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[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]

THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS!



A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale dealing with the Thrilling Adventures of the Chums of St. Jim's while in the South Seas.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I. Sunk at Sea.

CRASH!

Crash!

Tom Merry started and awoke.

He was lying in his bunk aboard the Silver Scud. He had been dreaming of home—of St. Jim's and the fellows there, and as he started into sudden wakefulness, it seemed to him for the moment that he was back at the school, and that he was in his bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's. There was a sound of creaking and straining, and of rushing water, of excited voices and hurrying feet.

Tom Merry sat up in bed.

What had happened?

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

"Look out!"

"She's struck!"

The engines were throbbing still—the yacht was trembling and shivering like a frightened animal. Tom Merry put his legs over the side of the bunk, and there was a yell from

below him. Jack Blake had just put his head out of the bunk beneath Tom Merry's, and Tom Merry's feet had come into violent contact with it.

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

"Sorry!"

"You ass!"

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

"She's struck!"

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

Wild confusion reigned there.

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

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

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

Next Thursday:

"CORONATION DAY AT ST. JIM'S," AND "THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON."

No. 175 (New Series.)

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

"Good heavens!"

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

The yacht was filling.

There was no doubt about it—the Silver Scud, the handsome yacht that was Lord Conway's pride, was a hopeless wreck. She had dashed upon the treacherous reef fair and square; her bows had ground upon the reef where it was concealed under the surface of the water, with hardly a line of foam to mark the place—and the stout hull of the yacht had been crushed in by the violent impact.

The Silver Scud was sinking!

The terrible reality rushed upon the minds of the juniors of St. Jim's with stunning force. Ten minutes ago they had been sleeping safe and sound in their bunks, homeward bound, rich with the treasure they had found upon Skeleton Island. Dreaming of home, of St. Jim's, and of the celebration they would have at the old school when they arrived there. And now—

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

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

There were twelve fellows in the party from St. Jim's—Tom Merry, and Manners, and Lowther, and Kangaroo, of the Shell; Blake, and Herries, and Digby, and D'Arcy, and Figgins, and Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth; and Wally D'Arcy, of the Third. They belonged to different Forms and different Houses at St. Jim's, and at school were generally on fighting terms; but they had enjoyed the holiday together wonderfully well. All the same, they were looking forward to their return to the school, and relating their adventures in the South Seas to interested audiences in the studies and Form-rooms. They could scarcely realise that their homeward voyage was stopped; perhaps for ever—that they were wrecked in the lonely wastes of the South Seas, and might never look upon a white man's face again. It was so sudden, and so terrible.

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

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

"Keep yours!" growled Blake. "I'm cool enough."

"Weally, Blake—"

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

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Get into the boats!"

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

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

"But weally—"

Jack Blake and Digby seized the swell of St. Jim's by the arm and hurried him to the side.

"Buck up, you ass!" said Blake.

"There's no time to lose!"

"Pway keep your head—"

"Oh, rats!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was rushed into a boat, and Blake and Digby followed him. Monty Lowther and Manners jumped in, Manners not having forgotten to sling on his camera.

Manners was getting quite a collection of pictures of the South Seas, on rolls of film to be developed after his return to England. If Manners had been sentenced to execution he would probably have taken his camera with him.

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

Lord Conway nodded.

"It is going into the boat, Tom."

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

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"Bai Jove, that's all wight!" said D'Arcy. "I dare say we shall be picked up in the mornin', and we shall save the treasure, you know. But don't lose your heads, deah boys!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

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

"She's sinking!"

"Look out!"

"Stand by there!"

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

"Pull—pull!"

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

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

Upon the wide, wild waters, under the soaring moon, two boats crammed with men and boys floated—alone in the heart of the Pacific.

CHAPTER 2.

In an Open Boat.

TOM MERRY drew a deep, deep breath.

It seemed like a dream—it was but twenty minutes since the crash of the yacht upon the hidden reef had awakened him in his bunk. He shivered; the night was not warm, and the junior was but half-dressed.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in a low, awed voice. "Bai Jove! It's tewwible, you know. But don't lose your heads."

Tom Merry looked round him.

The embarkation in the boats had been hasty, and he did not know who was with him, or who was in command. In Tom Merry's boat, the smaller of the two, was the chest of gold, and most of the juniors of St. Jim's were there. Tom Merry found Manners and Lowther sitting beside him, and Digby and D'Arcy and Jack Blake were in the boat. Wally, Kerr, and Wynn, the New House fellows, were there. Then there was Peter Raff, the sunburnt sailorman who had given the treasure-chart to Tom Merry in Rylcombe Wood, and first caused this strange adventure in the South Seas. Kangaroo, the sturdy Cornstalk, was there, too, quite cool and collected.

There were no men of the Silver Scud in the boat; the seamen had tumbled into the other, the juniors' boat being pretty full already. Herries was in the other boat, and so were Mr. Dodds and Lord Conway. The moon glided behind a mass of clouds, and a deep shadow fell over the ocean. Lord Conway's voice hailed the junior:

"Tom Merry!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Keep close to us!"

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

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

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

The sea was rolling a little. It would not have been safe for the two boats to approach too closely in the darkness, for men to pass from one to another. There seemed little danger of their separating by accident.

"My hat!" said Blake, as the boat rocked on the deep.

"My only hat! Who'd have thought this?"

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

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

"Yes, rather!"

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

"Yaas, wathah! Poor old Conway!"

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

"Good egg!"

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

"It's rotten," said Fatty Wynn. "We may run out of grub—"

"Then we shall have to fall back on you, Fatty," said Monty Lowther.

"Eh?"
 "You're the fattest."
 "What!"
 "And you'd last us quite a long time."
 "Look here, Lowther—"
 "Hang it all, Monty, don't make ghastly jokes like that!" said Tom Merry, with a shudder. "Wrecked crews have come to that, but we never shall—but it isn't a pleasant idea at all. I'd rather have one of your funny stories."
 "Oh, please, no!" said Figgins. "After being wrecked, it's too much to have Lowther's funny stories. They ought to be listened to when a chap's feeling specially fit."
 "Look here, you ass—" began Lowther.
 "Hallo! It's beginning to blow!" said Blake.
 "Yaas, watah!"

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

The juniors looked anxiously at the water. In the yacht they would have scarcely noticed the wind; but in the open boat they were terribly close to the water. The curling waves seemed as if they would leap the gunwale.

"It's all right, young gentlemen," said Peter Raff. "There ain't any danger—it won't be a blow."

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

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

"I trust we shall not get our clothes wetted," said D'Arcy anxiously. "I have only the clothes I am wearin', and it would be howlid to get them stained with sea-watah, and I feah that they would shwink, too."

"Go hon!"

"It is watah a sewious mattah, deah boys. You see—"

"Ahoi there!"

It was a hail from Lord Conway's boat.

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

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

"Ay, ay, sir!"

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

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

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

And he was right.

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

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

But the other boat was not to be seen.

They were alone upon the ocean.

CHAPTER 3.

Alone on the Deep!

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

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

With the morning came calmness of wind and wave. There was still breeze enough to fill out the sail, and the boat glided on to the northward. Northward lay the only chance of the shipwrecked. If the boat came into the regular track of steamers before their provisions gave out, or before rough weather overwhelmed them in the sea, they had a chance of rescue. But every hour was precious. Leagues upon leagues of desert ocean lay to be traversed before they had the remotest chance of being picked up. In that lonely sea, perhaps, a sealer or a whaler might chance upon them; but it was a very remote chance.

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

"Gone!"

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

"Watah not! But—"

"It may be all for the best," said Kerr. "If the boats

are apart, one of them stands a better chance of being picked up; and if one is picked up, search can be made for the other."

"True enough."

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

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

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

"Bai Jove!"

"Why?" asked Tom Merry.

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

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

"Ay, ay, Master Tom!"

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

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

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

"Oh, dear!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

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

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

"I wegard you as an ass, Wynn," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the unfortunate Falstaff of St. Jim's. "I don't mind bein' allowanced with the gwub, but I wealdy do not see how the watah can be allowanced. I have to wash—"

"Wash!" roared the juniors together.

"Yaas, watah! I suppose I cannot be expected to dispense with my washin' in the mornin'," said the swell of St. Jim's, in surprise.

"You—you ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!"

"You utter fathead!"

"Weally, Digby, deah boy—"

"You fearful chump!"

"I uttably wefuse to be chactewised as a feahful chump," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I should like to be informed how a chap is to keep clean without washin'."

"You frabjous ass!" roared Tom Merry. "Do you think we're going to let you have water to wash in?"

"I fail to see any alternative."

"Perhaps one will dawn upon you presently," grinned Monty Lowther. "You jolly well won't have any water for washing, anyway."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You can duck yourself in the sea if you like," Kangaroo remarked. "Of course, a shark may nip your noble nose off, but I don't know that you'd look much plainer without it."

"Weally, Kangawoo!"

"You see, fathead," Tom Merry explained. "We want all the water we've got for drinking purposes, chump, and so we can't let you have any for washing, ass, and it's not necessary for you to wash, anyway, duffer. Savvy, dummy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to weply to wemarks couched in such opprobrious language, Tom Mewwy. I suppose upon the whole I'd bettah bathe in the sea."

"We could tie a rope to your ears, and trail you behind the boat, if you liked," Figgins suggested.

"Oh, pway don't be an ass, Figgay!"

D'Arcy washed himself in the sea that morning, having fortunately a cake of soap with him. What he was to do when that soap was used up, was a terrific problem which the swell of St. Jim's shrank from attempting to solve.

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

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

NEXT WEEK:

"CORONATION DAY AT ST. JIM'S"

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

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

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

But the juniors, half dressed as they were, began to discard clothing as the rays of the sun grew more powerful.

D'Arcy was the last to yield.

For a long time—till past noon—the swell of St. Jim's sat tight, in a stiff collar and with his silk hat on. For D'Arcy had not forgotten his silk topper. It being impossible to bring any baggage into the boat, D'Arcy had put a tall hat on as the only possible means of saving one for possible need. He had a cap in his pocket in case of necessity, and his first surrender to the heat was the changing of the silk hat for the cap.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"So are we all," said Tom Merry.

"Don't you think you're being a little too strict with the watch, dear boy?"

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

There was a sudden shout from Wally. He was sitting in the bows, watching the shining sea with glassy eyes. He sprang to his feet, waving his cap, and yelling. The juniors turned round upon him in alarm, the fear in every mind that the heat and glare had turned his brain. But Wally was sane enough; only wildly excited.

"A sail—a sail!"

"Bai Jove!"

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

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

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

CHAPTER 4 The Felucca!

WHITE against the blue of sea and sky, the strange sail glanced and glimmered. It was standing westward, clear across the course of the gliding boat. Only the glimmer of a great sheet of canvas could be seen, and the juniors could not yet make out the form of the vessel. But it was a sail—a sail—there were men there, sailormen—who would help sailors in distress. If they could attract the attention of the vessel. They were saved!

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

"What vessel can it be, I wonder?" Tom Merry said.

"Not a sealer or a whaler, Peter?"

Peter Raff shook his head.

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

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

"Blackbirder," said Peter Raff. "A vessel employed to kidnap natives off the islands. That trade ain't extinct yet, whatever they may say about it. I've seen—"

The sailorman paused, and changed the subject. "If it's a blackbirder, they'll pick us up, I make no doubt; but they'll murder us for that chest."

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

"Ay, ay, sir!"

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

"Ay, ay!"

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

Peter Raff gave a groan.

"It's all over."

"What do you mean, Peter?"

"That's a felucca."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's Pablo Lopez's vessel."

"Oh!"

The juniors gazed with fixed, startled eyes at the sail.

Tom Merry wondered he had not thought of it before. Pablo Lopez, the dwarf Spaniard, whom they had defeated on the Treasure Island in the fight for the buried gold, had come thence in a felucca from Valparaiso, and had fled in that vessel after his defeat. It was not likely that there was another vessel of the same rig in this lonely waste of waters.

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

Peter Raff stepped towards the sheet.

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

"Hold on!"

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

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

"The felucca will run the boat down."

"Bai Jove!"

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

Peter Raff shook his head.

"I vote we make sure," said Figgins.

"Ay, ay, sir; have your way then!"

The boat kept on its course.

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

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

"Bai Jove! The wascals!"

Tom Merry put the binoculars to his eyes.

As he brought the glasses into line, the distant vessel rushed, as it were, into clear and close view, and it almost seemed as if he could tread upon her deck.

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

It was Pablo Lopez.

He was looking towards the boat, but he had no glasses. Perhaps he had none on the felucca; or perhaps he did not care to take the trouble of examining the castaway craft.

His glance towards the boat was indifferent and careless, and he turned away carelessly, and rolled a cigarette.

Tom Merry lowered the glasses.

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

"It's Lopez!" said Tom Merry.

"Sure?"

"Look yourself!"

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

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

"The villain!"

"The awful scoundrel!"

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

There were shipwrecked sailormen in the boat, and the



"After him!" yelled Blake. The juniors raced over the sand and into the water after the Spaniard, but Lopez leaped into the boat, and beat them off with an oar." (See page 14.)

Spaniard was passing on, callously leaving them to their doom.

And the irony of it was, that in the boat were the party he was seeking; in the boat was the chest of gold for which he had come to the South Seas.

Had he felt a single impulse of humanity, had he run down to the boat to rescue the shipwrecked, he would have found in it what he had long sought.

But no thought of humanity crossed his mind.

The felucca raced on.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the night came shade and coolness.

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

How was this to end?

CHAPTER 5. The Madman.

TOM MERRY rose wearily.

The sun was flushing up the east, and golden and rosy lights tinted the great surface of the sea. A new day was dawning!

Tom Merry looked out over the sea.

Its aspect was unchanged.

Wide blue sea, wide blue sky; not a sail, not a smoke-blur

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on the horizon. No land—no sign of a shore—nothing but sea and sky, and sky and sea.

D'Arcy sat up in the boat, but did not rise. He had slept in his clothes, and he was unwashed and unkempt. But even the swell of St. Jim's was beginning to forget those things now.

"Anythin' in sight, Tom Mewwy?" he asked faintly.

"No, Gussy."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Jack Blake rose on his knees, and swept the sea with the binoculars. Nothing—nothing—clouds and water—sea and sky—nothing more!

No sign, either, of Lord Conway's boat. It might have been hundreds of miles away by this time—it might be floating bottom up on the wide Pacific—but the juniors shut that thought out of their minds.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "This is gettin' wotten!"

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"Oh! What price the pork-pies at Mrs. Taggles, back at St. Jim's, now?"

"Shut up!" roared Figgins ferociously.

"And the meringues—"

"Cheese it!"

"And the rabbit-pies—"

Figgins picked up a boathook.

"If you don't stop jawing about grub, I'll puncture you, you fat boulder!" he exclaimed. "Do you think we ain't hungry, too?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry served out the rations. The allowance of food was small, and of water smaller. But it could not be helped. Even as it was, there was only enough for four days. If help did not come by then, even those slight rations would cease.

And then—hunger, thirst—exhaustion, and death!

Peter Raff ate his rations, and drank the water, and retired to the stern of the boat. The juniors observed him fumbling in the locker there, and a sound of gurgling was heard.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins. "You haven't got a private supply of water, surely, Peter?"

"Bai Jove! Play the game, you know, Petah!"

Some of the fellows looked angrily at the sailorman. The idea of a single one of the boat's crew keeping a bottle of water to himself was dangerously exasperating.

Peter Raff turned a dulled and stupefied face upon the juniors.

"I ain't got any water 'ere," he said.

"What are you drinking, then?"

"Rum!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Peter—Peter Raff! Don't be a fool! Put it away!"

The sailorman, with a dogged look, refilled his tin pannikin, and tossed off the burning liquor. A new light flashed into his eyes.

"You let me alone," he mumbled. "I ain't under your orders, Master Tom."

"Let it alone, Peter."

"I won't."

"It will only make you worse," said Tom Merry, in great distress. "You'll have a frightful thirst following that filthy stuff."

"Yaas, wathah! It will only make mattahs worse, Petah."

The sailor laughed recklessly.

"A short life and a merry one," he said; and he refilled the pannikin, and drank again. "We're all bound for Davy Jones's locker, anyways."

"There's a good chance yet, Peter. Do put that bottle away."

"I won't, I tell you!"

The juniors exchanged hopeless glances. Peter Raff was already considerably intoxicated, as his replies showed; for in his sober moments he was always kind and respectful to Tom Merry.

What was to be done? The man had taken to the rum to relieve his sufferings, and now he was no longer himself. The rum gurgled into the tin pannikin again. Peter Raff's face was flushed, and his eyes glittering now. He burst into a hoarse, husky fragment of a sea-song.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "This is simply wotten! I haven't seen him dwinkin' before. He may get violent."

"And he has a knife and a revolver on him," muttered Figgins.

"By George!"

"Keep an eye on him," said Tom Merry. "If he tries any mischief, we shall have to down him, and tie him up till he becomes sober."

"Suppose we collar him now, and take the rum away?"

"He would fight; and we don't want to start if we can help it. My hat! I never thought the man had this in him."

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The juniors were distressed as well as alarmed. They had looked upon Peter Raff as a rough diamond, rough, but honest and true; and this new phase in his character was a disagreeable discovery. Sober, the man was all they had believed him; intoxicated, another side of his nature came to light, and it was not a pleasant one. The expression upon his face was growing hard, coarse, and savage.

He glanced at the juniors several times, and finally started to his feet. The rum bottle rolled to the bottom of the boat and broke. What was left of the liquid gushed over the planks—and the juniors were glad to see it go.

Peter Raff glanced at it, but his senses seemed too dulled to realise it. He kicked the broken bottle aside, and came lurching towards the juniors. At every step he looked as if he would tumble into the sea; but even a drunken sailorman has a wonderful way of keeping his feet.

The juniors drew together. Peter Raff had two deadly weapons in his belt, and his hand was on the butt of the revolver.

"What-ho, my hearties!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "What's the trouble, eh?"

"There isn't any trouble, Peter," said Tom Merry mildly.

"I'm skipper of this craft," said the sailorman. "You understand that? I'm skipper—me, Peter Raff!"

"Right you are!" said Tom Merry good-humouredly.

"You touch your caps to me," said Peter Raff. "You hear me?"

"Certainly!"

"You call me 'sir' when you speak. I'll have no mutiny aboard my craft," roared Peter Raff.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Tom Merry was quite willing to humour the drunken man. It was better than fighting and bloodshed. Peter Raff looked at him suspiciously.

Then his mood changed, and he looked round cautiously over his shoulder, with all the sly cunning of an intoxicated man.

"You ain't seen 'im?" he asked.

"He? Whom?"

"The Spaniard."

"Oh, Lopez! No."

"I ain't afraid of him," said the sailorman. "You understand? I ain't afraid of him nor of any mannikin living! I'll put a bullet through him as soon as anybody! You hear me?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Peter Raff had taken a revolver from his belt, and his finger was on the trigger as he peered cautiously round the boat, in his drunken imagination expecting to see the dwarf Spaniard in every corner.

"We shall have to stop him, Tom," muttered Lowther. "The idiot will be taking one of us for Lopez, and blazing away—"

"Ah! There he is!" roared Peter Raff.

Crack—crack—crack!

CHAPTER 6.

No Hope.

THE man was firing into space.

Two bullets splashed into the sea, and another cut through the sail of the boat. Peter Raff staggered as he fired, and he was swinging round towards the group of alarmed juniors. The revolver, swaying in his unsteady hand, bore upon them now, and the trigger was trembling under his finger.

In a few seconds another shot would have rung out, and the bullet might have found a billet in a body there, but in a second or less Tom Merry acted. His hand was on a boathook, and like a flash it swept through the air, and caught the wrist of the drunken man.

The revolver clattered into the bottom of the boat, and Peter Raff uttered a yell of pain.

"Collar him!" shouted Tom Merry, as the man groped unsteadily for the revolver.

The juniors did not need telling. They piled upon Peter Raff instantly, and bore him down into the bottom of the boat.

The sailorman struggled furiously.

"Mutiny, by Davy Jones!" he roared. "Hands off, you swabs—hands off!"

They pinned him down, struggling. He was grasping at his knife, but Figgins plucked it away and tossed it into the sea.

Peter Raff struggled and scrambled and yelled, but the juniors were too many for him. They held him down while Tom Merry tied his hands and feet with rope.

Then, panting and breathless, they left him lying.

The sailorman was yelling with fury, his face purple, but they took no notice of his threats and imprecations. Tom

Merry went to the locker in the stern of the boat. He opened it, and found two more bottles of rum.

"I suppose there's no doubt what we'd better do with these?" he said.

"Wathah not! Chuck the beastly stuff overboard."

"Yes, rather!"

Splash—splash!

The rum-bottles circled in the air and sank into the sea, and disappeared into the depths of the Pacific. Peter Raff was to have no chance of repeating his alarming performance.

As the sun rose higher the sailorman lay and struggled and raved in semi-delirium, but at last that passed, and he fell into a deep, dull sleep. Tom Merry covered up his face from the sun.

The weary hours crawled by.

The sailorman lay in a deep slumber, but the juniors could not sleep. They were weak from want of their usual food, and aching with thirst.

Round them was the wide sea, a sheet of burning blue. Above them a sky of brass. The wind had died away; the sails flapped idly against the mast. The boat was scarcely moving in the placid sea.

There were oars, but the juniors had no heart to row. They had little strength, either, and their rowing would make little difference. Hundreds of miles had to be covered yet before the boat would be in the track of ships. Would they succeed in covering them? Hope was dying in their breasts.

The sun sloped downward to the west. The words of an old poet, loved by all who have any ear for what is musical, came into Tom Merry's mind.

"The western wave was all aflame,

The day was well-nigh done,

Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad, bright sun."

The junior turned his weary eye to east and west. Sea and sky—sky and sea. He looked at the boat, blistering in the heat of the sun. What were the fellows at St. Jim's doing now?

Peter Raff stirred, and woke.

"Shipmates!"

Tom Merry rose and crossed to him. He drew the sheltering rag of canvas from the face of the old sailorman. Peter Raff was conscious, with throbbing nerves and aching head. He looked wildly at Tom Merry.

"Shipmate! What's the matter? What am I trussed up like this for?"

Tom Merry eyed him sternly.

"Because you've been drunk and firing your revolver," he said. "Because you've acted like a ruffian and a brute, Peter Raff."

The sailorman's face was red with shame.

"It was the rum," he muttered.

"Yes, it was the rum."

"Yaas, wathah! You were a feahful ass, Petah," said D'Arcy, looking up. "I wegard you as an unspeakable beast."

"I'm sorry," said Peter Raff. "I'm powerful sorry, Master Tom."

Tom Merry untied the ropes.

"You can get up," he said curtly.

Peter Raff rose and stretched his cramped limbs. His head was aching, his eyeballs seemed to be starting from his head. The taste of the rum burnt in his throat like fire.

"I'm sorry," he said—"I'm sorry! It was the rum. I was allers a fool when I got at the rum. It's the curse of sailormen."

"Well, it's over now."

"Where's my knife?"

"In the sea."

"And my shooter?"

"In my pocket."

"You can keep it, Master Tom," said Peter Raff, in deep distress. "I'm sorry. I know I ain't to be trusted. Keep it."

Tom Merry took the revolver from his pocket and handed it back to the sailorman.

"Take it," he said.

"Master Tom!"

"You are sober now, and you will remain so. The rum has followed your knife to the bottom of the Pacific," said Tom Merry. "You have played the fool, but there's no harm done. Let bygones be bygones."

Peter Raff put the pistol into his belt.

"Thank you, Master Tom! Oh, my throat is like a lime-kiln!"

Tom Merry hesitated. The man's sufferings were his own fault, but the lad was generous. He drew a pannikin of water from a keg and handed it to him.

Peter Raff drank it at a gulp.

"Thank you, Master Tom! Not that I deserve it."

"It's all right."

"Yaas, it's all wight, deah boy," said D'Arcy graciously. "A gentleman can't do any more than apologise. I ovahlook tho mattah."

"Cheek!" said his minor.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, won't there ever be a sail?" muttered Digby. "I'm horribly thirsty!"

"And I'm hungry!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"While there's life there's hope," said Tom Merry.

But there was little hope in the voice of the hero of the Shell. Hope was dying in his breast.

The boat was scarcely moving on the sea; the canvas flapped on the mast. An albatross settled on the bow of the boat, and flew off again.

The boys looked at the cool water sliding by. To drink was madness, for the salt in the water would terribly inflame their thirst. Yet the temptation was almost too strong to be resisted.

The sun sank lower in the sky.

Darkness again.

Another night on the wide ocean. Exhaustion caused the juniors to sleep now, and they slept by fits and starts.

The night seemed endless, but they thought of the coming day with dread. Anything was better than the blazing, merciless sun.

But the night ran its course, still without a breath of air to move the sail, and the morning flushed in the rosy heavens, and the same dead calm prevailed, and the boat, with its suffering crew, floated motionless, as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean.

CHAPTER 7.

The Last Hope.

DAY gleamed upon the boundless Pacific.

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

It was the third day on the waste of waters, and supplies were running very low indeed. Two or three of the boys lay in a state that was almost comatose, and Digby had begun to wander a little.

Tom Merry scanned the sea.

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

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

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

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

Gold!

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

"Water, water, all around,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink!"

The words came strangely into Tom Merry's dizzy mind. He had read of such things—read with breathless interest. He had never dreamed of suffering them himself. Yet it is the daily risk of those that go down to the sea in ships. One frail keel is all that stands between them and doom.

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

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

Then another day.

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

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

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

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

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

"Let me go!" he cried hoarsely.

"What are you going to do?"

Digby laughed wildly,

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CHAPTER 8

Cast Ashore.

"Drink!" he said.

"Dig!"

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

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

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

"I must drink."

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

Tom Merry dragged him back.

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

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

"You can't drink, Dig."

"I will—I will!"

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

"I don't care—let me go!"

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

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

Tom Merry and Blake exchanged hopeless glances.

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

"Heaven knows!"

Blake groaned.

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

"I—I say, I'm sorry I brought you here," said Tom, in a strained voice. "It's all my fault; but for me, you might all be safe and sound at St. Jim's. It's all my fault."

And he groaned aloud.

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

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

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

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

Was there no help?

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

What was he looking at?

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

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

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

"What is it?" asked Tom Merry.

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

"Peter! What is it?" he cried hoarsely. "Not a sail?"

The sailorman shook his head.

"What is it, then?"

"A cloud!" muttered Peter Raff.

"A cloud—does that mean wind?"

"Perhaps."

"What else?"

"Rain!"

"Oh, Heaven!"

The word electrified the juniors.

Rain!

No greater boon could have befallen them save rescue. Rain! The words thrilled through their hearts like new-born hope.

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

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

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

The wind was upon them. But it was not a refreshing wind. It was a wind laden with burning heat, that fanned and scorched their faces like the breath of a furnace.

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

And—what was that?

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

"Rain!"

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RAIN!

Rain, at first in large drops, and then in sheets.

Rain! Rain drenching down upon the sea, drenching the juniors, drenching the boat, flooding them and soaking them, to their almost delirious delight.

Rain!

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

But satisfied it was at last.

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

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

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

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

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

"Bale away!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

They baled away heroically.

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

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

"Stand clear!" Tom Merry shouted suddenly.

"Bai Jove! Look out!"

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

The boat rushed on.

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

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

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

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

Where were they? Whither were they rushing? They did not know—and they had no time to think. They needed all their energies to escape instant destruction in the midst of the boiling seas.

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

"Rocks ahead!"

The boat rushed on.

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

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

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

"Look out!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good-bye, you fellows—save yourselves."

Crash!

Crash!

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

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

Tom Merry felt himself caught up and dashed from the boat; he felt shifting sand under his feet, and he clawed it

wildly, and he was thrown down at last, and the wave, its force expended, receded to the sea, and sucked at him, but he dug feet and hands in the sand, and held his own.

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

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

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

"Come and help!"

Another and another of the juniors was dragged out. Manners was still clinging to the boat, and Peter Raff and Tom Merry plunged in together and brought him off. The thundering waves chased them up the beach, and they sank down exhausted.

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

"All, I believe," said Kangaroo.

"Call over the names."

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

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

"Ay, ay!"

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of relief.

"We're all here! Thank Heaven!"

"But where are we?" said Blake.

"Goodness knows."

"The boat's done for."

"Never mind the boat."

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

"Never mind the treasure."

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

CHAPTER 9.

Cast Away.

TOM MERRY & CO. lay on the wet sand, exhausted—too exhausted to move. The heavy waves were beating upon the boat, beating it to pieces, but they had no strength left to attempt to save it. They could only lie and gasp on the wet sand just out of reach of the breakers.

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

Tom Merry sat up at last.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And savages."

"H'm!"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

"Cocoanuts," he said.

"Yaas, wathah—heaps of them, too!"

"I'm awfully hungry."

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

"I'm fearfully hungry."

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

"I'm famished, you see."

"Well, famish quietly," said Blake.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figgins chuckled.

"You just won't do anything of the sort," he replied. "You'll just stick here with me till we're all ready, Fatty."

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Oh, rats!"

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

"You ass!" said Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

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

The fellows laughed.

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

But D'Arcy was always D'Arcy!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

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

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

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

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

"I was thinking of the cannibal girls," Lowther explained blandly.

"If they see you, they certainly won't be willing to let you leave the island. We can't go without you, and so—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!"

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

"Yes, come on," said Kangaroo. "I must say I've got a healthy appetite, too. I could almost eat Gussy, he looks so nice."

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

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

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

D'Arcy looked round through his eyeglass.

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

"I think it's very likely."

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

The juniors stared at him.

"Well, you blessed cannibal!" exclaimed Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"You giddy anthropophagist!" said Wally.

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

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

"Oh, I see!"

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

"Weally, Wynn—"

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

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus' New Role.

FATTY WYNN paused under a coconut-tree, and looked up. Fatty Wynn's girth had been reduced a little during the days in the open boat, and his belt was drawn tighter than of yore. But the palm-tree's trunk was difficult to negotiate, and Fatty Wynn felt that he was not the fellow for the task. He turned a persuasive smile upon the other fellows.

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

D'Arcy shook his head.

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

"Figgy, old man—"

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

"Wally—"

"Rats!" said the hero of the Third.

Fatty Wynn snorted.

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

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

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

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

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

Tom Merry laughed.

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

"By George, yes!"

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

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

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"Is it nice, Fatty?"

Gna-w-w-w-w-w!

"Do you like it?"

Gna-a-a-w-w-w!

Fatty Wynn was too busy to speak.

"Bai Jove! I think I'll twy one!"

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

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

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

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

D'Arcy looked into the cracked nut. The interior was black as the ace of spades. He regarded it very dubiously.

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

Lowther shook his head.

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

"You uttah ass!"

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

"Oh, vewy well!"

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

"Ow! Oh! Gwoo! Yweoh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo.

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

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

"Kangawoo said—"

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

"Hasn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an ass!"

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

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

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

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

Suddenly there was a rustle in the underwoods, and Tom Merry dropped his cocoanut, and grasped the rifle. Peter Raff caught a revolver from his belt. A black face looked out of the bushes at the juniors, a startled but not hostile face.

Tom Merry levelled his rifle.

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

Tom Merry smiled.

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

He made a sign to the black to come out.

A little man, with a blackish-brown skin, came out of the bushes. He was clad in a loin-cloth, and his skin was dark and shining, and tattooed over in strange devices.

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

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

Tom Merry lowered the rifle.

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

The black fellow stared at him blankly.

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

Another stare.

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

Stony stare, and nothing more.

"I wegard you as a wude ass!" said D'Arcy indignantly.

"I wegard you as a beast, sir! Why can't you answah a question, you boundah?"

No reply.

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

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

The native grinned.

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

"Bai Jove! Yaas!"

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

D'Arcy started back in amazement.

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

"My hat!"

"What is he up to?"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Lowther!"

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

The juniors yelled at the idea.

D'Arcy turned very red.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse—"

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

"I tell you, I wefuse—"

"All together, kids!"

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

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

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

"Hail!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hail!"

"Ave, Caesar!"

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

"Hail!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

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

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

"You uttah asses! Bai Jove! I—"

"Pax!" gasped Tom Merry.

"I wegard you—"

"Pax!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The savage rose to his feet, trembling. But as D'Arcy's face cleared, he looked more calm. As a matter of fact, it occurred to D'Arcy that the spontaneous worship of the innocent savage was something of a compliment to him. The black fellow evidently recognised him as something superior

to the common ruck, and D'Arcy was not at all inclined to attribute it solely to the eyeglass and the top hat. The swell of St. Jim's bestowed a gracious smile upon his worshipper.

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

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

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

"Weally, Wally—"

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

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

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

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

The juniors shrieked.

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

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

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

"You uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

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

Tom Merry looked very dubious.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young wascal—"

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

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

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

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NEXT
WEEK:

"CORONATION DAY AT ST. JIM'S."

CHAPTER 11.

A Sudden Attack!

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

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Hail!"

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

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

"We shall have to wait a bit and see more what the natives are like, before we explore the place at all," said Tom Merry. "The other fellows may not be friendly, and there may be more than one tribe, too. And we don't want to leave the shore, either. We want to have what chance there is of seeing a sail."

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

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

"That's true."

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

"Wathah not."

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Yes, rather!"

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

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

"Yes, that's a comfort."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Jolly good idea!" said Digby.

The rope was passed round the sunken chest, and it was dragged with great efforts, through the soft sand, and above

high-water mark. Then the sand was scooped out into a hollow, and the chest was rolled in, and covered up.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

"Good!"

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

Tom Merry shook his head.

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

"True."

"We shall remember that, if we need to dig up the chest again," said Tom Merry. "Twenty paces from the big rock, in a line with the bunch of palms."

"Good!"

"Look out!" shouted Blake suddenly.

The juniors rose upon their feet in a moment.

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

They rushed straight at the juniors.

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

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

"My hat! Look out!"

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

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

Yet they hesitated to fire.

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

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

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

"Right-ho!"

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

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

"Good old Friday!" murmured Lowther.

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

"They want you, Gussy," said Manners.

"Bai Jove!"

"They want our giddy idol," grinned Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

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

He laid his hand on the savage's shoulder.

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

"Look out!" shouted Blake.

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

"Shoot!" shouted Peter Raff.

There was nothing else for it. D'Arcy was evidently sacred in the eyes of the savages, but they were prepared to murder the others with the peculiar irresponsibility of the savage nature.

"Shoot! Shoot!"

Tom Merry threw his rifle up.

Crack!

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

CHAPTER 12.

The Spaniard.

THE report of the rifle rang in a thousand echoes along the beach, and reverberated back from the wood.

The savages stopped dead, as if thunderstruck.

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

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

Friday lay motionless where he had fallen.

Tom Merry was very pale.

"Good heavens!" muttered Blake.

"Is he dead?" whispered Wally.

"Heaven forbid!" said Tom.

"It was his own look-out, Master Tom," said Peter Raff.

"He tried to kill you with his spear."

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

He stepped towards the fallen savage.

Friday lay motionless.

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

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

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

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

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

"He doesn't savvy," said Blake.

"I expect he'll come round," said Tom Merry. "Poor chap! I'm sorry to scare him like this; but those beggars meant murder."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It's a vewy remarkable experience."

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

"Yaas, wathah."

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

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

"A sail!"

Tom Merry caught up the binoculars, and turned them upon the sail, which had glanced up like a white bird's wing from the blue of the sea.

Then he uttered an exclamation of disappointment.

"The felucca!"

"Lopez again!"

The felucca was standing into the bay. The dwarf figure of the Spaniard could be seen at the helm.

"The felucca!"

"And the Spaniard!"

"Cover!" said Tom Merry quickly.

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

Tom Merry nodded quickly.

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

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

Tom Merry watched the felucca as it swept closer in under its lateen sails. The Spaniard at the helm was in full and easy view now, in easy range. Tom Merry half-raised the rifle.

He could have picked the man off as easily as a rabbit.

Peter Raff touched his arm.

"Shoot—shoot!" muttered the sailorman. "You'll never have another chance like this, Master Tom—never."

"It would be only prudent," said Tom. "But—"

"But you can't do it, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm surprised at you, Petah. It would be howlid."

"The man's a murderer," said Peter Raff—"a murderer twice over, as I've seen. He means death to us."

"Yaas, but—"

Tom Merry shook his head. It would have been, as he had said, only prudent, but it was impossible. He could not shoot a man down in cold blood.

"He deserves it," he said. "But it can't be done. Besides"—Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as a new idea flashed into his brain.

"What are you thinking of?" Blake asked.

"We might capture the felucca?"

"What?"

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

"No fear."

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And there will be provisions on the felucca, too," observed Fatty Wynn. "We shall have plenty of grub for the voyage, and—"

"Hallo! Hold on, Peter Raff!"

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

"Stop it!" he shouted.

The sailorman looked sullen.

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

"It's murder."

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

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

The sailorman nodded.

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

"I don't think so."

The great sails were down now, and the felucca floated gently in the bay. The anchor slipped into the water, and the handsome craft rocked on the waves a score of yards from the shore. A little skiff dropped into the water, and the Spaniard rowed himself ashore. The blacks remained on board the felucca. They were close enough for the juniors to see their faces, and it was easy to see that they were

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NEXT
WEEK:

"CORONATION DAY AT ST. JIM'S."

Another Splendid Long, Complete Tale of
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simple black sailors, with none of the ruffianly characteristics of the Spaniard about them. Probably Lopez dared not sail in company with scoundrels like himself—for if a gang of his own kidney had helped him win the treasure, they would certainly have murdered him for the possession of it afterwards. He preferred to rely upon himself, and have nothing to fear, at all events, upon his own vessel.

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

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

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

"Carambo!"

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

His heavy boots could be heard grinding the sand as he came on, closer and closer. In a few seconds he would be round the rocks, and in full view of the castaways. Tom Merry raised his rifle, ready, his finger on the trigger.

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

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

Tom Merry's voice rang out.

"Halt!"

CHAPTER 13.

Face to Face!

PABLO LOPEZ halted.

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

"Carambo!"

"Halt, you scoundrel!"

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

But his rage was nothing to the juniors.

He was at their mercy now.

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

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

"Carambo!"

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

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

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

But the sailorman obeyed Tom's order. He stepped to-

wards the Spaniard, and took the pistol and the knife from his belt, and unslung the rifle from his shoulder, and then took off his bandolier.

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

Tom Merry made a gesture of contempt.

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

Lopez ground his teeth.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Spaniard sprang back.

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

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

The juniors rushed forward.

Lopez sprang away.

It would have been easy for Tom Merry to shoot him down; but that the cunning rascal knew very well the junior would not do, excepting in self-defence. Lopez sprang away round the rocks, and dashed across the sand towards the felucca.

"After him!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Collah the cad!"

"Hurrah!"

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

But Lopez reached his skiff first.

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

But that they did not do. They halted on the shore, baffled, while the boat rocked away towards the anchored craft.

"Bai Jove! The wascal's gone!"

The Spaniard glared at them from the boat.

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

Peter Raff gritted his teeth.

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

Tom Merry shook his head.

The Spaniard steadied the boat with the oar, and stood looking back at the juniors. There was hate in his face—hate and rage, and bitter chagrin. It was not the first time he had been defeated by the juniors of St. Jim's. Upon his dark skin showed more than one deep scar that he had received in conflict with Tom Merry far away upon the island of the treasure.

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

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

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

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

The Spaniard started.

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

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

The Spaniard laughed.

"That is simple. I have found floating wreckage with her

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MASTER W. WILLIAMS, 16, The Crescent, Phippsville, Northampton.

MASTER R. PALMER, 42, Purser Road, Northampton.



"I'm thinking of the cannibal girls," said Monty Lowther. "If they see you, Gussy, they certainly won't be willing to let you leave the island!" (See page 10.)

name upon it—that is how I know. Do you say that it is not true?"

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

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

"And the treasure—that has been saved?"

"Find out."

The Spaniard gritted his teeth.

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

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

Lopez laughed scoffingly.

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

"Rats!"

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

Tom Merry laughed.

"Rats!" he replied. "That means no!"

"Very well; your blood be upon your own heads," said the Spaniard.

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

"Will he go now?" Blake muttered.

"I should say not."

Tom Merry was right.

The Spaniard had disappeared on board the vessel, but the great lateen sails were not raised, and the craft did not move from her anchorage. Pablo Lopez had come to stay.

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CHAPTER 14.

Fallen Among Foes.

THE juniors returned to their camp behind the rocks. The situation on the island was growing curious. On the one side were the brown-skinned natives, whose ferocious enmity might break out again at any moment. On the other was the Spaniard. It was pretty certain that Pablo Lopez was waiting on the felucca for the fall of night, with the intention of trying his luck a second time under cover of darkness. And without being timid, the juniors looked forward to nightfall with some uneasiness.

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

"If he shoots, we shall shoot," Tom Merry said.

Peter Raff shook his head.

"You won't have another chance, Master Tom."

"Bai Jove, I must remark that you're an awful cwoakali, Petah!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed. "I wathah think that we shall be a match for the wuffian."

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

Tom Merry smiled.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Quite wight, deah boy!"

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

"Oh, shut up," said Figgins; "you make me feel famished!"

"What price a nice juicy pork pie—"

"Shut up!" roared the juniors.

And Fatty Wynn sighed and shut up.

But his suggestion was good, and as the sun went down the juniors gathered armfuls of cocoanuts, and carried them back to the camp in the rocks. A change of diet was very desirable, but cocoanuts were better than nothing. As for hunting some of the wild goats they had seen in the distance, Tom Merry decided that it would be too imprudent.

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

The sun sank in the west.

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

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

"We ought to have a stockade, you know," said D'Arcy, with a dim remembrance of some treasure story. "A stockade and a blockhouse, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

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

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn emphatically.

"Listen!" said Jack Blake.

He held up his hand.

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

They had no doubt as to what caused it.

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

"Hark!"

It was a splash from the sea.

"Lopez!"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

The juniors clambered up the rocks. The rugged slopes below them did not favour a rushing attack, such as the savages were most likely to make. Among the rocks the castaways had no doubt of being able to hold their own by

using their firearms, but that, of course, they were very reluctant to do. But if the savages pushed them hard, they had no other resource.

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

The islanders were coming on!

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

Not a sound, not a motion from the darkness.

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

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

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

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

The juniors started, and listened in horror.

What was happening there in the darkness?

One word was on all lips:

"Lopez!"

Was it the Spaniard?

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

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

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

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

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

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

The savages, with yells of triumph, dragged their prisoner away towards the wood. With the curious irresponsibility of the savage mind, they had forgotten or abandoned their original intention in approaching the camp. With the gasping, feebly struggling Spaniard in their midst, they swarmed away into the forest and disappeared, but for a long time their savage yells rang in the ears of the juniors.

CHAPTER 15.

To the Rescue!

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

Tom Merry shivered.

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

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

"Goodness knows!"

"He wounded some of them. They may—"

"Kill him, perhaps."

Tom Merry made a restless gesture.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Suppose—" began Digby, and he paused.

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

"Suppose they're cannibals?"

"Bai Jove!"

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

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

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

"Quite wight, Blake."

"If they're cannibals—"

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

"Well, that's right, too."

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

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

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

The sailorman grinned.

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

Tom Merry shuddered.

"We cannot be sure," he said.

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

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

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

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

"The forest on fire!"

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

"Some celebration, I suppose?"

The sailorman grinned.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

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

"I'd better not say, sir."

"Tell me!"

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

"Very likely; but—"

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

"They do that, sir."

"Do they torture them?"

Peter Raff was silent.

"What do you say, Peter?"

"Well, sir, the man might be dead before they cook him, or—or he mightn't," said the sailorman reluctantly. "There's no telling."

Tom Merry gave a horrified start.

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

"I s'pose they might."

"Gwreat Scott!" muttered D'Arcy, with the perspiration running down his face. "The howwid wottahs! I—I say, Tom Mewwy, we can't stand this."

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

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

"Wathah not!"

"Come on."

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

"What's that?"

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

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

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

"Yes, rather!"

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

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

"Weally, Blake—"

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

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

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

For a great distance they threaded their way through the dusky aisles of the forest. The trees gave place to a wide clearing at last—a level glade, with trees in the distance beyond the green level. In the glade was a collection of rude huts, and on the open ground outside the village a huge fire was blazing away, fed by logs and branches. Round the fire, wild, dark figures danced amid unearthly, unmusical yells.

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

CHAPTER 16.

Saved From the Cannibals.

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

"Look!" he muttered.

It was the Spaniard.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suddenly the dance ceased.

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

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

The Spaniard was to be roasted. There was no doubt about it. The juniors were sick with horror as they watched. The dwarf was dragged towards the fire, and one of the cannibals had looped a rope to fasten him there quickly, so that his captors could recede from the heat.

Tom Merry raised his rifle.

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

"Ysah, wathah!"

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

Crack-ack-ack-ack-ack!

From the wood came a sudden burst of firing.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The juniors blazed away fiercely.

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

Crack! Crack!

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

Crack! Crack Crack!

"Charge!" shouted Tom Merry.

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

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

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

"Come!" he muttered.

"Loose my hands," muttered Lopez.

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

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"But, *senorito*—"

"Come!"

Tom Merry dragged the Spaniard up.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

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

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

"They're after us!" panted Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked back, and grasped his rifle.

"Look after Lopez," he said.

"Right-ho!"

Crack!

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

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

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

They came out into the bright moonlight there.

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

Tom Merry looked at him sternly.

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

The Spaniard nodded.

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

"Loose me—"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Because they were savages," said Tom Merry quietly.

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

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

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

Tom Merry interrupted him with a gesture.

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

Lopez gritted his teeth.

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

"Very well!"

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

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

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

The Spaniard did not reply.

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

"I am willing to make terms, *senorito*—"

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

"Better leave him!" muttered Pete Raff.

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"I will obey you, *senorito*," said Lopez, between his teeth.

"The boat is by the rock here; it shall be as you say."

"Come on, you fellows!"

In a few minutes the juniors were at the skiff. It was not large enough for all of them, and six of them went on board it with Lopez—Tom Merry, Figgins, Kerr, Lowther, Blake, and Kangaroo. They pulled out to the felucca, which lay glimmering on the bay in the moonlight.

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

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

And there was no trickery. The staring black faces looked over the side, and the Spaniard growled out an order, and the juniors were helped on board by the negroes. The black seamen stared at seeing their captain a prisoner, and the juniors were quite prepared for any attempt at a rescue, but none was made. The negroes were not armed; probably the Spaniard did not trust them with weapons; he could not have been a popular skipper, and if he had once taken the gold aboard, his life would not have been safe with an armed crew. The Spaniard was bound to the mast for security, and then the skiff was sent back with Figgins in it, to fetch the rest of the party. Ten minutes later, they were all on the deck of the felucca.

CHAPTER 17.

Picked Up.

TOM MERRY & Co. were very wakeful that night. The exciting adventures they had passed through left them in little humour for sleep. And there was always danger of an attack from the cannibals. During the night, at intervals, they saw moving forms on the shore in the moonlight, and heard loud and savage yells. The cannibals had mustered courage to follow them as far as the bay. But they did not attempt to swim to the felucca, and morning dawned upon the Pacific, without any attack having been made. With morning the islanders disappeared from sight, streaming away through the wood.

Tom Merry rubbed his eyes.

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

"The treasure!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

Tom Merry laughed.

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

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

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

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

"Bai Jove!"

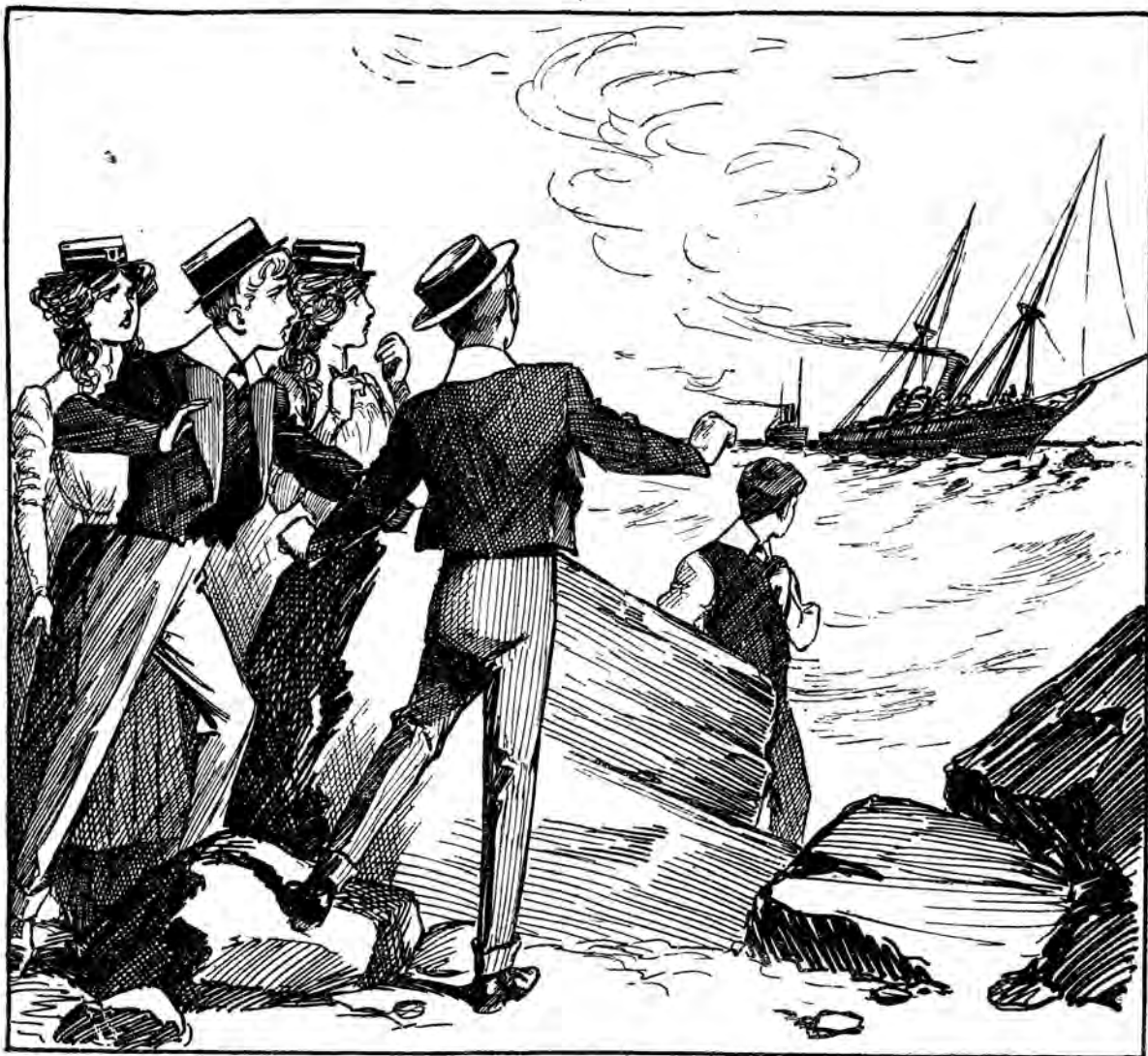
"Very likely," said Tom Merry. "Most likely, in fact. We'll get out to sea the moment we can. Let's overhaul the felucca and see how we're off for supplies."

That did not take long. They found that Lopez had provisioned himself well for his voyage, and that there need be no anxiety on that score. The water was running low, but that could easily be renewed at the stream in the bay. The juniors set to work at once; and Tom Merry, finding that the black sailors understood a few words of English, gave them orders, which they obeyed cheerfully enough. Peter Raff added orders in Spanish, and by the promptness with which he was obeyed, it is probable that he added threats in that unknown tongue.

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

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

The juniors kept a sharp look-out for the savages while they uncovered the great chest in the sand. It was taken into the little skiff, weighing it deeply down, and rowed off to the felucca. Getting it on board was a difficult task enough, but



Crash! The terrific impact of the yacht upon the hidden rock could be heard from where the juniors stood, and in an instant the handsome vessel reeled, tottered and trembled, and ground back from the rock. (An exciting incident in "The King's Guest," the splendid long, complete school story contained in the special Coronation Number of "The Magnet" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

with all hands to work it was managed, and the great chest was dumped down on the deck.

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

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

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

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

"Very well; when we are at sea."

There was a sudden shout from Kerr.

"Look out!"

"What is it?"

"Canoes!"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

The anchor was hauled in, and the black sailors, under Peter Raff's loud orders, set the huge sails. The keen breeze caught the great expanse of canvas, and the felucca moved like a great white bird out into the bay.

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

But they did not.

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

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

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

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

"Senoritos!"

"Hallo!"

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"You promised to let me see the treasure."

"Very well," said Tom Merry.

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

"Dios!" he muttered. "Dios!"

"Are you satisfied?" said Tom Merry.

"Gracias, senorito!"

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

"Jolly good idea!"

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

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

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

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

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

Sailing the felucca did not prove a difficult task, and the black sailors obeyed Peter Raff's orders as they had obeyed the Spaniard. The day passed in perfect calmness, the felucca speeding along before a strong breeze. It was towards sunset that Kerr, who was standing in the bows, was observed to have his gaze fixed attentively upon a spot on the blue horizon. Tom Merry joined him.

"What are you looking at, Kerr?"

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

"But what?"

"It might be a boat."

Tom Merry started. The course of the felucca was changed a little to bring her directly upon the unknown object. The juniors crowded in the bows, watching. The thought that it was a boat, that it might be Lord Conway's boat, was in every mind. Tom Merry's idea had been to get to the nearest port in New Zealand, and there send vessels in search of the missing boat, for money would have been spent like water in the search for Lord Conway, and the juniors would gladly have devoted every ounce of the treasure to the task of finding him and rescuing him and his companions.

"It's a boat!" Digby exclaimed.

It was a boat, certainly. As the felucca drew nearer they could make out a ragged signal flying from the mast. The sail was in tatters; the boat had evidently been through rough usage. Tom Merry scanned it with the binoculars, and made out several forms in the boat, most of them lying down.

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

The felucca raced on.

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

Tom Merry was puzzled for a moment.

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

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

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

They shouted to the boat, but for a long time the wind

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

The boat swung round.

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

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

"Thank Heaven!" said Lord Conway.

CHAPTER 18.

Lopez's Last Blow.

It did not take long for the castaways to clamber on board. They were in a terribly emaciated condition.

They had not, as Lord Conway said, come to the end of their provisions yet, but they had been on short rations of both food and water, and it had told upon them. The juniors gathered round Herries, and D'Arcy offered to carry him down to the cabin. Herries glared at him.

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

"Weally, Hewwies—"

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

"I refuse to admit anything of the sort, Hewwies. You are a little fatter and clumsier, I know, but you are not tallah, and I could cawwy you quite easily."

"Ass!" said Herries.

"Weally, you chump—"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, you ass—"

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

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

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

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

And the juniors roared.

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

Lord Conway was a good navigator, and he fell into his new duties at once. Day after day the felucca glided on with fair winds and a cheerful crew. The expedition, after so many adventures and vicissitudes, was turning out a splendid success, but the end had not yet come.

The Spaniard had fallen into a quite sullen humour, and he moved about the ship with downcast face and silent lips. After a couple of days the man was allowed the freedom of his limbs. There were so many Englishmen on board that it was absurd to think he could attempt any desperate move for regaining possession of the felucca, and he was not allowed a chance of getting at any weapons. Disappointment and chagrin seemed to have an effect upon him, and on the fourth day he took to his bunk, and did not leave it. He lay there through the sunny hours, eating little and speaking not at all. To a sick man the juniors were disposed to be kind, even after all his villainies; but the Spaniard spoke no word to them, and refused every kindness.

"We shall be at anchor to-morrow in Hawke Bay, in the North Island," said Lord Conway, one moonlit evening, on deck, as he smoked his cigar. "There we can get the chest ashore, and, I hope, pick up a steamer. The felucca will hardly do to take us back to Europe."

"I shall be sowwy to leave her, though," D'Arcy said, glancing up at the big sails. "We have had a good time, and I think we are entitled to regard her as a prize."

"I suppose we shall leave her to the Spaniard?" Tom Merry remarked.

The viscount nodded.

"Yes, he can have his vessel back when we are ashore with the gold. The way things have turned out I think we can afford to forgive him his rascality."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The felucca doesn't seem to be sailing so well just now," Figgins remarked, with a puzzled look. "She seems to be dragging, and look how the bows are dipping."

Lord Conway rose and threw away his cigar.

"That's very curious," he said.

"Bai Jove! Yaas! The craft is wobblin', too."

Peter Raff came up to them with an anxious expression.

"There's something wrong with the craft, sir," he said. "Looks to me as if there's a leak sprung somewhere below."

"Look at once, Raff."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

It was a hot evening, and everyone was on deck with the exception of the Spaniard. Peter Raff ran down below, and the next moment his voice was heard calling hoarsely for help.

"Lopez!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

They rushed down. Water was splashing over the planks of the cabin floor, and Peter Raff was struggling in the grasp of the Spaniard. The ruffian was grasped at once, and torn away from the panting sailorman.

Peter Raff staggered up.

"She's scuttled, sir!" he panted.

"Good heavens!"

Lopez, in the grasp of the seamen, turned a look of savage hate upon the Englishmen.

"Carambo! Did you think you would have the treasure, then?" he exclaimed. "Yes, I have scuttled the felucca! The treasure and all of us can go to the bottom together!"

"You hound!"

Lopez laughed exultantly.

"I have had my revenge!" he said.

The Spaniard was dragged on deck. Lord Conway made an attempt to get at the leak, but the hold was full of water. The Spaniard had known where to make the gash in the timbers, and it was not to be reached. The felucca was filling fast.

"Fortunately, we are near the shore, and the boats will hold us all at a pinch," said Mr. Dodds.

"But the treasure—"

"We may have time to save it yet," said Lord Conway. "Lower away the boats."

The treasure-chest had been placed below in the after cabin. The door of the cabin was locked, and there was no key. They turned savagely to Lopez and demanded the key, and the Spaniard, with an evil grin, pointed to the sea.

"The key is there," he said, "and the treasure will soon be there also, senores. That is the revenge of Pablo Lopez. Now do with me as you will."

Crash!

The felucca was heeling over, and one of the great sails dragged down into the water. The mast snapped like a match. There was a rush of water below, and the men gathered at the cabin door were driven up the ladder.

Lord Conway set his lips.

"To the boats—quick!" he shouted.

There was no time for anything else—no time even for food and water—barely time for a wild rush to the boats to put off before the felucca went down.

"Leave the Spaniard here," Peter Raff exclaimed. "Let him go down with the treasure."

The crew were in a mood to do it, too. There was no chance of saving the gold—a doubt whether they could save themselves. Black looks were cast at the Spaniard, but Mr. Dodds spoke in his quiet way.

"We cannot leave him to death," he said. "He is a scoundrel, but we have our duty as Christian men to consider. You will save him, Lord Conway?"

"Put him into the boat!" said the viscount shortly.

The Spaniard was tossed into a boat, roughly enough. The crew pulled away from the felucca, which was now rolling over helplessly in the trough of the sea. The great sails flapped in the water, and disappeared.

The felucca, the treasure, were gone. The Spaniard burst into a harsh, mocking laugh.

Tom Merry turned upon him angrily.

"Silence, you scoundrel!" he exclaimed.

"But I have had my revenge!" muttered the dwarf.

The boats pulled for the shore. The Spaniard sat silent now, but with the same grin of evil triumph upon his face. He had lost the treasure, but the rivals in the quest had lost it, too, and that was consolation enough to Pablo Lopez.

A few hours later the twice-wrecked voyagers landed on Maori soil. Their voyage was over, and it remained only to get to the nearest steamer and return to England. The Spaniard was released—there was nothing else to be done with him. Of the treasure of the Pacific island all that remained was the Spanish doubloons the juniors had in their pockets, but that, at least, would suffice to show the fellows at St. Jim's that they really had found a treasure in the South Seas; and, after all, as Blake said, that was the chief consideration. And so the St. Jim's party were cheerful enough when they trod the deck of a steamer homeward bound.

"We shall have two or three hundred pounds between us," Tom Merry remarked, "and I think we'll blue a good bit of it in a Coronation celebration at St. Jim's—what?"

And the juniors agreed that they would.

THE END.

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Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Serial Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]

A Thrilling Tale of Modern Adventure on Land and Sea.



By **ROBERT W. COMRADE.**

INTRODUCTION.

Frank Kingston, a young Englishman, is engaged on a secret campaign against a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, his aim being to break up the society by ruining the members of the Inner Council. He has the assistance of Miss O'Brien, an accomplished young lady, Professor Graham Polgrave, a clever scientist and inventor, Carson Gray, a detective, Fraser, a manservant, and a lad named Tim.

Kingston is away in the European State of Balataria, when he receives an urgent telegram from Carson Gray, summoning him back to England in haste. The occurrence which has caused the detective such agitation is nothing less than the theft, by the Brotherhood of Iron, of the British Crown Jewels from the Tower of London. Carson Gray happens to be within the precincts of the Tower when the jewels are stolen, but he is powerless to prevent the theft. The Brotherhood, as a glance at the rifled showcase in the Wakefield Tower proved, had made a clean sweep.

(Now go on with the story.)

Frank Kingston Arrives in London.

The boat-train from Dover came to a smooth standstill in Charing Cross Station, and in a moment was disgorging its horde of passengers—most of them consisting of foreign and Colonial visitors to London for the Coronation. Everything was bustle, and the passengers were, for the most part, hurrying after their luggage and making for the exits.

One individual, however, who stepped from one of the first-class compartments, seemed perfectly cool and at ease. It was a tall, magnificently-developed man of about thirty, and he carried nothing but a small gladstone and a walking-cane. His attire was perfect in every detail, and he gave one the impression of being something of a dandified fop.

As the reader will have guessed, it was Frank Kingston.

As usual, he was calm and languid-looking, and strolled down the platform with no sign of hurry. But although his outward appearance was so inane, he was thinking pretty deeply, and had decided to take a taxi straight to Great Portland Street.

The time was about six o'clock in the evening, and when he emerged into the Strand he found the air filled with dust and petrol-fumes. The day had been a hot one, and the air was now just beginning to cool a little. Outside the station was the usual bustle and noise of taxi-cabs,

motor-buses, etc., intermixed with the cries of newsboys. These latter seemed more excited than usual, and were selling their papers with extraordinary rapidity.

Kingston paused for a moment, and glanced at one of the placards held by a boy who stood against the kerb. On it, in huge letters, were the words:

**"THE CHASE OF THE CROWN JEWELS.
NO TRACE OF SIR HENRY KENNING.
LATEST REPORT."**

"Undoubtedly that is the reason Gray brought me home in such a hurry," Kingston told himself as he purchased a paper. "I can see quite plainly that this robbery is the work of the Brotherhood. Nobody else would have dared to attempt such a thing. By Jove, Mount-Fannell is aiming high! The Crown Jewels are no mean prize, and he certainly must have organised the thing well to bring it off at all."

He beckoned to a taxi-cab, and was very soon bowling across Trafalgar Square. He opened the newspaper out and glanced at the huge headlines, then read the long and somewhat tedious report of what had occurred. As the theft had been committed the previous day, the paper did not state the full facts—having already done so in a former issue—but merely told the latest developments in the case, which amounted to practically nothing.

The police had been utterly unable to trace a single one of the pseudo visitors who had made off with the Regalia. It was realised when it was too late that the explosion at the Weil Tower had been perpetrated for the sole purpose of attracting attention to that quarter of the grounds. The Beefeaters and other officials saw how easily they had been bamboozled by this simple ruse, and the constables at the gate were referred to in scathing tones by the newspapers for letting the robbers simply slip through their fingers. They did not realise that the policemen were under the impression that they had real bombs to contend against.

"That was a smart idea!" muttered Kingston, as he read of the fog, and how it had assisted the thieves to escape. "Of course, it was quite an easy matter for them to slip away under those conditions. The question is, who is in charge of this affair? Perhaps Gray will be able to enlighten me. In any case, I am practically convinced that this affair is the work of the genial Brotherhood."

He was still glancing at the paper, and saw that Sir Henry Kenning was looked upon as the main culprit. It did

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not occur to him that the baronet might possibly have been impersonated, and he was consequently rather puzzled. The police and the public, in taking the view they had done, could not possibly be blamed. The Lieutenant of the Tower himself had thrown the first bomb, and was still missing. What other inference could possibly be drawn?

Sir Henry's guilt seemed absolutely proved, and the case was turning out to be the biggest scoop for the newspapers that had occurred in recent years.

Frank Kingston arrived a few minutes later outside Carson Gray's door in Great Portland Street. He dismissed the taxi and rang the bell. The door was opened by Mrs. Webster, who seemed surprised to see him.

"Dear me, sir," she exclaimed, "if you ain't a stranger!"

"Really, Mrs. Webster, I have not been away for long," returned Kingston, with a smile. "Is Mr. Gray in?"

"Yes, sir. He came in not more than five minutes since, havin' just completed a very hard case over at Brixton. Wot with one thing an' another—"

"Quite so, Mrs. Webster!" exclaimed Kingston, stepping past her into the hall. "What with one thing and another, Mr. Gray has quite a busy time of it. You need not trouble. I will escort myself up."

He knew that the worthy landlady had somewhat unusual talking propensities—although most landladies are subject to that little complaint—and so escaped as soon as possible. He walked in upon Carson Gray without knocking, and found the detective seated in his big armchair smoking his big pipe and engrossed in the pages of a big volume.

"You seem to be busy, my dear Gray."

"Why, great Scott, I hardly expected you here so soon as this, Kingston!" cried Carson Gray, springing to his feet. "You're looking more bronzed than you were when you left by a long way. How are you?"

"I think my appearance will answer that question," smiled Kingston. "Since I left the Iron Island I never had so much as an ache in the whole of my body. You seem to be in extremely good health yourself. But sit down; I do not wish to disturb your work," he added, glancing at the book which Carson Gray had laid on the table.

"Oh, hang that! It was nothing important, anyhow. You have seen the placards, I suppose?"

"My dear Gray, what a question to ask! Could anybody but a blind person fail to do so? They stare one in the face at every turn, and even a blind man would know what was in the wind, for the boys are shouting themselves hoarse with the startling news. If I guess correctly, that is the reason for your telegram?"

"Precisely."

"The theft is the work of the Brotherhood?"

"Yes. I was sure you would guess it immediately, for no one else would have the colossal cheek to attempt such a thing. I myself was very doubtful before it passed off, but, by Jove, when the Brotherhood does a thing, it does it thoroughly. They took the Crown Jewels as though they had been lying in the middle of the pathway."

"Mount-Fannell never attempts a thing unless he knows it is practically certain of success," replied Kingston, dropping into a chair opposite to Gray. "Now, can you tell me everything you know about this affair, so that I can understand it better? The newspapers, of course, are completely in the dark."

"And I," replied Gray, "can only say that I am in the twilight. What I know about it is practically nothing, but I've every confidence that you, once you start, will very soon find out all there is to be known."

"Well, first of all, which Inner Councillor had charge of the case?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"You obtained your information, I presume, from Crawford? Having been here once to see me in your presence, he knew you were in my confidence."

"Yes. But all he could tell me was that a rumour was going round among the common-members to the effect that this robbery was to be perpetrated. He could not tell how or when, and that is all I can say. By-the-by, Crawford has now been promoted to be District Superintendent over a small area."

"Good! He told me he thought he would be given a higher post before long."

"It happened that I was at the Tower myself when the thing occurred," went on Gray, "and although I did my best, it was utterly impossible for me to prevent the escape of the thieves."

The detective told his companion exactly what had occurred—how he had guessed the ruse, and how Sir Henry Kenning had threatened to blow the gates to pieces with the bomb which afterwards turned out to be harmless, in so far as bodily injury was concerned.

"That is the only point which is puzzling me!" exclaimed Kingston thoughtfully. "I have met Sir Henry Kenning,

and have always thought him to be a perfectly upright gentleman. That he has any connection with the Brotherhood is absolutely out of the question."

"I should surely imagine so. He has not been Lieutenant of the Tower very long, but his record is a magnificent one."

The two men were silent for a few moments, Kingston tapping his foot thoughtfully against the desk. Then a sudden gleam entered his immobile eyes, and he smiled.

"Of course," he murmured, "that can be the only explanation."

"What can?"

"Why that man you saw was not Sir Henry Kenning at all," replied Kingston coolly. "Sir Henry himself is completely above suspicion in my mind, whatever the newspapers may say. And it would be just like one of the Brotherhood's plans to kidnap the Lieutenant and place one of their own men in his shoes."

"But it couldn't be done," protested Gray. "Think of the duties that have to be performed. An impostor could not possibly know everything that has to be done."

"Of course not. But he probably took Sir Henry's place for only one morning. The baronet himself is now imprisoned somewhere, and the Brotherhood are keeping him there, perhaps with the intention of killing him, so that the theft shall be placed on his shoulders, and so divert all suspicion from the real culprit. You see what I mean?"

"Yes, I see exactly. And in all probability you are right. But perhaps Crawford will be able to tell you more now that the affair is over. Being a district superintendent, he is sure to know much more now than he did beforehand."

"That is extremely probable. But now that Fraser is away, I hardly know how to get to see him."

Carson Gray knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"You needn't worry over that, Kingston," he said. "I told Crawford when he came here to call to-day and to-morrow at seven o'clock, in case you had arrived. The time is very close to seven now, so if you care to wait here until he turns up, you will be able to question him as much as you please."

"Excellent, my dear Gray. That was very thoughtful of you. I shall certainly wait, and take advantage of this opportunity. Until he arrives we can do practically nothing. However, if you would care to tell me again what happened at the Tower yesterday, it would certainly do no harm. Of course, I intend to get the Crown Jewels back in time for the Coronation."

Carson Gray smiled.

"Upon my soul, Kingston," he cried, "your coolness amazes me! I thought I had got used to you, but when you speak as though you had the stolen property in your own table drawer, it is something to be surprised at. How in the world can you so positively state that you will gain possession of the Regalia?"

"Did I positively state it?" laughed Kingston. "I am not a betting man, as a rule, Gray, but I would not mind wagering fifty pounds to a penny that by this time next week the Crown Jewels are in their usual place in the Wakefield Tower—for, of course, the Brotherhood has not stolen them for the purpose of unsettling the jewels and selling them separately. Their policy will be to demand a huge ransom from the Government for their safe return."

"And you will make that wager?"

"Certainly."

"Then I won't take you on," declared Carson Gray. "When you speak like that, Kingston, I know that you mean what you are saying, and to accept the wager would be to simply make me entail the loss of the sum of one penny."

Kingston laughed heartily, and crossed over to the window. He stood for a moment looking out on to the street, then turned.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," he drawled, "our expected visitor will be here in a few moments. Crawford is at this moment crossing the road with the evident intention of knocking at your door. He is disguised, but not sufficiently to deceive me."

A few seconds later the two men distinctly heard a ring at the bell.

The Wherry at Wroxham—Crawford's News.

The man who was shown up a few moments later by Mrs. Webster was indeed Crawford. He seemed very surprised at seeing Frank Kingston there, and stood for a moment without saying a word.

But while Carson Gray and Kingston had been talking, what was happening in the enemy's camp? What had Lord Mount-Fannell to say when he learnt how successful the plan had been? Needless to say, he was delighted, and the councillors had scarcely known him so genial for many months.

The robbery had taken place at midday, and by three o'clock every one of the men who had participated in the

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NEXT
WEEK:

"CORONATION DAY AT ST. JIM'S."

"job" had met at the agreed-upon spot—the house on Putney Heath. Some of them had entered as plumbers, others as gas-fitters, and tradesmen of all descriptions. This was so that no undue attention should be called to the house.

Having delivered their valuable loads they immediately took their departure. The Hon. Percy Claydon had been there first of all—with his disguise as the Lieutenant of the Tower, of course, removed—and he rubbed his hands together with satisfaction when the last man had departed.

"Ripping!" he exclaimed to the two common-members who were to remain in the house on guard. "The affair has gone with a swing from start to finish, and there hasn't been the least suspicion of a hitch. By Jove, the Chief will be off his head with delight!"

The Hon. Percy took his departure at about four o'clock, having seen that the Crown Jewels were quite secure. There was a large strong-room in the house, and although the common-members were implicitly trusted, it was thought wisest to take the precaution of placing the treasure in this safe. The possibility of the police tracing them to the house was absolutely nil.

When Claydon arrived at Grosvenor Square, the Chief was anxious and impatient, for although he had heard—via the newspapers—of the robbery, he was not by any means certain that everybody had managed to get clear away. So Claydon's news was a relief and a delight.

That night a small meeting was held merely between Lord Mount-Fannell, the Hon. Percy, and James Milverton. Most of the others could not attend, and as their presence was not necessary, it did not matter.

"Well, gentlemen," exclaimed the Chief genially, as he puffed at his cigar, "we are to be congratulated on having successfully pulled through the biggest and most daring robbery that this century has seen—and, in fact, the biggest the Brotherhood has ever attempted."

"The officials are in a fine stew already," chuckled the Hon. Percy. "The Coronation being so close at hand, they're simply tearing their hair. With the Royal Crowns missing, they can't possibly see how the Coronation is to take place!"

The others laughed in the manner men will laugh when in an extra good humour.

"But, putting all joking aside," said Lord Mount-Fannell, "we must decide what is to be done with the Regalia. But that is wrong, for I have, as a matter of fact, decided already. They can't possibly remain in the house at Putney, for I mean the police to have no loophole whereby they can trace them."

"Then where do you mean to keep them?" inquired Milverton. "Personally, I should say the simpler the place the safer."

"Precisely! That is my own argument exactly," replied Lord Mount-Fannell, sitting back in his chair. "You both know of the man who is in the power of the Brotherhood, named Nicholas Barton?"

"Yes, the old scoundrel who lives in a wherry?"

The Chief nodded.

"He is, I think, the very man for our purpose. Being but little over half-witted, he will never suspect the value of the parcel we hand him to take charge of, and on a wherry, floating about upon the Norfolk broads, the Crown Jewels will be as secure as anywhere."

"Do you think Barton can be trusted?" asked Claydon doubtfully.

"I am certain of it, and, as I have already said, he will not know the true nature of the goods we shall place in his charge. In addition, he will never even think of the matter, for I mean to commission him with other work."

"And what is that?"

"He will have a prisoner to look after."

"A prisoner?"

"Precisely. Sir Henry Kenning is at present in our hands, spending his valuable time in the cellar of the Putney Heath house. Now, the public is under the steadfast impression that he has run off with the Regalia. Certainly, appearances are all against him, and it is impossible to draw any other conclusions. Why should we enlighten them?"

The Chief's companions looked at one another for a moment.

"You mean," exclaimed Milverton slowly, "to hold Kenning a prisoner on the wherry at Wroxham? I think I understand what you are driving at."

Lord Mount-Fannell smiled.

"It is very simple. If we release the Lieutenant, suspicion will instantly be transferred to another quarter—not to any definite quarter, but away from Sir Henry himself. Now, it will suit our purpose to leave matters as they are, you understand? As soon as we have applied for ransom—"

"In Sir Henry Kenning's name," put in Claydon.

"Yes, in Sir Henry Kenning's name," agreed the Chief. "As soon as we have applied for ransom, I say, and have received it, and have returned the jewels, we can release the

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baronet. He will be able to tell nothing whatever, and the police will certainly not fathom us out. So, until the whole thing is over, I think we had better keep Sir Henry a prisoner."

"A good idea," replied the Hon. Percy. "And it is a better one to transfer him to the wherry. Somehow, I feel a little uncertain about him being at Putney. It is altogether too near London to be safe. And if Barton's attentions are occupied by looking after him, the Crown Jewels will never be thought of."

"Those are my views exactly," declared his lordship, "so we will decide that way. The question is how are we to convey him there?"

"Why not place him, in a drugged condition, in a prepared wooden case?" suggested Mr. Milverton. "The Regalia could be stowed in another, and the two packed aboard a motor lorry. This latter is a vehicle suitable for long journeys, and would convey the cases to Norfolk in a very few hours. In this way everything could be done by daylight, and who would suspect two innocent boxes of provisions when they were transferred to the wherry at Wroxham?"

The three Councillors talked over the idea for several minutes.

"I think it is a good suggestion," said the Chief at last. "Sir Henry would have rather an uncomfortable time of it, but that is only a detail. The ride will not harm him in any way, and will certainly be a safe way of getting him to his destination. Yes, Milverton, I shall adopt the scheme."

"And the newspapers will still continue to trample over Sir Henry's character," chuckled the Hon. Percy, lighting a cigarette. "By Jove, it's rather rough when you come to think of it, but he will be able to clear his character right enough when he regains his liberty!"

"You played your part wonderfully, Claydon," exclaimed Mount-Fannell genially; "but I should like to know who that confounded fellow was who tried to have you searched. There is mention of him in the newspapers, but nobody seems to have inquired his name before he left. You didn't recognise him at all?"

"Not in the slightest," replied the Hon. Percy savagely. "If he hadn't interfered we should have got out without using the smoke-bombs at all."

"Well, no harm was done, and the public have got something to excite them," laughed the Chief. "That fog business gave the robbery just a nice finishing off. All the same, I should feel more satisfied if we could discover who that man was."

They were hardly likely to do this, however, for Carson Gray had slipped out in the fog himself, removing his disguise while enveloped in its folds. So the man who had given the alarm had simply disappeared.

"Of course," went on Claydon, "I should have been unable to accomplish my work had not the other men seen to the explosion. I suppose you planned that yourself, Chief? Having enough of my own to attend to, I didn't worry about that."

"Yes, I planned it, of course," replied Mount-Fannell. "The dynamite bomb was laid the previous night, and our man lighted a very delicately-timed fuse at five minutes to noon. At twelve o'clock the explosion occurred, and the rest you know. It is amusing, when you come to think of it, how simple it was to get the people out of your way. But with regard to that motor lorry—"

And the Chief went into certain minor details concerning the transferring of Sir Henry Kenning from London to Wroxham. This conversation had, of course, taken place on the night previous to Kingston's arrival. During the intervening time the plan then discussed had been matured, and the men chosen to perform the work had received their orders.

As stated before, Crawford was considerably surprised when he saw his master in Carson Gray's library. He stood for a moment without speaking, looking from his master to the detective. He was attired quite smartly, and seemed in a much better position than formerly.

"Well, Crawford, you appear surprised," smiled Kingston.

"Love us, sir, you've recognised me!" exclaimed Crawford. Then he grinned. "Of course, sir, I forgot for the minute it was you. Fraser told me as you could see through pretty near any disguise that was ever worn. But I didn't expect to find you here, sir, so soon."

"Well, I am here, Crawford, and the great point is, have you brought any news with you. The last time you came, remember, you knew practically nothing about this Crown Jewels robbery. But now—"

"Now, sir," interrupted Crawford eagerly, "I've got a whole heap of news. Once the show was over I got to know all about it, an' something else besides."

"Well, sit down, Crawford, and tell us from the beginning.

Who's the man who has taken charge of the case—the councillor who is responsible?"

"The Hon. Percy Claydon, sir."

"Oh, so he's taking a hand in quite a new line," murmured Kingston. "It was Claydon, then, who, disguised as the Lieutenant of the Tower, unlocked the showcase and obtained the Regalia?"

"Yes, sir, it was him. But how did you know? All the newspapers said Sir Henry Kenning himself had stolen the jewels."

"The newspapers knew no better," replied Kingston. "When I knew the job was the work of the Brotherhood, I guessed that one of the Inner Councillors had been impersonating the Lieutenant. So it is Claydon. Well?"

"Sir Henry Kenning was kidnapped the night before, sir, and is now in the cellar of a house at Putney. When he got there Claydon was disguised, so's to look exactly like him, an' went back to the Tower in his place."

"That was rather risky, wasn't it?" put in Carson Gray. "How could Claydon be certain as to where to lay his hands on certain keys, etc? And how could he find his way about the house, and act as Sir Henry was in the habit of doing?"

"That was made as easy as winking for him, sir," replied Crawford, turning round to look at the detective. "A

I got my orders from the Chief to give to him. But there's something more important to come, sir."

"Is there, by Jove? Then let's have it!"

"The Chief decided last night, sir, that it would be a bit risky to leave the jewels at Putney, so to-morrow they're going to be shifted to a houseboat kind of thing—a wherry I think it's called, on one of the Norfolk Broads. And when they go Sir Henry is going with them, for he is to be kept a prisoner for some time to come. The police suspect him, an' the Brotherhood want them to go on suspectin'!"

"Indeed! That is rather unfortunate for Sir Henry!" exclaimed Kingston languidly. "But once we get to work, Crawford, we will very soon set him free. But from London to Norfolk is slightly more than a hundred yards, so tell me how he is to be conveyed there?"

Crawford knew the whole of this latest plan, for two of the men under his charge were to take the motor-lorry on its long journey. Consequently they had to obtain their orders from him.

So he thereupon informed Kingston of the scheme to take the Lieutenant of the Tower to Norfolk, boxed up in a large provision case. His two listeners were very much interested, and when he had done there was silence for a few moments.

"It is undoubtedly a good scheme," declared Kingston at



This picture illustrates a dramatic incident which occurs in next Thursday's instalment of "The Brotherhood of Iron." When the big packing-case is opened in the hold of the wherry, the man it contains is not Sir Henry Kenning, the Lieutenant of the Tower of London, but Frank Kingston, the Avenger, disguised.

common-member named Baldwin—a man I used to work with, too—has been the real Sir Henry Kenning's butler for over two months. So when Claydon did his bit, he knew everything, and had nobody in the house to ask awkward questions, for Sir Henry lived alone, you know, sir."

"That simplified matters exceedingly. I can see the whole thing now, Crawford. It was careful organisation that did the trick—careful organisation, combined with an unlimited supply of audacity. The Honourable Percy is just the man to carry a case like that through with flying colours."

"But what became of the jewels after the men escaped in the fog?" inquired Gray curiously. "And where are they now?"

"That's just what I am about to tell you, sir," replied Crawford, in an eager voice. "It was arranged beforehand that after the men were clear of the Tower they should all separate, and deliver their booty at the house in Putney. It's right on the Heath, sir, standing all by itself, among a clump of trees. Well, everything went off as arranged, and the Crown Jewels are now safely guarded in that house, together with the Lieutenant of the Tower. It's practically impossible for the police to trace anything."

"And where did you learn all this?" asked Kingston interestedly.

"From one of the men who took part in it, sir. I've been promoted now, and he happens to be in my division, and

length. "For if you wish to do anything unobserved by prying eyes, it is by far the best to do so in broad daylight, with people walking on every side of you. And this is to occur to-morrow, Crawford?"

"Yes, sir. The lorry is to start off at ten o'clock."

"And what men are now in charge of this Putney house?"

"Two, sir; and they are simply looked upon as caretakers, for the Chief took the precaution to place them in the house over a month ago. All they have to do is to attend Sir Henry's wants, and pack him in the case when it is delivered the last thing to-night."

"They have, of course, received their orders?"

"No, sir. I'm to go there to-night."

"You're to go there to-night?" Kingston echoed. "By Jove, that's splendid! You're proving of more use to me, Crawford, than Fraser—good as he is. Tell me, what time do you intend paying this visit?"

"At about eleven o'clock, sir, when everything's quiet. I've only just got to go an' tell the men what to do, an' where to go when the lorry's gone in the morning. But why are you so pleased, sir?"

"Because, Crawford, I mean to accompany you on this visit. I mean to enter this house, and set Sir Henry Kenning at liberty!"

"Do—do—do you really mean it, sir?" gasped Crawford.

"Every word!"

The Lonely House on Putney Heath.

Carson Gray was as genuinely surprised as Crawford at this remarkable statement. They were both well aware that Frank Kingston was a man who made up his mind with remarkable rapidity, but they scarcely expected this sudden decision on his part.

"But that will upset everything," protested Gray. "When they find that Sir Henry has vanished, they will naturally be set all in a flutter. Besides, how do you think it is possible to effect a rescue, with two men on guard. Sir Henry is in the cellar, remember, and these men are probably in the room above."

Kingston smiled in that languid manner Gray knew so well.

"My dear Gray," he drawled, "my plan is an exceedingly simple one, and it struck me quite suddenly. Crawford's present position is proving of the greatest use immediately, and I mean to take advantage of his information this very night."

"How?"

"He is the Brotherhood's District Superintendent, and the superior of the two men who are on guard at the Putney house. While he is engaging the attention of these common-members, I shall be doing my work in the cellar. But, instead of letting the Brotherhood know that Sir Henry has escaped, they will be none the wiser."

"But I can't see it, sir," interrupted Crawford. "The Brotherhood simply must know."

"Listen, and I will tell you what I have in mind. It is my intention to gain possession of the Crown Jewels, and I cannot possibly do so to-night, for, as Crawford has told us, they are very securely locked up in a strong-room. So, as the next best alternative, I intend to change places with Sir Henry Kenning, and be carted off to Wroxham myself. The journey will be far from comfortable, but a little discomfort will not hurt me. I dare say my constitution is more suitable for that kind of treatment than Sir Henry's."

Carson Gray rose to his feet, and laughed.

"I ought to have guessed it," he said. "That's the very thing you would do, Kingston. There's a good deal of risk in doing what you say, however, for although Crawford may engage the attention of the two men on guard, you will have to go very charily and cautiously. Sir Henry, too, must on no account let it be known that he has escaped."

"Of course not. I shall explain to him as much as is necessary, disguise him, and make it absolutely clear that he must on no account reveal his identity until he hears from me. It will not be a difficult matter to convince him of the importance of this. But what are you doing at present, Gray?"

"Nothing that requires my immediate attention," replied the famous detective. "Why do you ask?"

"Because, if you can spare the time, I should like you to accompany me to-night, and lend me your assistance. Do you think you can manage it?"

"I shall be only too pleased," replied Gray eagerly. "As I have told you before, Kingston, I would leave any other work, however important, to help you in your campaign against this infamous organisation."

"That's very good of you, Gray. We had better discuss the matter, and make everything clear. Your part, Crawford, will be quite as important, in its own way, as our own, so please pay strict attention."

For the next half-hour they talked over the plans until everything was quite clear; then Crawford, looking somewhat excited and eager, took his departure. Shortly afterwards, Kingston himself prepared to leave.

"I am going to the Cyril now," he announced, "to pay one of my flying visits. They are used to me there," he added laughingly, "so will think nothing of it. Meet me at half-past ten at the spot we have agreed upon."

"You can rely on me."

"I shall. Good-bye!"

A moment later Kingston was gone, and Carson Gray sat in his chair, marvelling at the extraordinary rapidity with which Kingston conceived and matured his plans. He had only been in London a few hours—had only just heard of this latest venture of the Brotherhood's—yet he was setting to work that very night.

At half-past ten exactly, Carson Gray, again disguised, was standing just outside the Underground Charing Cross station. He was looking up and down for Kingston, and suddenly stepped forward quickly as he saw a man with a red handkerchief sticking out of his pocket. Carson Gray looked very

searchingly, but saw no resemblance in the man to Frank Kingston.

"By Jove!" he murmured. "He's either disguised himself remarkably well, or else I've got on the wrong track."

Doubt was set at rest when the other man walked straight up to Gray and shook hands.

"I'm glad you're here to time," said Kingston quietly. "That disguise will do very well for the purpose; and mine, being one of the professor's disguises, can be removed in less than a minute. Come along; there's sure to be a train to Putney in a few minutes."

They passed inside the station, and a few moments later were seated in one of the District Railway Company's electric trains.

When they arrived at Putney they alighted, and commenced the walk to Putney Heath. There was none too much time to spare, which was exactly what Kingston desired. He simply hated waiting about with an unlimited amount of time on his hands. He liked any matter he was engaged upon to proceed with brisk precision.

"Crawford is to meet us a quarter of a mile from the house, as you know," exclaimed Kingston, as they walked. "He's got his instructions, so I can't see where anything can go wrong. It is a fortunate thing for us that the house is so lonely and so surrounded by trees."

"Yes, it is rather," agreed Carson Gray. "The only thing I am anxious about is that more than two men might be in the house. If that is the case, things might be extremely awkward for us."

"Not at all, my dear Gray. If we found ourselves discovered, we could very easily make our escape, although, of course, we should have to relinquish our task. Being disguised, recognition would be impossible. But I never consider those kind of things myself. We know there are two men there, and have planned accordingly. It is extremely unlikely any other common-members will be present."

They had reached the top of the hill, and were now on the Heath itself. The house they were making for lay a half-mile further on, and stood quite alone. When they had proceeded along a straight road for half this distance—Kingston, holding the red handkerchief in his hand meanwhile—a man suddenly stepped out from a side turning and faced them.

It was Crawford. The road being illuminated by gaslight, he had, of course, immediately seen the signal of identification.

"You're a bit late, sir," he said in a whisper. "We shall have to be quick, or they'll wonder why I haven't turned up. It's past eleven already."

"That will be all right, Crawford," replied Kingston calmly. "The later the better. Now, you walk on about a hundred yards, and we will follow, just keeping you in sight. When you enter the house, we shall make a tour round to the rear, and gain admittance by the back garden. And, whatever you do, see that the men's attention is thoroughly engaged. You have got the bottle of whisky?"

Crawford grinned.

"Yes, sir," he replied.

"There is one thing I want to quite understand. Will you get into any trouble for taking the whisky?"

"No, sir. It's nothing whatever to do with the Council what we district superintendents do in that way. Of course, if I went there an' made the men absolutely drunk, an' one of the councillors turned up, I should catch it hot then. But you needn't worry, sir. It'll be all right."

"Good! Then off you go. I trust you implicitly."

"Thank you, sir!"

The tone of Crawford's voice clearly showed how extremely pleased he was to do this work. He had tried his hardest to obtain the post of district superintendent, and now that he had obtained it, he was highly elated, for he knew what a boon this would be to his master. Crawford was true blue throughout, and loathed the Brotherhood wholeheartedly. Fraser had turned him round like this, and Crawford had been grateful ever since. He realised very fully how true was the old saying, "Honesty is the best policy."

He strode away rapidly, and Kingston smiled at Carson Gray as he did so.

"We've got a true man there, Gray," he exclaimed. "Crawford will never, as long as he lives, become again what he used to be. That man would make a first-class detective, if he were only trained in the right way."

"I believe you're right there, Kingston. I say, there do not seem to be many people about, do there? The chance of our being seen and watched is very remote."

Gray glanced round the Heath as he spoke, and the only thing to be seen beyond the bushes and gaslights were the illuminated windows of the surrounding houses, and the two twinkling lights of a trap as it proceeded on its way.

They saw Crawford walk straight up to the gates of a large, dilapidated-looking house. A bright light shone in the hall, while the windows of an upstairs room were illuminated,

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 175.

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as well as one of the lower ones. This was done merely as a precaution, for if men were seen leaving and entering a dark, deserted house, the police might become suspicious. There was nobody whatever in the illuminated rooms, but it served its purpose admirably.

"A good idea that," murmured Gray, nodding towards the windows. "Which way do we go now?"

"Follow me, and I think I can lead the way," replied Kingston. "I've never been here before, but from what Crawford told me this should lead to the back entrance."

As he spoke he bent down suddenly and crawled through a hole in one of the hedges, Gray following immediately afterwards. They found themselves still on the bare heath, but parallel with them was another hedge—the hedge which divided off the garden of the house. Kingston proceeded right to the very end, then he stopped and looked at Gray.

"This is the place," he whispered. "It's a bit of a tight squeeze, but we can manage it."

Again he bent down, and forced himself through a very small gap. As he had said, it was a tight fit, but two minutes later both of them were standing inside the grounds of the Brotherhood's house—the house which contained the priceless treasure, the British Regalia.

The Substitution.

"We'd better move as cautiously as possible," whispered Kingston; "for although everything is in darkness and seems deserted, there's a chance something may have miscarried. Follow me, and don't speak unless it's necessary."

"Right!" replied the detective. "This business is in your hands, and I'll do just what you tell me."

They crept forward down a weed-grown pathway, bordered on either side by large neglected shrubs and trees, which now rustled softly in the breeze of the early summer night. There was no moon, so the garden was in total darkness. Nevertheless, although Kingston had never been there before, he led the way without a faltering step.

Carson Gray, trained as he was in the art of shadowing, could not help admiring Kingston for the silent manner in which he made his way through the trees and over the dead leaves and dry twigs. Gray himself caused several of the latter to crack as he walked along, but Kingston seemed to proceed as though he were walking on a soft lawn.

The garden was a fairly long one, and was divided from a small asphalt-paved yard by creeper-covered trellis-work. A door in this stood open, and the two men passed through, keeping their eyes on the windows meanwhile. In one a bright light showed, but as the blind was down it was impossible to see who occupied the room.

"We must go cautiously here," murmured Kingston, "for if they hear the least sound of us they'll be suspicious in a moment. Now, let me see, where did Crawford say the coal-shoot was?"

"Somewhere just past the trellis-work," replied Gray, in a whisper. "Didn't he say it was just before a little window set high up in the wall? That must be the one, there."

The detective pointed to a narrow slit of a window immediately in front, and a moment later the two intruders were looking down upon a round iron covering. It was the top of the coal-shoot.

"Fortunately there is ample room for us to pass through," said Kingston. "It was the only point that was worrying me; but our task should prove to be very simple now. I will go down first and see where I get to."

He bent down and lifted the heavy covering off the opening. Then he produced his electric torch, and flashed it about for a second. The light revealed a dark and dirty cellar, practically bare of coal, and the drop was comparatively slight. So Kingston lowered himself feet foremost, and dropped lightly on to the coalstool below.

"It's all right!" he called up softly. "Mind you don't dirty yourself against the sides as you come down. There's not much chance of our being heard."

Carson Gray inserted his feet gingerly into the aperture, and then let himself go. A moment later he was standing beside Kingston, looking round the dingy walls of the coal-cellar. At one time a door had hung at the further end, but now nothing was left but a couple of rusty hinges and a few rotten splinters of wood.

"That's our way," whispered Kingston. The cellars under this house are very spacious, I understand, and Crawford himself has only a rough idea of their extent. It is up to us now to find out which one is occupied by the unfortunate Lieutenant of the Tower."

Once through the opening, they found themselves in a narrow passage-way, on both sides of which were occasional doorways, which presumably led into other cellars. But everywhere there was nothing but dust and grime. Immediately opposite the coal-cellar door a slight of steps led

upwards, undoubtedly to the kitchen or scullery. At the foot of these Kingston flashed his light to the ground.

"The footprints all lead in this direction," he whispered, turning to the left. "In this dust it will be child's play to find the cellar where Sir Henry is imprisoned."

They walked on for a few yards, Kingston leading the way, holding the electric torch close to the ground. As they halted before a particularly strong-looking door he held up his hand and listened. Above them, in the room immediately overhead, the sound of voices could be heard.

"Crawford will keep them engaged right enough," whispered Kingston, with a smile. "That bottle of whisky—Hullo!"

He stood motionless in the act of drawing a bolt. Above him the sound of a couple of chairs being pushed back was plainly audible, followed by the opening of a door. Carson Gray looked at Kingston questioningly.

"Hardly sounds healthy, does it?" he murmured. "If they come down here now we're done for, and no mistake!"

Kingston did not answer, but still stood listening intently. "They are coming down here!" he declared suddenly.

"Great Scott!"

"There's only one thing to be done," went on the Avenger quickly. "Follow me into this other cellar. It's absolutely out of the question to suppose they had heard anything of us, for we've been as silent as mice the whole time. Something else has cropped up unexpectedly."

"Crawford would have stopped them surely—"

"Not necessarily. To have shown any special desire for the men not to go down the cellar would have been suspicious, and— But they're coming down the steps!"

The two intruders stood perfectly still, Gray hardly daring to breathe, and feeling his heart hammering away at express speed. Kingston, on the other hand, was as cool and unemotional as he had ever been in his life.

"I tell you it's down 'ere!" exclaimed a rough voice from the stairs. "I can git it in 'arf a minute. All this 'ere fuss over nothink!"

"Do as you like!" came Crawford's tones unconcernedly.

"It's all a waste of time, though. I told you I couldn't stop only a few minutes, an' if we're to have a hand at Nap—"

"Oh, shut up, Crawford!" protested the other, now opposite the prisoner's cellar. "I'm lost without me blessed pipe, an' I remember layin' it down when I took the old cove his tea. Sha'n't be a minit!"

The two listeners heard a quick drawing of bolts, then the noise of a striking match. The next minute the door was banged to again, and the bolts reshot, and the man made his way up the steps to the floor above once more.

Carson Gray heard a chuckle in the darkness.

"By Jove, Gray, a false alarm. While you and I thought we were discovered, it seems that the fellow only descended to gain possession of his pipe. Upon my word, some people become perfect slaves to tobacco. Personally, I cannot understand it!"

"Being a non-smoker, you wouldn't. But I tell you, Kingston, I was just a little nervous for a minute. I suppose it will be quite safe now?"

"Not a doubt about it. Crawford is now, presumably, commencing a game of cards, and we can rely on him to keep his companions fully occupied for at least half an hour. Come along, we will set to work immediately!"

As he spoke—or, rather, whispered—he moved forward out of the deserted cellar, and flashed his light upon the bolts of Sir Henry's prison. In a very short time these latter were drawn without a sound being made, and the door swung open. Frank Kingston entered, Gray following in his immediate rear.

"What have you come for now?" exclaimed a voice, which Gray recognised as Sir Henry Kenning's. "Surely you can leave me alone at this time of night—"

"Hush, Sir Henry!" whispered Kingston warningly. "We have nothing to do with this gang of scoundrels, so please do not raise your voice above a whisper, or otherwise we shall be discovered—"

The light fell full on the Lieutenant of the Tower. He was lying full length on a cheap iron bedstead, and was gazing with wondering eyes into the bright light of the electric lamp. His grizzled hair and beard were looking rather untidy, and his expression was considerably haggard. But there was no sign of fear on his face. On the contrary a look of eager expectation had taken possession of him.

"What do you mean?" he whispered. "Have you—Are you here to help me to escape?"

"Exactly, Sir Henry," murmured Kingston calmly. "Your captors are at the present moment on the floor above very much engaged in playing a game of cards. There is nothing to fear from that quarter at present, but, needless to say, every minute is of value."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 175.

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NEXT WEEK

"CORONATION DAY AT ST. JIM'S."

"But how can we go out without disturbing them?" asked the Lieutenant of the Tower in a tremulous voice. "In a silent house like this three men could not possibly walk past the room and escape without attracting attention."

"Please leave that to me—" "But who are you?" persisted Sir Henry eagerly. "And why have you come here to help me? I have never seen you before that I know of."

"It is quite impossible for us to reveal our identity," put in Carson Gray, "but we are friends, Sir Henry, and you have nothing to fear. My companion and myself are both detectives, and my friend has set himself the task of regaining the Crown Jewels."

"Good heavens, yes! In the excitement of my own imprisonment, I had almost forgotten that dreadful calamity. Then it is true—they have really been stolen? One of the men told me of it, and at first I refused to believe him. Then, when I thought of my own abduction, I realised that there must be some truth in what he said. What a terrible catastrophe!"

Kingston set the light down on a stool so that its beams fell in the direction of the bed.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "it is something in the nature of a catastrophe, but no blame is attached to yourself, Sir Henry. You have been the victim of circumstances, and when the whole story is made known, the vindication of your character will be complete."

"The vindication of my character?" repeated the lieutenant. "I am afraid I do not follow your meaning."

"I will explain," returned Kingston swiftly. "Remember, we have no time, so a few words must suffice. As you are aware, you were kidnapped in a motor-car and drugged while being driven along. The letter supposed to have come from your son was, of course, a base forgery. When you arrived here, another man was made up exactly like you and returned to the Tower in your place."

"Good gracious!" "The following morning the plan that had been arranged was carried out. Your double unlocked the jewel-case in the Wakefield Tower, and together with his confederates, succeeded in making off with the greater part of the Regalia. It is quite impossible to state details, but those you will learn later. It is sufficient for you to know that the miscreants escaped with their booty."

Sir Henry Kenning passed a hand over his brow.

"What an awful occurrence," he murmured distractedly.

"And just now, when the Coronation is to take place within—"

"Pray don't worry yourself, Sir Henry; the Crown jewels will be returned in time for the Coronation. Now you, together with the Regalia, were to have been transferred from here to a quiet part of the country, but it is my intention to set you free and impersonate you myself."

"How?" whispered Sir Henry. "How can you possibly do such a thing?"

"You will see in a few moments. But there is one thing you must solemnly agree to do. If I am to save the jewels and escape with my life, your promise is essential."

"Anything you name I will agree to," returned Sir Henry Kenning anxiously.

"Well, although the news will be unpleasant to you, the Press and public alike are of opinion that you yourself have stolen the Regalia!"

"Great heavens!" "I admit it is rather startling, but even you yourself, Sir Henry, must realise that this could be the only result. You were kidnapped, and the scoundrel who took your place quite openly effected the robbery. Therefore, it is only natural that the public should draw such an unfortunate conclusion. It is only a matter of time, however, before your name is cleared. Now it is

quite impossible for me to regain the jewels here, so I am acting in the manner I have just outlined.

You will see that if I gave you your liberty, and you stated publicly what had really occurred, all my plans would come to nought, for I should then be known—by my captors—to be an impostor. Hope of then regaining the Regalia would be infinitesimal. So I want you to promise me, here and now, that if I set you free you will take up your residence in some quiet boarding-house under a false name, and await further instructions from me?"

"Of course—of course!" murmured the Lieutenant hoarsely. "I should be a fool if I did not agree to your proposition. But I should be recognised immediately by the police, and arrested—"

"No, no, Sir Henry! I shall obviate the chance of such an occurrence by disguising you before you leave this house—now!"

"Then set to work as soon as you please. My mind is in a whirl, and I find it impossible to think clearly. But since my position at the present moment is indeed desperate, I cannot see how it can be made worse, and if I am to take your word—which I must decidedly do—you are doing me a magnificent service. But you are not so tall as I. Do you think you would pass?"

"There is very little danger in that, Sir Henry. At the very most you are only a bare inch taller than I, and these men, who have only been acquainted with you a few hours, will certainly notice no difference. In every matter of this sort a certain amount of risk must be taken, and I am quite prepared to chance my luck. But to get to business."

Carson Gray looked on wonderingly as Kingston produced from an inner pocket a little case of phials which Professor Polgrave had presented to him. The Lieutenant's amazement, already great, was intensified exceedingly as he saw Kingston, by a few deft movements, entirely change the expression of his already-disguised countenance. The whole time he was working he was explaining in fuller language what he intended doing. Finally, he slipped on a false wig and beard, fastened them securely, and stepped back.

"Now," he said calmly to Carson Gray, "kindly point out any little fault, and I will do my best to set it right."

Carson Gray's eyes expressed his wonderment.

"There is no fault," he said. "By the aid of your miraculous injections you have made yourself an exact counterpart of Sir Henry Kenning. I will warrant his own son would have some little difficulty in detecting the real from the counterfeit!"

"Good!" exclaimed Frank Kingston, slipping out of his coat. "Now, Sir Henry, please show me where your own clothes are, and slip into these as rapidly as possible. You," he added, turning to Gray, "take charge of the phials and syringe—I shall want them again in a moment."

The Lieutenant of the Tower slipped from the bed and proceeded to don the clothes which Kingston took off—a new suit worn specially for the night's work. In a very short time the positions were reversed, and Sir Henry was ready to depart.

"Shall we go immediately?" he whispered.

"Not as you are, Sir Henry. Remember, I have to disguise you yet."

"Ah, yes! I had forgotten that in the excitement."

Kingston filled the little syringe with the liquid from one of the tiny bottles, and then held the instrument to the old gentleman's face.

Within two minutes all resemblance to Sir Henry Kenning had disappeared, and although the baronet still looked aged, nobody could liken him to the missing Lieutenant of the Tower.

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The Editor.

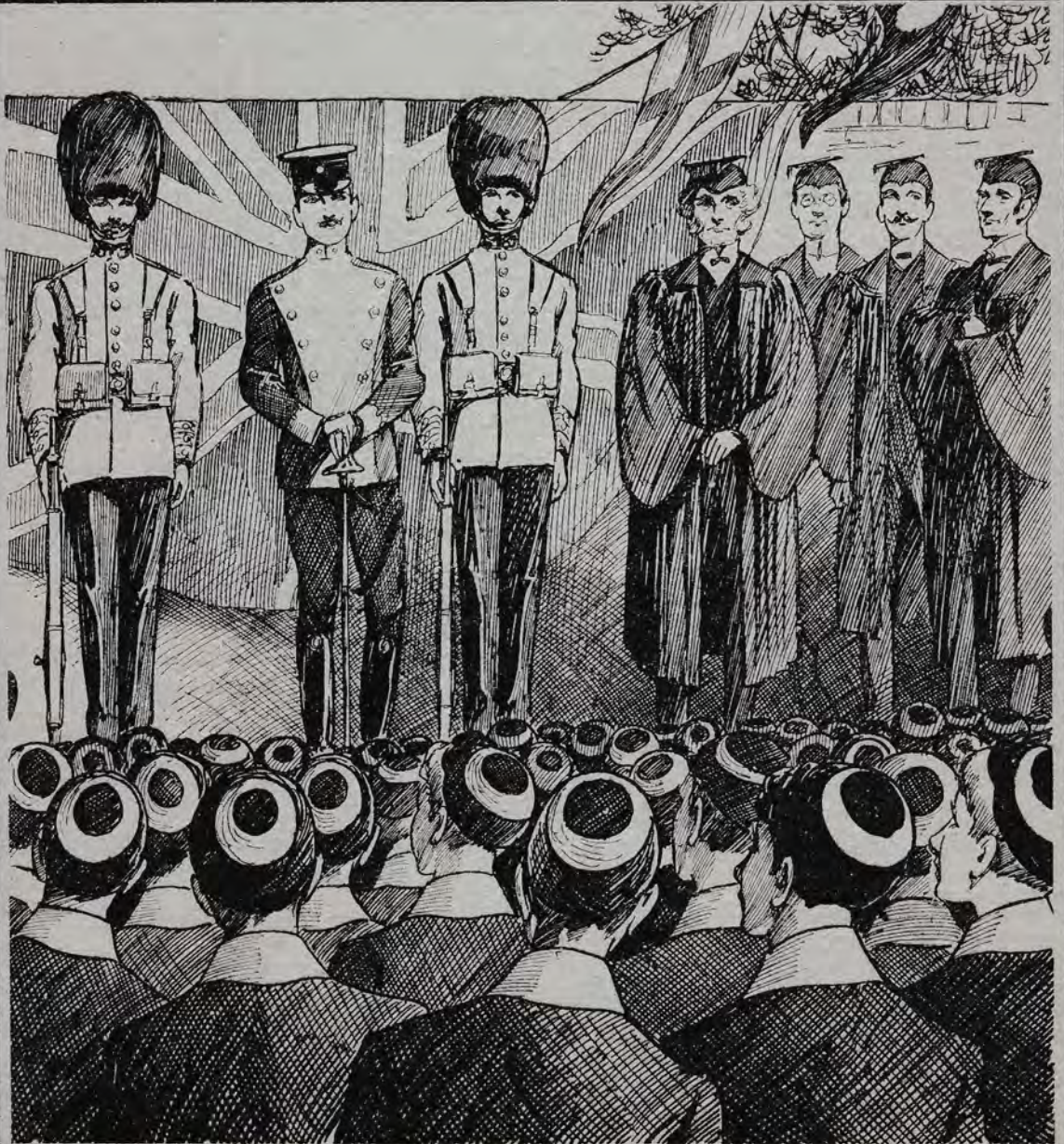
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