "I am vewy much surpvised at

you for wushin' into the studay like this, when there's a

distinguished guest here."

"Oh, I guess you needn't mind me!" said Mr. Poinsett.

Kangaroo drew back, a little abashed. In his excitement

he had not noticed the rancher sitting at the table.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "I'm s-s-sorry!"

"Sorry," said Clifton Dane.

"Faith, and we're all sorry intirely," said Reilly. And the juniors backed out of the study.
 "Not at all," said the rancher genially. "All correct!" But Kangaroo & Co. departed.
 Lowther closed the door.
 "It's all wight, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I think I've got enough forks and things, you know."

"You made enough row about it, anyway."
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Oh, sit down!"
 "Weally—"
 "Gussy will have to sit on the coal-locker," said Manners. "No room at the table. Figgins and Herries in the window."

"I am afraid I could not sit on the coal-lockah, Mannahs. I should be in dangah of soilin' my twousahs."
 "Better stand on it, then," suggested Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr—"
 "But perhaps you are afraid of soiling your boots."

"Weally—"
 "I can make a suggestion," Monty Lowther remarked. "Suppose you take off your jacket, Gussy, and spread it on the locker, and sit on that?"

"But that would soil my jacket, Lowthah."

"Dear me! So it would!"
 "Oh! You are wottin', you wottah! But it's all wight—I will stand. Pewpaws I had bettah stand, as a mattah of fact, to keep a superintendin' eye on the pwoceedin's."

"Pass the toast to Mr. Poinsett."

"And the ham!"

"And the eggs!"

"Now, sir, pile in."

"Don't think of the Head's dinner, sir. You owe us first innings."

Mr. Poinsett smiled.
 At the risk, or, rather, the certainty, of spoiling his dinner with the Head, he "piled into" the good things in the junior study.

Life on the boundless plains of the Far West had given the rancher a constitution of iron, and so he was well fitted to stand a junior feed. Any ordinary digestion would have sunk under the strain. But the rancher stood it without turning a hair. He would certainly have required the stowage capacity of a large steamer if he had eaten half of what the juniors pressed upon him.

But he did very well, nevertheless.

Tom Merry's face was very bright as he sat at the table. The study rang with voices, and the clatter of plates and knives and forks.

Most of the juniors were talking at once, and nobody took the trouble to listen, excepting when Mr. Poinsett spoke.

Then in the midst of the freedom and geniality, the juniors showed that they had at the same time a proper respect for age and for their guest.

It was a merry meal.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hovered round the feasters, at times casting a dubious glance upon the coal-locker.

He was getting tired of standing, and his superintendence of the feast did not seem to be really necessary, as nobody listened to him when he said anything.

And as he was standing up, the fellows who were not close to the table, seemed to take it for granted that he was there to pass things to them.

There was a hail of demands upon the swell of the School House all the time.

Only half the party had room at the table, and the rest were wherever they could find space, and so the services of a waiter came in very useful.

Arthur Augustus had not exactly intended that, but he was a very obliging fellow, and he was kept very busy.

"Pass the toast, Gussy."

"Ham this way."

"Another egg, please."

"Fill my cup again, will you?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I weally think I'll wisk the coal-lockah."

"More jam, Gussy."

"Cake this way!"

"I'll thank you for the salt."

"Sorry to bother you, Gussy, but you're standing up, you know. Do cut some more bread-and-butter."

"Bai Jove!"

"You might pass the pie, will you?"

"Have you cut that bread-and-butter?"

"Jam over here, please, D'Arcy"

Arthur Augustus flew to and fro breathlessly. And the more he obeyed the calls upon him, the faster the calls came, till the swell of St. Jim's began to lose his head a little.

But when he put salt into Figgins's tea, and poured tea into Lowther's helping of pie, there was a yell of protest.

"Look there!"

"You ass!"

"Oh, go and sit down!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Fathead!"

"Do be careful, Gussy," urged Figgins. "Bring me the tea, will you, and fill my cup, and don't be so jolly clumsy."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Buck up, old son."

D'Arcy brought the teapot over to Figgins. Blake called to him for some sugar, and D'Arcy turned his head as he began to pour out the tea.

"Wait a moment, Blake, deah boy."

"Yaroo!"

It was a fiendish yell from Figgins.

It is difficult to pour out tea safely with one's head turned in another direction, but Arthur Augustus had not thought of that for a moment.

The steaming hot stream from the spout of the teapot was missing Figgins's teacup, and pouring over his legs.

Crash!

Teacup and saucer fell to the floor and were shattered into fifty pieces as Figgins leaped to his feet with a wild yell.

"Ow! Yaroo!"

"Bai Jove!"

Crash went the teapot to the floor.

"You ass!" shouted Lowther.

"Oh! Bai Jove!"

"Yaroo!" roared Figgins. "Oh! Ow!"

"Gweat-Scott! I'm sowwy, Figgay!"

"Yow-ow! Ass!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins gave D'Arcy a terrific glare, and rushed out of the study, to seek a change of trousers. The juniors simply yelled. From that moment forward, however, no one sought to utilise D'Arcy's services as a waiter.

Figgins returned in five minutes, with new trousers and a new smile, and the feed went on cheerily. But D'Arcy was sitting in Figgins's place now, and he did not move again. Figgins sat on the coal-locker.

CHAPTER 3.

The Promise.

TOM MERRY'S uncle took his leave at last of the chums of St. Jim's, the juniors accompanying him to the end of the staircase. Mr. Poinsett was in high good humour, and so were all the juniors. They agreed that the study had seldom seen a merrier meeting, and Lowther was loud in his praises of D'Arcy as a waiter—a compliment that the swell of St. Jim's took in a rather dubious spirit.

"As a mattah of fact, Lowthah, deah boy, I did not intend to act in the capacity of waitah," he remarked.

Lowther waved his hand.

"I won't allow you to belittle yourself in that way, Gussy. You are a first-class waiter."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You couldn't have done the business better if you had been a professional," Monty Lowther declared. "You might have been born for the job."

"Weally—"

"In fact, if you follow Tom Merry's example, and go on the rocks, you'll never be in want of a job," Lowther observed. "You will always be worth your keep as a waiter."

"You uttah ass!"

"Didn't he do it splendidly, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather," chorused the juniors.

"We'll have him always to wait at our little feeds in future," Manners remarked.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass indignantly upon Manners.

"You fwabjous ass!"

"I mean it, Gussy. We'll let you know in time, so that you can get your dress-clothes on."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Of course, I don't mean to say that I'm particular about a little thing like that," said Manners. "But it looks more professional—gives a waiter a more finished appearance. Don't you chaps think so?"

"Certainly," said Figgins.

"You uttah asses! I wofuse to continue this widiculous discuss!"

And Arthur Augustus walked away with his nose very high in the air, followed by a yell of laughter from the juniors.

The Fourth-Formers departed, well satisfied with their entertainment in the Shell study, and the Terrible Three were left on their own.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"NO CLASS."

They proceeded to put the study in order again. The remains of the feast cumbered the room in every direction, and the piles of used crockery were appalling.

"Fortunately, it doesn't all belong to us," Monty Lowther remarked, "and the chaps who lent it can wash it. They shouldn't have lent it to us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it was a jolly feed!"

"Ripping."

"What's the matter with you, Tommy?"

Tom Merry came out of a reverie with a start.

"Eh?" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing!"

"Haven't got the toothache?"

"Toothache? No!"

"Or a pain in the toe?"

"No."

"Then what are you scowling about?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I wasn't aware that I was scowling," he replied. "I was thinking, that's all."

"Well, don't!"

"But, I say—"

"Ain't you glad to be back at St. Jim's?" demanded Lowther.

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry heartily. "It seems almost too good to be true. My uncle is a brick! He's going to keep me at St. Jim's, and he's going to provide for Miss Fawcett. Isn't he ripping?"

"Yes, rather! I'd trade off my uncle for him any day."

"No fear!"

"Then you're feeling happy?" asked Manners.

"Yes, rather!"

"What are you thinking about, then, and wrinkling your chivvy over?"

Tom Merry coloured.

His two chums stared at him. There were no secrets between the Terrible Three, and Manners and Lowther could both see that the hero of the Shell had something on his mind. They waited to be told what it was.

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "you remember Blucher's Buildings—that awful place in London you went to when you were looking for me at Christmas-time?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You remember that kid—Joe?"

"The little ragamuffin who wanted you to become a pick-pocket?"

"Well, he didn't exactly want that—he's been brought up among pickpockets, and he really didn't know how rotten it was," said Tom Merry. "I had a lot of good turns done me by that kid when I was in London. I didn't know much about living on next to nothing a year, you know. That kid saved me a lot of things. He took a liking to me, and stood by me in many ways."

"Good for him!"

"And I told him," went on Tom Merry slowly—"I told him that if my luck ever changed and I came out of the trouble I was in I'd look after him."

"Ah!"

"Oh!"

Manners and Lowther uttered those two ejaculations together.

"Well," continued Tom Merry, "I'm out of the trouble now, and my luck has changed. I've got to keep my promise."

"Hum!"

"Exactly how I'm to do it I don't know; but—but I can't leave that kid to grow up in horrible poverty among drunken brutes and criminals," said Tom Merry quietly.

Monty Lowther nodded.

"There are thousands of kids who grow up like that in London every year, Tom," he remarked. "We can't help it. If the Government lets it go on, I don't see what private people can do."

"You're right, Monty. But in this particular case I've given my word—and if I hadn't it would be just the same. After the way that poor kid stuck to me, I should have to stick to him."

"Well, that's right, I suppose."

"I'm going to do it. But the question is—how?"

"Your uncle would do something for him. He seems to be an awfully good sort."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's what I was thinking. I told Joe I'd look after him, and he should come with me if my luck changed."

"Phew! Come with you?"

"Yes. Why shouldn't he come to St. Jim's and have a decent education and grow up into a decent chap?" said Tom Merry.

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"That little ragamuffin at St. Jim's?"

"Why not?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Well, I suppose there are about a thousand reasons why not," said Lowther. "He's not what you'd call a suitable chap to come here, and I fancy the Head wouldn't have it."

"I should have to get my uncle to work it with the Head, of course. And I don't see why the kid shouldn't improve in a very short time. He was very quick and intelligent."

"H'm!"

"Anyway, he would pass among those other young rascals in the Third—he would make an addition to Wally & Co."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you chaps think?"

"Blessed if I know," said Manners uneasily. "You ought to get your uncle to do something for the kid, of course. But—"

"Let him come here," said Lowther. "It will be fun. If the fags don't like him we'll lick 'em."

"Well, that's so," said Manners. "We could do that."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then I shall jolly well put it to my uncle!" he said.

And he did.

He had a talk with the rancher that evening, and told him the whole story.

Mr. Poinsett listened, with a curious gleam in his clear, keen eyes.

When Tom Merry had finished, the rancher laid his brown hand upon the lad's shoulder.

"I'm glad to hear this, Tom," he said quietly; "I'm glad to see that you've not forgotten a fellow who stood by you when you needed it, however humble he may be. It's like you, Tom, to think of him—it's just like you. If you think he could come to the school, and you would look after him and lick him into shape a bit—"

"I would gladly, uncle!"

"Then you can leave the rest to me. The fees are nothing to me, and I can arrange it with Dr. Holmes."

"Oh, thank you, uncle!"

"Not at all, Tom. You'll always have me to back you up, I guess, when you're doing a real decent thing," said Mr. Poinsett, and he gripped the hand of his nephew. "Now, I'll go and put it to the Head."

Tom Merry waited in his uncle's room during the interview with the Head.

The rancher returned, smiling.

"I've settled it," he said.

Tom Merry's face lighted up.

"And I've got leave for you and a couple of your friends to come up to town to-morrow morning with me to fetch the lad," said Mr. Poinsett. "I have to go right on to Manchester on business, but you will be able to find the kid in London."

"Oh, yes, easily!"

And so it was settled.

CHAPTER 4.

Kangaroo's Little Joke.

THE next morning Mr. Poinsett prepared at an early hour for his departure from St. Jim's. The Terrible Three were ready before the rancher was, and half the Lower School had gathered to see them off.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wore a rather uneasy expression.

"I trust you fellows will be all wight in London," he said.

Tom Merry laughed.

"We'll try to look after ourselves, Gussy," he said.

"Well, you know, you wemembah how you all got lost the time I took you to London to see the Towah," said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You can take Towser if you like," said Herries generously. "Mind you bring him back safe, that's all."

"Oh, we won't rob you of him!" said Monty Lowther.

"Not at all! I shouldn't mind!"

"Ahem! But I should."

"You silly ass—"

"Bai Jove, you know, I feel that I ought to come! I know perfectly well that you chaps will get into some wotten twouble if you're not looked after."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Lowthah—"

"Cut off and ask Lathom," said Tom Merry. "He might give you leave. He looked in a good temper this morning."

"Bai Jove, that's a wippin' ideah, you know!"

And Arthur Augustus rushed away in search of his Form-master. The Fourth Form-master was indeed in a very good temper that morning, and, after a little hesitation, he gave Arthur Augustus leave.

The swell of St. Jim's rushed back, to find Mr. Poinsett in the hall, bag in hand, and the Terrible Three ready to start. The rancher had insisted upon walking to the station—and, indeed, the clear, frosty morning made walking a luxury.

"Pway for me, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I've got leave!"

"Buck up, then!"

"All wight, I'll huwvy like anythin'!"

Mr. Poinsett looked at his watch.

"We can wait two minutes," he said.

"Thank you vewy much, sir!"

And Arthur Augustus rushed upstairs.

Two minutes elapsed and then Tom Merry shouted upstairs after him:

"Gussy! Gussy!"

"All wight, deah boy!"

"What are you doing?"

"Puttin' on a clean collah."

"Come without one!"

"Weally, Tom Mewvy—"

"Buck up, Gussy!" shouted Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake, you might come and help a fellow—"

"It's all right!" said Kangaroo. "I'll help him!"

He rushed upstairs.

Arthur Augustus had finished fastening his collar. The Cornstalk junior rushed into the study.

"What can I do?" he demanded.

"Get my othah toppah out of the box."

"Good!"

"And my coat fwom the wardwobe in the dorm."

"Right!"

"Buck up! I'll wait in the passage."

"Right you are!"

Kangaroo rushed away. He came down the stairs again three at a time, with a coat over his arm.

Manners was shouting up the lower staircase:

"Come after us, Gussy—we're starting!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

But Manners was gone.

Mr. Poinsett, with the three Shell fellows, was striding across the frosty quadrangle towards the gates. They did not mean to lose the train.

"Bai Jove," ejaculated Arthur Augustus, "they've started!"

"Never mind! Here you are, get into this and run!" exclaimed Kangaroo, holding out the coat.

Arthur Augustus, without even looking at the coat, plunged his arms into it, and dashed down the stairs. There was a roar of laughter in the hall.

D'Arcy did not even stop to think what it might be about. He was in too great a hurry for that.

He dashed out of the School House, and sprinted across the quad.

Juniors shrieking with laughter crammed the doorway, looking after him.

The humorous Cornstalk had not given D'Arcy his own coat. He had brought down an old morning-coat, which had once belonged to a master at St. Jim's—a big man—but had long since been discarded, and was now used by the Junior Dramatic Society for comic effects.

It looked comic enough on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The pointed tails nearly touched the ground behind him as he ran, lashing to and fro in the wind.

Everybody who saw him passing in the quad, stopped, and stared, and roared.

Yells of laughter accompanied him to the gate.

But Arthur Augustus did not even listen.

He was in too great a hurry for that. He dashed on, and out into the road.

Far ahead, striding rapidly towards the village of Rylcombe, he discerned four figures in the frosty lane.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "I shall catch them all wight."

And he sped on.

The four were tramping along at a good rate, but at the sound of hurried footsteps behind, they turned round.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Why—what—Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three burst into a wild yell of laughter.

Mr. Poinsett stared at the swell of St. Jim's, and then joined irresistibly in the laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus paused, panting, and jammed his eye-glass into his eye, and fixed a witheringly indignant look upon the chums of the Shell.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses—"

"Where did you get that coat?" shrieked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, hold me!" gasped Manners.

"Bai Jove! What! What's the matter with the coat?"

"Look! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three yelled.

Arthur Augustus looked down at his coat. For the first time he saw what he was wearing.

His aristocratic countenance turned almost green.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the chums.

"It was that awful wottah Kangaroo!"

"My word! Oh, dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can't go to London in this thing!" D'Arcy gasped. "Bai Jove! I'll go back and give that awful boundah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can you wait and catch the next twain, Mr Poinsett?"

The rancher laughed.

"I'm afraid not, D'Arcy," he said. "I am due in London early, and I have to go on to Manchester this morning. Dear me! I guess you'll have to come to London in that coat."

"But weally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway stop cacklin', you asses! Look here, I'd wathah come to London without a coat than twavel in this howwid thing."

"Too cold! You'll be frozen."

"Bai Jove!"

There was no doubt about it.

The air was keen and frosty; the bitter cold was piercingly sharp. The chums did not feel warm even in overcoats and scarves.

"Bai Jove, you know! I—I can't twavel in this."

"You'll have to go back, then."

"I wufuse to go back."

"Well, we must get on," said Mr. Poinsett.

The rancher moved on with his long strides. The chums of the Shell followed. Arthur Augustus hesitated. He was determined not to give up going to town. That would be too bad, and he could imagine the shriek of merriment that would greet his return to St. Jim's.

But to travel in that coat! He whipped it off; but the cold wind blew clear through his Etons, and his teeth chattered.

"It's wotten!"

There was no help for it! He put on the coat again and started after the party.

And as he entered the old High Street of Rylcombe, and walked on to the station, with a crimson face, yells of laughter from all sides testified that the ancient and extraordinary coat had not escaped the attention of the youth of Rylcombe.

CHAPTER 5.

Funny.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY walked on to the station with a face the hue of the beetroot. The tails of the morning-coat swept the frost on the ground behind him as he walked.

The Rylcombe folk were generally slow to see anything in the nature of a joke. They were a stolid race.

But a race of misanthropes would have laughed at the sight of the swell of St. Jim's in a morning-coat four or five sizes too large for him.

Tom Merry and his chums could not help laughing, too.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched on with crimson cheeks through lanes of laughing faces.

He reached the station at last.

The old porter of Rylcombe almost had a fit as he saw Arthur Augustus.

"Haw, haw, haw!" he roared. "Skuse me, gentlemen, bad cold this morning! Huh! Ugh! Haw, haw, haw! Oh!"

"Weally, portah—"

"Haw, haw! Cold morning, sir! Need a big, thick coat this weather, sir! Haw, haw, haw!"

"Weally—"

"Come on!" shouted Manners. "The train's in."

"Pway stop a minute while I wush into a place and buy a coat."

"Late already!"

"But weally—"

"Not a second to spare."

"We must hurry," said Mr. Poinsett. "We must not lose the train."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

They rushed upon the platform.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"NO CLASS."

The train was there, and they had just time to tumble into a carriage before it started.

The guard waved his flag, and the train moved out of the station.

"We're off!" said Tom Merry.

"I guess so."

There was a sound of gasping and choking from the corner of the carriage. A stout farmer was sitting there, and his glance was fixed upon Arthur Augustus's coat.

"Haw, haw! Ho, ho!"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the farmer indignantly.

"You seem to be amused at somethin', my deah sir!" he exclaimed.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Pway let me know the joke."

"He, he, he!"

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the farmer.

He seemed to be in danger of an attack of apoplexy.

Arthur Augustus turned his back upon him, as well as he could. He sat glowering with indignation as the train rolled on.

They had to change at Wayland Junction, and there D'Arcy hoped to be able to rush out of the station and buy a ready-made coat. Under the circumstances, the swell of St. Jim's would have been willing to wear a "reach-me-down."

But there was no time.

They had three minutes to catch the London train, and another platform to reach, and there was no time to cut to waste.

They walked through the station, to the accompaniment of titters and chuckles wherever D'Arcy's coat appeared.

The London train was in, and they entered it, and the swell of St. Jim's was relieved to see that there were no other passengers in the carriage.

But as the train rolled London-wards, passengers entered at several of the stations, and everyone who entered seemed to be in danger of apoplexy, as soon as he caught sight of D'Arcy's coat.

The swell of St. Jim's sat with crimson cheeks.

It was a long journey to London, and the cold was bitter, and D'Arcy could not think of taking the coat off.

He sat and endured a martyrdom.

It was all the worse because his companions did not seem to understand how really awful it was, and persisted in taking the matter as a joke.

"Bai Jove! I wondah if we shall evah weach London!" the elegant junior muttered more than once.

Near London the carriage was quite full.

The passengers stared at D'Arcy, and grinned and winked at one another on the subject of the coat, and the swell of St. Jim's endured it as patiently as he could.

He would have given a whole term's pocket-money to be in London, within reach of any sort of a shop where a coat could be procured.

But the journey was long.

D'Arcy looked as if all the blood in his body had been pumped into his face, by the time the express rattled into the London terminus.

He gave a gasp of relief when the train stopped.

The St. Jim's party alighted. A chuckle went along the platform as the swell of St. Jim's stepped out of the carriage, his coat-tails sweeping the ground.

"Well, I guess we part here," said Mr. Poinsett. "I wish I could come with you to look out your young friend, Tom; but it can't be done."

"We'll manage all right, uncle."

"Yes, I guess you will. You'd better take D'Arcy somewhere and get him a coat first."

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, uncle!"

"Good-bye, sir."

And Mr. Poinsett jumped into a taxi, and was gone.

People were staring at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's coat, and youthful persons were passing rude remarks about it.

"Bai Jove, pway show me to a place where I can get a coat," said D'Arcy plaintively. "I feel weally awf'ly widiculous, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"What kind of a coat do you want?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, any kind of a coat will do!"

"All serene! There's a colour-shop round the corner."

"A colah-shop, Lowthah! What's the good of a colah-shop?"

"You said any sort of a coat would do."

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"Ass! How can you get a coat at a colah-shop?"

"You can."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"A coat of paint, you know."

"Weally, you uttah ass—"

"Well, you said any sort of a coat would do," grinned Lowther; "but if you want a ready-made tailor's, come this way."

And Arthur Augustus was marched into a ready-made clothes shop, and there, to his great relief, he was able to discard the ancient morning-coat, and don one more suitable to his size and his years.

The new coat was certainly not all that the elegant junior would have desired in cut or in cloth, but he was too glad to get any sort of a change to be inclined to grumble.

"I say, you're not going to leave that old coat behind, are you?" asked Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Couldn't you carry it on your arm?"

"I uttably wufuse to cawwy it on my beastly arm."

"It belongs to the Junior Dramatic Society, you know."

"Then the Juniah Dramatic Society can come and fetch it," said the swell of St. Jim's.

And the offending garment was left in the shop when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked out.

CHAPTER 6.

Joe.

"WE can get a motor-bus most of the way," said Tom Merry.

"What twice a taxi?" asked D'Arcy.

"Eightpence."

"Ass! I mean, how would a taxi do?"

"No need to waste cash, Gussy. Haven't you blved enough over that blessed new coat?" demanded Lowthah."

"Gussy is always extravagant," Manners said, with a shake of the head. "Buying new coats, and throwing morning-coats away while they've still got a lot of wear in them, and—"

"Weally, Manners, you ass—"

"Here's our 'bus!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Tom Merry sat and looked round him upon the teeming crowds with a curious mixture of feelings.

The last time he had been in London was in that bitter December, when he had tramped the streets without a coin in his pockets and without a crust of bread to stay the cravings of hunger.

His chums had found him and taken him from that; but had it not been for the kindness of his uncle, he must have returned to it sooner or later.

The battle of life was hard—bitterly hard, for a boy unaided. Tom Merry had learned that lesson. It made him more than ever determined that little Joe, of Blucher's Buildings, should have a helping hand while it was still time to save him from a life of want and crime.

Blucher's Buildings had been an episode to Tom Merry—an episode that seemed, as it were, seared into his memory with a hot iron.

Little Joe had never known anything else. Blucher's Buildings was the world to him.

Joe's universe had been bounded by Charing Cross Road and the Euston Road and the narrow old streets of the City.

Of the green lanes and blue skies of the country he had heard, with half-incredulous wonder.

He knew that there was a place where flowers and vegetables were grown, for he had seen them arrive at Covent Garden Market. But that was about all he knew of his Mother England—a hard mother to him.

Tom Merry thought of all those things; and thought, too, that but for the grace of God, his life might have been even as poor Joe's—as, indeed, the life of any of us might have been. In the scramble of life, the weak and the foolish must go under. And to what are their children born?

Tom Merry thought of his brief experience in London slums. He remembered the kind friends he had met—Jack, Sam, and Pete—and wondered whether he would ever see that cheery trio again.

"We get down here!" he said suddenly.

They had to walk the rest of the way. It lay through dingy streets, and then through a reeking alley, and so they reached Blucher's Buildings.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was all he could say.

Rough, ragged figures were gathering round the juniors, staring at them rudely, and some begging for coppers.

Tom Merry led the way into the house.

A slatternly woman stopped on the stairs to stare at him. Tom Merry remembered her as an occupant of the house when he had lived in a miserable room under the roof.

"You know me, Sal?" he said, with a smile. The woman nodded. Early in the day as it was, she was partly intoxicated.

"You've 'ad some luck," she said. "Where did you get there clobber?"

Tom Merry pressed a half-crown into her hand.

"Do you know where Joe is?"

"Joe!" she repeated vaguely, her thin fingers closing like talons on the coin.

"Yes; young Joe."

"Ain't you 'eard?"

Tom Merry's heart sank.

"Nothing's happened to him," he asked quickly.

Sal shook her head.

"Not to 'im," she said. "But his father's come 'ome."

"His father?"

"Yes."

"I didn't know he had a father," said Tom Merry. "He was not here in my time."

Sal grinned.

"E's out now," she explained.

Tom Merry looked bewildered.

"Out!" he repeated.

"Quod!" said Sal briefly.

"Oh, he's been in prison!"

"Three years stretch," said Sal. "Ighway robbery with violence."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

"And Joe's mother?" said Tom.

"She's 'ooked it."

"Gone away?"

"Yes. The ole man, 'e, larruped 'er every night with a belt, and she's 'ooked it."

"And Joe?"

"His father larrups 'im now, instead," said Sal, with a grin. She held up a claw-like hand. "Ark! There they go!"

A shrill scream of pain rang from a room above the stairs.

"That's Joe!" said Sal.

Tom Merry waited to hear no more.

He dashed up the stairs at top speed, his clumps at his heels. With a kick, he sent the door of the room flying open.

A short, thick-set bulldog of a man, with a convict's face, and eyes bleared with drink, held a belt in his hand, and a cowering bundle of rags quivered and moaned on the floor at his feet.

The man glared round furiously as the door was burst open.

"Oh, you hound!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Outside!" said the man, his brutal face black with passion. "Outside! This 'ere is my room! I'm master 'ere!"

"Put that belt down!"

The ruffian stared at him, apparently hardly able to believe his ears. His savage face worked with rage.

The bundle of rags sat up.

"Master Tom!" cried a quivering voice. "Master Tom, come back ag'in!"

"Yes, I'm back again, Joe, and that cowardly brute sha'n't touch you again!" shouted Tom Merry, almost beside himself with rage and indignation.

The man made a step towards him.

"Sha'n't touch 'im ag'in!" he muttered thickly. "Ain't 'o my son—eh? You are goin' to give orders to Bill Frayne, are you? I'll cut your hide off! Take that!"

The belt sang in the air.

But Tom Merry was ready. He leaped forward, dodged the descending blow, and his clenched fist, hard as iron, shot up and caught the ruffian upon the point of the chin.

It was a terrible upper-cut, and it sent Bill Frayne, powerful as he was, staggering backwards, till he fell with a crash to the floor.

Crash!

The ruffian lay half-dazed; and then, as he strove to rise, the juniors were upon him. Murder might have been done in that filthy garret if Bill Frayne had been given time to recover from that blow.

But he was not given time.

Manners and Lowther and D'Arcy were upon him, and he was grasped and pinned down to the floor by sheer weight.

"Put the belt round him!" said Tom Merry.

The ruffian struggled furiously; and so strong was he, that the juniors had all their work cut out to hold him.

But held he was, and the belt was passed round his body and buckled over his arms, pinning them down to his sides. Then he was easy to deal with.

Struggling and kicking and uttering curses, he was held fast while his braces were torn off and tied round his ankles. Monty Lowther stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth, to stop the torrent of foul abuse that was streaming forth, and Bill Frayne relapsed into maddened silence.

CHAPTER 7.

Joe is Taken Away.

TOM MERRY closed the door.

Rows were of too common occurrence in Blucher's Buildings for this tussle to have attracted any attention from the other inhabitants.

Bill Frayne lay quivering and gasping on the floor, helpless now to move hand or foot, able only to glare his rage.

But Joe was trembling in every limb. Tom Merry patted him on the shoulder.

"It's all right now, Joe."

"Ye-es," mumbled Joe.

"Has he hurt you much?"

"Not more'n usual," said Joe, shivering; "only it's bad, because me legs is so cold, Master Tom. It 'urts more when you're cold."

"The howwid wascal!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "Bai Jove, I've a gweat mind to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"It's werry kind of you young gents," said Joe, "but 'e'll only take it out of me arger. E's worse'n mother used to be. She used to use a broom'andle; but that wasn't so bad as a belt, not arf."

Tom Merry shuddered.

"The brute won't be able to hurt you again, Joe," he said.

"He will when you're gone, Master Tom."

"I'm going to take you with me, Joe."

Joe started.

"Take me with you."

"Yes."

"Away from 'ere—away from 'im?"

"Away from London altogether, Joe."

The lad gasped.

"Oh, Master Tom!"

"You'll come, Joe?"

"Won't I!" grinned Joe. "Not 'arf! Then you've come into your money agin, Master Tom. I knew you wouldn't always stay with the likes of us. 'Eving bless you, Master Tom! Won't I come with you? Not 'arf!"

The man on the floor writhed.

Tom Merry turned to him with a stern expression upon his young face.

"I'm going to take Joe away, where he will be cared for," he said. "You have no rights over him, you cruel brute. You'll never see him again. I only wish I could send you to prison again before I go."

The man glared.

"Come on, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "This place is suffocatin' me."

"Crikey!" said Joe. "I'm ready!"

They passed out upon the landing and closed the door after them.

"Somebody will come and let that brute loose presently," said Tom Merry. "I'll leave word as we go. Do you think he's likely to make any attempt to follow you, Joe?"

Joe shook his head.

"E don't want me," he said. "E'll find somebody else to belt."

"Bai Jove!"

"Come on, then, Joe!"

"Hold on, deah boys! Joe hasn't packed up his things yet!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We'd bettah all give him a hand in packin' his twunk!"

Tom Merry grinned. Joe seemed on the point of going into convulsions.

"It's all right, guy'nor. I ain't got no trunk, and there won't be no grand planner to move!" he exclaimed. "I've got all me property on."

"Bai Jove!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

And in a few minutes more they were clear of Blucher's Buildings.

The four of them bundled into a passing taxicab, and the vehicle dashed away at a great speed through the crowded streets.

If Bill Frayne, when he was released, attempted to follow them, there would not be much chance of his success.

In the taxicab the juniors looked curiously enough at Joe. The little ragamuffin was a bundle of rags and dirt, and on his skin in several places were the marks of old bruises and cuts.

Joe had evidently had a hard life. But the delight of the present moment seemed to compensate to him for it all.

He was grinning from ear to ear in sheer enjoyment.

His dirty face was a picture of pleasure. But it was very dirty. It had probably been washed some time or other. But not lately. The marks of recent tears could be seen furrowing the dirt. But there were no more tears for Joe. Life was all smiles to him now.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"NO CLASS."

Only he seemed scarcely to believe in his good luck. "You mean it, Master Tom?" he said, more than once. "I ain't to go back to Blucher's Buildings any more?" "No," said Tom Merry. "You're going to take me away for good?" "For good, Joe." "You must 'ave piles of money now, Master Tom." Tom Merry laughed. "My dear kid, I haven't piles of money, but I have a very kind and generous uncle who is looking after me."

"Crikey!" "Bai Jove! What an expression!" "Crikey! 'Ow orlight!" said Joe. "You're going to take me into the country, Master Tom?" "Yes." "Where the vegetables come from?" "Yes," said Tom, laughing. The thought seemed almost too much for Joe, and he remained silent for several minutes, chewing the cud of meditation.

"My word!" murmured Lowther aside. "I wonder what sort of a sensation our young friend will make at St. Jim's." "He will want washing," said Manners. "Yaas, wathah!" "But he seems a good little chap!" "Wippin', deah boy!" "There's one thing I'll bet on," said Manners, "and that is that the Head never knew what Tom's protegee was exactly like, when he agreed with Mr. Poinsett to take him in at St. Jim's."

"Vewy pwob." "But he's agreed now," grinned Lowther. "And the Head isn't a man to back out of his word." "Wathah not!" Tom Merry stopped the cab. "We get down here," he said. "Here's the station." "Good!"

The chums of St. Jim's alighted. Tom Merry paid the chauffeur, who looked curiously at Joe. So did a good many other people. Joe certainly looked a strange enough companion for the well-dressed juniors.

D'Arcy nudged Tom Merry. "You can't take the kid to St. Jim's in that state, Tom Mewwy," he remarked, in an undertone. "My ideah is that we should wash him, and have his hair cut, you know, and then get him a new wig."

"A what?" "A new wig, deah boy." "What's the good of having his hair cut, and then getting him a wig?" demanded Tom Merry. "Do you think a kid of his age can wear a wig?" "Weally, deah boy—" "I suppose his hair had better be cut short," said Tom Merry. "But as for a wig—" "You uttah ass—" "Look here—" "I did not say a wig. I said a wig." "That's what I like about Gussy," remarked Monty Lowther. "He's so lucid."

"Weally, Lowthah—" "What's the difference between a wig and a wig?" demanded Tom Merry. "You fwabjous ass! I was weferrin' to new clothes—a new wigout."

"Oh, a new rig." "Yaas, wathah!" "Adopted," said Tom Merry. "We'll take him to a barber's first, then, and have the wash and hair cut." "Crikey!" said Joe. "You don't mind being washed, do you, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus courteously.

Joe looked doubtful. "All over?" he asked. "No; but it will be all over soon." "Ha, ha, ha!" "Weally, Lowthah—" "Fathead! He means is he to be washed all over?" roared Lowther.

"Oh, I see! Yaas, deah boy, you will have to be washed all over."

"Feet and all?" "Yaas, wathah!" "Oh, orlight!" said Joe. "I'll do anythin' that Master Tom thinks is all right."

"Then you shall have a steaming hot bath," said Tom Merry.

"Orlight, guv'nor!" And Joe was forthwith marched into a large hair-dressing establishment; to the great surprise of a most aristocratic and highly-scented hairdresser.

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CHAPTER 8.

Well Washed!

THE hairdresser—he would have felt extremely indignant if he had been called a barber—looked at Joe, and then looked at the chums. Joe was not a pleasing object to behold. True, there was intelligence in the dark eyes that looked out from the reddened rims, and sensitiveness in the mouth, dirty as it was. But the hairdressing gentleman could not be expected to notice those trifles. He was far too curly, far too highly-scented, to tolerate willingly a person of Joe's class.

He stared. It was a most aristocratic stare. "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his eyeglass and looking at the hairdresser in great surprise. "What is the mattah with the person?"

"Shocked!" "What about?" "Joe." "Bai Jove! Surely if we can stand Joe, this person can stand him!"

"My dear chap, don't you know that that chap is really a duke in disguise, running a hairdressing business for the fun of the thing?" demanded Lowther aside.

"Weally, Lowthah—" "That's where he gets his haughty manners from. Listen, and you'll hear him pretending to drop his 'h's' soon."

"Bai Jove!" "Sir!" said the tonsorial artist. "I want to have this kid washed, and combed—and—and hair cut," said Tom Merry, a little dubiously.

"My establishment is not for persons of that sort, sir," said the hairdresser, with dignity. "Send 'im hout, please!"

"There, I told you so," whispered Lowther. "Weally, Lowthah—" Tom Merry coloured a little.

"We're taking the kid away with us," he said, "and we want him cleaned up. We're willing to pay half-a-sovereign." The tonsorial artist's manner changed at once.

He had to shave a great many customers, even at fourpence each, to pile up the sum of ten shillings. His aristocratic reserve melted away at once.

"Yes, sir, quite so, sir," he said. "Always willing to oblige a gentleman, sir."

"Bai Jove!" "Ducal manners, don't you think so, Gussy?" murmured Lowther.

"You uttah ass!" The hairdresser led Tom Merry & Co. into another room, with a range of marble washing-basins in it.

He provided the juniors with all that was required for the cleaning of Joe, and then retired to his tonsorial department. He evidently did not intend to take a hand in the cleaning process himself.

Tom Merry looked at Joe rather helplessly. The little ragamuffin was such a mass of dirt and rags, that it seemed difficult to know where to begin.

Joe was grinning cheerfully. He had never been in such a room before, and the sight of the marble basins, the clean towels, and the soap and hot water, amazed him, as if he had entered into a fairy palace.

"Crikey!" was all he could say. "You'd better take those things off, Joe, and wash all over," said Tom Merry. "I'll see if the barber chap's got a foot-bath."

A small bath was forthcoming, and it was filled with hot water. Joe's rags were peeled off, leaving him standing with a thick coating of dirt, which had probably accumulated upon his person during months or years.

He looked doubtfully at the hot bath, and stepped in. "Bai Jove! He will want some scwubbin', you know," said D'Arcy.

"He'll want some new clothes, too," said Tom Merry. "One of us ought to go and get him some clothes, while the others take turns at scrubbing him."

"Good egg!" "Pewwaps I had better do the shoppin'," said D'Arcy. "But how am I to get the size, without the kid bein' measured?"

"Chance it."

"It would be wathah wotten to get a bad fit."

"My dear ass—" "Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "You must get some ready-made clothes, to take him down to St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "He can have a new rig there."

"Yaas, that's vewy twue."

"Buzz off, and get the best things you can, Gussy. So long as he can wear them, that's near enough, and don't pay too much."



Arthur Augustus dashed on, the pointed tails of the old morning-coat almost touching the ground behind him, and lashing to and fro in the wind, amidst yells of laughter from all beholders. (See page 5.)

"Wighto!"

Arthur Augustus departed on his errand.

The Terrible Three superintended the bath of Joe Frayne.

Joe scrubbed and scrubbed, under their directions, till the whiteness of the skin began to show.

Then each of the chums rolled up his sleeves, and took a hand in the scrubbing.

It was hard work.

But it was rewarded. At the end of a quarter of an hour Joe was quite white and rosy. He gazed at his own limbs in admiration and surprise. He had never suspected them of being susceptible of such a change.

"Crikey!" said Joe

"Here's a towel," said Tom Merry.

Joe was towelled down.

He certainly presented a very different appearance now, and when his unkempt mop was taken off, he would be further improved, Tom Merry thought.

The hairdresser was called in, and Joe was seated in a chair, with a coat round him, while the tonsorial artist's assistant cut his hair.

The hair was cut very close.

"By George!" said Monty Lowther, when the operation was finished. "I must say, he looks ripping now."

"Splendid!"

"Crikey!" said Joe.

"Time Gussy was back!"

"Bring me a toothbrush," said Tom to the hairdresser's assistant. "How often do you clean your teeth, Joe?"

Joe grinned.

"You're jokin', Master Tom," he said.

"Don't you ever wash your teeth?" asked Manners.

Joe chuckled at the idea.

He had evidently never heard of people washing their teeth. But the toothbrush was brought in, and Tom Merry instructed him in its use, and made him promise solemnly to use it regularly every morning and evening.

By that time Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had returned.

The swell of St. Jim's brought in a big leather bag. The chums of the Shell stared at it.

"What's that for?" asked Tom Merry.

"Clothes in it, deah boy."

"But what did you want the bag for?"

"To cawwy the clothes in, of course."

"Ass! How much did you give for it?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass—"

"How much did you give for it?" roared Tom Merry.

"I picked it up cheap, deah boy, for thirty shillin's."

"Well, it's worth fifteen, so you haven't been done as much as I expected," said Tom Merry.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"NO CLASS."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Tumble out the togs!"

Arthur Augustus opened the bag.

"It's a weally wippin' bag," he said. "The man in the hop told me he had sold one exactly like it to Lord Woberts when he went to South Afiwah. I suppose what is good enough for Lord Woberts is good enough for me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatevah for wibald laughtah, Monty Lowthah."

"Ha, ha, ha! But what did you want a bag at all for?"

"I have already weplied that it was to cawwy the clothes in."

"And you couldn't carry them without a bag?"

"I suppose I couldn't walk through the streets with a bwown papah parcel?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Hand over the duds," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus handed over the clothes. He had purchased a ready-made suit of clothes suitable for a lad of fourteen, and about three sizes too large for Joe.

"Get into them, Joe," said Tom Merry.

The clothes might be ready made, of a poor cut, and a poor material, and ill-fitting. But they were princely raiment to the little ragamuffin of Blucher's Buildings.

"Them togs is for me, sir?" asked Joe.

"Yes."

"Crikey, guv'nor!"

That was all Joe could say; emotion overcame him. He plunged into the new clothes in eloquent silence.

CHAPTER 9.

A Topper for Joe.

JOE did not take long to dress.

It was the first time in his life that he had ever worn under-clothing of any sort, and that D'Arcy had purchased for him was of the same quality as the swell of St. Jim's wore himself. It seemed like rolling in unheard-of luxury to Joe, of Blucher's Buildings.

The boots D'Arcy had brought were a little too small, in contrast to those which Joe had discarded, which were a great deal too large.

But Joe crammed his feet into them, manfully repressing any sign of pain. That was a thing he had learned to do.

He would not appear to dislike anything that his kind friends had bought for him, and the chums did not even see that it hurt him to put on the boots.

The trousers were six inches too long for him, but they were turned up at the bottoms rather liberally, so that it was possible to walk in them.

The jacket fitted him somewhat like a sack, and the sleeves came down over the ends of his fingers, and the waistcoat had to be pinned in at the back to make it fit at all.

But with all these drawbacks, Joe's appearance presented a wonderful improvement.

He fell into a way of jerking up his head, as the linen collar rubbed against his neck, like a restive horse. Joe had never worn a white collar before.

The chums surveyed him in great admiration.

"Wippin'!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Splendid!"

"Gorgeous!"

"Top-notch!"

"Look at yourself, Joe," said Tom Merry, leading the ragamuffin before a standing glass.

Joe looked at his reflection.

He almost fell down at the sight of the clean, tidy, respectable lad who was standing before him, reflected in the glass.

"Crikey!" he gasped. "Is—is that me?"

"That's you, Joe!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Time to get some lunch, and then to catch the afternoon train to St. Jim's," he remarked. "Where's Joe's cap?"

"His what?"

"Didn't you bring him a cap?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, we can take him out and get him one," he said.

And he settled with the hairdresser, and the chums of St. Jim's and their proteges quitted the tonsorial establishment.

"Here's a hattah's, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Come in, Joe."

Joe showed some little trepidation in entering the shop.

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It was a large and fashionable-looking establishment, such a place as Joe had never entered in his life before, and he inwardly marvelled at the coolness and self-possession with which the chums entered it.

However, he walked in.

A spruce assistant came swimming up to the juniors; it could not be called walking.

"Yes, gentlemen. What can I do for you, gentlemen?"

"I want a cap for this kid," Tom Merry explained.

"Pewpaws he had bettah have a toppah, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"I should recommend a silk hat, sir," said the assistant.

Tom Merry grinned.

He had no doubt that the assistant would have recommended a panama or an opera-hat, if he had seen any chance of selling it.

"Bettah have a silk toppah, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy firmly. "You see, Joe will be bound to have one at St. Jim's."

"My dear Gus—"

"I will stand twecat for the toppah."

Tom Merry hesitated.

All the juniors at St. Jim's wore toppers for Sundays and state occasions, even down to the lags in the Third Form.

"Oh, very well!" he said.

Joe gave a gasp.

To him a silk hat was the symbol of undreamt-of wealth and luxury.

"Topper!" he gasped. "For me! Crikey!"

"Shall I try a silk hat on the young gentleman, sir?" asked the assistant graciously.

Joe jumped.

"Young gentleman!" he murmured. "I'm a young gentleman! Oh, my 'at! Crikey!"

"Yes, please," said Tom Merry.

Silk hats were brought and tried on the hero of Blucher's Buildings.

Joe seemed like a youth in a dream as he looked at his reflection in a glass.

He looked very good-looking in a silk hat. As Arthur Augustus remarked—looking at his own reflection the while—there were fellows they suited, and fellows they didn't!

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "How much?"

"Twenty-five and six, sir," said the assistant.

"Bai Jove! I only pay a guinea for mine!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"And I only pay ten-and-six," said Tom Merry, "and fifteen-and-six for the Sunday topper. Can you show me some cheaper ones?"

The assistant apparently had cheaper ones. He produced silk toppers in great variety, ranging from twenty-five-and-six down to twelve-and-six. The latter was apparently the rock-bottom price.

Tom Merry selected one at twelve-and-six, and Joe put it on.

"Wippin'!" said D'Arcy.

"Hatbox, sir?" said the assistant. "Nice leather hatbox, sir, only forty-five-and-six."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"One in a cheaper leather at thirty shillings."

"Thanks—no!"

"Or in cheap leather, very good and serviceable, at fifteen shillings."

"No!"

"Our special line in hatboxes at ten shillings, sir. These are what we really recommend to our customers."

"I suppose you haven't an extra-special line at half-a-crown?" suggested Monty Lowther, as innocently as a cooing dove.

The hatter smiled in a sickly way.

"N-n-no!" he stammered. "But we do one at seven-and-six!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is a vewy interesting thing, you know. I always take an interest in these mattahs of business, you know. I think ewevybody ought to have some knowledge of the twade of the countwy. Now—"

Tom Merry grinned and paid for the hat.

"Now," went on D'Arcy, "you have hatboxes from seven-and-six—"

"Yes, sir, that's the lowest."

"And at what's the next pwice?"

"Ten-and-six, sir."

"And aftah that?"

"Twelve-and-six."

"Bai Jove, you have a vewy gweat vawiety. What is the next deawah?"

"Fifteen-and-six, sir."

"And then—"

"One guinea."
 "This is awf'ly intewestin', deah boys!"
 "Oh, come on, Gussy!"
 "Wats! Pway let us finish the subject, Tom Mewwy. What is the next to a guinea, my deah sir?"
 "Twenty-five shillings, sir," said the latter. "But I should strongly recommend the thirty-shilling one."
 "But you have a bettah one?"
 "Oh, yes, sir, quite so, sir, at two guineas—a really splendid one, sir, such as we supply to the King of Pomerania and the Crown Prince of Nokashstein, sir."
 "Bai Jove!"
 "But the really best one, sir, is the forty-five shillings. If you care to take that—"
 "Oh, no, not at all."
 "We have a striking line at three guineas."
 "Bai Jove!"
 "And a most luxurious one at four guineas."
 "How good! Is that all?"
 "Y-e-es, that's all, sir. Which one will you have?"
 "Oh, I don't want any, thank you! I was only askin', you know. Come on, deah boys!"
 And Arthur Augustus walked out of the shop with his chums, leaving the assistant speechless.

CHAPTER 10.

D'Arcy's Pocket is Picked.

"GUFF again," said Monty Lowther, as the train buzzed out of the station.

The chums of St. Jim's had a first-class carriage to themselves.

Joe was seated in a corner, with a travelling-rug over his knees, and an expression of never-ending astonishment on his face.

Two hours before he had been a hungry, dirty, ragged little wastrel, trembling under the belt in the filthy room at Blucher's Buildings.

Now he was clean, tidy, cleanly-clad, filled with a good lunch, and leaning on the cushions of a first-class carriage of an express train.

It was enough to bewilder him.

At intervals he put up a furtive hand to his silk hat, as if to assure himself that it was a real one.

When the train passed through a tunnel, and the window beside him was transformed into a looking-glass, the little ragamuffin stared at his reflection there with intense enjoyment.

For a long time, as the express rushed on westward, the chums of St. Jim's chatted, and Joe remained silent, lost in wondering thought.

"Well, Joe, what are you thinking of?" Tom Merry asked at last.

Joe came out of a brown study.

"I was wondering what your school is like, sir," he said.

"Oh, St. Jim's," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"Why do you call it St. Jim's, sir?"

"It's named after St. James, you see—full title, St. James's Collegiate School; St. Jim's for short," said Tom Merry.

"Crikey!"

"You'll find it a ripping place, Joe. We'll teach you to play footer."

"Oh, Master Tom! And—and—" Joe paused.

"Yes, Joe?" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

"Shall I 'ave to wash every day?" asked Joe hesitatingly.

"Ha, ha! Yes, twice."

"Twice a day!" ejaculated Joe, in alarm.

"Yes, rather."

"Crikey!"

"You'll get used to it, Joe."

"I'll do whatever you tell me, Master Tom," said Joe submissively, though it was easy to see that he regarded washing twice a day as something very extraordinary.

"I 'spose I shall 'ave my 'air cut every day, too?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! No."

"Twice a day?"

"No; once in three weeks will do for that."

"Oh, orlright," said Joe. "I 'spose I clean my teeth once every three weeks, too?"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Haven't you already made me a promise, Joe?"

"Ave I?" said Joe.

"Yes; to clean your teeth twice a day, morning and evening."

"Crikey!"

"They can't be kept decent without it, Joe."

"Oh!"

"You promised."

"Yus, so I did," said Joe.

Tom Merry looked at him. He wondered whether Joe really understood what a promise was.

Certainly his word did not seem to weigh very much on his mind.

"You must always keep a promise, Joe," he said.

"Yes, Master Tom."

"Never break your word under any conditions, whatever it costs to keep it. A chap who would break his word would rob a church, or do anything rotten."

"Yes, sir."

"Always play the game, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"What game, sir?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy means always stick to the truth, and keep your word, and wash yourself, and clean your teeth, and be decent generally," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Oh, I see, sir."

"We shall be in in half an hour," Arthur Augustus remarked, taking out his famous gold ticker, and glancing at it.

Joe's eyes glinted on the gold watch.

He fell into silence for some time, and presently asked Tom Merry the hour. Tom Merry took out his watch to tell him. It was a silver, serviceable watch.

"Thanky, sir!" said Joe.

The juniors changed at Wayland Junction for Rylocombe.

They found a carriage to themselves on the local train, and rushed off through the snowy countryside towards the school.

Joe looked out of the windows in great interest and wonder.

The wide sweep of country, the leafless trees standing white in the frost, the long hedges, and masses of dark wood amazed him.

It was a change from the smoke and grime of a great city, such as he had never experienced before.

"Crikey!" he exclaimed, in an undertone, many times as the train swept on.

"We shall be in before the chaps are out from aftahnoon classes," said Arthur Augustus, putting his hand to his pocket for his watch.

Then he uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Gweat Scott!"

The juniors all looked round at him. The swell of St. Jim's was upon his feet, the greatest dismay written in his face.

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"What's biting you, dear boy?"

"My watch!"

"Rats! Watches can't bite."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What's the matter with your watch?" asked Tom Merry.

"It's gone!"

"Gone!"

"Yass, wathah!"

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's not half an hour since you told us the time on it."

"Yass, but—"

"You put it back in the wrong pocket."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, look!"

"I have looked!"

"Look again!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Look!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Oh, vewy well!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy searched through all his pockets. Then he held up his empty hands.

"It's gone, deah boys!"

"Let us look!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, you know—"

"Pile in," said Lowther.

The swell of St. Jim's was searched. The juniors turned out all his pockets, and Monty Lowther even poked a fountain pen down his back to see if the watch was there. It wasn't!

The watch—the famous twenty-five guinea gold ticker—was gone!

It was evident that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had had his pocket picked.

Joe did not take part in the search. He sat looking on at the scene with keen, twinkling eyes.

But his assistance was not needed. The Terrible Three reduced Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to several sorts of a wreck in their search.

D'Arcy plumped down on the seat breathlessly.

"You see it's gone, deah boys."

"Looks like it," said Tom Merry perplexedly. "But how on earth did you manage to lose it, since you looked at it last, Gussy?"

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NEXT WEEK:

"NO CLASS."

"It's been taken, you ass."
 "Taken by whom?"
 "Some beastly pickpocket."
 "But you had it in the train?"
 "That was before we changed at Wayland," said Monty Lowther. "There was rather a crowd at the junction."
 "Yaas, wathah! I wemenbah someone pushed against me vewy wudely, while I was helpin' Joe into the cawwiage."
 Tom Merry nodded.
 "Yes, I suppose your pocket was picked at Wayland, Gussy, when we come to think of it. It's rather rotten."
 "It's vewy wotten, deah boy. You see, that watch was a present from my governah, and I simply must get it back somehow."
 "H'm!"
 "I've lost it before, you know, and got it back," said D'Arcy, in distress. "I twust I shall get it back this time. It's vewy wotten."
 "Better go straight to the police as soon as we get into Rylcombe," said Tom Merry. "They will telegraph a description of the watch to Wayland and to London."
 "Yaas, I suppose so."
 The train stopped in Rylcombe Station.

CHAPTER 11.

Joe's Gift.

TOM MERRY & Co. left the station, Tom linking his arm in Joe's. The little ragamuffin of the city looked round him in wonder.
 The quiet of the old streets, the old-fashioned cottages within a stone's throw of the railway-station, the big trees growing outside the building, astonished the street arab.
 "Crikey!" was all he could say.
 "We'll cut off to the police-station at once, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "It won't make us much later at St. Jim's."
 "Vewy well, deah boy."
 Joe pulled at Tom Merry's arm. The junior looked down at him. There was a very alarmed expression upon Joe's face.

"Where are you goin', Master Tom?" he asked.
 "To the police-station, Joe."
 "You ain't taking me there?"
 "Yes; why not?"
 Joe was visibly troubled.
 "I—I'd rather not go," he said. "The perlice—they don't like me! They chivvy a chap so, a-movin' of 'im on!"
 Tom Merry laughed.
 "You won't get moved on here, Joe."
 "M-may I stay outside, sir?" asked Joe.
 "My dear lad, they won't hurt you."
 Joe hung back.
 "I suppose he's had some wathah unpleasant expewience of the police, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, in a low tone. "Bettah take him on to the coll., while I go to the station, you know."
 "Oh, all right!" said Tom Merry. "Come on with me, Joe. You fellows go with Gussy, and see that he explains it properly to the police."
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "So long!"

Tom Merry strode off towards Rylcombe Lane with Joe, leaving D'Arcy and Manners and Lowther to go to the police-station.

Joe trotted along beside Tom Merry in contented silence for a time.

True, his feet were beginning to ache considerably, but Joe's experience had always been that he had a pain or an ache somewhere, and it was no worse in the feet than anywhere else.

Joe's training had made him a philosopher. The poet assures us that there was never a philosopher that could endure the toothache patiently; but the poor of a great city have worse things than toothache to endure with what patience they can.

Joe trotted along beside the hero of the Shell, unheeding his tight boots, and the expression upon his face showed that he was happy and content. Tom Merry glanced down at him with an amused look more than once.

"How do you like the country, Joe?" he asked.

Joe grinned.

"Oh, it's spiffing!" he said.

"There's St. Jim's!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

He pointed to the grey tower rising over the leafless trees. Joe gazed at it with the keenest interest. A curious shade of thoughtfulness came over his brow.

"That's where you used to live, Master Tom?" he asked.

"Yes, Joe."

"Afore your lost your money and come to London?"

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"Yes," said Tom Merry, with a smile.
 "I'll like to see it, Master Tom."
 "It's my school again now, thanks to my uncle," said Tom Merry, "and it's going to be your school, too, Joe."
 "Thanks to you, Master Tom."
 Tom Merry laughed.
 "Thanks to your good-heartedness when I was hard up in Blucher's Buildings, Joe," he replied. "You've only yourself to thank."

Joe shook his head.
 "I know 'ow much I owe you, Master Tom," he said. "I ain't forgetting it. I sha'n't never forget it, and I'd die for you any day, I would straight. Look 'ere, Master Tom, you ain't got so much money as that other cove, 'ave you?"

"What cove?" asked Tom Merry, with a laugh.

"Im with the glass eye."

"Ha, ha! Gussy? No, Gussy is much richer."

"'E 'as a gold watch, 'e 'as?"

"Well, he had."

"And you 'ave a silver one, Master Tom?"

"Yes, Joe. Most of the fellows have silver watches. It's considered rather swanky for a junior to have a gold watch, but D'Arcy is a bit out of the ordinary, you know. We make allowances for Gussy."

"But you'd like a gold watch, Master Tom?" persisted Joe.

Tom Merry looked a little puzzled. He did not quite see what Joe was driving at.

"Yes, I suppose so," he said. "I suppose every chap would like to have a gold watch."

"You can have one, Master Tom."

"How do you mean, Joe?"

"I can get you one."

Tom Merry stared at him.

"You Joe?"

"That's it, Master Tom—me!"

"Blessed if I understand you, Joe."

"Come 'ere, Master Tom," said Joe, very mysteriously, and he drew Tom Merry into the cover of a high hedge.

"Look 'ere, that's for you."

Tom Merry gazed at him speechlessly as he drew a gold watch from a pocket, and held it out to him.

The sun glistened upon the gold case.

Tom Merry gazed at it, deprived of speech for the moment.

He could only stare at the gold timekeeper in blank astonishment. For it was D'Arcy's famous watch.

CHAPTER 12.

Arthur Augustus Recovers his Watch.

TOM MERRY stared at the gold watch in Joe's hand, and Joe looked anxiously at Tom Merry. The blank amazement in Tom's face seemed to disconcert him.

"It's the real thing, Master Tom," he said.

"Joe!"

"And it's yours, Master Tom."

"That's D'Arcy's watch!"

"It was his; it's yours now."

Tom Merry looked at him.

The thing was so surprising, so utterly unexpected, that the junior was taken hopelessly aback.

"Do—do you mean to say that you stole D'Arcy's watch, Joe?" he gasped out at last.

Joe grinned.

"I pinched it," he said.

"Pinched it!"

"Yes, when we was changing carriages."

"Good heavens!"

"It's orlright, sir," said Joe eagerly. "He don't know. He's gone off to the perlice-station about it, and they'll look for it in that place—Wayland—or in London. Look 'ere, you can take it to a place to 'ave the monnygram taken off the back—I know a place, where Captain Rake used to take 'em—and then nobody will be any the wiser, Master Tom."

"Joe!"

"And then you'll 'ave a gold watch, Master Tom."

"My hat!"

"Put it in your pocket, Master Tom, afore anybody sees it."

Tom Merry took the watch mechanically.

He was beginning to realise now what it meant to take charge of a lad who had had the training poor Joe had had.

Brought up in a den of poverty and thievery, with a convict for a father and a drunken mother, taught to steal before he was taught to write, poor Joe had very vague ideas of the rights of property.

The wickedness of stealing had never been brought home to his consciousness. To steal came as easily to him as to lie, and to lie came more easily than to tell the truth.

The growing horror in Tom Merry's face struck the little ragamuffin. His face took on a more anxious expression.

"You—you ain't wild with me, Master Tom!" he said falteringly.

"Yes, Joe, I am very angry with you," said Tom Merry quietly.

Joe's eyes dilated.

"Wot 'ave I done?" he muttered, his voice showing signs of a coming whimper. "I wanted you to 'ave the watch, Master Tom."

"It is D'Arcy's watch."

"Not now I've pinched it."

"Don't you understand, Joe, that what you call pinching is stealing, and that stealing is one of the meanest, basest, most cowardly of all things?" exclaimed Tom Merry sternly.

"Oh, Master Tom!"

"Don't you understand that one who steals is a thief, and that a thief is as horrible as a leper?" said Tom, his voice growing more stern in his indignation, "or worse, as far as that goes. I'd ten times rather touch a fellow with a contagious disease than I'd touch a thief."

Joe began to cry.

Tom Merry's anger melted away at once at the sight of the tears in the eyes of the little wastrel of the London slums.

After all, what had Joe done more than he was trained to do? The poor little wretch knew no better.

"There! Don't blub, Joe," Tom Merry exclaimed hastily. "I suppose you didn't mean any harm. But if this should be known at St. Jim's—if it should ever happen again—you'd be kicked out of the school!"

"Oh, Master Tom!"

"Promise me, Joe—mind, a sacred promise—that you'll never take any more things that don't belong to you."

"Yes, Master Tom."

"Never, never steal again, Joe, for if you do, I shall have to part with you at once, and never see you again!"

"Oh, Master Tom!"

"Promise, Joe!"

"I—I swear it, Master Tom!"

"Don't swear it—promise!"

"I promise," said Joe.

"And mind, Joe, a promise has to be kept. Breaking a promise is only one degree less rotten than stealing."

"Yes, Master Tom," said Joe submissively.

"Remember, Joe—never lie, never steal, and never break your word," said Tom Merry. "Stick to that, and you'll get through all right."

"Yes, Master Tom."

"Now, we must let Gussy know his watch is all right."

"You're going to give it back to 'im?"

"Of course!"

"Crikey!"

"And you will have to confess to him, and beg his pardon, Joe."

"I'll do anything you tell me, Master Tom."

"That's right, kid!"

Tom Merry turned back towards Rylcombe. He walked quickly, and the two of them arrived at the police-station just as D'Arcy and Lowther and Manners were leaving it. D'Arcy stared at them through his eyeglasses.

"Bai Jove! I understood that you were goin' on to the coll. deah boy."

"We've found the watch," said Tom Merry abruptly.

"What!"

"Here it is!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"You'd better cut into the station, and tell them it's found," said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy looked at the watch in amazement.

"But where did you find it?"

"I'll tell you afterwards."

"But I shall have to explain—"

"Oh, simply say it's found! That will do."

"But—"

"My dear Gussy, there's nothing more to say!"

"But what will they think?"

"Whatever they like."

"Oh, vewy well!"

D'Arcy re-entered the police-station. The chums remained waiting for him in the street. Lowther and Manners were looking very curious, but they did not say a word. They waited for the explanation to come.

Arthur Augustus appeared in a few minutes, looking very red and indignant.

"All right?" asked Tom Merry.

"The inspectah was vewy wude," said D'Arcy. "He said that if I came here with any more of my larks, he would box my eahs! I replied that I should uttably wefuse to have my eahs boxed, undah any circs. whatevah, and a gweat wuff policeman pushed me quite wudely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughin' mattah, Tom Mewwy! A fellow has to considah his dig."

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Undah the circs—"

"Yes. We shall be late at coll., you know."

D'Arcy was still looking considerably exasperated as they walked down the lane together. He evidently considered that his dignity had not been fully acknowledged by the persons at the police-station.

"I should be glad of an explanation now," he remarked frigidly. "Did you take my watch for a wotten joko, Tom Mewwy?"

"No."

"Then how did you get it?"

"Joe had it."

"Joe!"

"Yes, Joe!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely upon Joe. Joe hung his head. The full enormity of his action was far from being revealed to him. But he understood that he had done something that was universally condemned in the new world he was now entering.

"Joe! You have played that wotten jape on me!"

"Oh, sir—"

"Joe stole your watch, Gussy," said Tom Merry quietly. "He gave it to me, because I have only a silver one."

"Gweat Scott!"

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther.

Manners grinned. He could not help it. The matter was serious enough, and yet there was something funny in the poor ragamuffin stealing a watch and giving it to Tom Merry, thinking that Tom would keep it.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "You awful young wascal!"

"Tell him you're sorry, Joe!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Joe.

"But—but you can't take that sort of person to St. Jim's, Tom Mewwy! It's howwible!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Oh, sir—"

"I want you to look over it, Gussy. Joe didn't know any better; it's owing to his rotten training," said Tom Merry. "He's promised never to do anything of the sort again."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Joe eagerly. "I'll never, never—"

"Bai Jove!"

"You'll keep it dark, you fellows?"

"Certainly!" said Manners. "But—"

"Yes, rather!" replied Lowther. "But—"

"Joe won't do it again."

"Never, sir! Wish I may die if I do!" exclaimed Joe.

"What a howwible expression!"

"Say honour bright, Joe!" said Tom Merry. "'Wish I may die' will hardly do for St. Jim's!"

"Honour bright, Master Tom!" said Joe obediently.

"Do you know what that means, Joe?" asked Monty Lowther suspiciously.

"No, sir," said Joe candidly.

The chums could not help laughing.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think that Joe will want some twainin'. Howevah, I am quite willin' to take him in hand. I flattah myself that I have a vewy good influence on youngstahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"Come on, Gussy!"

And the chums walked on to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

Joe and the Head.

THERE was no one in the quadrangle when the juniors arrived at the school. Afternoon classes were still in progress, and from some of the lower class-rooms came a hum of voices.

Taggles, the school porter, came out of his lodge, and looked at the juniors, and bestowed a second look upon little Joe.

Joe, in his new and respectable clothes, looked decent enough; but there was something about him that betrayed him to Taggles's eyes as not an ordinary new boy for the school.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 154.

Another Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEEK:

"NO CLASS."

"Which this is the new boy, Master Merry?" Taggles asked.

"Yes, Taggy."

"Box to be carried in, sir?" said Taggles.

"No," said Tom. "There will be a box later."

"I ain't got no box," said Joe.

"One will be sent for you later, Joe," said Tom Merry.

"Thankee, sir!"

Taggles stared blankly at Joe.

Such language, and such an accent, he had certainly never heard before within the precincts of St. Jim's.

"Is this one of your little jokes, Master Merry?" he asked, staring. "That ain't a new boy for the school, I know that!"

"Yes; it is, Taggy!"

"What's his name, sir?"

"Joe!"

"Joe what, sir?"

"What's your other name, Joe?"

"Ain't got any other name, sir!" said Joe cheerfully.

"My word!" gasped Taggles.

And he started after the juniors as they walked on across the quadrangle. Taggles rubbed his nose and rubbed his chin. He was very dubious as to whether he ought to have allowed Joe to enter at all.

"I s'pose it's true, as Master Merry says so," murmured Taggles. "But it's a disgrace, that's wot it is! Nice goings hon, I must say!"

And the school porter retreated into his lodge in disgust. Tom Merry and his comrades marched Joe on to the School House. Taggles's surprise and disgust that a person of his own class should come to St. Jim's was rather amusing than otherwise. But Tom Merry was really feeling a little uneasy as to what the Head might think about the matter.

True, he had told Mr. Poinsett that Joe should come to St. Jim's. But the rancher had not known exactly what Joe was like. And probably he had not thought of telling the Head all he knew. Neither, probably, had given the matter much thought. Poor boys had come to St. Jim's before, and the Head probably thought that Joe would be like one or two good, hardworking lads who had come to the school at different times with scholarships.

He would have a surprise when he saw Joe.

"Mind, don't talk more than you can help," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to take you to see the Head. Be as silent as you can."

"Yes, Master Tom."

"And treat the Head with great respect."

"Yes, Master Tom."

Joe hesitated a moment.

"I s'pose 'e'll ask me questions?" he said.

"I suppose so."

"And I tell 'im the truth, sir?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Orlright!" said Joe.

"Don't say 'all right,' Joe, old chap—say very well!"

"I suppose I had better come to the Head's study with you, Tom Mewwy," Arthur Augustus remarked. "You will pwobably make some fearful howlah othahwise!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Buzz off, Gussy—and you chaps, too! I'll take Joe in alone!"

"I'm afwaid you will make some awful bloomah, Tom Mewwy."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'll risk it, Gussy."

"But undah the circs.—"

"More rats!"

"You uttah ass!"

"I'm off. See you chaps later."

And Tom Merry linked arms with Joe, and walked him off to the Head's study. The School House page brought him a message from the Head. Dr. Holmes was engaged in the Sixth Form class-room, and Tom Merry was to wait for him in his study.

Joe gazed round the Head's study in amazement, and when Tom Merry made him sit down, he sat down on the extreme edge of a chair.

The cosy, comfortably-furnished room, the walls lined with bookcases, with the titles on the books in many languages, struck Joe with an oppressive sense of his future head-master's greatness and learning.

"I—I say, Master Tom," murmured Joe nervously, as if afraid that the sound of his voice would awake scaring echoes.

"Yes, Joe?"

"Wot is the 'Ead like?"

"A kind gentleman," said Tom Merry. "One of the best and kindest men in England, Joe. You will like him."

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"Thank you, Merry!" said a voice at the door.

Tom Merry swung round with scarlet cheeks, as Dr. Holmes came in.

"Oh, sir!" he gasped.

The Head smiled.

"Never mind, Merry; I know you did not mean me to hear," he said. "Is this the new boy—the lad your uncle has so kindly taken charge of?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry still very much confused.

"Stand up, my boy!" said the Head, frowning a little. Joe evidently did not know that he was expected to rise when his head-master entered the room.

"Yes, sir," said Joe.

"What is your name, my boy?"

"Joe, sir."

"Your surname?"

"Joe, sir."

The Head smiled.

"But you have another name besides Joe," he said.

"I ain't, sir."

"Oh!"

Dr. Holmes gave Tom Merry a quick glance, and Tom coloured more deeply. He stood silent and uneasy while the peculiar interview proceeded.

"But you have a surname?" said the Head.

"Wot's that, sir?"

"Another name you are called by as well as Joe," said the Head.

A light of comprehension gleamed in Joe's eye.

"Oh, I catch on, sir!" he exclaimed. "Yes, sir; I 'ad another name in Blucher's Buildings, sir; cert."

"What did they call you?"

"Bones, sir."

"W-w-w-what!" ejaculated the Head.

"Bones, sir," said Joe innocently.

"But—but that is not your name?"

"Oh, no, sir. They called me Bones because I was skinny," said Joe. "Come through not 'aving enough to eat, sir. Bones and Rags are werry common names in Blucher's Buildings, sir; cause why, we was most bones and rags, sir."

The Head stepped back a pace.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured.

Tom Merry was mute.

"Then you have no other name, my lad?" asked the Head, in a very gentle voice.

"Ain't got one, sir, that I knows on."

"But what was your father called?"

"Whisky Face, sir."

"W-w-w-what?"

"Leastways, that's wot they called 'im be'ind his back, sir," said Joe. "When they was talkin' to 'im they'd call 'im Bill."

"Dear me!"

"Cause why?" explained Joe. "'E could 'ave knocked any of 'em in Blucher's Buildings dead hout with one tap on the smeller."

"Oh!"

"Even the captain never rubbed up father the wrong way, sir," said Joe. "'E was a terror, 'e was. He broke out worse'n ever when he came back from quod, sir."

Tom Merry trembled for his protege.

The expression on the Head's face was too awful to look upon. The old gentleman was in a state that the juniors would have described—correctly—as knocked into a cocked hat.

He seemed to be unable to catch his breath. He could only gaze at Joe, of Blucher's Buildings, with wide-open eyes.

"Dear me!" gasped the Head at last.

Joe stood waiting to be questioned further. Tom Merry had warned him to tell the truth, and he was doing it with a vengeance.

"But was your father called by no name?" asked Dr. Holmes, determined to get at the bottom of the surname mystery, at all events.

"Oh, yes, sir. Before he went to quod he was called John Smith, sir, and sometimes Fred Brown, sir. When he came out he was William Davis, and last of all 'e was Bill Frayne."

"Oh!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the Head. "Is it possible that the boy does not know what his own father's real name was?"

"Never thort about it, sir," said Joe.

"Dear me! Please wait outside, my lad, while I speak to Merry."

"Suttin'ly, sir!"

And Joe left the study and closed the door. Dr. Holmes turned to Tom Merry with an expression upon his face that made the junior's heart sink.



"Outside!" roared the ruffian, his brutal face black with passion. "Outside! This 'ere is my room! I'm master 'ere!"

"Put that belt down, you bound!" shouted Tom Merry bursting in at the door.

(See page 10.)

CHAPTER 14.

A Chance for Joe.

"MERRY!" "Ye-es, sir?" said Tom Merry, as bravely as he could.

"Is—is that the boy you asked your uncle to send to this school?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Do you think St. Jim's is a suitable place for him?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"Do you think he is suitable for this place?"

Still no reply.

But the dismay and discomfort in Tom Merry's face touched the Head, and his look and his tone became softer as he proceeded.

"I suppose you felt yourself bound by some ties to the lad, Merry."

"He was kind to me when I needed it, sir," said Tom Merry. "I couldn't forget that. And I had promised him that I'd stand by him if I ever came into good luck again."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Quite right, Merry. I cannot but approve of that. Quite right. But a totally uneducated slum-dweller, and

the son of a convict recently returned from prison, at St. Jim's! Oh, heavens!"

Tom Merry was silent.

"You can see how incongruous it is, Merry."

"I suppose so, sir."

"The worst of the matter is, that I have promised Mr. Poinsett to take him, and have accepted a cheque for three terms' fees in advance," said the Head musingly.

Tom Merry's eyes lighted a little. Under the circumstances, it would be exceedingly difficult for the Head to send Joe away; he realised that.

"But it is really most unpleasant," said the Head; "most disagreeable. How can I allow such a lad to associate with the boys here?"

"I think the best fellows would help him on, sir," said Tom Merry. "I know I and my friends would stick to him, and help him."

"Quite right, Merry. But you remember the case of Binks. It was arranged that he should be a pupil here, but on reflection he saw himself that it would be better for him to put in a few terms at another school first—a school—ahem!—not exactly of the same standing as St. Jim's."

"Yes, sir."

"As for this boy—"

"He's got a heart of gold, sir," said Tom Merry. "His manners and—speech—and other things can be improved. We'll all look after him, sir. I do hope you'll give him a chance. We found him in London being beaten with a buckled strap by his father, who was half intoxicated, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"He's covered with weals and bruises, sir, from head to foot," said Tom Merry. "We saw it when we bathed him. He's had an awful time, sir. If you'd give him a chance here, I know he'd improve. And—after all, sir, we're supposed to take some trouble, and even to run some risk, to help others who've been less fortunate than ourselves, sir. I remember your saying so in your sermon last Sunday, sir."

Dr. Holmes was silent.

Tom Merry was speaking with earnest sincerity, and all unconsciously he had placed the Head in a difficult position. Dr. Holmes would have been very sorry to give the impression, to a junior, that he had one set of principles in the pulpit and another set out of it.

"Under the circumstances, Merry, I do not see how I can refuse to give the boy a trial," he said. "But it must be understood that he is under your care to a large extent, and in case of any outrageous conduct on his part I shall hold you responsible."

"I'm quite willing, sir."

"Is he honest?"

"I believe he is now, sir."

"That means that he has stolen?"

"You haven't seen Blucher's Buildings, sir. It's a place where they breed thieves like—like maggots in rotten fruit," said Tom Merry. "The police never go there less than three at a time, and the Board-school inspector has never even looked in there. He would be murdered if he did. The poor kid was brought up to steal just as he learned to breathe."

The Head shuddered.

"But if he were to steal here, Merry—"

"He has promised me not to, sir."

"You think he will keep that promise?"

"I am sure of it, sir."

"Does he use decent language?"

Tom Merry coloured.

"I'm afraid he used to swear, like all the people he knew, sir; but when I was in Blucher's Buildings, I spoke to him about it. I only spoke once, sir, but he never swore again after that time."

"Ah! That shows that there is something in the lad," said the Head slowly. "We shall see. Very well, Merry, I can only say that he shall have a chance."

"Thank you so much, sir."

And Tom Merry quitted the Head's study, feeling very much relieved.

He found Joe waiting for him in the passage. Joe's face wore a peculiar twist, and Tom Merry looked at him quickly and inquiringly.

"What is the matter, Joe?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Have you got the toothache?"

"No, sir."

"You've got a pain of some sort."

Joe was silent.

"What is it, Joe? The truth, now!" said Tom Merry.

"Well, it's the boots, sir," said Joe reluctantly.

"The boots! Are they tight?" asked Tom Merry, glancing down at Joe's well-clad feet.

"Ye-es, Master Tom."

"Have they been hurting you long, Joe?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Since when?"

"Since I put them on, sir."

Tom Merry frowned with annoyance.

"Why didn't you tell me so before, Joe?" he exclaimed.

"Not arter the young gentleman was so kind as to buy 'em for me, sir," said Joe. "I wouldn't be so thankless, sir."

"You young ass! Another time, just say so. Come up to my study and take them off."

"Yes, Master Tom."

Tom Merry took Joe up to his study. Manners and Lowther were there, boiling the kettle and making toast for tea. A great many Shell fellows were in the passage, evidently having heard about Joe, and anxious to see him. There was a shout as Tom Merry was seen piloting his protegee along the Shell passage.

"Here he is!" shouted Gore.

"Hallo! Here's the new kid!"

"What's your name, kiddy?"

"Who's your father?"

"Where are you from?"

"Oh, let him alone!" said Tom Merry. "He's tired after a journey, and he wants a rest. Come into the study, Joe."

"Orlright, sir," said Joe.

"Orlright!" gasped Levison, of the Fourth. "My only THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 154.

hat! What a voice! What a giddy accent! Where did you dig him up, Tom Merry?"

"Mind your own business, Levison."

"Is that chap really coming to St. Jim's?" asked Mellish.

"Yes, he is."

"Great Scott!"

"My hat!"

Tom Merry, with a very red face, pushed Joe into the study, and closed the door. It was opened again almost immediately, and Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, looked in.

"Let's have another look at young workhouse," he said, in his amiable tone.

"You cad!" shouted Tom Merry. "Get out!"

Mellish held the handle of the door ready to slam it and run if Tom Merry made a movement towards him. He did not see that Monty Lowther had quietly picked up a pat of butter from the table, and was unostentatiously drawing back his hand for a throw.

"Oh, rats!" said Mellish. "We haven't had such a nice kid here, you know, since that ragamuffin you brought from Liverpool—what was his name?—'Erbert! Oh, yes, there was Binks, too! But this chap takes the cake! What I admire most is his accent! I—Ow! Ooooooooooh!"

The pat of butter whizzed through the air, and squashed fairly in Mellish's eye.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "Bullseye first shot!"

"Grooooooooooh!"

"Give him some jam with the butter!" exclaimed Manners.

But Mellish did not wait for the jam.

He slammed the door and ran, gouging the butter frantically out of his eye. He did not look in at Tom Merry's study again.

CHAPTER 15.

Joe Has Tea.

MONTY LOWTHER had a queer expression upon his face as he placed the big dish of toast on the table.

Manners was looking a little curious, too, as he brought the teapot on the scene. Tom Merry understood very well what those expressions meant, and he was feeling uncomfortable enough.

His taking up of Joe was likely to prove a bigger order than he had ever dreamt of. The reception Joe had met with so far had been very mixed; but it could not be doubted that at least half the fellows he had seen had been hostile.

It was probable that the greater part of the Lower School would be injured and insulted by the introduction of a street arab into their ranks.

It would be, to some extent, a natural feeling. Joe would require great care before he could mix with the other fellows on equal terms.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry believed that the waif of the London slums had plenty of good in him.

But he could hardly expect the other fellows to take that on trust.

There was trouble ahead!

Tom Merry knew it, but he did not shrink from it. He had said that he would stand by little Joe, and stand by him he would, through thick and thin.

Joe stood looking at the table. He had seldom seen a table so clean and neat before, which is saying a good deal. For there were many stains of coffee and tea on the cloth, and the crockery had hardly two articles of a similar pattern.

"Sit down, Joe," said Lowther.

"Thank you, sir."

"And take your boots off," said Tom Merry.

Lowther stared.

"Hang it all," he exclaimed, "this isn't a Turkish mosque, where you have to take your boots off before entering!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Joe's boots are too tight, and they're hurting him," he explained. "Gussy got them a size too small."

"Just like Gussy!"

"Weally, Lowthah—" said a voice at the door.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "You'd better fetch Joe a pair of slippers—his boots are too tight."

"Certainly, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus was soon back with the slippers. Joe changed into them with great comfort.

"Thankee kindly, sir," he said.

"I've looked in to see how you're gettin' on with the kid," said D'Arcy. "If I can be of any use, I twust you will not neglect to call upon me."

"What-ho!" said Lowther. "You ought to make yourself useful, Gussy. People who can't be ornamental should always try to be useful."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Sit down to tea, Gussy. We're getting on all right with Joe, so far, and he's going to play up like anything."

"Crikey!" said Joe, as his teeth closed on the hot buttered toast, so that the words came out in a rather smothered way. "This is spiffing!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Crikey! Yes, rather!"

"Pway don't say 'spiffin,' deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's a vulgah expression. Pway say wippin'."

"Wippin'," said Joe.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"Weally, deah boys," remonstrated Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon them reprovingly. "I twust you will not discedit my instwuction in this wude mannah by unseemly laughin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you feahful duffahs—"

"Let him make it ripping," implored Monty Lowther.

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah."

"Blessed if I know what I've done to inspire you with such a brotherly regard, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you—"

"That's right—we know you give us your kind regards,"

said Lowther. "Pass the toast."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Pass the toast."

"I wefuse—"

"These are what Gussy calls his table manners," said

Lowther. "He says that he refuses to pass the toast."

"I did not mean I wefuse to pass the toast—I meant—"

"Never mind what you mean, so long as you pass the

toast," said Lowther cheerfully. "You are really neglecting

young Joe in a shocking way."

Arthur Augustus, at a loss for words, but with an eye

burning with indignation, passed the toast.

Joe liked toast.

He did not say so, but his actions left no room for doubt

upon the subject.

He bolted round after round. Fortunately, there was a

large supply. But the butter, which was intended to be

eaten with the toast, was largely applied by Joe to making

shiny his fingers and his face.

His hands were soon glistening brightly, and a gleam of

melted butter shone upon his happy and contented face.

The juniors watched the progress of the buttering

curiously.

It was Tom Merry's self-imposed duty to give Joe instruction,

especially in manners, but he had a natural dislike to

correcting a fellow at his own table. It seemed to Tom Merry

priggish to correct anybody. It was his duty in this case,

but it was a most uncongenial one.

He was rather at a loss how to do it, too. Joe evidently

thought that he was giving complete satisfaction.

Joe's method of drinking tea, too, was not exactly gratifying

to his entertainers.

He would take the cup in both hands, and guzzle into it

with a noise like that of water gurgling out of a pipe.

When the tea was too hot for his liking, Joe would eject

it without ceremony.

The chums gazed at the latter proceeding in dismay.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy drew back unconsciously from Joe.

He was afraid that his immaculate trousers and his fault-

less jacket might suffer from contact with the hero of

Blucher's Buildings.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "Bai Jove!"

Gore opened the door and looked in.

Joe was still bolting toast at top speed, and his hands and

his face were shining brightly in the gaslight.

Gore stared at him.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed. "What a specimen!"

"What do you want?" asked Tom Merry irritably.

"Nothing—"

"Then buzz off—"

"But—"

"Oh, clear cut!"

Monty Lowther picked up a chunk of bread, and Gore

closed the door rather quickly.

"You'd better come!" he bawled through the keyhole.

"It's a House row. Blake and Digby have been collared by

the New House cads, and Kangaroo told me to call you. I'm

off!"

The Terrible Three and Arthur Augustus jumped up at

once. A House row was a call they could not neglect. If

their chums were fighting with Figgins & Co., it was their

bounden duty to rush at once to the rescue.

"Come on!" exclaimed Manners breathlessly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Stay here, Joe!" said Tom Merry. "Finish your tea,

and we'll be back by then. Don't go out of the study what

ever you do."

"Orlright, Master Tom."

"Mind you don't go out, Joe," said Tom uneasily.

He was afraid that the lad might be led to go out and look

round, from sheer curiosity in his new quarters, and he knew

that the juniors would be certain to capture him if he did,

and probably rag him without mercy.

"I'll stay here, Master Tom."

"Honour?" said Tom.

"Honour bright, Master Tom!"

Joe had learned the meaning of that expression by this

time. He evidently meant what he said, and Tom Merry was

satisfied.

"Right you are, Joe!" he said.

"Come on!" roared Monty Lowther from the passage.

"I'm coming!"

And Tom Merry slammed the door and rushed after his

comrades, and out into the dusky quadrangle, and in less

than a minute they were in the thick of the row.

CHAPTER 16.

Real Grit.

JOE sat in the study at the tea-table. A smile of beaming and happy contentment was upon Joe's face.

Joe was, in fact, happy—happier than he had ever

been before in his life. Only that morning he had been

writling under the belt of the drunken convict—and here

he was in the early evening, sitting at Tom Merry's table,

enjoying a litherlo undreamt-of luxury—hot buttered toast!

Joe was enjoying himself immensely.

Joe had no principles to speak of—his training had not

given him any. He had learned one thing—to worship Tom

Merry, and do whatever Tom Merry told him. And as Tom

Merry was as fine a specimen of British boyhood as could

be found in the British Isles, Joe could not have had a better

guide. To do exactly as Tom Merry wished—and to antepiate

his wishes if possible—that had become Joe's purpose

in life.

Tom Merry had told him to finish his tea—and Joe went

on with it, and finished it at last. He revelled in toast, in

jam, and marmalade, and cake. He had to leave off at

last for sheer want of stowage room, and then he moved to

the armchair, and sat down in it, with his feet on the

fender, and gazed at the blazing fire blissfully.

"Crikey!" he murmured. "This is spiffing—wippin'—

ripping!"

Joe had got it right at last.

He gazed at the flames, seeing in them pictures of his old

life, and fanciful sketches of his new, till the sound of the

door opening made him look round. He thought it was

Tom Merry returning. But it was not.

Gore came in with Mellish and Levison. They grinned at

the sight of the shiny face of Joe.

"Here he is!" said Mellish.

"Good!" said Levison. "And those cads are away, so we

can ask him a few questions."

"If he won't answer—"

"Oh, we'll make him answer."

Joe gazed at the visitors in some alarm. He could see by

their looks that they had no friendly intentions. There was

another step at the door, and a Sixth-Former looked in. It

was Knox, the prefect, the most unpopular senior in the

House.

He glanced at the juniors, and then at Joe.

"I hear Tom Merry's protege is here," he said. "Is that

it?"

"That's it, Knox."

"Pretty looking specimen, I must say. Isn't Merry here?"

"Oh, he's rowing in the quad. with the New House

chaps!"

Knox grinned, and came into the study and closed the

door. Prefect as he was, Knox was always careful how he

treated the Terrible Three. He knew that though it was in

his power to take advantage of his position in dealing with

them, the chums of the Shell would always contrive to give

him as good—and as bad—as they received.

It seemed to Knox an excellent opportunity to score over

the juniors whom he disliked, by bullying the new boy they

had taken under their care. And he was really very curious

about Joe, too.

"So you're the new boy," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Joe.

The "sir" pleased Knox somewhat, and his tone was a

little less bullying as he proceeded. Gore, Mellish, and

Levison drew round. They had intended to rag Joe them-

selves. But they could see that that was Knox's intention,

and they preferred to back up the prefect. For his rank

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as a prefect would be a shield over them afterwards if the Terrible Three cut up rusty.

"Oh! Where did you come from?" asked Knox.

"London, sir!"

"I know that!" snapped Knox. "But what part of London?"

"Blucher's Buildings, sir."

"What's your name?"

"Joe, sir."

"Joe what?"

"Nothin' but Joe, sir."

"Oh, I suppose you never had a father," said the prefect.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Is he alive?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is his name?"

"Bill, sir."

"Bill what?"

Joe did not reply.

After the most unfortunate interview with the Head, Tom Merry had cautioned Joe not to be too free in giving information about his origin.

He had explained to the little ragamuffin that, while if one gave information it should always be truthful, on the other hand it was always possible to refuse giving information if impertinent questions were asked.

Joe did not yet realise what it meant to him to keep secret the fact that his father had served a term of penal servitude.

In Blucher's Buildings it had been rather a distinction than otherwise. St. Jim's had ideals different from those of Blucher's Buildings. But Joe had not been long enough at the school to begin even to understand them.

But his faith in Tom Merry was his guide. Tom Merry had told him not to relate the details of his early life. He meant to do as Tom Merry had bidden him.

Knox was gazing at him in astonishment.

"Why don't you answer, you brat?" he demanded.

"I ain't got nothin' to say, sir," said Joe.

"You impudent whelp."

Joe looked a little frightened. Knox was growing very angry, and he was big enough to eat Joe. And Gore and Levison and Mellish were all ready to pounce upon him at a signal from the prefect; Joe could see that.

"My hat!" ejaculated Knox, in sheer amazement. "If the rotten little guttersnipe isn't disobeying me!"

"Check!" said Mellish.

"Give him a licking," suggested Levison.

"I'll break every bone in his body if he checks me," said Knox. "Look here, young shaver, have you ever been thrashed?"

"Orfen, sir," said poor Joe.

"Oh, you know what it's like, then, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. My father used to give me the buckle end of his strap," said Joe. "My mudder 'ad a broom-handle; but that wasn't so bad, 'cause why, she was usually so squiffy that she couldn't hit straight."

Knox stared at him. The words, so full of the unconscious pathos of a slum child's life, would have gone straight to most hearts. But Knox did not feel touched. He felt disgusted, and prided himself upon his disgust, which made him feel aristocratic and superior to common people.

"My word!" he exclaimed. "What sort of a horrible toad has Tom Merry brought to St. Jim's. Where were you brought up, you snipe?"

Joe looked at him with wide, frightened eyes, without replying. He cast a hunted glance at the door. He could have dodged out, but he remembered Tom Merry's injunction not to leave the study.

True, Tom Merry had been far from foreseeing anything of this sort. But an order from Tom Merry was an order to Joe, and had to be obeyed.

"Oh!" said Knox, in a low, unpleasant voice. "So you've learned Tom Merry's cheek already, have you, and you're taking it upon yourself to disobey a prefect. I might have guessed you'd be taught insolence by those young cads."

Joe's eyes gleamed.

"Master Tom is better'n you are, any day in the week," he said. "Don't you say nothin' against Master Tom. You're a liar, you are."

Joe's language had the painful directness of Blucher's Buildings.

Knox glared at him for a moment, and then he grasped him by the collar, grinding his knuckles into the boy's neck.

"You confounded young cad!" he shouted. "I'll teach you to cheek me. Shut the door, Gore, and hand me that cricket-stump."

"I'll lay it on for you, if you like, Knox," said Mellish, while the Shell fellow closed the study door.

"Good!" said Knox. "I'll hold him while you lay it on."

Mellish grinned as he grasped the cricket-stump.

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"I'll jolly well make him squirm," he said. "We'll show the filthy young rotter that beggars can't come to St. Jim's."

"Ow! You leggo!" roared Joe.

"Quiet, you little greasy pig!"

"Leggo! Ang you, leggo! You're a coward! You're a beast!"

Knox smiled grimly, and twisted the new boy over on the tea-table. There was a crash of broken crockery as Joe struggled there in the senior's heavy grasp.

"Now!" Knox hissed to Mellish.

"What-ho!" said the cad of the Fourth cheerfully.

The cricket-stump rose and fell, Joe gave a wild howl of pain. He tried to get at Knox with his teeth, but the prefect was too careful. He jammed Joe's face down upon the table to stifle his yells.

"Lay into him!" he said savagely.

Lash, lash!

There was a sudden crash of footsteps in the passage, and the door of the study was flung open.

"Well, Joe—Hullo! What! My hat!"

The Terrible Three had returned. Their appearance showed that they had been through a rough experience. Tom Merry had a swollen nose, and Lowther a discoloured eye, and Manners' collar was torn out, and hung by a single stud. Their clothes were dusty and their hair dishevelled. There had been a wild scrimmage in the quadrangle, but the School House had beaten the New House, so the Terrible Three had returned to their study quite-contented.

The sight that met their gaze almost petrified them for a moment.

Then Tom Merry rushed fiercely towards Knox.

He did not speak. He drove his clenched fist straight at the prefect, and Knox reeled back and crashed to the floor. Mellish dashed for the doorway, and Manners and Lowther kicked at him together as he passed, and he crashed down into the passage with a yell of pain.

Joe rolled off the table, wriggling, jammy, buttery, and in tears. Knox was upon his feet in a moment, glaring furiously at the chums of the Shell.

"Tom Merry!" he gasped, choking with rage. "You—you dare to strike me—a prefect!"

"Yes, you hound!" shouted Tom Merry, facing him with clenched fists and blazing eyes. "And I'll do it again if you lay a finger on that kid. You bully! You cad!"

Knox sprang straight at him. Tom Merry faced the prefect without faltering, and Manners and Lowther rushed to his aid at once.

Then Knox hesitated. He knew that he had no chance against the Terrible Three together, and they had evidently no scruples, just now, about laying hands upon a prefect.

"You—you young hounds!" Knox spluttered. "I'll report this to the Head! I'll have you expelled from the school!"

Tom Merry laughed scornfully.

"And we'll report at the same time how you were treating this kid," he exclaimed. "You cowardly hound!"

"I—I—" Knox fairly choked, and could not get the words out.

"Get out of my study!"

"What!"

"Get out of my study," said Tom Merry determinedly, "or we'll throw you out, prefect or no prefect!"

The Terrible Three advanced a step. Knox hesitated one moment, and then strode from the study.

Monty Lowther closed the door after him, while Tom Merry turned to Joe. The little waif was trying bravely to keep back his tears.

"Have they hurt you much, Joe?" asked Tom Merry.

"N-not much," faltered Joe through his quivering lips.

"Why didn't you bolt?" asked Manners.

"Master Tom told me not to leave the study," said Joe simply.

Tom Merry felt a choking sensation in his throat. The simple faithfulness of the little waif went straight to his heart.

"Good for you, Joe!" he said. "Isn't he the real stuff, you fellows?"

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Monty Lowther heartily. "He's real grit!"

"He's been ragged," said Tom Merry slowly. "He may be ragged again. But we know he's the right stuff, and we're going to stick to him through thick and thin, and see him through. That's agreed?"

"Agreed!" said Manners and Lowther; and they meant it.

And the Terrible Three kept their word.

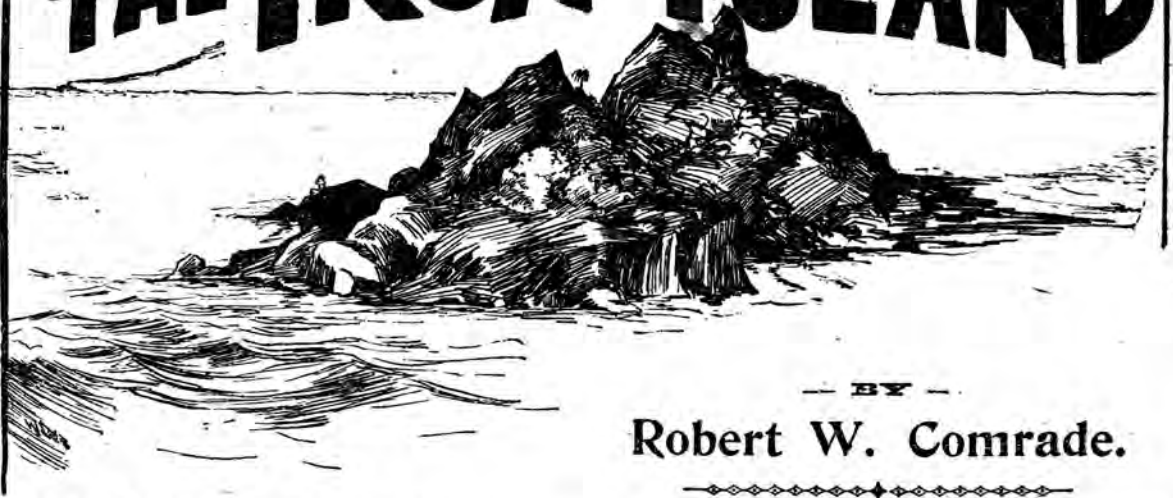
THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's next week, entitled "No Class!" by Martin Clifford. Also another grand instalment of "The Iron Island," by Robert W. Comrade. Order your "GEM" Library in advance. Price 1d.

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

A Powerful Adventure Story!

THE IRON ISLAND



— BY —

Robert W. Comrade.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RE-WITTEN.

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, Sir Robert Gissing, and Colonel Marsden, all Inner Councillors of the Brotherhood.

By means of his submarine, Kingston destroys the Night Hawk, the Brotherhood's yacht, which attempted to hold up the liner Colston. Leaving Fraser, his servant, on the submarine, Kingston dresses as an ordinary seaman, and puts out in a little collapsible boat with the intention of being picked up by the Colston, which he wants to board. He takes with him Tim, a lad whom he rescued from the Night Hawk. Kingston stands up in the boat and shouts to attract attention.

(Now go on with the story).

Kingston Meets Another Member of the Brotherhood.

Being on the look-out, many minutes had not passed before he was seen. A shout went up, and Kingston plainly heard the order for a boat to be lowered.

"Now, Tim," he said, as a final word, "remember you and I are members of the Night Hawk's crew, and that we fired the magazine. All you know about me is that I am a deck-hand."

"Right you are, sir! I won't let nothin' slip."

They watched curiously, as one of the liner's lifeboats put off. Tim was excited, and in a whirl. Everything had happened in such rapid succession that he couldn't take it all in. Kingston, however, was as cool as the proverbial cucumber. A slight smile was on his lips, and he was really looking forward to the coming hour.

This was the second time he had been picked up out of the little collapsible; but on this occasion the situation was vastly different. The lifeboat slid alongside, and its occupants bent forward in eager curiosity to see who this man was. The darkness, however, did not allow of a very close scrutiny.

"How many of you?" inquired the officer in charge.

"Two sir," answered Kingston. "Me an' a kid."

"Are there no more saved from the wreck?"

"Saved?" echoed Kingston scornfully. "We wasn't saved, sir! It was me 'oo blew 'em up!"

"Great Scott! But you'd better tell the captain. It is a serious business, my man, and you'll have to answer—"

"It 'ud ha' bin a serious business for you, guv'nor, if I 'adn't done as I did. You'd ha' bin in Kingdom Come by now!"

The little boat was towed to the Colston's side, and Kingston smiled inwardly, as he saw the crowds of passengers craning their necks over the rail to get a first glimpse of the sole survivors. At the top of the ladder stood the skipper—a man named Lindsay. Under the brilliant electric light, Kingston looked a sorry spectacle in his sea-stained clothing and bare feet. The officers, all more or less excited over the night's happenings, crowded round him.

"Bring him to my cabin, Smith," said Captain Lindsay, in his gruff tones. "We must investigate this matter immediately."

The first officer did as ordered, and Kingston soon found himself, with Tim by his side, standing in front of the skipper's table. In the room, also, were the first and second officers.

"Now, then, my man, I want some explanation of this extraordinary affair! Never in all my whole forty years of service, have I experienced such an occurrence as this. Tell me everything from the beginning."

"Well, sir," said Kingston, affecting a bold and straightforward manner, a manner which spelled honesty, "there ain't really much to tell. That craft was a pirate, a boatload o' murderers—"

"What was her name?"

"'Er name, sir? The Night 'Awk."

There was no reason why her name shouldn't be disclosed, as the Night Hawk had, supposedly, belonged to Bruckmann, who was now dead.

"The Night Hawk? Very well; go on!"

"As I said, they was a lot o' murderers aboard 'er, sir! I soon found that out, but kep' it dark, as I didn't mean to 'ave any part in their dirty work. It was known by everybody aboard as we was a-goin' to sink the Colston, an' git the bullion."

"Suppose I had handed the bullion over quietly?"

"It wouldn't ha' made no odds, sir. They meant to sink yer any'ow, so's yer wouldn't tell no tales. But as soon as I sighted yer to-night I decided to give you a warnin'."

"The wireless?"

"That's it, sir. I larnt it off of a pal o' mine. I warned yer to take no notice o' threats, because I meant to blow the ship up!"

"That was a terribly serious step, my man."

"What else could I ha' done, sir?" asked Kingston eagerly. "I wasn't a-goin' ter see you sunk, and I give you my word you would ha' bin but for me an' my pal 'ere. There wasn't nothink else to do. It was the 'Awk or you, an' I chose the 'Awk. Didn't I do right, sir?"

The captain was certain that Kingston was speaking the truth, for had not the pirate actually fired on the Colston, proving her threats to be genuine?

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Another Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Tem
Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.NEXT
WEEK;

"NO CLASS."

"Yes, my man. I certainly think you did right," cried the captain. "There is no question as to which ship deserved such a fate. Nevertheless, weren't you rather drastic? Couldn't you have stopped their vile plan without killing them all?"

"Ow, sir?" demanded Kingston. "What could I do agin all of 'em? An' wot could you do agin their guns? They was fitted up like a battleship, sir. At the least sign o' funk on my part they'd ha' chucked me overside, an' then there'd bin nothin' to save yer!"

Kingston's arguments were certainly conclusive. Try as he would, Captain Lindsay could not find any weak spot in his story. To have sunk the pirate with all hands seemed to have been the only course. All others would have ended in disaster for the Colston.

"You have acted with remarkable smartness, my man," said the skipper, at last. "and I really cannot say enough in praise of your brave conduct. You have saved every life aboard this ship, as well as a vast amount of bullion gold. Your little companion, too, was evidently useful."

"We're honest, both of us, sir, and wasn't goin' to 'ave nothin' to do with them cut-throats, sir. It was as much for our own sakes as yours that we blew 'em up, 'cos they'd ha' killed us afore reachin' port, for sure. They'd ha' found us 'ow we was traitors!"

"Well, be that as it may, I only know that you have saved my ship, and I am grateful. But the passengers in the saloon are impatient to hear the story. Come with me, and I will tell them everything."

"Me, sir?" said Kingston. "In the saloon? I ain't good 'nough."

"Nonsense! Come along, my man!"

And the sole survivors of the Night Hawk followed the captain out on deck. The Colston was steaming ahead now, and order was somewhat restored, although there still remained a feeling of excitement and curiosity in the air. The saloon passengers were talking together in groups, and looked up in expectation as the captain entered the brilliantly-illuminated apartment. The news that "the sailor from the other ship" was in their midst quickly spread, and the men crowded in from the smoking-room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried Lindsay. "I have no hesitation in saying, after hearing this man's story, that we all owe our lives to his pluck and ingenuity. Although the measure he took to save the Colston was a drastic one, there was no other way. Had he not sunk the other vessel, we should ourselves have been sunk. It is a very great debt of gratitude we owe him, and I hope you will appreciate his action to its full worth."

A buzz of conversation filled the room, and Kingston and Jim found themselves surrounded. But neither said much, neither were talkative. The captain told the whole story, and many were the words of praise and thanks heaped upon Kingston's shoulders.

"So you see, Dr. Anderson," concluded the captain, "I was correct in acting in the opposite manner to that which you suggested. You advised me to ignore the wireless message, and give up the bullion rather than risk the lives of my passengers. But, as you know, the wireless was of great value. I followed its instructions with what results you are aware."

At the mention of Dr. Anderson, Kingston metaphorically pricked up his ears. He made no outward sign, but glanced carelessly at the man addressed, the man who had advised Captain Lindsay to deliver up the bullion meekly, and without a fight.

He was elderly, wearing grey hair and beard. The well-cut frock-coat, the immaculately parted hair, and the gold pince-nez were quite familiar to Kingston, and he did not wonder why the doctor advised the surrender of the bullion.

For this highly-respectable and staid-looking member of the medical profession was none other than Dr. Charles Anderson, the West End specialist, and No. 11 of the Inner Council of the Brotherhood of Iron!

Carson Gray, Detective.

"I admit, Lindsay, that my judgment was entirely at fault," smiled Dr. Anderson, in soft, pleasant tones. "But, at that time, I really imagined the thing to be a hoax. Of course, I, as much as anybody else present, quite recognise the debt we owe to this brave fellow here, and have no hesitation in saying that our lives were in his hands."

The doctor smiled, and discussed the question with a group of ladies. He was a very popular man, and universally liked. His true character was absolutely concealed.

There was one other man aboard the Colston Kingston well knew, and one who scrutinised the "sailor" with some disconcerting thoroughness. This was a slim, wiry man of about thirty-five, clean-shaven, and dressed with unusual

neatness. His eyes were of a brown colour, and rather dull. Notwithstanding this, however, they missed nothing of what went on around their owner.

Everybody knew Carson Gray, the celebrated private inquiry agent. He was considered the ablest detective in London, and he had distinguished himself on very many occasions. Kingston had met him at the Cyril, and had, in fact, become quite friendly.

It was rather a coincidence his being aboard the Colston just now. Seeing that Kingston was alone, he leisurely crossed over, and his brown eyes rested for a moment on the other's bare feet and ragged trousers.

"You have done well, my friend," he said genially. "Some people wouldn't like to shake hands with a common sailor, but if a man saves my life, I think he is, at least, entitled to a hearty handshake."

He grasped Kingston's hand, and wrung it with vigour. The latter could tell that the detective was sincere, and his estimation of Carson Gray went up. At the same time Kingston gave no sign as to his true identity, for he felt sure that Gray was curious concerning his story.

"Who were the owners of the Night Hawk? Do you know?"

"No, sir, that I don't," replied Kingston. "All I knows is that she was a pirate."

"You haven't explained yet exactly how you managed to wreck the Hawk, and escape uninjured yourself. That must have been a pretty stiff task."

"It was, sir; all that."

The detective endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to pump Kingston. All his questions were answered, but in such a manner that they were not really answered at all. Carson Gray was not long in noticing this, and it struck him rather forcibly. Could this man be all he claimed to be? Could a common sailor parry all these questions with the cleverness Kingston parried them? It seemed peculiar on the face of it. Gray was a little suspicious.

Tim, too, was like an oyster. He had no answer at all for his questions, and the detective was certain that such a smart lad, as Tim Curtis evidently was, could have offered better answers than "Yes" and "No."

Another thing which struck Carson Gray was the comparative whiteness of Kingston's feet. Kingston had not overlooked this fact, but he had certainly never anticipated the presence of the detective on board. Of course, he was there in charge of the bullion.

"You haven't been long without your boots, have you?"

"No, sir; an' I shouldn't be without 'em now, only I wanted to git about the ship quiet. I 'adn't got time to put 'em on when I left."

"Quite so. What are your plans for the future? Where do you intend going when we reach Southampton? Of course, the Blue Star Company will reward you highly for your services. Do you intend going to sea again?"

"Might do, sir. Don't know yet."

Carson Gray gave it up after a few moments longer. It was very evident the saviour of the Colston did not intend saying a word more than he had said. Yet Carson Gray had never failed to elicit, at least, some information from a man yet. It was all the more remarkable being unable to pump a common sailor. There was something decidedly suspicious about the whole affair to Gray's mind.

Of course, he wasn't to know that the man was Frank Kingston, and, even if he had known it, Kingston was only a fool. Yet Carson Gray, clever as he was, could never hope to equal Frank Kingston at the same class of work. The latter was his superior in every way.

The bulk of the saloon passengers, having thanked Kingston, took scarcely any more notice of him, although they were discussing nothing else but the hold-up affair. So, taking advantage of an opportunity when a group of ladies were talking to Tim, he quietly strolled out on deck.

Just at that place nobody was about. The whole vessel was throbbing with life, and Kingston thanked Heaven that he had been successful in his venture. All these innocent people were safe now, safe from what some considered an imaginary danger, but which Kingston knew to have been very real, indeed.

He also knew that it was hopeless trying to put off in his boat, for the liner was travelling at a good speed. Yet he would have to leave it soon. He would have to get back to the Dart. How?

There was only one way, and that was to jump overboard. Kingston had been assured that there were no sharks whatever in these waters, and, although it was a risk, he did not hesitate to take it. In this way he would give everybody aboard the Colston the impression that he had committed suicide, thus making it utterly impossible for anybody to suspect that he was Frank Kingston.

It was a calm night, and he could hear the strains of

singing proceeding from the steerage cabins. The bridge was away to his left, and nobody was within sight. It was a good opportunity.

He gave a last glance round, smiled at the recollection of the conversation with Carson Gray, and stepped to the rail. He knew Tim would be all right, and decided to give early attention to Dr. Charles Anderson.

Without the least sign of hurry, he divested himself of coat and waistcoat, then, as cool as if just stepping into his morning tub, he sprang far out into the water. Ten minutes later the second officer passed along, saw the coat and waistcoat lying on deck, and picked them up.

"What the dickens—" he began, thinking for a moment that a deck-hand had left his clothing there. Then he recognised the stained reefers of the Colston's visitor. He did not realise for a moment what it meant; then it struck him suddenly. "Good heavens!" he muttered. "The fellow's committed suicide! It must be so. These clothes—"

He hurried to the saloon, where the skipper was still chatting on the topic of the hour. He burst in and looked round quickly.

"Excuse me," he said, "but has anybody seen that sailor from the Night Hawk? Is he here?"

"He was ten minutes ago," said Carson Gray, "for I was talking to him. He went out on deck then."

"On deck, sir?"

"Yes. Is anything wrong?"

"I'm afraid so. There's every reason to believe that he's committed suicide by jumping overboard!"

"Committed suicide!" echoed everybody, in amazement.

Captain Lindsay stepped forward.

"What reasons have you for thinking that, Harris?" he asked sharply. "Is the man missing?"

"Well, he isn't here, sir; and I found these clothes on the deck near the rail. I don't think there's any doubt on the matter, sir, myself."

"Institute a search immediately, Harris. This is most unexpected. The man has proved himself brave and straightforward, and now to take his own life seems cowardly and senseless."

"To a certain degree," agreed one of the passengers. "Perhaps he feared the consequences of his action, however. In all probability he has some acquaintance in England, who, when they learn he has turned traitor, would round on him."

Carson Gray kept his opinion to himself. One significant fact struck him, however. If the sailor had really meant to take his own life, why had he divested himself of coat and waistcoat?

Meanwhile, what was happening to Kingston himself? He struck the water with scarcely a splash, dived under, and struck out away from the Colston's side with powerful strokes. He had no desire to be dashed to pieces by the propellers.

The water was delightfully cool, and if it hadn't been for the possibility of sharks Kingston would have thoroughly enjoyed the swim. He cleared the dangerous wash safely and struck out again, keeping his eyes fixed keenly on the surface of the water. There was no sign of the Dart yet.

The risks he was running were many and great. Besides danger from the monsters of the deep, he knew perfectly well that if Fraser missed him unnoticed, and such a thing was by no means impossible—he was as good as dead. Nothing on earth could save him then.

So he never relaxed his vigilance for a single second. The Colston had steamed quite a long way ahead before Kingston sighted the little submarine. And as he did so, he uttered a real sigh of relief. For a moment he had begun to think he had missed it.

It was moving along the surface, entirely submerged, with the exception of the little conning-tower. An ordinary man would hardly have noticed the tiny black dot in the surrounding darkness, but Kingston's eyesight was marvellous.

In a loud voice he called out, making for the Dart all the time. Unless Fraser's attention was attracted, he would follow his instructions, and keep the Colston in sight. The faithful servant was on the alert, however, and heard Kingston's faint cry immediately.

Five minutes later the swimmer was standing in the submarine, smiling and cool. He had passed through the ordeal in perfect safety.

"Well, Fraser," he cried as he donned his own clothes again, "that's another Inner Councillor accounted for. They are going one by one. That youngster will prove useful to me in England. He can be trusted."

"I don't know what we should have done without this submarine, though, sir."

"We should have done nothing, Fraser. It would have been impossible for me to have carried out my plans. And

your assistance has been invaluable. You have helped splendidly."

"I haven't done anything, sir," replied Fraser. "It's you who's been doin' all the work. An' I don't know how you've got through it, sir."

"My task was really very simple and straightforward—"

"But look at the risks you ran, sir; an' the actin' you had to do."

"I admit there were a few risks, Fraser. But as to the acting, there was nothing much in that. But we are wasting time. How far are we from the Coronet?"

"About five hours' run now, I should say, sir. We've been bearin' towards her, if anythin'."

"Then I propose we lower the vessel to a depth of sixty feet, and have a good rest. In the morning we can make for the yacht, and be there by midday."

"Very good, sir. I dare say you're feelin' tired."

This plan was carried out to the letter, and just before noon on the following day the Coronet was sighted, lying motionless on the placid water, the sun beating fiercely down upon her decks. The Dart passed right underneath her, and continued under water to the distant horizon, where she turned and rose to the surface.

"Now then, Fraser, we've met with no excitement whatever, and are heartily glad to be back. You understand? Appearing from this direction will give Morrison the impression that we have been to the northward."

Kingston stood at the open manhole of the conning-tower, with a pair of binoculars to his eyes. He smiled as he saw the signs of excitement when the Dart was sighted, for he knew that Captain Morrison had been very sceptical as to whether the little vessel would ever be seen again.

With no ostentation, the Dart slid against the plates of the Coronet, and Frank Kingston stepped on to the ladder, cool and smiling as usual. Outwardly, he was just the same as he had been when he left, and certainly no one would have guessed the adventures he had passed through during his absence.

"Ah, Morrison, we're back, you see!" he cried, stepping on deck. "I give you my word, I'm sick of the Dart for a time. She's behaved splendidly, I admit, but it has been so beastly dull and cramped. I'm real glad to be aboard the Coronet again."

"And I'm glad to see you, sir," replied the skipper. "I never did trust those submarines, but this little one does seem to be better than most."

"It is better, Morrison; but a long stay on her is rather monotonous. I want you to hoist her on to the davits, and set sail for England at full speed."

"Very good, sir."

Morrison couldn't quite understand it, but he knew his master's eccentric habits and sudden changes of mind, so he said nothing.

Dolores was on the promenade deck, looking on with casual interest, for she had, of course, to keep up her character of governess. Her feelings, however, were very different. Ever since Kingston had departed she had been uneasy. She knew how dangerous his mission was, and knew what a frail little craft he was trusting himself to.

The relief on seeing the same indolent fop as usual was very great. But had he been successful? To look at him it would seem impossible that he had done anything since he left the Coronet.

But her curiosity was soon to be satisfied. Kingston lost no time in putting her into possession of the facts; and as he told the adventure she marvelled at his coolness and audacity—at his bravery. But she could not understand why they were racing to England so quickly.

"Because I want to arrive there before the Colston," replied Kingston. "It is quite possible, for the liner stops at one or two ports on the way, whereas we shall go straight through. I want to be on Southampton Quay—disguised, of course, when Dr. Anderson alights. I have decided he shall be the next councillor to receive his punishment."

"There is this boy, too," said Dolores. "Do you think he can be trusted sufficiently to be told your real name and the object of your campaign?"

"Yes, Dolores, I do. I believe Tim Curtis is straightforward and honest, and truly grateful to me for having saved his life; for, in a way, I suppose I have done so. I shall be able to make use of him almost directly."

"If he mentioned the submarine to anybody on the Colston, this detective—Gray—wouldn't take long to put two and two together. Neither would Anderson."

"But he won't mention a word about it, Dolores. I am positive I can rely on Tim's discretion as well as I could on Fraser's. He's only a youngster, and I haven't seen much of him; but my first impression was that he is absolutely straight, and if I prove to be wrong—well, I shall be very considerably surprised."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 154.

Another Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEEK:

"NO CLASS."



Shadowing the Shadower.

Tim Curtis found himself in luck's way aboard the Colston. The captain had given orders for him to be removed to the steerage, but several passengers, particularly Dr. Anderson and Carson Gray, requested that he should be allowed to remain where he was.

So Tim made the voyage to England as a first-class passenger. Kingston's dramatic disappearance had never been cleared up, and it was finally decided he had committed suicide. Dr. Anderson, in his own mind, concluded the "sailor" had been a member of the Brotherhood, had turned traitor, and then committed suicide, rather than face the consequences of his act of treachery.

Tim, however, evidently knew something about him, so the doctor decided to get it out of him. Tim, of course, was not a member of the Brotherhood, but he was very probably aware of its existence. For this reason Anderson was rather alarmed, lest the boy should give the game away.

Carson Gray, too, resolved to keep a sharp eye on Tim. The whole affair, to his mind, seemed fishy. He wasn't at all sure that Kingston was dead, and he was quite certain he was not the common sailor he pretended to be. Kingston was a very clever man; but Gray was a smart detective, and items that ordinary people would never notice he saw at once. And now that Kingston had gone, Tim received all Gray's attention. The detective had decided, in fact, to devote all his time for the first week, on arriving in England, to solving the mystery of the Night Hawk.

Tim himself, with real smartness, had seen in a second what Kingston had done. The instant he heard that his rescuer had jumped overboard, he guessed his object. The boy was faithful to his word, and, no matter how many questions were asked him, he never revealed anything.

One slip he made, however—one very serious slip—was to get him into great trouble. Not that Tim could be blamed, for the slip was an unconscious one. He allowed himself to get friendly with Dr. Anderson.

To him, as to everybody else, the doctor was a mild, very pleasant, and quite harmless gentleman. He was an eminent specialist, and his name stood high in the medical profession. He declared he was interested in Tim, and had decided to give him a situation in his household as page-boy.

Could Tim be blamed for agreeing to accept the place? He knew he could pay periodical visits to the address Kingston had given him, and Tim did not like spending the five pounds he had. He wanted to give it back to Kingston intact. So he looked upon Anderson as a very nice gentleman indeed.

The long journey to England passed over uneventfully enough, the weather becoming colder and rougher as the vessel proceeded. At last the Colston steamed up the Channel, and the passengers, one and all, were glad the voyage was at an end.

The news of the attempted hold-up had, of course, reached England before them, and the docks at Southampton were crowded with sightseers to gaze at the vessel which had been saved in the nick of time from destruction.

One man, although he appeared only casually interested, was, in reality, watching the proceedings very carefully indeed. He was an old man, though very erect, and attired in shabby blue serge clothing. One would take him, at first glance, for an old Army pensioner.

The Colston, appearing among all the other shipping only moderately large, was soon fast to her moorings. The gangways were then placed into position, and the bustle of landing commenced.

The old man in the blue serge, despite his shabbiness, was evidently expecting somebody who travelled saloon, for the second-class and steerage passengers—further along the quay—were not favoured with his attention.

Dr. Anderson was among the last passengers to land. Tim was by his side, and the people on the quay instantly recognised him as the lad who had come from the Night Hawk. He was attired in good clothes now—purchased at one of the ports called at—and looked somewhat excited. At the sight of him with the specialist the old man on the quay started.

"Tim Curtis with Anderson," he muttered in surprise. "What on earth can Anderson be doing with the boy? They are going to the station, too!"

The old man—otherwise Carson Gray—followed the doctor and his young companion, rather puzzled. He had expected to find Tim alone, and had made up his mind to follow him, in the hope of gaining some information. He had left the Colston three days before, and had travelled overland to London. And it was after his departure that Dr. Anderson had made his offer to Tim.

Therefore, Gray was in ignorance of this development, and

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was surprised to see the two together. Nevertheless, he still stuck to his original plan, and shadowed the boy, for he did not know where Anderson was taking him.

He noticed, as he entered the station, a man of about thirty-five slightly ahead of him, and remembered seeing him on the quay watching the passengers land.

Carson Gray would have been very considerably surprised had he known that the man was the very same one as had parried all his questions so cleverly aboard the Colston, and who had afterwards committed suicide—that he was, in other words, Frank Kingston.

Yet such was the case; and Kingston himself, knowing nothing of Gray's presence—though he had been surprised at the detective's non-appearance from the liner—was intent on following Tim and Anderson.

The Coronet had arrived in London the day before, and Kingston had journeyed to Southampton for the purpose of getting on the trail of his next victim. He, too, had been surprised on seeing him leave the steamer with Tim by his side.

To Kingston the thing was rather disconcerting. It was in Tim's power to give him away, yet the boy was going off with a member of the Inner Council. Could he have proved unworthy—had Kingston's trust in him been misplaced?

No; the Avenger refused to believe such a thing. Something apart from the matter must have arisen.

So it came about that Kingston and Carson Gray were both, unknown to one another, shadowing the same couple—the former, Anderson; and the latter, Tim.

The journey to London was uneventful.

Kingston was glad to be back again, although the weather was far from pleasant. A slow, drizzling rain was falling in the metropolis—it was evening—causing everything and everybody to look miserable.

Kingston was the first to be after his quarry, and Carson Gray did not fail to notice him. When he hired a taxi from the same rank as Anderson and obviously told the driver to follow the doctor, Gray began to get really interested. He, too, hired a taxi, and ordered the chauffeur to keep Kingston's taxi well in sight.

"There's more in this than meets the eye," he told himself, as he lit a cigar. "Who the other fellow is I can't imagine. I don't know what this journey will lead to, but, by Jove, that boy must be somebody more than he makes out; for somebody besides myself is taking a close interest in his movements. I mean to get to the bottom of this."

The three taxicabs drove across London rapidly. At the corner of Grosvenor Square the foremost one stopped, and Anderson and Tim stepped to the pavement. At the same time the two others delivered themselves of their fares.

"The Chief's house," thought Kingston. "That is where Anderson is going. It looks as if Tim has betrayed me—as if he is going to explain all to Lord Mount-Fannell. Yet it is hard to believe. The lad seemed so straightforward, and assured me solemnly that he wouldn't breathe a word."

Kingston was doubtful. There might easily be some other explanation, although it did look suspicious.

It was only a few steps to the Chief's mansion. Why Anderson hadn't driven straight up Kingston did not know. And the doctor turned in without hesitation.

Kingston only waited a moment; then he hurried briskly away, followed, after the address had been noted, by Carson Gray. The detective meant if possible to find out who this man was.

He was a little surprised as Kingston turned into the Hotel Cyril, and stood outside wondering what to do.

Kingston hurried straight upstairs and managed to slip into his suite of rooms unnoticed. The light was on full, and a bright fire blazed in the grate of the sitting-room.

"Fraser!" he called sharply. "Fraser!"

"Yes, sir?" answered the valet, appearing from the other room. "I didn't know you were in."

"I this moment arrived. The boy, for some reason, is along with that scoundrel Anderson, and the pair have both gone to the Chief's house in Grosvenor Square. Is Crawford at home now?"

"Sure to be, sir."

"Then rush along to him immediately and tell him to go to the Chief's house on some pretext and learn all he can concerning Tim. It might be serious, Fraser. If the youngster tells everything we shall be discovered in a day. So hurry, and impress on Crawford the urgency of the matter."

Fraser darted off, and Kingston, left to himself, leisurely removed his disguise, then settled down before the fire to reading the evening paper which had been sent up.



Kingston stood up in the boat and yelled. A shout went up from the liner, and the castaway plainly heard the order for a boat to be lowered.
(See page 19)

In the Hands of the Enemy.

Dr. Charles Anderson rang the bell of Lord Mount-Fannell's house gently. He was a very nice man outwardly, with kind, thoughtful, and gentle actions. Tim Curtis was entirely deceived.

The door opened, and a footman appeared. He bowed respectfully on seeing who the visitor was, and the doctor walked into the spacious hall, Tim following him, rather awestruck at all the grandeur.

"Is his lordship in?" inquired Dr. Anderson.

"He is downstairs, sir, with the other gentlemen, awaiting your arrival. Mr. Milverton is in the library, sir, and will escort you downstairs."

"Take me to him."

The two visitors passed along the hall and were ushered into the library. Mr. Milverton, the eminent barrister, rose to his feet, with a cry of welcome.

"Ah, Anderson, delighted to see you! Lord Mount-Fannell is waiting below: we expected you about this time. So that is the boy—eh? Well, we'll see what we can make of him."

The words sounded innocent enough, and Tim thought

nothing of them; yet they had a quite different meaning to that which he understood.

The two men left the room, and descended the flight of stairs to the cellar, Tim bringing up the rear, rather surprised at this move.

Where were they taking him to? The suspicion of danger never entered his head, and he followed them into the safe unsuspectingly.

"Now, Anderson, close the door."

The doctor swung the strong-room door to with a crash. Tim looked round in alarm, for Milverton's tone had altered altogether.

"Why, where are we, sir?" he asked. "This 'ere place seems—"

"Silence!" said Milverton sharply. "Have you got the stuff, Anderson? This handkerchief will do."

And the barrister grasped the boy's arms behind him tightly.

Tim, amazed and scared, struggled to free himself, but he was, of course, helpless.

"Ere," he cried, "what's the meaning o' this? What are you a-doin' of—eh—"

Before he could say anything further his voice was muffled

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NEXT
WEEK!

"NO CLASS."

by the application of the handkerchief, now treated with chloroform.

Tim struggled gamely, but almost immediately the strength died from his limbs, and he fell limp in Milverton's arms.

"Not much trouble over that!" laughed Dr. Anderson. "Ring the bell, will you? I dare say they are getting impatient on the other side."

In a short time the end of the safe swung outwards, and the two councillors carried Tim between them past the wizened doorkeeper to the Council Chamber.

The bulk of the members were present; but some, of course, had been unable to get there at such short notice. Anderson had cabled the previous day to call a meeting.

"Good!" exclaimed Lord Mount-Fannell, rising from his chair. "You came through without mishap, doctor?"

"It was plain sailing the whole way. The boy, like everybody else, believes I am quite a harmless physician, and he consented to my proposition immediately."

"Your manner, we all know, is irresistible," said the Chief. "But to get to business. Now, before we go into the matter of the Night Hawk, I wish to say a few words with regard to Sir Christopher Rowe. According to your long letters, doctor, the nephew is alive?"

"Very much alive, in fact. He has heard of his uncle's illness, and will be in England within three weeks. So it is absolutely imperative that the old man must be finished off at once."

"How does the case stand exactly?" put in Milverton. "I have been so busy lately that I am afraid I have allowed myself to get behind the times."

"Well," replied Dr. Anderson, "to put it briefly, Sir Christopher Rowe, who is an infirm invalid, has made his will in favour of myself. He is unmarried and has no relations save one nephew in Australia, of whose existence he is unaware. I have attended him now for many years, so there is nothing strange in his leaving his money to me."

"But if his nephew turns up, he will probably alter the will in his favour?" said Milverton.

"He is sure to. So it is absolutely imperative that he should be finished off within ten days. I think the task will be an easy one, for his heart is in a very critical state."

For five minutes longer the council discussed the matter—a mere everyday case to them, notwithstanding its terrible nature—then the more important subject of the Night Hawk was brought up.

Anderson related all the facts so far as he knew them, and described the man who had been responsible for the affair. All the councillors were concerned at the loss of their yacht and their fellow-councillor, Herr Bruckmann.

"It is a complete mystery to me how the disaster came about," said the Chief. "I am confident that our own sailors wouldn't have turned traitor. There must have been somebody on the yacht who is working against us—somebody who desires our downfall. What other reason had the man for acting as he did?"

"It is all nonsense his saying he knew the men on the Hawk were villains, and that he meant to have nothing to do with them!" exclaimed another councillor. "The man must have known the Brotherhood. The job seems to me like the work of more than one man."

"Besides," put in Anderson, "look at the other mishaps which have happened lately. First of all, Don Sebastian disappears with our fortune, then Caine turns false. Following on that Gissing allows himself to get arrested and imprisoned, only to be released by some unknown person, and is never seen again. And, to complete all, Colonel Marsden, one of our most useful men, suddenly vanishes, and the evidence clearly points to the conclusion that he was kidnapped. Why, it is as clear as daylight that the Brotherhood is menaced by some unknown, outside enemy—one who is exceptionally clever, or, perhaps, a band of enemies. It is quite certain, however, that one is, or was, a member of the Brotherhood."

"That seems to point to the culprit being Don Sebastian," said the Chief. "After taking the gold from the Iron Island, I could suspect him of anything. Yet I don't believe he could have done all these things. It is a difficult matter to decide—a very difficult matter to decide."

"There is a chance the boy can give us some information," put in Mr. Milverton. "He ought to be coming round by now. I should think."

The barrister crossed over to the spot where Tim lay, silent and motionless. Milverton shook him, and the youngster opened his eyes for a second. Then he lay back again, as if half-asleep.

"A little drop of brandy will make him more lively," exclaimed Dr. Anderson, producing his flask, and forcing some of its contents down Tim's throat. The spirit soon had an effect, for the boy was able to stand upright in a few moments. He glared about him defiantly, with no sign of fear.

"You old fraud!" he cried to Anderson. "What's this ere place you've brought me to? Wish I 'adn't taken no notice of yer!"

"Silence, boy!" said his lordship sternly. "Now, answer these questions—"

"I ain't goin' to answer no questions!" said Tim.

"I think you are. First of all, how did you get aboard the Night Hawk, and who was the man who blew her up, and then took you to the Colston?"

Tim retained a stony silence.

"You had better answer, my boy. I give you my word it won't benefit you to be obstinate. Come along, tell us all you know concerning the man who rescued you. We know well he was not one of the Night Hawk's crew. Who was he, and where did he come from?"

Still the youngster remained true to his word, and said nothing. He could see now that he had allowed himself to get into the enemy's hands, although he did not know who they were. He realised bitterly that these men were the enemies of his rescuer—the strange man who had appeared from the submarine. Tim, however, meant to reveal nothing.

"You refuse to answer?" said the Chief angrily.

"I told yer I wasn't goin' to answer no questions!"

"You really mean that—you absolutely refuse?"

"Yes; I do!"

"Very well, my lad, you have only yourself to blame for what happens, for I fully intend to wring the information from you. That you can tell us something is very evident, otherwise you would have no reason to keep silent."

Tim looked round him fearlessly. The members of the Inner Council were, one and all, returning his gaze with no pleasant glances.

"Mr. Milverton," went on Lord Mount-Fannell, "it looks as if this boy is going to be some trouble. The only thing is to force him to speak. As he won't do so of his own accord, it is the only way, for I mean to get to the bottom of this mystery."

"Of course," agreed the barrister. Then he turned to Tim threateningly: "Unless you speak up immediately, we shall get the information from you by force—"

"By force! What do yer mean?"

"Exactly what I say. We have certain appliances here especially for use on such obstinate persons as yourself, and I think you will speak up sharply enough after a few moments' application."

Tim looked a little startled.

"Do you mean to torture me?" he gasped.

"Perhaps I had better say persuade you," smiled Milverton. "You can, of course, avoid such a thing by telling us straightaway all you know."

Tim drew himself up. He remembered the solemn promise he had given to Kingston, and decided to keep his mouth as fast as a vice. He'd never give away the man who had saved his life.

"Then I ain't goin' to!" he cried, in open defiance. "You can do what you blessed well like, but I ain't goin' to tell nothin'!"

"The boy's got pluck," said Dr. Anderson, "and I'm afraid he'll cause us some trouble. What do you propose to do, Chief?"

"Well, it is evident he means to say nothing now, so I suggest that we leave him here for the night."

"Leave him here!" echoed Milverton. "Why?"

"I have been down here in the darkness myself," replied Lord Mount-Fannell grimly, "and I can give you my word that the experience was not a pleasant one. To the boy it will be terrifying, and I shall be surprised if in the morning we don't find him as submissive as a lamb."

The Way Out.

"Ah, Fraser! What news?"

Frank Kingston rose from his chair quickly as the man entered the room. He had been thinking the matter over, and could not bring himself to believe that Tim had betrayed his confidence.

"It's all right, sir. The boy's not split."

Kingston smiled grimly.

"I was sure he would prove faithful, Fraser. Well, what details have you brought?"

"Not many, sir. Crawford only had half a minute's talk with the doorkeeper, who says that Tim is imprisoned in the Council Chamber for the night. He refused to say a word, and if he don't give the game away in the mornin', they'll torture 'im!"

"Torture him, Fraser! That's bad, for they'll kill him afterwards, for certain. He has been in the Council

(Continued on page 26.)



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Chamber, so he cannot be allowed to live to tell the experience. No doubt Anderson got round the lad with his smooth tongue."

"But anything can't be done, sir—it ain't possible to rescue 'im from the Council Chamber?"

"Impossible? My dear Fraser, I never use that word myself. Tim must be rescued somehow, and before morning, too. He is only a lad, and his death would be a terrible shame. Besides that, under the influence of torture, he will probably give me away. He could not be blamed for that."

"Still, sir, nobody but the Chief can get to the chamber. Even if you disguised yourself—"

"What is the time, Fraser?" asked Kingston abruptly.

"The time, sir? About nine o'clock, I think."

"Good! That will just suit me. There is only one way in which to rescue Tim, and, although risky, I mean to do it."

"Will you want me, sir?"

"No, Fraser. The way I am going to do it will not necessitate your services. In all probability I shall be back about eleven, perhaps before."

Fraser asked no questions, but quitted the room. Kingston, left to himself, rapidly changed his attire. When he had done, no sign of the ineane dandy was left, and he looked a smart business man of about thirty. To disguise himself was imperative, and by now he was becoming accustomed to it.

He did not go to Dolores—for she was now at the Cyril as her old self once more—but walked straight out of the hotel. The elderly man in the blue serge—Carson Gray—had disappeared, and was now, in fact, in his rooms, puzzling his brains for a solution of the affair.

Kingston walked briskly down the Strand, entered the Tube station at Trafalgar Square, and was soon whizzing westwards. He alighted at Oxford Circus, and entered Lord Mount-Fannell's club. As it happened, his lordship had just arrived, and Kingston was shown to a private room.

"Kindly take this card to his lordship, and say it is imperative that I should see him," he told the attendant. "The matter is one of life and death!"

Which was the perfect truth, for Tim's life depended on the result of the interview. The card, of course, bore a fictitious name, but Kingston's words had their effect, for presently the chief of the Brotherhood of Iron, breezy and smiling, entered the room.

"You wish to see me on important business?" he said genially. "Rather an unusual time—eh?"

Kingston did not answer, but in two strides reached the door, and looked it. The other started forward in surprise and annoyance.

"May I inquire the reason—"

Then the Chief's words died on his lips, and he took an abrupt step backwards. Kingston had turned, and the powerful electric light was shining full on his face. And his eyes, usually so dull and sleepy, were terrible to look upon. He did not speak, but stood there motionless, silent.

His eyes were living coals, piercing and penetrating. Lord Mount-Fannell, standing there, felt the same sensation exactly as Don Sebastian had felt on the Iron Island, only more intensified. His own gaze was drawn against his will to meet that of Kingston's. Try as he would, he could not move; he was transfixed, magnetised by that awful gaze.

He resisted violently, but it was useless. He was as weak as a kitten compared to this man. Gradually, fully conscious of the fact all the while, the Chief felt his senses leaving him. Yet he could do nothing; he could not save himself.

The sensation was terrifying, and he tried to shout. No sound came, however. He was in Kingston's power as surely as Tim was in his. The power was dying from his limbs; they seemed numb and feelingless, and Kingston's eyes were the only objects he could see. All else was an indistinct blur, and out of this blur those points of fire stood out prominently.

One last effort he made to renew his failing senses, then something seemed to buzz in his brain, and he sank to the floor unconscious.

Kingston stepped forward and bent over him for a moment. He was breathing hard, and his face was streaming with moisture. Not once since he had left the Iron Island had he perspired so freely. The ordeal had been exhausting, but he was triumphant; his task was over, and Tim Curtis was as good as set free.

That terribly piercing look had vanished from Kingston's eyes, and they were now merely bright and clear. He looked at the prostrate figure of Lord Mount-Fannell.

"Get up," he said quietly, "and open your eyes."

Immediately the Chief rose as if nothing had happened, and looked at Kingston dully. He was hypnotised—entirely in his companion's power.

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"Now affect your usually breezy style, and keep the smile of geniality on your features."

His lordship did as ordered. He was unconscious of what he was doing. It was entirely mechanical, yet no one would have believed he was not responsible for his actions—that he was merely obeying the will of another.

"Now," said Kingston, seating himself, "you will go straight to your own house in Grosvenor Square, enter the Council Chamber, and come away with Tim Curtis. You will bring him here direct, and come to this room, where I shall be awaiting your return. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly," answered Mount-Fannell, in his natural tones.

"Repeat what you have to do exactly."

The other did so in precisely the same words as Kingston had used. The latter pointed to the door.

"Take a taxi-cab, and be as quick as you can. Speak to nobody, and if anybody stops you, tell them you are in a hurry. I shall be here till you return. Now go!"

Without a word the Chief, in his usually brisk style, bustled out of the room, leaving Frank Kingston seated in his chair, smiling with genuine amusement.

"Well," he told himself, "this is really too funny. Tim gets himself imprisoned in the Council Chamber—that place which is well-nigh impregnable—and in the morning was to have been tortured, and probably murdered. Jove, but Dolores will laugh when I tell her. His lordship went off rippingly, and here am I, coolly sitting in his club, while he himself is on the way to set the lad at liberty—to give freedom to his own prisoner. Why, the situation is absolutely humorous!"

And Kingston settled himself more comfortably in his chair and waited, watching meanwhile the hands of the clock on the mantelpiece slowly ticking the time away.

The Ride to Peckham.

Frank Kingston sat in his chair looking utterly unconcerned. Nobody would have guessed the thoughts that were passing through his mind. Outside he could hear the buzz of motor-buses and taxi-cabs.

He was waiting—waiting for Lord Mount-Fannell to return with Tim Curtis. There was not much doubt on the matter, for the Chief was entirely under Kingston's influence; he was in a sound hypnotic trance.

Suddenly Kingston bent forward in his chair. Out in the passage could be heard the sound of footsteps, and they were approaching. The door opened quietly, and Mount-Fannell appeared, followed by his own prisoner, Tim Curtis.

Kingston's eyes showed triumph just for a second.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "You have done exactly as I told you?"

"Exactly," replied the Chief mechanically, while Tim looked on in amazement. He did not, of course, recognise Kingston.

The latter laid a firm hand on his lordship's shoulder, and looked steadfastly into his expressionless eyes.

"Mount-Fannell," he said slowly, "you will remain in this room for ten minutes without moving. At the termination of that time you will awaken as if nothing had happened, and everything that has passed while I have been with you will be forgotten. You will know nothing of what you have just done. Do you understand that?"

"Yes," answered the other, in an expressionless voice.

"As soon as you are out of your present trance, go straight to the reading-room, and remain there for not less than an hour. That is all," went on Kingston, preparing to depart.

"Needless to say, I am very much obliged to you for having assisted me so generously in effecting this youngster's escape, and wish you good-night."

Kingston laughed softly to himself, and turned to Tim, who, in the meantime, had been looking on in genuine bewilderment. What was happening? Who was this stranger? And why had the Chief released him, after locking him up in the Council Chamber for the night?

"Come along, Tim, we'll be going."

"Goin'!" repeated Tim. "Where to? Who are you, sir?"

"You don't recognise me, young 'un? I take that as a compliment," laughed Kingston, in his natural drawl. "I'll warrant there are not many things that escape your sharp eyes."

"The guv'nor!" gasped Tim. "The gent wot blowed up the Night 'Awk, an' then put me aboard the Colston."

"Your memory for voices is evidently good, Tim. I heard you had let yourself fall into a considerably deep hole, so took the immediate step to hoist you out."

"You knew I was in them cellar places, sir?"

"Yes, Tim, and that you refused to tell those scoundrels anything about me, although they threatened you with torture. But come, we'll be going."

Kingston walked unconcernedly out of the club, Tim following, looking at his companion in some awe. This was the second time he had been saved from death, but on this occasion the rescue was beyond Tim's understanding.

In a very few minutes they were seated in a taxi, and bowling southwards. Kingston, with a few strokes, removed his disguise. The driver had only caught a glimpse of him outside the club, so would probably fail to notice the change. "I am going to take you into my confidence, Tim. I feel I can trust you, because you have kept your word, and said nothing to betray me, although threatened with death."

"But it was me own fault, sir. I was chump enough to let that doctor chap get round me. But 'e looked so respectable, sir, an' 'e talked so nice—"

"You will generally find," interrupted Kingston, "that scoundrels have very smooth tongues in their heads. But you cannot be blamed; the whole world thinks Dr. Anderson is a highly respectable and staid West End physician."

"An' yet 'e was down there among all them other chaps, talkin' as if 'e was like one o' them rotters on the Night 'Awk, sir. I couldn't make it out nohow. An' 'ow did yer make that chap they calls the Chief fetch me out? I never see such a thing! It fair took me breath away when 'e came!"

"I have ways of my own, Tim, that you wouldn't understand. You have behaved very well, though, and I intend making use of you in my work."

"I ain't good enough, sir," protested Tim, though his face glowed with pleasure. "I ain't eddicated, nor nothin'."

"Education is not everything, my lad. Now, listen here! I am going to tell you something which is an absolute secret, which you must hear and keep entirely to yourself."

"O' course, sir!" cried Tim. "I sha'n't forget that you've saved me life agin, 'cos I knows jolly well them chaps in the cellar meant to do me in."

Kingston, as briefly as possible, told Tim of the Brotherhood, and its relation to himself. The boy was mightily interested, and began to understand. One thing he wouldn't believe, however, and that was that Kingston was looked upon as a fool.

"Very well, my lad," laughed Kingston; "think what you like. You will soon find, however, that people have every reason to call me an idiot. I act the part to divert suspicion, to make myself secure."

"An' you are a millionaire, sir?" asked Tim, in awe.

"Not exactly a millionaire, Tim, but I am rich. And I am using my time and abilities to wipe this infamous organisation off the face of the earth. You understand now what the Night Hawk was, and why she meant to sink the Colston."

"O' course, sir! An' you are settin' yourself agin all them villains? Ain't it dangerous, sir? Won't they kill yer?"

"They don't know who I am, Tim. Besides, I have people who help me, and I shall expect you to as well."

"Rather, sir; I'll do everything I can."

"I believe you, youngster. I believe you will prove useful. If, on the other hand, you give me away, I shall treat you exactly the same as I am treating the Brotherhood."

"Give yer away, sir? As if I should do that, when I owes yer me life twice over—two lives, in fact. I'll stand by yer, sir, no matter wot 'appens, an' 'Eaven bless yer for 'avin' the kind 'eart to think I'm worth troublin' about."

Tim could find no words to express his gratitude, or declare his faithfulness and loyalty, and Kingston had no doubt as to the wisdom of telling the lad everything. That he could be trusted was certain.

"Now, Tim, the journey's nearly at an end. It is already past ten, so the time is getting on. The reason I have come in this direction—we are in Southwark—is in case Lord Mount-Fannell makes inquiries. You have some money; go to an hotel and stay the night. Then, in the morning, come to the Hotel Cyril, and say you are an applicant for a situation as a page-boy. Pretend to have no knowledge of me whatever. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir. You mean that if I was traced some'ow, it 'ud look as if I 'adn't nothink to do with this affair."

"That's it exactly, young 'un. There is never any harm done by taking a few precautions. In my position I have to be careful, for any traces would be pounced upon immediately by the Brotherhood's emissaries. I think, however, we shall have eluded their attentions."

"Are we goin' to git out now, then, sir?" asked Tim quickly, bending forward in his seat.

"In a moment, my boy."

"But I've somethink to tell yer, sir—somethink I've bin savin' till the last."

Kingston looked at his young companion curiously.

"Savin' until the last, Tim? Why, what do you mean?"

"Somethink I 'eard down in the cellar, sir—down in the

Council Chamber. It's very important, sir, an' if I'd known we was goin' to etop now, I'd told yer it before."

"You say it is urgent?"

"Matter o' life an' death, sir."

Kingston did not answer, but directed the driver through the tube to continue the journey to Peckham.

"That will give us a few moments longer, Tim. Now, what is this news you have left till last?"

"It's somethink, sir, that the Council think I don't know," exclaimed Tim eagerly. "When they find I've 'eard it, they'll console themselves by sayin' that I 'adn't 'eard all they said. But I did, sir, every word."

"Explain yourself, Tim."

"Well, you see, sir, when they turned on me in the strong-room, ole Anderson got a 'andkerchief an' shoved it over me nose. I knew I'd got orf afore long, so all of a suddin, as I was beginnin' to feel queer, I lets myself go limp. I was only kiddin' 'em, yer see, sir?"

"Yes," smiled Kingston, "I see, my boy. Well?"

"They was took in a treat, sir; an' thinkin' I was unconscious, carried me through a kind o' passage to the Chamber of 'Orrors. Then, says the Chief, afore 'e spoke about the Night 'Awk, 'e'd 'ave a few words concernin' Sir Christopher Rowe."

Kingston bent forward with interest. It looked as if Tim was going to prove useful already. His shrewdness was certainly above the ordinary.

"They didn't say much, sir, but from wot I could gather Sir Christopher Rowe is a ole man with no relations, an' 'e's leavin' all 'is money to Anderson. The Brother'ood's found out that a chap from Australia—a nephew—is comin' to England, 'avin' 'eard that 'is uncle's ill. An' Anderson's got to kill the ole gent within ten days. If 'e don't the nephew'll git all the fortune."

"So the precious doctor is going to murder his patient, eh? I'll warrant it's not the first, Tim, by a long way. But tell me all you know."

Tim repeated his story in fuller language, and when he had done Frank Kingston remained for a few moments laying back thoughtfully, tapping his foot against the floor to the accompaniment of the engine. Finally he looked up with a smile, and clapped Tim on the back.

"Youngster," he said slowly, "you've given me the very information I was wishing to possess. The way is clear now to deal with Dr. Charles Anderson. Incidentally I shall foil a particularly cowardly murder, and must go right into this matter at once. You've been smart, Tim, very smart."

"They don't know I 'eard anythin' of it, sir, 'cos they thought I was senseless."

A few moments later the taxi pulled up at the corner of Rye Lane, and was dismissed. Kingston only stopped a few moments to say a few words, then jumped into a motor-bus bound for the West End. He knew Tim could look after himself right enough.

"Jove," he mused, "I haven't had even a minute's respite! This Anderson case looks like being an interesting one. I shall have to look up all information concerning Sir Christopher Rowe, and get Crawford to supply all the inside matter he can."

Before Kingston started on the case in earnest, however, he was to receive a visit from a man whom he had met previously in his present personality of Frank Kingston, and afterwards on the Blue Star liner Colston. This individual was one of the cleverest men in London, and was none other than Carson Gray, detective.

A Bold Step and Its Result.

Carson Gray, pipe in mouth, was sitting in his study in Great Portland Street, wearing a puzzled frown on his clean-shaven face. A cheerful fire blazed in the grate, and altogether he looked very comfortable.

"To take the case from the beginning," he murmured, tapping his foot gently on the fender, "this man, calling himself a common sailor, appears aboard the Colston, bringing with him a boy. Now, I am absolutely positive the man was no more of a common sailor than I am. His feet, for one thing, were delicately shaped, and showed evident signs of having been encased in narrow, gentlemen's boots."

"For another thing, no sailor could have answered my questions in the way he did, and, though he was made up very cleverly, he certainly was made up. Finally, I am certain he is alive to-day. When he leaped overboard, it was merely a blind. Even the boy showed no great surprise when he heard the news—probably because he knew it was going to happen. But where did the man go to? Where could he go to? There was no other vessel in sight."

Carson Gray puffed silently at his pipe for some little time, following the course of events as they had happened.

"At Southampton, too," he went on, "the boy, Tim Curtis, seemed to be a personage of some importance. In

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NEXT
WEEK:

"NO CLASS."

addition to myself, another individual was following him. The question is, who was the man, and why did he, after notifying the address Curtis was taken to, go to the Hotel Cyril, in the Strand? He entered the place, went upstairs, and, as far as I can make out, never came down again. That proves quite conclusively that he is in disguise. Ah! I wonder if that is what I am expecting?"

A ring had sounded in the hall outside, and Carson Gray rose from his seat. The door opened, admitting the detective's manservant.

"Letter for you, sir."

Gray took the envelope, and tore open the flap. He sat down in his chair again, looking interestedly at the contents of the package. It was a list of the persons who were at present staying at the Hotel Cyril.

"I'm afraid it, will be a difficult task singling out from this lot the likely man," mused Carson Gray. "Still, considering the size of the hotel, there are not many people there at present. Now to go over the collection."

He slowly ran through the list of names, marking those off who were absolutely above suspicion with a blue pencil. He had reached half-way down the list before he came to Kingston, and smiled to himself.

"No," he murmured; "it wouldn't be Frank Kingston. The young fool's only just returned from the Pacific, where he's been experimenting with some submarine."

Carson Gray paused, and slowly the expression of amused contempt altered to one of amazement, incredulity, and wonder. With a cry, he sprang to his feet, and paced the room. In his eyes an eager gleam showed itself, and he looked triumphant.

"By Jove," he exclaimed—"by Jove!"

Once again he looked at the list, and that which had been a suspicion—that which had suddenly struck him like a bolt from the blue—became an absolute certainty.

"But it's incredible!" he muttered. "It's too amazing! Yet the theory must be the correct one. It all fits in to a nicety. But Frank Kingston—By Jove, it wants a lot of swallowing!"

He sat down again, and relit his pipe. The discovery he had just made had taken him completely by surprise, and even now he was sceptical, even when the facts were staring him in the face.

"That young idiot, of all men!" mused Carson Gray. "I can't bring myself to believe the truth. Let me see, he has just returned from the Pacific—from the very region where the Night Hawk was blown up. Of course, he did that from the submarine. He entered the submarine after he had jumped overboard, and returned to his yacht, arriving in England before the Colston. It was Kingston who followed the boy to Grosvenor Square, and then went to the Cyril. It is the only solution to the affair; he is the only man who could have done it. And he was in the same latitude as the Colston on that eventful day. Why, there's no doubt about the matter at all; it is self-evident."

Carson Gray's face glowed with triumph. He had satisfied his own curiosity, anyhow; he had fathomed the matter to the bottom. Yet it was hard to believe that such a man as Frank Kingston was at the bottom of it all. The detective had met Kingston on more than one occasion, and had put him down as a dull, uninteresting dandy.

"Well, the next thing is to make a few inquiries." And Gray very soon was bowling along to the docks. The interview with Captain Morrison on board the Coronet was entirely satisfactory. He had presented himself as a friend of Kingston's, and came away with positive proofs.

"So the Coronet stopped in a certain spot for two days—oh?" thought the detective. "And during that time the excellent Kingston was on 'a pleasure cruise' on the Dart? The date of one of those days he was absent coincides exactly with the date on which the Hawk was sent to the bottom. I'm afraid, my dear

Kingston, you must have been very careless. I don't deny the traces were such that no ordinary man would notice; but I make it my business to follow up traces, so I fancy you'll be the recipient of a little surprise."

Carson Gray meant to waste no time; he would go and interview Kingston immediately, and confront him while the iron was hot. So instead of returning to his rooms, he found himself in the magnificent entrance-hall of the Hotel Cyril. He was really interested in the affair, for he knew Kingston could not be a criminal. It was clear, however, that he was something more than a fool, and Gray was curious.

Fraser answered his ring, and, asking him to step into the entrance-hall—Kingston's suite of rooms were among the best in the hotel—he took the card to his master, who was very busy just now looking up facts concerning Sir Christopher Rowe.

"Ah, Mr. Carson Gray!" exclaimed Kingston, glancing at the card. "Show him in, Fraser, will you?"

"It's the famous detective, sir!" began Fraser hesitatingly. "I am well acquainted with the gentleman, Fraser. Have no fear; he can do us no harm."

Fraser left the room, and in a minute ushered in the detective, who, attired in a heavy overcoat and a soft felt hat, was looking rather pleased with himself.

"Pleased to see you, Mr. Gray!" cried Kingston, shaking hands. "I've been doing a little calculation, you know. That submarine of mine is a little wonder! But take a seat, and have one of these cigars. I don't smoke myself, but I always keep a few for visitors."

He handed a box of expensive cigars to Carson Gray, and grinned rather fatuously. The detective, watching him, wondered how this young man could have disguised himself as the sailor. Yet he must have done so. There was something behind it all, decided Gray.

"I have come here, Mr. Kingston," he began, "on a very serious matter."

"A serious matter!" echoed his companion. "Jove, but you surprise me."

"Whether I surprise you or not, it is a fact. To put it quite plainly at the commencement, I want to know, here and now, what game you are up to?"

Carson Gray bent forward and looked at Kingston with his brown eyes, now keen and alert. The latter laughed softly.

"What game I'm up to? Gad, it's come to a pretty pass if I'm suspected of being a criminal! What are you going to do Gray—arrest me?"

Carson Gray tapped his foot impatiently.

"Believe me, Mr. Kingston, I am deadly serious. I have discovered certain facts concerning yourself which must be explained immediately. For one thing, you are the man who destroyed the Night Hawk."

Frank Kingston's face did not alter one bit. He sat there apparently as cool as ever, gently joggling one slipped foot up and down before the fire. Frankly, Gray was disappointed, for he had expected his companion to jump to his feet in amazement on hearing the words. It was a little

disconcerting to see him sit there as if nothing had been said at all.

"Really!" Kingston murmured. "You speak, my dear Gray, as if you were telling me some startling piece of news."

Carson Gray knocked the ash from his cigar savagely.

"You admit, then," he cried, "that you are the man who sank the Night Hawk, and who afterwards came aboard the Colston as a common sailor?"

"Useless my denying it," drawled Frank Kingston coolly, and looking at the detective as if he were discussing football. "I certainly acted as you say, and jumped overboard soon after, leaving my clothes on deck, wondering if you would deduce a fairly obvious fact from their presence—namely, that I did not intend suicide. I am gratified to see that you followed up the clue to advantage."

(Another thrilling instalment of this powerful story next Thursday, in which Frank Kingston gives Carson Gray a big surprise.)

How Do You Do?

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The Editor.