

THE LEADING FOOTBALL AND SCHOOL STORY PAPER!

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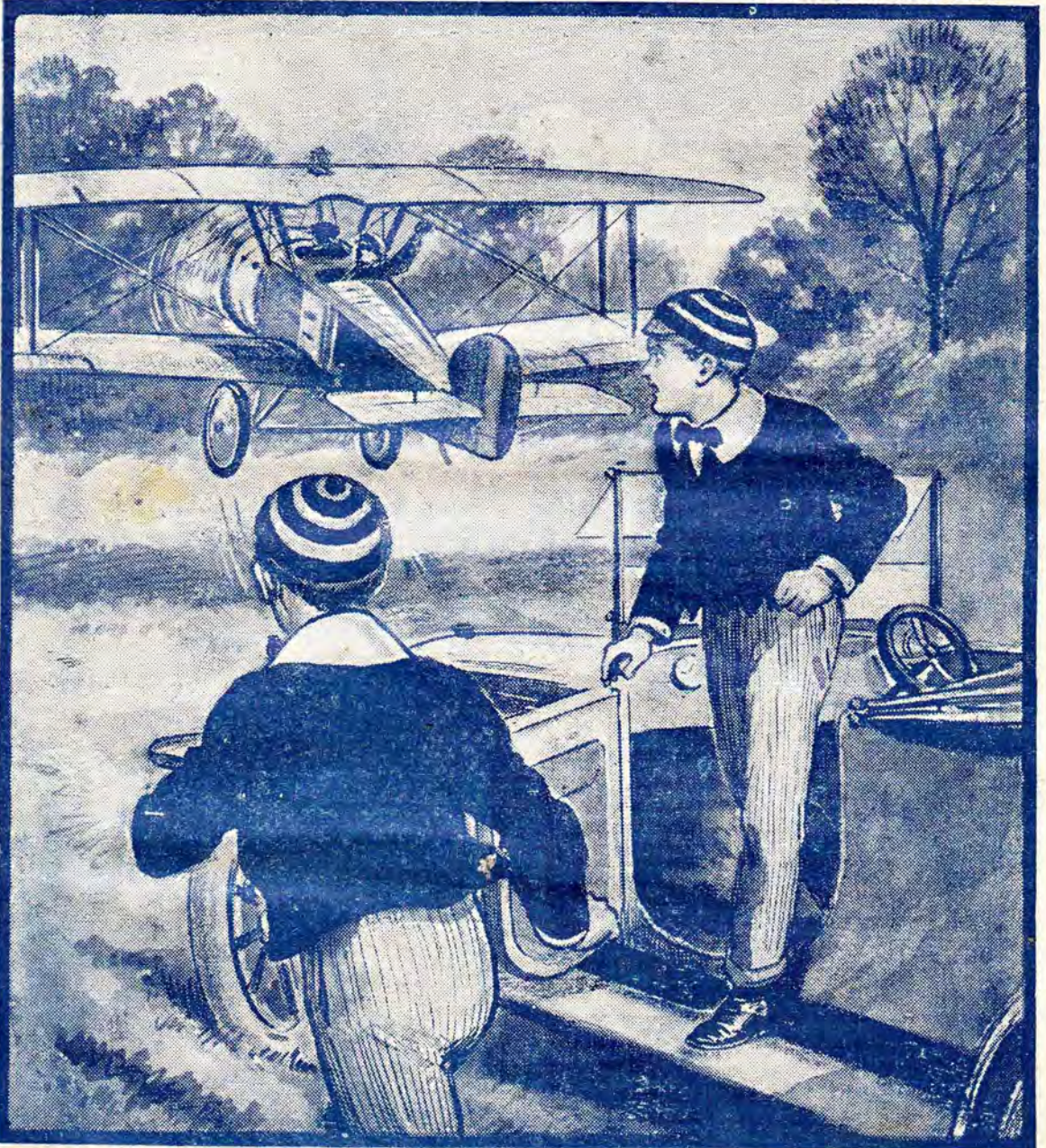
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"RENTON OF THE ROVERS!"
A Grand Football Tale.

"A STERN CHASE!"
A Story of Tom Merry & Co.

"SLAVE ISLAND!"
A Thrilling Adventure Yarn.



JUST TOO LATE! THE START OF THE STERN CHASE!
(Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn are baffled—but not for long!)

MY READERS' OWN CORNER.

NOTE.—Half-a-crown will be awarded to the sender of every par. published on this page.

PHIEW!

A beggar walked into a refreshment shop, and was told he could have a free meal if he could tell a really astounding lie. "That's easy!" he said. "I was walking down a street in little, old New York, and saw a man, who was cleaning windows, slip and fall. The window the chump was cleaning was in the hundredth storey. I yelled to two policemen, and the three of us ran to the bottom of the building, and held a thick rubber mat for the falling man. The crowd cheered. We waited for the arrival of the man. He struck the mat, and bounced up again where he had come from. Down he rushed again, but once more he bounced upwards. This went on for ten days. The police held the rubber mat in reliefs. After a bit the man slowed a bit, and the police caught him, but it was only his dead body. He had starved to death." The tramp had his meal.—C. J. Williams, 12, Penhevad Street, Grangetown, Cardiff.

MARY'S BICYCLE.

Mary had a bicycle

With seat as white as snow,
And everywhere the front wheel went
The back one had to go!—
Eric Newson, 59, Bailgate, Lincoln.

A GARDEN EPISODE.

Whilst in the garden the other day I saw a daddy longlegs climbing up the wall. It rested near a hole. Suddenly, while I was still watching, a brown, hairy spider came out of the hole, and, seeing the daddy longlegs, went up to it and did something to one of its legs. The unsuspecting visitor seemed all of a sudden to drop paralysed. The hairy spider performed the same operation on the next leg, and this, too, became limp and lifeless. Having made his pathway clear, the spider then attacked the body of its prey.—W. A. Mitchell, 67, Rosebury Road, Fulham, S.W. 6.

POETS' LICENCE.

There was once a young boy named Zerubbabel,
Who played with an indiarubber ball;
But he had the misfortune to break a pane of glass

in his uncle's conservatory, and his uncle being a peppery old chap, came out and gave him a tremendous hiding with a ground ash-stick, which caused the young fellow to blubber well.

—Miss Vera Ware, 16, Mountford Road, Dalston, E. 8.

DOING HIS BEST.

The teacher gave a lesson in grammar, and, having emphasised her point, she

pounced upon Tommy to give her a sentence of any origin. Tommy stood up. "I is—" Here he was interrupted by the teacher. "You must, say, 'I am,'" she said. Tommy proceeded: "I am the ninth letter in the alphabet." —Miss Mabel Francis, 72, Derby Street, Stanhope Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

HIS CAREER.

A small boy told to write down during class what he wanted to be when he grew up, was found to have written "gardener." "Well, I never knew you wanted to be a gardener!" cried the teacher, in surprise. "I don't," said the small boy sadly; "but I didn't know how to spell 'engineer.'" —George Bowker, 23, Carlton Street, Old Trafford, Manchester.

ASTON VILLA.

Founded in 1874, at Villa Cross, Handsworth, Birmingham, by some youths connected with a Wesleyan church, and, playing under Association Rules, it won several local trophies, including the Birmingham Association Cup, in 1860. In 1886-7 the team, consisting of G. Kynoch, M.P. (president), F. Coulton, F. Dawson, J. Warner, R. Davies, J. Barton, D. Hodgetts, H. Vaughton, A. Hunter, J. Simmonds, H. Yates, and A. Brown, won the Football Association Cup. Having adopted professionalism in 1897, it won both the Association Cup and League Championship, which it first gained in 1894. The club was reconstructed in 1896. Its ground is at Aston. Before 1887 it was at Perry Bar.—H. George, 52, Cheapside, Birmingham.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

The nightingale is one of the most famous of all birds in all countries because of its beautiful song. It sings far more in the daytime than at night, but so many birds are singing then that it is less heard. He hardly ever sings when it is quite dark. The best time to hear him is an hour or two after sunset. His voice is loud and ringing, every note round and full and musical. The nightingale spends the winter overseas, coming to us about the middle of April. From then to the middle of June he sings constantly, but after that period family cares occupy the nightingale to the exclusion of all else. The bird is very like a robin in appearance. The nest, made of dead leaves, is placed on the ground, and lined with grass, roots, and hair. The eggs are olive-brown and four and five in number.—Miss Marion Hepworth, 60, Cromwell Road, Hove, Sussex.

The Editor's Chat.

Note:—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

GREAT ATTRACTIONS FOR NEXT WEEK.

The grand Stories of School Sport and Adventure which will figure in the GEM next Wednesday go to make up the best programme of boy's fiction on the market, by general consent.

The first item will be another instalment of our stirring football serial,

"RENTON OF THE ROVERS!"

By Paul Masters.

In this week's chapters Jimmy Renton and his Irish companion, Micky Desmond, learn that the daughter of one of the directors of a certain football club has been kidnapped by gipsies. Whilst the two chums are motoring through the forest they come up against their and effect an amazing rescue, which has important results.

A splendid long, complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, entitled:

"FALLEN AMONG FOES!"

By Martin Clifford,

will come next. A sensation is caused among the ranks of the juniors when it is announced by the Head that an old boy will present a topping silver cup to the best football team from any of the neighbouring schools. Needless to say, there is a great unearthing of new talent, and many are the demands for places in the eleven to be chosen to represent St. Jim's. Tom Merry is kept busy in "putting off" would-be players. Talbot has a shock when he sees his old enemy, Jim Dawlish, whom he thought dead, in the village, and the notorious cracksmann threatens to bring the toff's school career to an abrupt ending. On the eve of the trial match Talbot strangely disappears! You will enjoy reading

"FALLEN AMONG FOES!"

A further instalment of

"SLAVE ISLAND!"

is also included in the list, and although it is last mentioned, it does not mean that it is least important. There are many surprises to burst upon my readers in the subsequent instalments, which is something for them to look forward to.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The first part of a splendid 32-page book, packed with boxing pictures and articles dealing with the art of self-defence, will be given away with next week's issue of the "BOYS' FRIEND." Make sure of getting the "Boys' Friend" Illustrated Boxing Annual and Guide by asking your newsagent to reserve you a copy of next week's issue of the "BOYS' FRIEND." Published on Monday next.

All contributions to this feature should be sent to: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and marked: "Readers' Own Corner."

Your Editor

RENTON OF THE ROVERS!



A Magnificent New Football Serial. By PAUL MASTERS.

Read This First.

JIMMY RENTON is a keen footballer and an excellent fellow, and his heart is in the great winter game. On leaving St. Clive's, he obtains a situation as a newspaper reporter on the "Burchester Times." Here he meets and chums up with

BILLY DESMOND, a cheery, high-spirited fellow of his own age.

Jimmy also comes into contact with **LUKE RAYNER**, coward, spy, and blackguard, who is envious of Jimmy's footballing ability, and schemes to bring about his downfall.

Thanks to Rayner, Jimmy Renton loses his job, and is compelled to tramp the country in quest of another. He has the consolation of giving Rayner a good thrashing before he sets out on his wanderings.

Jimmy approaches one of the directors of the Easthampton Football Club, and asks to be given a trial. He meets with a blunt refusal. During that afternoon his money is stolen, and he is destitute. He sleeps at the docks that night, and early the following morning he resumes his tramping. While resting on a stile at noonday, he is suddenly and unexpectedly joined by his old chum, Billy Desmond, who explains that the "Burchester Times" has suspended publication, and that he—Desmond—has been offered the post of chief reporter on

the "Daily Sportsman." He is not required to take up his new duties for a month. Meanwhile, he generously offers to back up Jimmy Renton in his efforts to become a professional player in League football. The two chums adjourn to the Forest Arms together, and Billy Desmond orders lunch.

(Now read on.)

Billy Desmond's Ruse.

"**T**HIS," murmured Billy Desmond, "is top-hole!"

"Yes, rather!" agreed Jimmy Renton heartily.

In the private parlour of the Forest Arms the two chums were enjoying a first-rate repast.

Billy Desmond had eaten nothing since the previous day, so intent had he been upon finding his friend. And Jimmy Renton had been subsisting on a few sandwiches which had been pressed upon him by a good-natured coffee-stall proprietor at Easthampton.

"Was the roast pork to your likin', gentlemen?" inquired the landlord, popping his red, jovial face into view round the parlour door.

"It was great!" said Billy Desmond. "Same remark applies to these apple-dumplings. They're just like mother makes 'em!"

The landlord grinned, rubbed his plump hands together, and withdrew.

"This is an awfully comfy place," said Jimmy Renton, his glance travelling from the old oak rafters to the mullioned window. "I don't like the idea of leaving it."

"There's no hurry, dear boy," said Billy Desmond. "We can stay here for a few days; in fact, we can make this place our headquarters, and travel around on the motor-bike trying to get you fixed up with one of the big clubs."

"It's jolly decent of you to act as host, Billy," said Jimmy Renton. "But I'm afraid it'll make a big hole in your resources. By the way, how ever did you manage to raise a sum like forty quid?"

"My life's savings, dear boy!" said Billy Desmond, striking an attitude. "When I was on the 'Burchester Times' I made a point of putting aside ten bob a week. I hoarded it, like an old miser, in my digs. Fearfully unpatriotic of me, wasn't it, when I might have invested it in Savings Certificates, and watched it grow? Rather silly of me, too. If I'd put it in Savings Certificates, I should have got a quid back for every fifteen-and-six invested, when I came to be an old man of ninety."

Jimmy Renton laughed.

"You're a queer beggar, Billy," he said. "But, look here, I don't like the idea of your blueing all that cash. You'll want it when you go to London."

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"Not a bit of it! My screw as chief reporter on the 'Daily Sportsman' is going to be colossal. You'll see me shunting about in a Rolls-Royce, and owning racehorses and yachts and things. Possibly I shall be awarded the O.B.E. for getting rich so quickly."

"Is it really going to be a big screw, Billy?"

"Enough to keep me in comfort during my declining days, dear boy. You needn't worry about this forty quid of mine. Whether you were with me or not, I'd blue it just the same. Have a cigarette?"

"No, thanks!" said Jimmy. "Don't smoke."

"Glad you don't," said Billy Desmond. "It would stunt your growth."

Considering that Jimmy Renton was already six feet, all but half an inch, his chum's remark was rather comical.

Billy Desmond abstracted a cigarette from his case, and lit up. A white wreath of smoke curled up to the ceiling.

"If I were to start that game," said Jimmy Renton, "I shouldn't be able to dash along the wing like a two-year-old. In fact, my footer would go right off."

"But Rayner smokes like a chimney all day long, yet he's one of the fastest forwards in the South of England."

"That's because it hasn't affected him yet. But if he keeps on smoking and dissipating, he'll collapse like a pricked bladder in a year or two. By the way, what's happened to Rayner?"

"I said good-bye to him last night," said Billy Desmond. "There were no tears on parting. He mumbled something to the effect that he was going to take up professional football as a means of livelihood."

"He's really hot stuff, I suppose?"

"Yes; but he's not a patch on you, Jimmy. He's a keen player, but he's not a clean one. And if he starts any of his sly tripping and ankle-tapping in League football, he'll jolly soon find himself in the cart."

"Rayner's a beastly outsider!" said Jimmy. "I had the satisfaction of giving him a thumping good licking before I left Burchester."

Billy Desmond chuckled.

"So it was you who put his nose out of gear, and blackened his optics?" he said. "Good work, James! You deserve a knighthood, at least, for that!"

There was silence for some moments.

Billy Desmond puffed at his cigarette, and Jimmy Renton leaned back on the settee, happy and contented.

Presently the former jumped to his feet.

"Rouse yourself, James!" he said. "Shake off dull sloth! There are two important things to be done this afternoon."

"Namely?"

"I'm going to take you over to Bourne in the sidecar, and rig you out with a new pair of boots. Those that you're now wearing are in the sere and yellow leaf, as the poet says. They're long past the prime of life."

Jimmy laughed.

"I'm perfectly aware that they'd disgrace any tramp," he said. "I've been miles and miles in them, and I sha'n't be sorry to get a new pair. What's the second important thing we've got to do this afternoon?"

"Tackle the directors of Bourne Athletic, and see if we can persuade 'em to give you a trial."

"Some hopes!" murmured Jimmy.

"You needn't be sarcastic. It's true that Bourne Athletic's one of the best teams in the country, but it's equally true that their directors are always on the look-out for fresh talent. I shouldn't

be a bit surprised if they gave you an engagement."

"I should!"

"Well, we shall see. Come along!"

Billy Desmond explained to the landlord that they would be back in time for supper. Then he fetched his motor-cycle from the shed at the back of the inn, and bade his chum get into the sidecar. They were soon speeding along the narrow, leafy road which ran through the forest.

Jimmy Renton much preferred this mode of locomotion to the tardy one of travelling on foot. The romance of the road appealed to him far more forcibly from a comfortable sidecar.

It was very pleasant, speeding through the forest, beneath the overlapping branches of the trees.

"We'll come back this way," said Billy Desmond. "I don't go much on scenery, as a rule, but this fairly gets me!"

They reached Bourne in just over half an hour, and Billy Desmond slowed up outside a large bootshop.

"This way, Jimmy," he said. "We'll soon rig you out with something decent in the way of footwear."

When they were inside the establishment, Jimmy Renton sat down, and removed his dilapidated boots.

"You can give these away to some deserving object," said Billy Desmond to the shop-assistant, "and bring hither a good-looking pair of boots, minus hobnails."

"Very good, sir. Would you like patent leather, sir?"

"Yes!"

"What size, sir?"

"Tens, I think."

"Ass! You know jolly well I take eights!" said Jimmy Renton, laughing.

Within five minutes Jimmy was fixed up.

"Thanks awfully, Billy!" he said, as they left the shop. "I feel that I've got something on my feet now."

"You really ought to get a new cap, and a fresh collar and tie," said Billy Desmond thoughtfully. "The cap you're wearing looks like a batter-pudding. Your collar's like a limp rag, and your tie's perfectly awful! Mind you, I'm not attempting to criticise your appearance in any way."

Jimmy laughed.

"It's the rain that's spoilt my things," he explained.

"Then the sooner you get some new ones the better."

The purchases were duly made at the hosiery's a few yards away. And then Jimmy Renton clambered into the sidecar once more, and Billy Desmond swung himself astride the saddle of his machine.

"Pon my soul, you look almost respectable now, Jimmy!" he said. "We will now adjourn to the Bourne Athletic Football Ground. Wonder where it is?"

"Looks like a footer-ground over yonder," said Jimmy, pointing southwards.

"Good old Sherlock Holmes! We'll follow the trail. I expect the place will turn out to be a cemetery, or something!"

It transpired, however, that Jimmy Renton was correct. The structure at which he had pointed proved to be the grand-stand of the Bourne Athletic Ground.

"Now, the thing is, how can we get an audience with one of the directors?" said Jimmy, as they left the motor-cycle outside and approached the entrance to the ground.

"Leave that to me," said Billy Desmond.

In a small sentry-box near the turnstiles sat one of the minor officials of the club.

"This is the merchant who sits at the

receipt of custom every Saturday afternoon," murmured Billy Desmond.

"Good-afternoon, my man!" The person in the sentry-box gave a snort.

"What d'you want 'ere?" he growled. "There's no league match on this afternoon. It's just a practice game. Members of the public not admitted."

"I know all about that, my dear fellow," said Billy Desmond. "There's a director here named Smith, I believe?"

"There's only one director on the ground at the moment, an' that's Mr. Robinson."

"Ah, Robinson! That's the man! You might tell him I want to see him."

"'Ere, none of your cheek!" said the man in the sentry-box aggressively.

Billy Desmond frowned.

"Be careful how you address me, you vulgar person!" he said.

"'Eh? Who are you?"

"The Honourable Eustace Carfax," answered Billy Desmond calmly. "I'll give you my card, if you like—"

In an instant the man in the sentry-box became apologetic and respectful.

"Don't trouble, sir," he said. "I'll tell Mr. Robinson that you're 'ere."

"Very well. And you might mention that I've brought my friend, the youthful Lord Sweeney. No relation to the demon barber of Fleet Street."

The man, looking greatly impressed, hurried away.

Jimmy Renton clutched his chum by the arm.

"Billy, you chump, what do you mean by playing the giddy goat like this?"

"It's necessary to resort to a subterfuge, old man. If I gave my name as plain William Desmond, and yours as plain James Renton, we shouldn't get a hearing. They'd set a ferocious bloodhound—the club mascot—on us!"

"You silly ass! This fellow Robinson will rave when he discovers that I'm not a lord and you're not an honourable!"

"I don't think he will," said Billy Desmond. "Not if he's got a sense of humour, that is."

After a brief interval the man who presided at the sentry-box returned.

"Mr. Robinson will see you now, sir," he said to Billy Desmond. "Also your lordship. Step this way, please."

And the "Honourable Eustace Carfax" and "Lord Sweeney" followed their guide to the grand-stand, in which a plump, prosperous-looking person was seated.

The prosperous-looking gentleman rose to his feet, looking profoundly surprised.

Billy Desmond was well-dressed, and he would certainly have passed muster as a member of the aristocracy. But Jimmy Renton's somewhat shabby suit was scarcely the sort of apparel that Lord Sweeney might have been expected to wear.

"You are Mr. Robinson?" said Billy Desmond.

"Yes."

"I'm Desmond. And this is my pal, Jimmy Renton."

Mr. Robinson gasped.

"But I—I understood—" he stuttered.

"You thought we were blue-blooded members of the British aristocracy—what? Well, I may as well inform you, sir, without regret, that we're not. But it was necessary to employ a bit of wangling in order to get an interview with you."

Mr. Robinson scarcely knew whether to be angry or amused.

It was a critical moment for Billy Desmond and his chum.

Presently Billy burst out laughing, and this relieved the tension.

Mr. Robinson, who had been trying

hard to look severe, was compelled to laugh, too.

"Well, you've got a nerve!" he exclaimed.

"And you, sir, I am glad to see, have a sense of humour," said Billy.

"What do you want with me, anyway?" asked Mr. Robinson.

"I'd like you to give Jimmy Renton here a trial for Bourne Athletic."

Mr. Robinson surveyed Jimmy with a critical eye.

"Well, you certainly look a footballer," he said. "But there's a vast difference between ordinary football and the football that is played by Bourne Athletic. Who have you played with previously, my boy?"

"I've had a couple of games with Burchester United, sir," said Jimmy.

"Have you, by Jove? Then you ought to be the real goods. Where do you play?"

"Outside-left, sir."

Mr. Robinson nodded.

"There's a practice match on this afternoon," he said, "and I'll see if I can fit you in."

Jimmy Renton's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, good!" he murmured.

"But I'm making no promises, mind," said the director. "You'll have to show exceptionally good form before you can get an engagement with Bourne Athletic."

At that moment a strapping fellow in football attire emerged from the dressing-room. Mr. Robinson called to him.

"I believe you are a man short, Sullivan?" he said.

"That's so, sir. Our left-half hasn't turned up."

"Then you can tell Towers to drop back into the left-half position, and this young fellow, Renton, will play at outside-left."

"Very good, sir!"

"Take him into the dressing-room, and rig him out with the necessary suit of armour," said Mr. Robinson, with a smile.

And Jimmy Renton, as he followed the burly Sullivan into the dressing-room, felt that his chance had come at last—thanks to Billy Desmond's ruse!

On Trial.

WHEN the two elevens came on to the field for the practice match there was a solitary cheer.

It emanated from Billy Desmond, who sat beside Mr. Robinson in the stand.

"Play up, Jimmy boy!"

Jimmy Renton waved his hand towards his chum, and lined up with the rest of the forwards. This was his testing-time, and he resolved to give of his best, and to emerge from the ordeal with flying colours.

When the game had been in progress ten minutes, however, Jimmy realised two things—(a) that the play of Bourne Athletic reached a very high standard indeed, causing him to feel like a pigmy among giants; and (b) that the recent hardships through which he had passed had adversely affected his form. He was not so fast as usual; his passes were not placed so accurately, and his shots at goal—when he had the opportunity of trying any—lacked driving force.

At the end of half an hour's strenuous play Jimmy Renton showed signs of distress. He had run himself practically to a standstill.

Billy Desmond turned to Mr. Robinson.

"You mustn't take this to be a criterion of Jimmy's real form, sir," he said. "I ought to mention that he's been through some terrible experiences during

the last few days, and they seem to have upset his form."

"Quite so—quite so," said the director. Jimmy Renton shook his head sadly as he came off at half-time.

"Afraid I can't reproduce anything like my real form," he said, addressing Billy Desmond. "The fact is, I feel quite off colour."

"That's not surprising, considering you've gone without food and sleep," was the reply. "I made a mistake in dragging you here so soon, Jimmy. I ought to have waited till you were quite yourself again."

"Perhaps I shall feel better after the interval," said Jimmy hopefully.

As a matter of fact, he felt worse. But he followed Kipling's advice, and forced his heart and nerve and sinew to serve his turn. He was physically unfit to play, but he kept on keeping on until the final whistle sounded. And he had the satisfaction of having netted a brilliant goal midway through the second half.

When the game was over Jimmy went up to Mr. Robinson in order to learn that gentleman's verdict.

"I can clearly see, Renton," said the director, "that you played below your usual form, and that you are capable of putting up a better show than you put up this afternoon. It would be unfair to judge you by your recent display. You are worth persevering with, in my opinion, and if you would care to come here and practise three times a week with our second string, you are at perfect liberty to do so."

It was a generous speech, and Jimmy Renton appreciated it.

A good many directors, having seen him put up an indifferent show, would not have given him another chance. But Mr. Robinson was a real sportsman.

"Thanks awfully, sir!" said Jimmy. "I'll come along the day after to-morrow, if I may. I ought to be really fit by then."

"Very well," said Mr. Robinson. "Au revoir, Lord Sweeney!"

And both Jimmy Renton and Billy Desmond burst out laughing.

As soon as he had changed into his ordinary attire, Jimmy rejoined his chum, and they left the ground together.

"That man Robinson," said Billy Desmond, starting up the engine of his motor-cycle, is a Sport—with a capital S. He didn't fly at our throats when he discovered that we weren't members of the aristocracy. And he made allowances for the falling-off in your play. Strikes me, brother James, that within a month or so you'll be sporting the colours of Bourne Athletic!"

Jimmy Renton drew a deep breath.

"If only your prophecy came true, Billy!" he exclaimed.

"It will come true. You see if it doesn't. The sporting Press will be shouting from the housetops about Bourne Athletic's new winger. And before a couple of seasons have gone by you'll be getting your International cap!"

"Stow it!" said Jimmy, laughing. "That's the worst of you journalistic fellows. You've got such vivid imaginations!"

"You see if I'm not right, anyway," said Billy. "Now, off we go! Hang on tight, 'cos I'm going to put the pace on. Once aboard the lugger, so to speak, and we'll defy every giddy police-trap we come across!"

The motor-cycle leapt forward, and was soon speeding through the streets of Bourne like a live thing.

There was no great hurry, but Billy Desmond didn't believe in crawling.

The machine took the hills in grand style, and soon the two chums, with the

wind rushing past their ears, were whizzing through the King's Forest.

Very little conversation passed between them as they went. It was almost impossible for them to hear each other speak.

Dusk had descended by the time they reached the Forest Arms, that quaint old-fashioned hostelry which they had made their headquarters.

The landlord greeted them cordially. He was a plump, jovial, Falstaff of a man, and when he smiled his countenance resembled a full-moon.

"Good-evening, young gentlemen!" he said. "I trust you have had a pleasant afternoon?"

"Not so dusty," said Billy Desmond. "What are you going to inflict upon us in the way of supper?"

"There's cold ham an' pickles, sir—" "Good!"

"An' coffee or ale, accordin' to taste."

"Make it coffee, will you? I once knew a fellow who was misguided enough to swallow a pint of Government ale, and they had to take him away on a stretcher!"

"Was he bad, sir?"

"He complained of acute sea-sickness all night, and first thing in the morning he signed the pledge. Terrible stuff, that Government ale. If I had to choose between that and ditch-water, I'd plump for ditch-water every time. Where have you laid the supper, mine host?"

"In the private parlour, sir."

"Then, we'll adjourn thither. Come, James!"

And, seizing Jimmy Renton playfully by the ear, Billy Desmond escorted him to the parlour.

The two chums were hungry, and they did full justice to the meal.

"To-morrow," said Billy Desmond, "seein' as 'ow you haven't got to turn out for footer practice, we'll have a quiet, restful day. We'll borrow a couple of guns first thing in the morning, and go rabbit-shooting; then we'll bring forth ye ancient gridiron, and take a trip right round the forest, returning at nightfall."

Jimmy Renton grinned. His chum's idea of what constituted a quiet, restful day was rather novel.

They turned in early that night, for both were tired. And next day Billy Desmond's programme was carried out to the letter. Before breakfast they borrowed a couple of guns from the landlord, and a number of inoffensive rabbits were sent to their doom. And after fortifying themselves with eggs and bacon, and toast and marmalade, the two chums set out on their tour of the King's Forest.

It was a most enjoyable day. And all the bitter hardships he had undergone now seemed like a bad dream to Jimmy Renton.

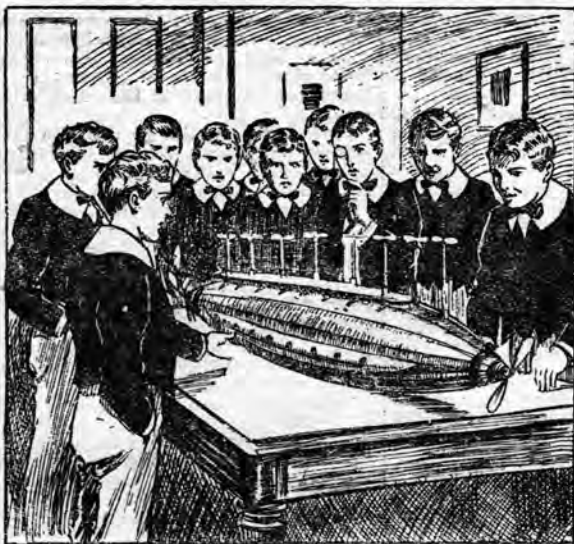
"I can't believe that once yesterday morning I was absolutely down and out!" he remarked to Billy Desmond, as they sped along.

"Don't talk about it, dear boy. The past is dead and buried now. It's the future you've got to think about, when you'll be winning laurels on the football field."

And Jimmy Renton conjured up happy visions of getting an engagement with Bourne Athletic, or with one of the big clubs. And while he dreamed his dreams, he realised how much he owed to the loyal chum who was now by his side. But for Billy Desmond he felt that he would have gone under by now.

(Another instalment of this magnificent Football Serial next week.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 664.



"It's a ripping model, and no mistake," said Tom Merry. "Glyn, you're a blessed genius, old man!"

CHAPTER 1. "England's Glory."

"IT'S a ripping model, and no mistake, Glyn!" said Tom Merry, with enthusiasm. "You're a blessed genius, old man!"

"Hear, hear!"
There was a loud murmur of assent from the crowd of admiring juniors standing round the table of Study No. 11 in the Shell passage of St. Jim's. Besides the owners of that apartment—Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Harry Noble—quite a number of Shell and Fourth-Formers were there, and all were gazing with glistering eyes at Bernard Glyn's latest invention—a model airship.

And it was, indeed, as Tom Merry had said, a ripping model. It was nearly four feet long, occupying the full length of the study table, and was constructed almost entirely of aluminium. In shape it resembled a submarine, with eight slender steel masts, topped by spiral lifting-screws rising from the deck, and at either end of the tapering hull was another screw or propeller.

Nor was there anything botchy about the construction of the model. It was a marvel of neat and skilful workmanship—a model to gladden the heart of any young boy—or old boy, either, for that matter.

"She's a beauty—no doubt about that," said Jack Blake. "It does you great credit, Glyn."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, eyeing the graceful model through his monocle reflectively. "I weally must confess, deah boy, that I could not have made a bettah model myself, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of the swell of the Fourth constructing such a model seemed to strike the assembled juniors as very funny, and they laughed heartily.

"The only thing Gussy can make efficiently," remarked Lowther, "is an ass of himself."

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, you feahful wotthah!" shouted D'Arcy, pushing back his cuffs. "Unless you withdraw that statement, I will pwoceed to administah a—"

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A STERN CHASE!

A MAGNIFICENT, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THE "GEM" LIBRARY—

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's indignant reply was cut short by Bernard Glyn. The clever schoolboy inventor had been engaged upon the task of squirting minute drops of oil on to various parts of the mechanism of his beautiful model. But now he put down the tiny oilcan, and wiped his hands upon a piece of cotton-waste.

"Now she's ready!" he announced, eyeing his handiwork with no little pride. "I admit, you fellows, she doesn't look so bad."

"If she flies as well as she looks," said Talbot admiringly, "she's a winner, Glyn!"

"She'll do more than fly," said Glyn quietly. "I don't mind telling you fellows that this is no ordinary model airship. Any kid handy with tools can make a model that will fly. But old 'England's Glory'—that's what I've christened her—will, I hope, do more than that. I believe I've solved the problem that up to now has baffled airship and aeroplane designers—the problem of constructing a machine that will, under its own power, remain stationary in the air."

"My hat!"
"If 'England's Glory' will do that, Glyn," said Tom Merry, "then your name and fortune's made!"

Bernard Glyn nodded.
"And this afternoon's going to prove it!" he exclaimed, with gleaming eyes.

"I propose to test the thing on Wayland Heath—plenty of airspace there. So if you chaps will lend a hand we'll make a start."

"What-ho!"

Willing hands helped the enthusiastic inventor to lift the gleaming model from its trestles, and lower it into the long box Glyn had made to hold it. And a moment later, with Glyn and Tom Merry gripping a handle of the box each, the excited juniors trooped from the study.

"Better buck up," advised Tom Merry, as the little procession moved across the quad, "or we sha'n't be back in time for calling-over."

The juniors accordingly put on speed, and, taking the short cut across the fields, after twenty minutes' brisk walking, arrived, breathless and excited, on the edge of Wayland Heath.

"Now you'll see what 'England's Glory' can do!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn, with sparkling eyes.

"Let us hope," said Monty Lowther, "that she won't do what the matches of that ilk do—strike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats! You're too funny for words, Lowther!" said Glyn. "Now, stand back, you fellows, and give the thing plenty of atmosphere. Carefully, Tommy!"

With great care, "England's Glory" was lifted from the box, and Bernard Glyn, kneeling on the grass, began to fiddle with the delicate mechanism. Then, as the soft purr of a motor sounded from within the hull of the model, he stood up and looked across the heath thoughtfully.

"That thicket over yonder is about fifty yards away, isn't it, you fellows?" he said at last briskly. "Well, unless 'England's Glory' is a failure, she'll fly as far as that and remain stationary in the air under the power of her spiral screws. All ready?"

"Ready, ay, ready!" murmured Lowther solemnly.

"Then up she goes!"

With the words, the inventor stooped and touched a tiny lever on the deck of the little airship, and immediately, amid a loud whirring and buzzing, the screws and propellers began to revolve.

For a brief moment the model quivered from stem to stern, and then, to the on-lookers' delight, she gave a preliminary wriggle, and "up" she did indeed go—a little sooner than the inventor anticipated.

She swooped up from the grass like a frightened bird, and, striking Bernard Glyn a glancing blow in the face, toppled him backwards into a bed of prickly brambles.

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

Bernard Glyn was hurt, but he sprang to his feet like a shot, and sped after the other fellows, who were rushing, in a laughing, cheering crowd, behind "England's Glory," which was cutting through the air about six feet above the ground.

But, alas! for Bernard Glyn's fond hopes.

Instead of stopping in mid-air on

reaching the fifty yard radius, "England's Glory" tilted her prow upwards slightly, and seemed to set a deliberate course for the setting sun.

"Oh, my hat!" shouted Clifton Dane suddenly. "The old mill! She'll smash into the old mill!"

The juniors stopped running with gasps of alarm as they realised the truth of Clifton Dane's warning. Towering on a slight rise another fifty yards away was the old, ruined windmill, and the crazy structure stood immediately in the line of the runaway airship's flight.

The unhappy Bernard Glyn groaned aloud in dismay as he watched his precious model speeding on its slanting course to destruction with propellers and spiral screws humming bravely. Then—
"Thud!"

The forward tractor screw splintered to atoms as "England's Glory" buried her prow deep in the rotting woodwork high up the side of the mill. And, fortunately, she stuck there, with her spiral screws and propeller still whirling.

"Oh, what rotten luck!" groaned Bernard Glyn dismally.

"Jolly good job she didn't fall, though!" exclaimed Tom Merry consolingly. "Only the forward screw seems to be damaged. We ought to be able to recover her all right through that little window, Glyn."

Bernard Glyn looked up at the airship, quivering like a wounded bird near the little window high up in the mill-tower.

"Yes; it might have been worse," he admitted gloomily. "Anyway, it's a failure as far as the stationary device is concerned. But I'm not beaten yet, Tommy. I'm certain I'm on the right tack, and next time I won't fail. But we'd better be getting at the thing before the blessed wind catches it. Come on!"

The juniors pushed open the door of the mill, and clattered up the ladder leading to the tower to retrieve the unlucky airship. Glyn was the first to reach the aperture where once a window had evidently been, and he immediately popped his head and shoulders out.

"Just about do it!" he gasped, squeezing himself farther out. "Hold my legs, you chaps!"

Tom Merry and Talbot gripped his legs as the schoolboy inventor reached out and grasped his precious model with extreme care. The engine now had ceased to work, and after a little, gentle coaxing and tugging, he released the slender prow of the model, which had been, happily, wedged between a narrow aperture in the woodwork.

He was drawing the little airship towards him tenderly, when the unexpected sound of a motor-car engine struck his ears, and he glanced in surprise across the lonely stretch of heath below. Then he gasped aloud in sheer astonishment.

Across the rough ground a large, powerful car was being driven at a good speed towards the old mill. This in itself was astonishing enough; but suddenly something familiar about the car made the watching juniors almost drop his model in sheer amazement.

"What on earth's up, ass?" asked Tom Merry impatiently.

Bernard Glyn drew back cautiously, and laid his model carefully on the dusty floor of the mill. Then he pointed to the window.

"Look and see," he said blankly. "That car, Tommy!"

Tom Merry looked out, and as he saw the car bounding and jolting over the grassy hillocks and through the gorse of the heath, he gave a startled cry.

"M-m-my hat!" he ejaculated. "Why, it's your pater's car, Glyn! But—but I

say, your pater's not in it! Those two fellows are strangers!"

"I know," said Bernard Glyn, with a puzzled frown. "I can't understand it. I've seen those two foreign-looking merchants hanging round these parts a lot lately. There's something jolly fishy on, you chaps!"

"Looks like it," said Jack Blake seriously. "I wonder if—Hullo! They're stopping here."

The roar of the powerful engine as the car climbed the little rise had ceased, and Bernard Glyn popped his head out of the window and looked down.

But the car had evidently stopped at the front of the mill, and he could see nothing. He drew back, his eyes gleaming.

"Come on, you fellows!" he exclaimed grimly. "We must look into this. If I'm not mistaken, those merchants have pinched the pater's car."

"Yes, rather! Better go carefully, though," warned Tom Merry.

And next moment the juniors were passing cautiously in single file down the crazy ladder to investigate.

CHAPTER 2.

St. Jim's to the Rescue.

ON the first floor of the mill Tom Merry paused and held up a warning hand. From the ground floor came the sound of voices and footsteps.

"Better lie low until we've found out what they're up to," he whispered tensely. "See, there are plenty of cracks in this mouldy old floor. Mind your steps, though."

The floor was but a single thickness of planking, nailed upon thick, oak joists, and the planks themselves were broken in innumerable places.

Headless of the thick layer of dust, the juniors—with the single exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who contented himself with stooping—kneeled upon the floor and peered into the gloomy chamber below.

This had once held the millstones, but these had long since vanished. The only window had also been boarded up, and the only light that entered the chamber came through the open doorway.

But, to the juniors' surprise, the room appeared to be empty.

Then quite suddenly the patch of daylight through the open doorway was blotted out, and two men entered the mill, between them carrying the apparently inanimate figure of a man.

He appeared to be bound hand and foot, and around his mouth a scarf was tied, which prevented the juniors from seeing his features clearly. But as the two men lowered their burden to the floor, Bernard Glyn gave a sudden, half-stifled gasp, and his body quivered.

"It—it's my father! I believe it's my father!" he hissed, in horrified alarm. "Help me, you chaps!"

And Bernard Glyn was about to jump to his feet in a mad rage, when Tom Merry gripped his arm in a vice-like grip.

"Stop, you silly fool!" he whispered tensely. "Can't you see the fellows are armed? Before we could get down the ladder they'd be waiting for us. If it is your dad, we'll soon have him free, never fear. But we must bide our time."

"Quite right, Tommy," agreed Talbot quietly. "No good rushing things yet. Better sing small for a bit, Glyn, old chap."

There was a murmur of agreement. Tom Merry's words were only too true. One of the scoundrels below held a revolver in his grasp, and even if the prisoner were Bernard Glyn's father, it would be madness to risk losing the

chance to rescue him by rushing things, besides the certain danger to themselves such a reckless course would involve.

But though Bernard Glyn sank to the floor again, it was all Tom Merry and Talbot could do to hold him down. Next moment, however, something happened in the chamber below that astonished Bernard Glyn, if anything, more than the others.

While the fellow holding the automatic kept Mr. Glyn covered, the other man swiftly cut his bonds and helped the millionaire engineer to his feet.

"I want your coat and cap, Mr. Glyn," he said curtly. "Hurry, please!"

The words were spoken in a refined voice, and in English, with just the faintest trace of a foreign accent. But there was no mistaking the deadly menace in the tone, and Mr. Glyn—the watchers could now see that it was indeed he—had more sense than to argue with a levelled automatic. He removed his heavy motoring-coat and cap, and flung them upon the floor.

"Now raise your hands above your head, please!"

A sudden gleam came into Mr. Glyn's eyes, but he raised his hands as ordered, and offered no resistance whilst the tall rascal ran his fingers lightly and swiftly through his pockets. After a moment's search the fellow brought to light a bunch of keys. These were apparently what he sought, for he gave a murmur of satisfaction, and transferred them to his own pocket.

Taking up the rope again, he deftly tied the millionaire's hands behind his back, and picked up a small handbag from the floor.

His next movements held the watching juniors spellbound with astonishment. From the bag he took a small hand-mirror and a pair of scissors. Then, glancing alternately at Mr. Glyn's face and the mirror, he proceeded to clip the turned-up ends of his moustache ruthlessly.

Evidently satisfied at last, he took from the bag several other materials, and proceeded to "make up" his features deftly and skilfully.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake, in a thrilled whisper. "He's making up as your pater, Glyn!"

Bernard Glyn did not reply, but Tom Merry felt the schoolboy inventor's arm quiver beneath his grip like the body of a terrier straining at the leash. And this stranger's next action proved Blake's surmise without possibility of doubt.

He picked up the motoring-coat and slipped it on. Then he jammed the cap well down over his eyes and turned to his accomplice.

"Is that near enough, my dear Symonds?" he asked, with a sneering smile.

Without lowering his automatic in the slightest, the other man glanced from Mr. Glyn to his companion admiringly.

"As near as no matter," he replied, with a chuckle. "You're a cool hand, Neumann, that you are!"

The man addressed as Neumann took up his bag, and turned to Mr. Glyn, with a mocking smile.

"I deeply regret, Mr. Glyn," he said smoothly, "that I have been forced to take this somewhat drastic course. But I must have those plans. And now I bid you good-bye, sir."

And before the breathless watchers above had quite grasped the fact, the door had slammed behind the scoundrels, and the harsh grating of a key in a rusty lock came to their ears.

For a brief moment the juniors stared at each other, wondering if they had dreamed it all. It had all happened so

swiftly that they were left for the moment breathless. But as the soft purring of a motor-engine came from outside, Bernard Glyn gave a grunt of rage and dashed pell-mell down the rickety ladder.

"Father!"

At the clatter of footsteps on the stairs and the welcome sound of his son's voice, Mr. Glyn spun round as if he had been shot. His eyes nearly started from his head with astonishment as he recognised the juniors in the dim, uncertain light that filtered through the cracks and crannies of the old planked wall of the mill.

With eager, swift hands Bernard Glyn almost wrenched the gag from his father's face, whilst Tom Merry and Talbot rapidly untied the ropes round his arms.

"That's better, my boys!" gasped the millionaire faintly. "But—but, 'pon my soul, Bernard, how in Heaven's name did you happen to be up there at this time? Did you—"

"We saw all from the floor above, dad!" muttered the Shell junior, eyeing his father's somewhat pale face in deep concern. "Oh, those scoundrels, to treat you like that! But what does it all mean, dad? Why—"

"That I will explain later, my boy," replied Mr. Glyn quickly. "There is no time to be lost. I must follow the rascals at once—"

"I'm afraid it's too late, sir," broke in Tom Merry, who had been trying the door. "The door is locked, and is too strong to break down!"

"Then we must try that window," said Mr. Glyn determinedly.

But though repeated attempts were made by the millionaire and the juniors to force the boards away, it was useless. They were new boards, and nailed securely on the outside. Without tools it was impossible to move them.

"I'm afraid the case is hopeless," said Mr. Glyn, in despair, at last. "Doubtless those scoundrels nailed those boards up to make escape from the mill impossible, having cunningly laid their plans in advance. They've trapped me fairly, and by this time will have entered Glyn House and stolen the plans."

"Plans!" ejaculated Glyn. "What plans, dad?"

"The plans of a new aeroplane-engine—details of which I am not at liberty to give, my boy. But they are worth a fortune, and more than money to the nation fortunate enough to possess them."

The juniors looked grave, and Bernard Glyn eyed his father in surprise.

"But I had no idea you were working on such an invention, dad."

Mr. Glyn's face clouded.

"That is the worst part of the whole business, as far as I myself am concerned," he replied bitterly. "The invention is not mine. The plans were entrusted to me by the British Government for my expert advice as an engineer on several details of a technical nature. Yesterday I received a communication purporting to come from the Government—but which I now realise was a forgery—stating that Government experts would arrive at Wayland this afternoon to discuss the plans with me."

"I suspected nothing wrong," went on the millionaire grimly, "and, as I often do, drove the car alone to the station. There I met the men you have seen, and was driving them to Glyn House when, at a lonely part of the Wayland Road, one of the scoundrels struck me from behind, and I remembered nothing more until I was being carried from the car into this horrible place. But from words they

let drop then, I soon gathered they were after the plans."

"Great Scott!"

"But—but who are the men, dad?" asked Bernard Glyn, in alarm.

"I do not know—possibly agents of a foreign Power. But undoubtedly they were fully aware that the plans were in my possession. The taller of the two—Neumann—is obviously an educated man and a foreigner—a German, I strongly suspect. The other man—Symonds—appears to be a rascally Englishman."

"Then that fellow Neumann has impersonated you—"

"To enable him to enter Glyn House unchallenged; and as he has the keys of the bureau where I placed them before starting out, it will be a simple matter for him to obtain the plans. And even now," ended Mr. Glyn heavily, "the plans entrusted to my care may be gone—stolen by those scoundrels! It is terrible, boys!"

And, with head bowed, Mr. Glyn began to pace the stone floor of the gloomy chamber with nervous agitation, watched by the sympathetic juniors.

Suddenly Tom Merry caught Bernard Glyn's eye, and he moved over to him.

"Look here, Tommy!" muttered the schoolboy inventor through his teeth. "This business is awful for the poor old pater. We've simply got to stop those scoundrels somehow. Listen! Try to slip upstairs unseen. I've got an idea. It's a bit dangerous, and I know the pater wouldn't hear of it if we told him. I'll explain when we get up."

Tom Merry nodded, and a moment later was following his chum casually towards the narrow stairs leading to the floor above. In the semi-darkness this was easily accomplished unnoticed by any of the others. And less than a minute later the two were tiptoeing up the ladder.

On the floor above, Bernard Glyn quickly outlined his plan to Tom Merry.

"It's risky," he commented, after a pause. "But I'm on, Glyn! You're not going alone, though. I'm coming, too." "Good!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn gratefully. "Then we've not a moment to lose, Tommy."

CHAPTER 3.

At Glyn House.

DISREGARDING all caution now, the two dashed up to the top of the mill. There Bernard Glyn climbed up to the dusty alcove where the rusty axle of the sails went out through a great hole in the broken wall.

"I think I know how these blessed things work!" said the schoolboy inventor keenly. "There's an iron pin somewhere. Here we are!" There followed the clanging crash of falling iron as Glyn knocked the bar out that held the sails at rest when not working. "Now for the giddy joy-wheel!" said Bernard Glyn, with a faint grin. "Whatever you do, Tommy, don't fail to drop off when the blessed sail nears the ground, or you'll be smashed to little bits!"

Without hesitation, Bernard Glyn climbed out on to the rusty iron axle and began to edge his way slowly towards the sail that ran out horizontally on his right. And Tom Merry followed.

It was a thrilling journey—and dangerous. But both reached the gaunt arm safely, and, straddled, began to work their way along, backwards. The rotting laths of the vanes crumbled and snapped beneath their knees, but they kept on doggedly.

And then, when Glyn was about a yard from the end, for the first time, perhaps, for scores of years, the old sails began to revolve amid a harsh, discordant grating and whining.

Slowly at first, and then with increasing speed, the sail they straddled began to swing downwards under their weight. Grimly the plucky juniors clutched the sail with hands and knees, and then Glyn gave vent to a sudden yell.

"Now, Tommy!"

He let go abruptly and fell sprawling into a thick cluster of brambles. But it was great good fortune, for all that. And, next second, Tom Merry came, too, like a shot from a gun.

Crash, crash!

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh dear!"

Groaning, the two Shell fellows picked themselves up dazedly. The fall had shaken them up more than a little, and the bushes had proved decidedly prickly. But both were thankful to escape so lightly.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "I'm punctured and scratched all over! No more blessed joy-wheeling for me, Glyn!"

"Same here!" groaned Bernard Glyn. "But it might have been worse, old chap. And now we've got to leg it for all we're worth."

"Yes, rather!"

And, without a second glance at the mill, whose sails still revolved slowly the two juniors set off at top-speed for Glyn House, with only one thought uppermost in their minds—would they be in time?

Side by side they raced over the rough ground of the heath, and, taking the footpath across the fields, reached Rylcombe Lane. Then on past the Grammar School, and, after a few minutes' brisk running, the gates of Glyn House came in sight.

So far neither of the juniors had spoken since leaving the heath, but now, as they swung through the open gates, and along the avenue of tall trees that bordered the well-kept drive, Tom Merry gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Good egg!" he gasped breathlessly.

"The car's there, Glyn."

"Then it looks as if we're in time," panted Bernard Glyn, without relaxing speed. "The rotters must still be inside! Buck up!"

The juniors dashed past the big, throbbing car standing unattended on the gravel before the entrance-doors of the mansion, and, bounding up the steps, entered the spacious hall.

Inside, Bernard Glyn hesitated and glanced about him, thinking swiftly. Nobody seemed to be about, and nothing untoward appeared to have taken place.

"Listen, Tommy!" he whispered, pointing to the door of a small ante-room leading off from the hall. "There's a telephone in there. We must get help, and I suggest that you 'phone Wayland police-station while I—"

"But you—"

"I'm going to scout round a bit. If I'm not mistaken, the rotters are still in the pater's study. But if you hear me yell out, you'd better trot along. You know where the room is—at the back of the house."

Tom Merry nodded somewhat reluctantly. But it was not the time to argue—nor did Bernard Glyn stay to argue. He turned abruptly to cross the hall, and Tom Merry pushed the door of the little room and hurried across to the telephone.

Put, as it happened, Bernard Glyn did not go far alone. Barely had he taken a dozen steps when a door on his right opened, and from the room a slight, girlish figure emerged. It was Edith Glyn, Bernard's sister.

She gave a start as she recognised her brother.

"Why, Bernard, what are you doing here now?" she ejaculated, in surprise. "Why aren't you—"



Then quite suddenly the patch of daylight through the doorway was blotted out, and the juniors saw two men enter the mill, between them carrying the apparently inanimate figure of a third man. A gasp of dismay and surprise broke from Glyn. "It's my father!" (See page 7.)

"Never mind me, sis," muttered the junior swiftly. "Tell me—is anyone in dad's study?"

"Only dad himself," replied Edith Glyn, in astonishment. "But why—"

"Then get back into the drawing-room and lock yourself in—quickly!" said Bernard Glyn urgently. "I'll explain everything afterwards—"

"But why, you silly boy?"

"Because the man you saw is not dad—he's a rascally impostor!" gasped Bernard Glyn desperately.

And in a few hurried words he explained something of the position.

As she listened, the girl's face grew alarmed. Then her eyes gleamed, and she set her lips firmly.

"Then—then that explains why he did not answer me in the hall!" the girl gasped. "I thought it was not like dad to be so surly. But if you imagine I'm such a coward as to hide myself away, you're sadly mistaken, Bernard! I'm going to help you capture—"

"But the scoundrel is armed and desperate! You must, sis!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort," said Edith quietly. "You seem to think because I'm a girl I'm afraid to tackle a silly burglar. I'm coming to lend a hand!"

Bernard Glyn bit his lip. But he saw that his sister's mind was made up, and he knew it was useless to argue.

"Then, if you're bent on helping, you

can't do better than relieve Tom Merry at the telephone; he'll tell you what to do," he muttered swiftly. "He'll be more useful if it comes to a scrap than you, sis. Then, when you've finished on the 'phone you can round up all the men-servants and send 'em along."

Bernard Glyn said that more to get his sister out of harm's way than anything else. But there was sense in it, and Edith Glyn was as sensible as she was pretty and plucky. She knew Tom Merry would be more useful than she if it came to trouble. She knew, also, something that her brother did not know—that, by an unfortunate chance, the butler and other men-servants were away at a sporting show in Wayland, and that the only help the juniors could expect would be from herself.

Without another word she turned, and tripped lightly to the ante-room. And less than a minute later Tom Merry hurried out and joined Glyn in the hall. He gave his chum an inquiring glance.

"Nothing doing yet, luckily!" muttered Bernard Glyn. "If he's still there, then he's finding the pater's safe much more of a job than he bargained for. But I can't think where the other chap is. Anyway, come along!"

With hearts beating fast the juniors crossed the hall, and tiptoed down the long passage, at the end of which was the door of the study. Outside the door Bernard Glyn stopped, and listened in-

tently. From within the room came the sound of someone moving about and the rustle of papers.

"He's there, right enough!" murmured Glyn tensely. "I'll have a peep!"

He stooped and applied his eye to the keyhole, and then he gave a smothered exclamation. By a strange bit of luck the key was in the lock—on the outside. Without hesitation he gripped it, and turned it gently.

"That's put one spoke in his wheel!" he breathed grimly. "He'll never escape that way, unless he breaks the door down; and I'm afraid that's a bit above his weight!"

"But the window—what about the window?"

"That's where we come in, Tommy! We're going to be there to greet the dear man! Follow your uncle!"

Tom Merry grinned as he followed his chum back along the passage. Bernard Glyn had always been a cool customer, but his coolness now surprised him.

Once out of the hall Bernard Glyn led the way at a run round to the back of the large house. Presently he whispered a warning, and, keeping well within the shadow of the ivy-clad walls, he cautiously approached the French-window opening out on to the lawn.

A moment later he was peering stealthily into the room beyond.

And what he saw was what he expected

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to see. A man was there—a man strikingly resembling his father. It was the impostor without a doubt. He was standing before a large bureau, feverishly hunting through the drawers.

From the fact that the safe door was wide open, and that the drawers of the desk had been ransacked, it was obvious the impostor had not yet found what he wanted.

"See anything?" asked Tom Merry curiously.

"Yes. Look! The beggar hasn't found the plans yet, and he's looking wild, too. What a stroke of luck!"

Tom Merry bent down and also peeped into the room. Even as he did so the man within the room unlocked the top of the bureau, and snatched from a pigeon-hole at the back a large buff envelope.

He opened the flap, glanced eagerly inside, and then a look of triumph spread over his features.

"He's found 'em!" hissed Bernard Glyn, quivering with excitement. "Now we shan't be—Hullo!"

Without a second glance at the contents of the envelope, the impostor jammed the envelope into his inside pocket, and, striding to the door, grasped the knob.

"Here's where the band plays!" muttered Glyn grimly. "Get ready, Tommy!"

And, with hearts jumping a little, the two Shell fellows drew back from the window, and braced themselves for the coming struggle.

CHAPTER 4. Face to Face!

WHAT happened in the next few minutes neither of the boys had any clear recollection. After a moment's waiting they heard a heavy tread across the room, the door of the French-window rattled, and the two boys sensed, rather than saw, the tall figure framed in the doorway.

As if he suspected an ambush, the fellow stood fully thirty seconds on the threshold in ominous silence. Then he stepped out lightly as a cat on to the soft lawn.

"Now, Tommy!" yelled Bernard Glyn. And things happened swiftly after that. The impostor spun round on the instant, but the juniors were quicker. Like an arrow from a bow, Bernard Glyn hurled himself bodily on to the fellow's shoulders. Tackling low, Tom Merry flung himself at his legs and tugged desperately.

Crash! All three went to earth, and rolled over and over in a struggling, whirling heap on the lawn.

"Give in, you rotter!" gasped Tom Merry fiercely.

The answer was swift and brutal. The man's knee swung upward, and, catching Tom Merry under the chin, sent his head back with a jerk that rattled every tooth in his head.

But that was not all. Even as the junior involuntarily released his grip, the ruffian lunged out savagely with his foot. It was a cowardly kick. The heavy boot struck the junior in the ribs, and it settled the fight there and then as far as Tom Merry was concerned. With a choking gasp he rolled over, helpless and half-winded; and, alone, Bernard Glyn stood no chance against the ruffian.

There was a fierce, brief struggle, and then the schoolboy inventor found himself forced to his knees. The man's right hand gripped his throat, and his left went to his pocket. It flashed out, gripping an automatic by the barrel.

But the blow never fell. Even as the weapon was raised aloft help came suddenly from an unexpected quarter.

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Round the corner of the house Edith Glyn came hurrying. She stopped and stared, white-faced, at the scene; only for a brief moment, though. Then she acted promptly.

Her slim, white arm swung round, and something left her hand, and whirled through the air like a boomerang. It was a hockey-stick, and it struck Neumann's uplifted arm with a dull thud, and sent the weapon spinning across the lawn.

"Oh, good for you, sis!" shouted Bernard Glyn.

The fellow turned with a muttered imprecation, and, snatching up the fallen automatic, dashed towards Edith Glyn.

Bernard Glyn sprang forward, and Tom Merry, who was just staggering to his feet, made a feeble effort to stop the scoundrel. But they were both too late.

"Look out, Miss Glyn!" shouted Tom Merry. "Run for it!"

But Edith Glyn disdained to run, and stood her ground pluckily. Happily the fellow made no attempt to attack her, however. He swerved round the slight, girlish figure, and vanished round the corner of the house.

Both the juniors were after him in a moment. But once again they were too late. As they gained the front drive the fellow sprang into the waiting car. He let in the clutch, and the powerful car hummed away up the drive, and swung through the gates.

"After him!" gasped Glyn. "He simply mustn't get away with those plans!"

Though they both realised the futility of pursuit, the juniors raced along the drive. They arrived at the gates only in time to see the car disappear up the lane in a cloud of dust.

Bernard Glyn groaned.

"What rotten luck!" he muttered through his teeth. "But we're not licked yet, Tommy! If you are game, why not follow the beggar in the two-seater? Will you—"

"Like a shot!" snapped Tom Merry promptly.

The juniors raced back along the drive, and half-way to the house met Edith Glyn, her face flushed and eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Well played, old girl!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn. "It's a jolly good thing for me you did not hide away, sis!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"It was a lucky hit!" said Edith Glyn, with a queer, unsteady laugh. "But—but he's got away, then, Bernard!"

"Yes; for the present. But we've not finished with the beggar yet!" said her brother grimly. "I suppose you got the police all right, sis?"

"After the silly operator had put me on to the Wayland Laundry and the gas works. But I got through at last, and Inspector Skeat promised to come at once—"

"And the pater?"

"He's sending a couple of men to release poor dad and the others from the mill without delay," answered Edith.

"Good! Then we'll be off. We're going after the scoundrel in the two-seater, sis. You can tell dad we're on the trail of the plans, and don't intend to return without them. So long, sis!"

And without further ado Bernard Glyn led the way towards the garage, leaving his sister staring after them. Much time had already been wasted, and there was no time for further discussion.

In less than five minutes a smart little two-seater, with Bernard Glyn at the wheel, was sweeping down the drive and out into Rycombe Lane in the direction the car had gone.

Once on the open road, Bernard Glyn opened the throttle, and sent the little machine along at its fullest capacity. A

couple of miles farther on were the cross-roads, where the Burchester Road branched off, and here they received their first check.

"Now, which blessed road have they taken?" muttered Glyn, slowing down. "We're fairly stumped unless—Hullo, there's old Crump!"

Leaning against the signpost in a semi-somnolent state was the fat figure of P.-e. Crump, the Rycombe policeman. As the car approached he held up a podgy hand commandingly.

"Stop! I orders you!" he shouted. Bernard Glyn brought the car to a standstill.

"Have you seen the pater's car pass within the last ten minutes, Crump?" he asked quickly. "You know it—a red-painted car, upholstered in black."

"Which I ain't seen no car, Master Glyn. Wot I wants to know is, why you was a hexceedin' of the speed limit—"

"Blow the speed limit!" howled Glyn. "How long have you been slumbering there?"

"I've bin 'ere twenty minutes or more, Master Glyn. But wot I wants to know—"

"And the pater's car hasn't passed you?"

"That it ain't. But wot—"

"That's a jolly queer thing," gasped Bernard Glyn, turning to his chum.

"Where the thump can the blessed car have gone? We both saw it go in this direction, and yet there isn't a single lane branching off before this—"

"There's that little cart-track running through the fir-wood—"

"Yes; but that only leads to the meadows beyond—"

"I know. But doesn't it strike you the scoundrels would realise they'd stand a better chance of not being traced without the car than with it? It's quite on the cards that the other rotter was waiting there, and to put the police off the track they've abandoned the car in the lane. It's a lonely spot, and they'd figure it out that the car wouldn't be found for days."

"My hat! You're right, Tommy!"

With desperate haste Bernard Glyn turned the car round, and next moment they were speeding back, leaving P.-e. Crump to waste his sweetness on the desert air, as it were.

They reached the little lane Tom had mentioned, and the car was turned into it. This was little more than a gloomy cart-track through the woods. After bumping over the rough ground beneath overhanging trees for a couple of minutes they emerged with startling suddenness into a broad stretch of meadowland beyond.

As they did so Bernard Glyn drew up smartly, and uttered an exclamation of amazement, echoed next second by Tom Merry.

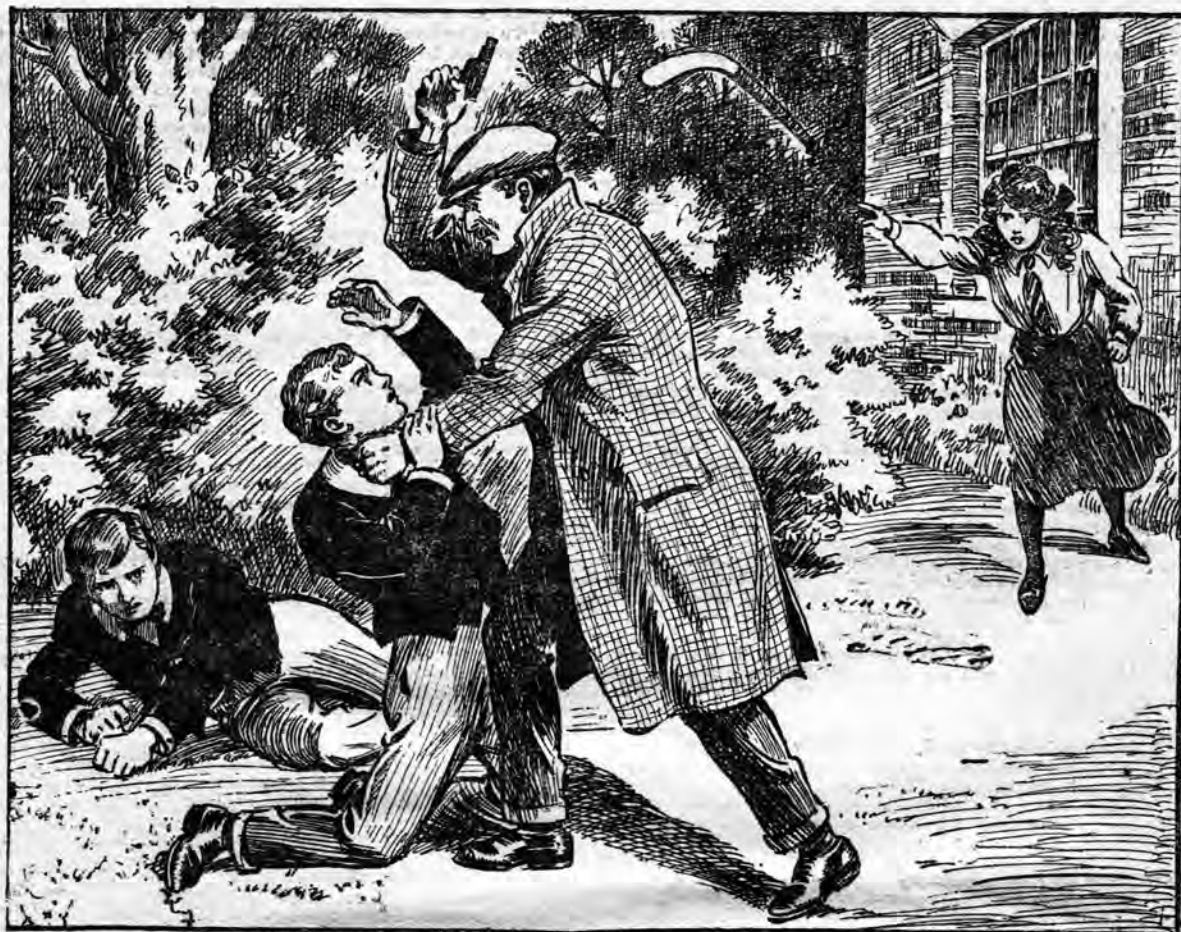
For the stolen car was there right enough. It stood unattended on the grass a few yards away from the cart-track. But that was not all. Some hundred yards across the field stood another machine—a machine that caused the juniors to gasp aloud as they beheld it.

"Great Scott! An aeroplane!" cried Tom Merry. "Well I'm blowed!"

For a brief space the juniors stared dumbfounded at the two-seater aeroplane at rest on the meadow grass. Bustling about the machine were two men, whom even at that distance they easily recognised as the scoundrels they were after.

And, from what the juniors could see, they appeared to be carrying out repairs to the engine.

And then quite suddenly the men appeared to become aware of the newcomers in the field. With frantic haste one of them sprang to the propeller,



Edith Glyn's slim white arm swung round, and the hockey stick left her hand and went whirling through the air like a boomerang. It struck Neumann's uplifted arm with a thud, and sent his weapon spinning across the lawn. (See page 10.)

whilst the other settled himself in the pilot's seat.

"My hat! They'll escape us yet!" cried Bernard Glyn.

He thrust the clutch home, and twisted the wheel. With a jerk and a series of jolts the little car left the cart-ruts and bumped its way recklessly across the grassy hillocks towards the aeroplane.

How they would fare in a conflict with two armed and desperate scoundrels the two juniors did not stop to consider. They were grimly determined not to allow them to get away with the plans if they could prevent them.

But, as it happened, the two men had no intention of coming to grips with the juniors. Before the car and its occupants had covered fifty yards the propeller began to whirl, and the man who had swung it clambered swiftly into the passenger's seat.

Even as the car rushed up and the juniors sprang out the machine "taxied" across the meadow, and as she rose with a rush and a roar, a mocking laugh floated back to the juniors.

"Beaten on the post!" groaned Bernard Glyn fiercely. "The poor old pater—Hullo!"

As Glyn spoke, the roar of the engine above ceased suddenly, and the aeroplane seemed to waver and swoop downwards. Then, as the boys held their breath, the engine fired again with startling suddenness, and, after spluttering fitfully for a time, settled down to a steady roar, and the machine mounted higher and sped and sped away southwards.

"My hat!" breathed Tom Merry. "I thought she was coming down then."

"If I'm not mistaken," said Bernard Glyn, "there's something wrong with that engine. We're going after 'em. Jump in, Tommy—quick!"

"But—but we can't chase an aeroplane! Man alive, they'll be well away the other side of the Channel within a couple of hours."

"They're making for the coast, certainly. But if I know anything about engines, they'll be forced to come down before reaching the coast, my boy. Anyway, I mean to stick to the trail, and I don't intend to chuck up the sponge until I've had proof positive that the beggars have really crossed the Channel. Are you coming?"

Tom Merry's answer was to jump into the car.

"Go ahead!" he said, with a grim laugh. "It's already long past calling-over, and we might as well make a night of it."

"That's the spirit! I've told the pater I won't return without the plans, and I mean it. Luckily, I know every inch of the road to the coast, and we ought to get there long before dark."

"What about the other car?"

"Blow it! It's more powerful, of course, than this, but I'm used to handling this little beggar. She's a beauty, and you'll soon see what she can do!"

And Bernard Glyn skilfully toolled the car round, and within a minute they had turned out of the little lane, and were speeding down Rylcombe Lane.

There was no sign of P.-c. Crump at

the cross-roads as the little car turned on to the Burchester Road. But the juniors had no thought of P.-c. Crump, or even St. Jim's just then. The excitement of the chase had gripped them.

Long ago the aeroplane had vanished from sight southwards. With Bernard Glyn crouching over the steering-wheel and Tom Merry silent by his side, the little car tore on at breakneck speed along the winding Sussex lanes, while the shadows lengthened over the lonely countryside.

CHAPTER 5.

An Anxious Night.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Glyn and his fellow-prisoners in the old mill on Wayland Heath had been by no means idle.

It was when the long-silent sails of the windmill began to revolve that the absence of Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn was discovered.

As the harsh and somewhat eerie groaning and whining of rusty machinery reached the juniors' ears they exchanged startled looks in the gloom.

"Bai Jove, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a trifle nervously.

"What on earth is that fearful wow?"

"If I'm not mistaken," said Mr. Glyn, peering round him a little suspiciously, "that noise is made by the sails revolv—Why, where is Bernard?"

"And Tom Merry" echoed Manners, suddenly missing his chum.

There was a silence as the juniors

peered about them, and Jack Blake rapidly counted the number present.

"They don't appear to be here," he ejaculated, at last. "P'raps they're upstairs exploring."

Mr. Glyn frowned.

"I hope so, my boy," he said. "I hope the foolish boys have not made a reckless attempt to escape from here. I think we had better go in search of them."

And, looking not a little worried, the millionaire hurried to the steps and began to ascend, with the wondering juniors at his heels.

It was plain that Mr. Glyn already had a suspicion of the truth, for, without hesitation, he ascended to the top chamber of the mill. As he led the way into the empty room and saw the hole in the wall, his face filled with apprehensive alarm.

Headless of the dust and cobwebs, he clambered up to the little alcove, and gazed out to where the great, gaunt sails still swung sluggishly.

"Can you see anything of them, sir?" asked Blake anxiously.

Mr. Glyn did not answer for a moment as he scanned the heath below. Then he gave vent to a deep sigh of relief, and jumped lightly to the floor.

"Yes; the reckless young rascals have left the mill by dropping down the sails!" he answered grimly. "But I am thankful to say they have apparently escaped uninjured, and are now making all speed for Glyn House."

"But why didn't they—" began Blake.

"They did not make known their intention, I should imagine," said Mr. Glyn, anticipating the question, "because they knew I should forbid such a dangerous enterprise. Even now I have grave fears that they will attempt an equally reckless and dangerous task by tackling those scoundrels on their own."

"As regards that," exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gazing reflectively at the now spasmodically-revolving sails, "I see no reason why we should not emulate their example, and rush to the rescue, Mr. Glyn. It looks simple and safe enough to drop—"

"On the contrary," said Mr. Glyn sharply, "it is exceedingly difficult and dangerous, and now the sails are moving, almost impossible. In any case, I most emphatically forbid it, my boy!"

Arthur Augustus subsided gracefully, and a moment later Mr. Glyn had shepherded the juniors out of the room—coming last himself, as if he intended making quite certain none of the juniors attempted the experiment.

They had reached the first floor, and were about to descend, when Talbot of the Shell turned suddenly to Mr. Glyn.

"If I might make a suggestion, sir," he said quietly, "why not rip up one of the floorboards and use it as a battering-ram against the window below?"

"Jolly good idea, Talbot!"

"It is certainly well worth trying," said Mr. Glyn. "And I wonder we did not think of it before."

And at once they set about carrying out Talbot's idea. It was a slow and tedious job, but eventually the juniors got a grip, and the dusty plank was ripped up and carried into the basement.

"Now, all together!" sang out Jack Blake.

Crash, crash, crash!

Again and again the heavy plank was swung against the obstruction, until the boards splintered, and at length fell away, letting the welcome daylight into the dingy apartment.

"Two at last, dear boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in delight. "Huwah!"

In a very few minutes Mr. Glyn and the juniors had climbed through the

narrow aperture, and dropped one by one on to the ground outside. Then, without loss of a moment, they set out for Glyn House.

As the party entered the gates and hurried down the drive, they saw Edith Glyn standing on the entrance steps, her face full of excitement and expectancy.

"Oh, I am so glad you have returned, dad!" she gasped. "I feared—"

"What has happened, Edith?" interrupted her father, eyeing her face apprehensively. "Where are Bernard and his—"

"Gone—they have gone after those awful men!" said the girl gravely.

And in quick, excited sentences, she related all that had happened. As he listened attentively, the millionaire's frown deepened.

"As I feared," he exclaimed heavily at last. "The scoundrels have gained their ends. If only the servants had been here! But you say that Bernard and his friend have gone in pursuit, Edith?"

"Yes; they got out the two-seater and went off without delay, and Bernard told me to tell you he would not return without the plans."

"Worse and worse," said Mr. Glyn grimly. "I fear the boys' recklessness will take them into grave danger! I must—"

Mr. Glyn stopped, and his face brightened as a large grey car swung through the gates and along the drive. But as the car came nearer his face fell with disappointment.

"It is only Inspector Skeat and his men," said Talbot.

"Too late, as usual!" said Mr. Glyn bitterly.

The car came to a standstill, and the inspector and two constables approached the group. As he came up, the inspector stared in astonishment at Mr. Glyn.

"Then you have escaped from the mill, sir?" he said, saluting the millionaire.

"Yes, inspector; but, like yourself, I arrived here too late to be of use."

Inspector Skeat coughed and produced a notebook and pencil.

"Perhaps you will be so kind, sir," he suggested, "as to give me details of the case?"

From past experience, Mr. Glyn had learned to place little reliance upon the intelligence of the local police. But he gave the required information, nevertheless. And after making copious notes, the inspector closed his notebook with a snap.

"Very good, sir!" he said briskly. "I think I can promise you a speedy return of the stolen papers, and the early capture of the thieves!"

Mr. Glyn nodded. But though he did not say so, he had little faith in that promise being carried out. And a moment later the police-car fussed away with its cargo of blue-coated officials.

"Can we do anything to help, sir?" asked Blake eagerly. "We could get out our bikes and scour the countryside—"

"I'm afraid that would be useless," said Mr. Glyn, with a shake of the head.

"Without a doubt, the two cars are miles away by this time. All we can do is to wait for the return of the boys or for news of them. I advise you boys to return to school at once, and I will 'phone Dr. Holmes and explain the position."

Very reluctantly, the juniors took this advice, and after saying good-bye to Mr. Glyn and Edith, they started at a brisk trot for St. Jim's. Arriving at the gates, they rang the bell, and Taggles, the porter, shuffled out of his lodge.

"Nice goin's on, I must say!" he sniffed. "Which 'ow you're late, you young rips, and you got to report to Mr. Railton immedjately. My heye! I expect you'll get it 'ot for this, Master Blake!"

But Taggles' expectation—and possible hopes—were not realised. When the dusty and dishevelled juniors trooped into

the Housemaster's study a few minutes later, one glance at Mr. Railton's grave, concerned face told them that he was already in possession of the facts.

"I am glad to see you back, my boys," he exclaimed kindly. "You had better visit the bath-rooms and make yourselves presentable without delay. In the exceptional circumstances, of course, you will not be punished for being out of gates after lock-up."

"Then—then you know all about it, sir?" asked Blake, in some astonishment.

"Yes. Mr. Glyn has just been in communication with Dr. Holmes on the telephone, and has acquainted him with the position," said Mr. Railton, with a glance at the juniors' anxious faces. "But there is no cause as yet for you to be unduly alarmed, my boys!"

"But—but don't you think search-parties ought to be sent out, sir?" asked Monty Lowther eagerly. "We ourselves could scout round on our bikes. Even if we didn't find them we could learn which direction they had taken."

The Housemaster shook his head and smiled.

"Both Dr. Holmes and myself believe that will not be necessary. I understand those miscreants had a good start, and a more powerful car, and it is therefore extremely unlikely that Merry and Glyn would overtake them. Doubtless they will follow until they realise the futility of further pursuit, and will then return."

And at his nod of dismissal, the juniors left the room in a disappointed and dismal group. They were not so hopeful of their chums' speedy return, despite Mr. Railton's cheery, optimistic words.

And, as events transpired, the juniors were right, and Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were wrong—hopelessly wrong. The long evening passed without news, good or bad.

Repeatedly Dr. Holmes rang up Glyn House and the Wayland police-station, but up to a late hour nothing had been heard of the missing juniors, and optimism gave place to apprehension and uneasiness.

"It is most distressing," said Dr. Holmes wearily, at last. "But I fear we can do no more to-night, Railton. We can only wait until the morning, when I hope and trust they will have returned in safety."

In the Shell and Fourth dormitories, the juniors had lain awake until long after "lights out," discussing the strange affair in low, excited tones, and listening for the return of their absent chums—but in vain.

One by one the juniors dropped off to sleep. And when they awoke at the clang of the rising-bell the next morning, the beds of the absent juniors were still vacant.

Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn had not returned.

CHAPTER 6.

A Check and a Surprise.

"WHAT rotten, putrid luck!" groaned Bernard Glyn.

"We're fairly stranded now, Tommy, and no mistake!"

And it certainly did look as though Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn were indeed stranded.

Since starting on the trail of the aeroplane and its rascally crew, the little two-seater had made splendid progress. When within a couple of miles of the market town of Burchester, Bernard Glyn had turned off into a narrow, winding side-lane. This also led to the coast, and he had chosen it in order to avoid traffic on the main road.

Tom Merry had been long aware that his chum was an expert driver; but he surprised him by his coolness and consummate skill on this occasion.

And to avoid disaster during that mad ride along the narrow, winding lanes, Bernard Glyn certainly needed all his coolness and skill. But, so far, everything had gone well. Only one halt had been made, and that was to inquire from a passing cyclist if anything had been seen of the aeroplane. And from him they had learned that an aeroplane had indeed passed over Burchester, but an hour earlier.

Considerably enheartened, the juniors drove on doggedly, and then, when some six miles beyond the outskirts of Burchester, disaster had overtaken them utterly and unexpectedly.

Without warning, the little car slowed down, and finally stopped running altogether. Considerably puzzled, Bernard Glyn had made a hurried examination, only to find that the petrol-tank was empty.

To make matters worse, dusk was deepening rapidly over the quiet countryside, and darkness, they knew, would soon be upon them.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Tom Merry at last, trying to speak cheerfully. "I suppose this means walking back into Burchester?"

Bernard Glyn shook his head. "There's to be no turning back for me!" he exclaimed emphatically. "If I remember rightly, there's a town, or, rather, a large-sized village, about four miles ahead. Manton, I believe it's called. Look here, Tommy. If you'll stay with the car, I'll trot along there for some petrol. You can make yourself comfortable—Hallo!"

The schoolboy inventor broke off joyfully, as at that moment the headlights of a motor-car came into view round the bend ahead.

"Good luck!" gasped Bernard Glyn excitedly. "We must stop this merchant!"

And, stepping into the roadway, Bernard Glyn hailed the approaching motorist. The car drew up, and a tall, good-natured-looking young fellow jumped out.

"Well, what's the matter?" he asked cheerily. "Engine trouble?"

"Petrol given out," replied Glyn. "I wonder if you have a spare tin you could sell us?"

"I haven't a spare tin, but I can lend you a drop to take you into Manton," was the smiling reply.

"Oh, good! Thanks awfully!" said Bernard Glyn gratefully.

The obliging stranger quickly unstrapped a petrol-can from the footboard of his car, and a moment later the precious liquid was gurgling into the tank of the two-seater.

"There, that'll see you into Manton all right," said the stranger at last. "You'll find the motor-repairer's shop on the right of the High Street. So-long, and good luck!"

With a smiling refusal to accept payment for the spirit, the Good Samaritan boarded his car and proceeded on his way. And, congratulating themselves on their good fortune, the chums jumped into the two-seater and were soon speeding towards Manton.

Ten minutes later they entered the village, and, moving slowly down the High Street, found the motor-engineer's shop without difficulty. The shop was closed, but a light was burning in the little garage in the rear, and Bernard Glyn turned his car into the opening leading to it.

"Better get a couple of tins, I think," he said, looking round as the car came to a standstill in the yard. "We may want it, and—My hat!"

The junior's words ended with that startled exclamation. Whilst looking

about him, Glyn's glance had fallen upon two men who stood within the half-circle of light cast by an electric bulb over the door of the garage. One was a man in blue overalls—plainly the proprietor of the garage. And the other—Bernard Glyn's eyes danced as he saw him.

"Look, Tommy," he whispered, in a voice shaking with excitement. "That stiff-built chap with the bike. Don't you recognise him?"

Tom Merry glanced round, and then he gave a violent start.

"Great Scott! It—it's Symonds, by all that's wonderful!" he gasped blankly. "What the dickens—"

"Quiet, and keep your chivvy down!" breathed Bernard Glyn swiftly.

Just then the two men moved slowly down the yard, talking in animated tones. They halted again quite close to the car.

"Sorry, but it can't be done, sir," the garage man was saying. "It'd take mor'n an hour to get my man here, let alone send him out to Moorcliff this time o' night."

"But it's a case of extreme urgency!" expostulated Symonds. "To-morrow morning won't do. We must be ready to start off at daybreak. I'm ready to pay well for the extra time and trouble. And—"

The motor-engineer shook his head.

"I'll send him first thing in the morning, as I said," he responded stubbornly. "I'll see he gets there by nine o'clock. But is it a long job? What's wrong with the engine?"

"Couldn't say exactly, but it's misfiring badly," grunted the fellow surlily. "It's been jibbing for some time, and we decided at the last moment not to risk the crossing. But you're sure your man understands aeroplane engines?"

"Yes; he was in the R.A.F. during the war, as mechanic. You needn't worry about that, sir. Directly he comes in the morn'—"

The rest of the interesting conversation was lost to the juniors, as the men moved down the opening to the street. The two chums exchanged triumphant glances.

"What a topping stroke of luck!" exclaimed Tom Merry excitedly. "My aunt! Then that means—"

"That their engine's broken down, as I expected," finished Bernard Glyn grimly. "It's plain enough. They've been forced to land somewhere near here, and that chap's hired, or pinched, a bike to fetch help. They know their only chance of getting clear away is by the plane. Anyway, it means we're not beaten yet. We've got to get to know—Hallo! Here's our pal the motor merchant."

The man in overalls hurriedly approached the juniors.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, young gentlemen!" he greeted them briskly. "What can I do for you?"

Bernard Glyn gave his order, and whilst the man was filling the tank, he proceeded to pump him.

"Who's the merchant just gone?" he asked carelessly. "Seems in a jolly old hurry."

"Don't know him from Adam," was the frank reply. "But he's an airman. Wanted me to send a man this time of night—"

"Yes, yes! We overheard him," grinned Bernard Glyn. "Plane come down somewhere near here, I suppose."

"Bout seven miles away—little fishing-village, name of Moorcliff. But it's too far for me to send a man out so late, and I wasn't doin' it for anyone."

"I should think not. Well, we're going that way. Praps we'll see something of it; that is, if it isn't far from the road?"

"If it ain't too dark, you'll see it right enough. 'Cording to that chap, it's come down on the moor 'bout quarter of a mile the far side of the village, and a hundred yards from the cliff-road," said the man. "Do you want the other can in?"

"No. Shove it under the seat, please," said Glyn. "We must be off."

He asked no more questions. He had already learned all he wanted to know. And when, after paying for the spirit, they swung out into the street, Bernard Glyn's eyes were gleaming.

"What's the programme now?" asked Tom Merry eagerly. "Hadh't we better go to the police?"

"Waste of time," sniffed his chum. "They wouldn't believe the yarn, and if they did, they'd make a botch of it. No; we've got to rely on our little selves, old son. You leave it to me, Tommy."

Tom Merry grinned faintly in the darkness. The junior skipper of St. Jim's was more used to leading than being led. But on this occasion he was quite willing to leave the initiative to Bernard Glyn. The schoolboy inventor had more at stake; or, at least, his father had. And Tom Merry was quite content to leave things in his capable hands.

"But I tell you what we can do," went on Bernard, abruptly bringing the car to a standstill. "We can wire to the pater—"

"Post-office closed," said Tom Merry briefly.

"I know. But that motor merchant will send it in the morning. Seems a decent sort of chap. Anyway, we may not get another chance, and the sooner the pater gets on the job the better. So here goes."

He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and hurriedly scribbled a few words on it in the light of a street-lamp. Then, deftly backing the car, he jumped out and hurried up the opening.

In less than a minute he was back again, and without a word he sprang to the wheel.

"All serene?" asked Tom Merry, as the little car shot forward.

"Yes. He's sending it first thing in the morning. And now for catching our old friend Symonds up."

"You mean to tackle him?"

"Rather. With a bit of luck, we'll treat him as they treated the pater. The only thing we've got to watch is that we down him before he starts any fancy shooting."

"My hat! Yes."

In a couple of minutes the car had left the town far behind, and was soon speeding along the lonely country lane. Save for the soft humming of the engine, and the sharp, eerie voices of night-birds in the dark fields, all was silent and still.

Presently, Tom Merry, who was staring hard through the wind-screen, gave an exclamation, and pointed ahead to a white arc of light from a bicycle-lamp, with the dark figure of the rider clearly outlined against it.

Bernard Glyn nodded grimly. Rapidly the car overtook the cyclist, and when within fifty yards of him Bernard Glyn slowed down. As they ran slowly past the cyclist he turned his head and stared suspiciously at the car, his features clearly seen in the glare from the headlights.

"Get ready!" hissed Bernard Glyn. "When I pull up jump out and go for him!"

He drew up smartly, and was out barely a second behind Tom Merry. And then the cyclist was upon them. There followed a startled cry and the

jarring of brakes. But that was all the rascally Symonds had time to do.

Before he could dismount, Tom Merry charged him like a bull at a gate, and he went over, bike and all, with a clattering crash. Next second both the juniors were upon him.

But to their surprise and not a little alarm, the fellow made no attempt to resist.

"He's stunned, I think," muttered Tom Merry. "I hope to goodness—No; he's stirring!"

Plainly the fellow was only partly stunned, for he made a feeble attempt to rise. Tom Merry immediately pinned him down again.

"Hold him!" gasped Bernard Glyn. "I'll not be a sec!"

The junior hurried round to the car, and was back in a moment with straps taken from the luggage-rack. While Tom held the fellow down, his chum strapped his legs. Then, after a brief struggle—for the man was recovering rapidly—they tied his wrists with cord from the tool-box, and carried the writhing and swearing rascal to the waiting car, and dropped him on the floor.

"If you don't stop that rotten language," said Tom Merry angrily, "I'll tap your head with this spanner, my friend!"

Tom Merry's determined tone was enough, and Symonds subsided, with a growl of fury. After dropping the bicycle behind the nearest hedge, the juniors boarded the car again.

"So far, so good!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn cheerfully, as the car shot forward. "And now for Mr. bloomin' Neumann and the plans. I feel we're going to win, Tommy, my son!"

"We certainly shall!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle, "if we have as little trouble over Neumann as we have had over this merchant!"

But that remained to be seen!

CHAPTER 7.

Captured.

LIGHTS ahead, Glyn!" Many minutes had passed since the kidnapping of Symonds on the highway, and already the salt breath of the sea was in their nostrils.

As Tom Merry spoke, he pointed ahead to where several lights twinkled faintly in the darkness.

Bernard Glyn nodded.

"Moorcliff," he said briefly. "Better slow down a bit, I think."

He slackened speed, and as they drew nearer the lights spread out, and within a couple of minutes the little car was jolting over the cobblestones of a tiny street, bordered by whitewashed cottages. Even at reduced speed, they were soon through the little village, and as the darkness closed round them again, the car began to climb a long, steep hill.

"This is the Cliff Road, and the moor's at the top," muttered Bernard Glyn. "I'm going to shut off the lights now, and stop at the top."

With the words, the schoolboy inventor switched off the headlights and rearlight, and the car climbed on slowly in the darkness. It was ticklish work, but the junior's eyes were keen, and the car topped the hill in safety.

Evidently Bernard Glyn knew the spot well, for, without hesitation, he turned the car off the road, and drove it, amid a rustling and crackling, deep into the gorse. Then he drew up and shut off the engine.

"Now for the last giddy act, The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 664.

Thomas!" he said, springing from the car. "If you're ready, come on."

"What about this merchant?" asked Tom Merry. "Hain't we better gag him?"

"He'd never be heard in this lonely spot if he did yell," grinned Glyn. "Buck up!"

"What about weapons?"

"My bat, yes! And if we have the luck to capture Neumann we'll want some cord," replied Glyn.

The cord and a couple of spanners were hunted out, and, as an afterthought, Tom snatched the travelling-rug from the seat.

"This ought to be useful when we tackle the beggar," he remarked. "He'll find it difficult to use his shooter with this over his head. Now we're ready for anything!"

With scarcely a glance at the fuming scoundrel huddled in the bottom of the car, the juniors tramped back through the gorse and gained the road. There they hesitated a moment.

Somehow, it seemed lighter up here on the moor; or, possibly, now they were away from the dazzling headlights their eyes were growing accustomed to the darkness. On the left of them the edge of the cliff, where it dropped to the sea, could be clearly seen, outlined against the sky. To the right, stretched away the shadowy moorland. Save for the dull murmur of the sea, and the rustle of the wind in the dry gorse, everything was silent and still.

"I vote we move!" muttered Bernard Glyn, with a slight shiver. "If we stand here much longer I shall be getting the wind-up. Must keep our peepers open for the 'plane, though."

So saying, Bernard Glyn led the way along the white ribbon of road. For ten minutes they tramped on in silence—a silence that was not to be wondered at in the circumstances. It was not a pleasant task they had set themselves, to say the least of it.

And then, quite suddenly, Tom Merry gripped his chum's arm, and pointed across the moorland to where a shadowy something loomed up above the scrub a hundred yards or more inland.

"It's the 'plane right enough!" said Bernard Glyn eagerly. "We've got to do some scouting now, Tommy. What a sell if the rotter ain't there, though! But we'll soon know."

The two chums dived into the scrub, and a moment later were treading with the stealth of Red Indians on the trail towards the aeroplane, taking advantage of every bit of cover the moor afforded. They had covered half the distance, when Bernard Glyn whispered a warning and pulled his chum down.

"If we don't want to be spotted, we'd better crawl now," he muttered. "Our only chance of winning is to take the rotter by surprise. I vote—What's that?"

Against the dark background of the 'plane's fusilage a tiny spark of fire glowed in and out fitfully.

"A cigarette, by gum!" breathed Tom Merry. "He's there right enough, leaning against the fusilage, smoking. Get ready. If you'll tackle his legs, I'll see he doesn't try any shooting tricks, come on—quietly!"

The juniors sank down flat, and a moment later were worming their way through the gorse. It was no easy task, this. A single false move, a crackling twig, and the success of the adventure would be jeopardised. But here their training as scouts stood them in good stead.

Nearer and nearer they crawled towards the unconscious smoker. Now they were but half a dozen yards away

from him, and it seemed that he must see their figures as they lay, hardly daring to breathe, in the gorse. Then suddenly Tom Merry gave the signal:

"Now!"

The two Shell fellows leaped up together. Tom Merry flung the rug. There was a startled gasp, and the man clawed wildly as the rug swept round his head. His cigarette flew away amid a smother of glowing sparks, and next moment they were upon him.

Tom Merry sprang bodily upon the man's shoulders. Bernard Glyn hurled himself at the man's legs, and all three went to earth with a crash and rolled in a whirling heap amongst the gorse.

Taken utterly by surprise, and half-smothered by the entangling travelling-rug, the man seemed too bewildered for the moment to struggle. And then suddenly, amid a torrent of furious imprecations in a foreign tongue, he began to fight and kick furiously.

"Quick, the cord, Glyn!" panted Tom Merry. "Tie his legs first!"

But the juniors' luck was out that night. Even as Glyn's hand flew to his pocket for the cord, there came a sudden shout and crashing through the gorse. Evidently Neumann heard, for his voice rang out desperately:

"Help, Symonds—help! Quick!"

Startled, Tom Merry glanced round, relaxing his grip slightly as he did so. But it was enough. A sudden wrench, and the man's arm was free. His fist swung round, and, by blind chance, it struck Tom Merry on the temple with stunning force, and sent him reeling into the darkness.

And just then Symonds—for it was he—dashed up, panting, and peered about him quickly.

"Quick—the other boy!" snarled Neumann. "I'll settle this one!"

"Will you, you foreign rotter!" panted Bernard Glyn.

And his fist shot out straight from the shoulder. The blow struck Neumann under the chin, and he reeled. Then he growled, and his hand flew to his pocket. It came out with something that gleamed dully in the darkness.

"Stand back!" he muttered savagely. "Move another step, my young friend, and—"

There was deadly menace in the tone, and Bernard Glyn paused. He glanced round for Tom Merry. That junior lay, dazed and helpless, in the iron grip of Symonds. The game was up.

Neumann chuckled softly.

"You needn't hold him, Symonds," he said smoothly. "I will see that the young pigs give no further trouble. One of them has a supply of cord. Find it and tie them securely."

Symonds relaxed his grip of Tom Merry, and grinned in the gloom. Tom Merry staggered to his feet and exchanged a miserable glance with his chum. Once again the game had gone against them.

In gloomy silence they submitted to having their hands tied behind them. Then Neumann took an electric torch from his pocket and flashed it in their faces.

"Who are the young hounds?" snarled Symonds. "They overtook me on the road and bowled me over!"

"What?"

"I couldn't help myself," said the fellow savagely. "They knocked me from the bike, and I was half-stunned. Then they tied me up and brought me along in a car. Luckily, though, I was not idle during the journey. I spent the time gnawing the cord with my teeth. When they left me the cord was nearly through, and I snapped it easily, and here I am, just in time—hang 'em!"

"But the machine—didn't you—"

"He's sending a man first thing in the

morning. I offered him a big figure, but the fool wouldn't undertake the job to-night."

Neumann muttered a savage imprecation. Then he motioned to Symonds, and the two moved away a little. Evidently the juniors were the subject of their confab, for when they approached again, Symonds addressed them roughly.

"Get up!" he said harshly. "And now walk before us. And if you as much as utter a sound, it will be your last! Now march!"

He gave Tom Merry a savage push in the direction opposite to the road. Tom stumbled forward, and a moment later the juniors were plodding into the darkness. For ten minutes they stumbled on blindly, guided only by sharp directions from their captors behind. Then, with startling suddenness, Tom Merry brought up against a thick hedge.

Neumann flashed a torch upon it and revealed a gap a few yards away. Symonds crouched and forced his way through.

"Come along!" he snapped.

The juniors followed, Neumann, alert and watchful, bringing up the rear. Then on again, this time with soft, springy turf beneath their feet. They crossed two fields, and then a low, gloomy building loomed up ahead. Symonds removed a heavy wooden bar from the door in the light from the torch Neumann held.

"In you get!" said the latter mockingly. "And pleasant dreams, my young friends! And don't waste time and energy shouting for help. The nearest farm is half a mile away."

He flashed his torch carelessly round the barn—it was little more—and withdrew. The heavy door swung to, and the juniors' hearts sank as they heard the heavy bar dropped into the iron slots without. Then came departing footsteps and silence.

"Great pip!" groaned Bernard Glyn, trying to make his chum out in the pitch darkness. "What shocking luck! What on earth are we to do? We're beaten all along the line, Tommy!"

"Not yet!" came Tom Merry's determined voice.

His chum heard him stumbling about in the darkness. Then came a curious, scraping, sawing sound.

"What's that, Tommy? What's the game?" whispered Glyn.

Tom Merry did not answer, and the sounds went on. Then Glyn heard his chum's triumphant voice, followed by the scraping of a match. As the light flared up, he saw his chum crouching by the side of a plough-share in the corner of the barn.

"I spotted this when that brute flashed his lamp round," said Tom Merry, "and I've cut myself free with it. Hold your hands out, and I'll soon have you free!"

Holding the match 'twixt finger and thumb, he took from his pocket a knife, and, opening it with his teeth, severed the cords round his chum's wrists.

"That's better!" gasped Bernard Glyn thankfully. "And now for getting out of this hole."

But this was easier said than done. Striking match after match, the juniors subjected the place to a thorough scrutiny. But the place was substantially built, and the door resisted their utmost efforts. There was no window, and beyond the plough and a heap of straw in the corner, the place was empty.

There was nothing to do but make the best of a bad job. Fearful of using up the stock of matches, the juniors flung themselves on the straw in the darkness.

"Luckily," said Tom Merry, "this straw is clean, and we'll be able to sleep pretty comfortably. It might be worse. And the game's not ended yet; old man, he

When daylight comes, we'll be able to look round better. We'll be up with the lark in the morning, and if we don't find a way out, I'm a Dutchman. I vote we get some sleep now."

"I'm tired enough, but I'm more hungry than tired," said Bernard Glyn ruefully. "I could just about clear Dame Taggles' stock of sausage-rolls now!"

Tom Merry was silent. Mention of the school tuckshop turned his thoughts to St. Jim's, miles away. He wondered what they were thinking of their absence at the old school—or, rather, what they had been thinking. For he knew it must be close on midnight now, and all St. Jim's would be dark and silent under the stars. He could just imagine the Shell dormitory now, silent save for the resonant snores of George Alfred Grundy.

What a night it had been! Only a few hours before they had left the school to test Bernard Glyn's wonderful invention—and it had ended in this.

For some time longer the two juniors whispered together in the darkness, and then, thoroughly tired out and exhausted, they fell asleep on their rough but not comfortable couch.

CHAPTER 8. To the Rescue.

MEANWHILE, far away at St. Jim's, the dawning of a new day had brought no news of the absentees, and apprehension had given place to consternation. During the long, anxious morning Dr. Holmes was in constant communication with Glyn House and Wayland police-station. But Mr. Glyn had no news of the missing juniors, and all the police had to report was that they were prosecuting the search with the utmost vigilance—an assurance which brought little or no comfort to anybody concerned.

After morning lessons, Jack Blake of the Fourth met Mr. Railton in the Fourth Form passage.

"Excuse me, sir, but has any news come through yet?" he asked anxiously.

The Housemaster shook his head gravely.

"None whatever, I am sorry to say," he said. "It is most mysterious. Both Merry and Glyn appear to have completely vanished."

"But surely two fellows and a motor-car couldn't disappear in broad daylight without being seen by someone, sir?"

"The only person who seems to have seen them since they left Glyn House is P.C. Crump, the Rylcombe constable," said Mr. Railton. "They were about to take to the Burchester Road when they saw the constable standing at the cross-roads. They stopped and asked if Mr. Glyn's other car had passed that way, and, on receiving the constable's assurance that it had not, they turned the car and sped back in the direction of Glyn House and St. Jim's."

"Then it looks as if they've not gone Wayland or Burchester way, sir."

"On the surface—yes," said Mr. Railton quickly. "But that, in my opinion, is just where the local police have badly bungled the affair."

"How is that, sir?"

"Acting upon that presumption, they have completely ignored the Burchester Road and the southern routes, and have concentrated all their attention upon the London and northern routes. Dr. Holmes, however, has since pointed out the futility of this, and Inspector Skeat has agreed to extend his inquiries in other directions, so that we are now hopeful of hearing news."

Mr. Railton nodded kindly and passed on, and Jack Blake proceeded in a thoughtful mood to Study No. 6, where he found D'Arcy, Digby, and Herries

gloomily discussing the affair. And to them he related what he had heard from the School Housemaster.

"The local police," he ended, "are on the job, of course. But if the powers that be are content to wait for news from them, we are not! We're going on the trail, my infants. Luckily it's a half-day, so we've plenty of time to scout round Wayland and Burchester."

"Yaas, wathah! Where the Wayland police force have failed, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus confidently, "we shall succeed. I vote we cut dunah and set out at once on the twail, bai Jove!"

"We'll do it!" said Blake grimly. "You fellows can be getting something to eat from the cupboard, while I trot along and give Lowther and Manners the tip."

And Blake hurried out of the study. As he expected, the two Shell fellows were only too eager to join in the search for their chums. And in less than fifteen minutes bikes were got out, and the expedition started from St. Jim's.

The juniors were cycling along Rylcombe Lane, when Lowther gave a startled exclamation, and pointed along the dusty road ahead. Coming towards them was a large, red motor-car.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "It—it's the stolen car and Mr. Glyn! What the dickens—"

The juniors dismounted hurriedly, and touched their caps as the car drew abreast. Mr. Glyn recognised the juniors, and pulled up promptly, and a moment later they surrounded the car, and were plying the millionaire with questions.

"Yes, I've found the car all right," he said, when he could make himself heard. "But, unfortunately, I have no news whatever of Bernard or his chum. It is a bigger mystery than ever. The car was found deserted in the meadows beyond Saxon's Lane."

"But—but how did you find it, sir?"

"Quite by chance, my boys. A farm labourer had occasion to visit the meadows in search of a stray cow, and the first thing he saw there was the car. He recognised it at once, and reported the discovery to me, and I have just been to fetch it."

"Bai jove!"

"But did you find nothing else—no trace of the other car?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yes, I found clear traces of the two-seater. These led to the centre of the field, and there the car had apparently been turned round. At first I was completely mystified," went on Mr. Glyn, "but, after a thorough examination on the spot, I quickly formed a theory of what had happened—"

"And that, sir?"

"That the scoundrels have escaped by aeroplane, and that Bernard and his chum have followed in what, I am afraid, was a futile attempt to keep in touch with them."

"Great Scott!"

The juniors stared at Mr. Glyn dumb-founded. They were still staring when an interruption occurred. A telegraph-boy from the village cycled leisurely up. On recognising Mr. Glyn he dismounted, and, after fumbling in his wallet, he produced an orange-coloured envelope, and handed it to the millionaire.

Mr. Glyn took the missive, and tore it open eagerly. As he scanned the message his face lit up with gladness.

"Then the boys are safe, thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "But"—he turned tartly upon the messenger—"what does this mean, boy? This message was handed in at Manton at nine-thirty this morning, and it is now one o'clock!"

"Which as 'ow there's bin a mistake, sir," said that worthy. "The operator what took the wire put 'Whyn' on the

envelope 'stead of 'Glyn'; and I've bin 'untin' all over Rylcombe all mornin' tryin' to find a party name of Whyn, w'ich there ain't no—"

Mr. Glyn cut his eloquence short with an angry gesture, and handed the wire to Blake without a word. Then he started the car, and, turning in at the gates of Glyn House, shot down the drive.

Blake read the message out aloud. It ran as follows:

"To Glyn, Rylcombe.—Have traced men to moor beyond Moorcliff, on coast. Come at once! Urgent!—GLYN."

As he finished reading, Blake's eyes gleamed.

"My hat, you chaps! We must be in this!" he snapped. "Come on!"

The juniors leaped into the saddles, and, turning in at the gates, sped down the drive. They had barely piled their machines against the front of the house when Mr. Glyn came hurrying out.

"Can we come with you, sir?" gasped Blake eagerly.

Mr. Glyn glanced at the eager, excited faces of the juniors. But he was a man of quick decision, and he made up his mind at once.

"It is your half-day, is it not?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then jump in. I have already arranged for the news to be 'phoned to Dr. Holmes, and I will be responsible for you."

The juniors piled into the car. It was a tight squeeze, but they didn't mind that. Mr. Glyn grasped the steering-wheel, and a moment later the powerful car hummed up the drive and out of the gates, en route for Moorcliff.

Would they be in time?

CHAPTER 9.

The End of the Chase.

WHEN Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn awoke the following morning they got the shock of their lives. As the startling events of the previous evening flashed across their minds, their first thought was of the time.

Bernard Glyn's watch had stopped, but Tom Merry's was still going, and when they peered at it in the gloom of the barn, both juniors nearly fell down with astonishment.

The fingers of the watch indicated half-past twelve!

That they had overslept themselves was perhaps not to be wondered at in view of what they had gone through. But it was a discovery that floored the juniors. The possibility of what had taken place on that lonely moor while they had slept filled them with grave misgivings.

Had Mr. Glyn and the rescue party arrived and got to grips with the scoundrels, or had the men repaired the 'plane, and got away before the rescue-party arrived? Or, again, had the motor engineer forgotten to send off their wire? In that case, the position was indeed hopeless.

The juniors lost no time, and began to look about them. But any hopes they had cherished the previous night that daylight would show a means of escape were quickly dispelled.

The planked walls and the stout door of their prison resisted all their efforts.

"It's no use, Tommy!" groaned Bernard Glyn, in despair. "We'll never break out of here! And, in any case, it's too late! By now those scoundrels will be well away across the English Channel!"

Tom Merry did not answer. Though of a naturally optimistic temperament, he could not help feeling that his chum was right. The position seemed hopeless.

Another hour passed—an hour of gloom and despair for the captives. But

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it proved to be the hour before the dawn. With startling suddenness Tom Merry raised himself on one elbow in the straw, and listened intently. From without the barn came the thud of hoofs and the musical jingle of chain-harness. Then came a deep, cheery voice:

"Oooooop, laddie!"

And almost simultaneously Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn leaped to their feet, and, dashing to the door, began to thump and shout with all the force of their lungs.

"Help! Rescue! Help!"

There followed an exclamation of surprise, and then the thud of hoofs and jingle of harness ceased. Plodding footsteps approached slowly, the bar was lifted, and the door swung open.

As the juniors rushed out, blinking in the bright sunshine, the farm labourer—for he was that—jumped backward, with eyes goggling and mouth agape.

"Who be 'ee, dang it?" he began blankly.

But the juniors did not stay to answer that. Bernard Glyn flung a half-crown at the startled yokel, and together they dashed madly across the fields; and when, a minute later, they reached the hedge, and looked eagerly over the moor, they both gave gasps of deep relief.

The aeroplane was still there. They were not too late, after all. They could plainly see Neumann and Symonds also walking impatiently up and down near the roadway.

"They're watching the road!" said Tom Merry quickly. "It looks as if that mechanic johnny hasn't come. Yes, by Jove, he's there fiddling about in the pilot's berth! See him?"

Glyn nodded, as his eyes made out the figure of a young fellow in blue overalls working at the engine of the 'plane.

"Come on!" he muttered. "I'm blown if I know what we're going to do, but we've simply got to do something."

The juniors dived into the gorse, and began to work their way towards the aeroplane. It was a severe test of scoutcraft. But this time the juniors could see and take advantage of what cover the moor offered, and by good fortune they reached to within twenty yards of the 'plane undiscovered.

"Got to watch and wait now," whispered Tom Merry, as they lay flat in the scrub. "Perhaps your pater will come in time yet. I see they've brought the two-seater here. I think I see the game. If the 'plane fails 'em, they hope to get away in that—Hullo!"

The sudden roar of the aeroplane engine was heard, and Bernard Glyn, who was watching Neumann and Symonds at the time, gave a startled jump.

"Quiet!" hissed Tom Merry. "He's only testing the engine."

"Then that means they'll soon be off!" said Glyn, in alarm.

Evidently the engine was satisfactory, for the mechanic shut it off, and, dropping from the pilot's seat, put on his coat. Then he walked away, whistling towards the roadway.

Glyn was on his feet on the instant. Only pausing to snatch a spanner from the ground, he hauled himself into the pilot's berth. His head vanished from sight, and next second Tom Merry heard the spanner at work, and barely thirty seconds later Bernard Glyn was by his side again.

"I've done it!" he panted jubilantly.

"That merry 'plane won't fly again for many a long day. But did they spot me?"

"No; they were too busy gassing—Hullo! That mechanic chap's off. Now for it! We'll see some fun in a minute!"

But the "fun" came in less than a minute. Tom Merry was watching the two men approaching across the moor. Bernard Glyn was watching the departing mechanic as he sped away on his motor-bike, and he saw something his chum did not see—something that made his heart leap joyfully.

"Great pip! The pater!" he gasped swiftly. "Here's the pater at last. What topping luck! Look, Tommy!"

But though he heard, all Tom Merry's attention was upon Neumann and Symonds, for they had also seen the powerful, red-painted car tearing along the white ribbon of road, and were making a frantic dash for the 'plane.

Symonds came first. He rushed for the propeller, and grasped it. Neumann dashed up, and simply hurled himself into the pilot's seat. And then he gave a howl of baffled rage.

"We've been fooled, Symonds!" he yelled furiously. "That hound of a mechanic has smashed—"

Without finishing his sentence, he leaped to the ground and made a rush for the two-seater, followed next second by Symonds. But neither of the rascals reached it. From the gorse two agile figures leaped, and hurled themselves upon them.

Madly the fellows struggled to free themselves, and it would have gone hard with the juniors had not help been at hand. But, happily, help came quickly.

Without slackening speed, the car left the road, and came jolting and crashing through the undergrowth. It stopped, and from it sprang Mr. Glyn, Blake & Co., and Lowther and Manners. Without hesitation they flung themselves into the scrimmage.

It was soon over. Hopelessly outnumbered, the two rascals were crushed to the ground, helpless in the grasp of many determined hands. Not until the men were bound hand and foot did the juniors relax their grasp. Then Bernard Glyn turned, grinning faintly to his father.

"You came in the nick of time, dad!" he panted. "I thought it was all up with both of us then. And now—"

He stooped over the fuming Neumann, and, inserting his hand in the baffled rascal's pocket, brought to light a long, official-looking envelope, and handed it to his father.

"Here you are, dad! Here are the merry old plans!" he said quietly. "You ought to stand us all a jolly good feed in Manton for this. I could do with one myself, anyway."

Mr. Glyn almost snatched the package, gave one glance at the contents, and then he gave a deep gasp of intense relief.

"And you shall have your feed, my lads!" he said quietly. "But we are longing to hear the story, Bernard."

"Hear, hear!"

Bernard Glyn grinned, and related all that had happened since they left Glyn House.

There is little more to tell. Mr. Glyn was as good as his word, and after the two sullen prisoners had been handed over to the Manton police, the party adjourned to the only hotel the place boasted for the promised feed.

And what a feed it was! As Tom Merry said afterwards, the feed alone amply repaid them for all they had gone through, and Bernard Glyn agreed with him.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "FALLEN AMONG FOES!" By Martin Clifford. Avoid disappointment by ordering EARLY.)

The Most Exciting Serial Ever Written.



letting both boy and girl off further punishment.

(Now go on with the story.)

Reprieved.

MEPPEL resented himself and smiled in self-satisfaction as cheers for him came from the slaves and overseers alike. Jasper Standish's judgment had been right. He had added to his power and popularity on Slave Island by showing leniency for once.

Dick Harmer heard the Dutchman's words, as did everyone else, and although for the moment he feared treachery and thought it likely Hans Meppel would not keep to his word, he realised that it was Hobson's choice.

A word from Meppel would see some description of wild animals loosed upon himself and Elaine, or them murdered by the dozen powerful, armed overseers who had entered the arena and were approaching him, so that it would not be advisable to disobey.

Before they could give him the command, as a matter of fact, he had tossed aside his sword and suffered himself to be marched from the arena. An overseer followed, carrying the inert figure of Elaine, and both she and Dick were

try as he would; and, to his annoyance, it kept sleep from his eyes until shortly before the dawn. Not for a moment did it occur to him that Elaine was somewhat like his dead wife!

Captain Dirk Kentish, R.N.R.

IMAGINE a stockily-built man of forty-two or three, with an aggressive beak of a nose set beneath flashing, steel-blue eyes, a sun-tanned skin, deeply lined and weather-beaten, and a short, black, pointed beard, and fiercely-twisted moustache. Clothe him in the garments of a skipper of the merchant service, and you have in your mind's eye the vision of a certain Captain Dirk Kentish, R.N.R.

Picture him with a great curved and blackened pipe protruding from his bearded lips, and with a large brown monkey on his shoulder, and you see Captain Kentish as Mr. Richard Harmer saw him when he found him in the garden of his cottage down in South Devon.

Dick Harmer's father had sought out Captain Kentish because of an advertisement the skipper had inserted in the "Agony" column of a London newspaper.

A very strange advertisement it was, and ran as follows:

careworn face. "It was with regard to my son that I came to you. I thought, after seeing your advertisement, that you might be just the man to help me."

"George!" the skipper shouted. "Where is the timber-toed, lazy, good-for-nothing lubber— Oh, here you are! A chair for this gentleman, George—sick!"

A curious and comical form had emerged from the porch—that of a typical old sailor, who must have been quite sixty, and who had a bald head and a wooden leg.

As he also possessed a round, clean-shaven face that reminded one of a setting sun, a decided squint, and a habit of pursing up his lips as though constantly about to whistle, he was a man in whom a humorous artist would have delighted.

"Ay, ay, cap'n!" he jerked; and he stumped back into the cottage for the required chair, and, having returned with it, gave a hitch at his slacks and departed.

Captain Kentish darted at his visitor a quick, penetrating look. He felt sorry for him, seeing that the loss of his boy had left him a stricken man.

Mr. Harmer's hair had turned quite white, and there were great shadows beneath his eyes that told only too plainly

(Continued on the next page.)

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2nd " 5/- " " " " " | And many Consolation Prizes.

of weeks of worry and anxiety, and anything but regular sleep.

"I might as well explain my circumstances, and why I inserted that ad., sir," the skipper said, filling his pipe and re-seating himself as his caller took the chair George had brought to him.

"My name's Dirk Kentish, as you know, and all the days of my life, from the time I was a lad of twelve till a couple of months ago, I've sailed the sea. A fortunate investment of certain savings brings me in an income that will make me never want for much again, and I thought that I could retire and take matters easily; but, bless you, I hadn't settled in this pretty little cabin more than a fortnight before I began to feel as hipped and dissatisfied as man could well feel!"

"You craved for the adventurous life, the life of action—to which you had always been accustomed?" Mr. Harmer suggested.

The skipper removed his pipe from between his perfect teeth and nodded.

"That's it, Mr. Harmer," he agreed. "Life ashore is too slow for me. You see, for years I've owned my own vessel—she lies yonder in the harbour now—and

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since I got moderately rich I've gone on voyages as much for adventure and excitement as gain, and taken on some queer and hazardous things. I've worked for the U.S.A. Navy, and been up against opium smugglers, I've dived for treasures sunk in torpedoed ships, I've run guns under the very noses of certain people who would have blown me and my boat out of the water if they had had a notion of what I was up to! But, enough of myself, except to say that my ad. appeared because I am throwing up this life of idleness here as soon as something to do that appeals to me turns up, and I thought the insertion in the newspaper might bring it. Suppose you tell me how you think I could help you in your trouble?"

Mr. Richard Harmer leaned eagerly forward in his chair.

"I have a very strange story to tell you, Captain Kentish," he said.

"It'll not be the first I've heard, so fire ahead!" the skipper answered.

"You evidently read how my boy was abducted by the mysterious gang of Malays, who, after attacking me in the garden of my home, must have fallen upon him and carried him off. That was nine months ago, and I had begun to

mourn poor Dick—that was my boy's name—as dead, and expected never to hear of him again, when, like a bolt from the blue, I received a photograph of him in which he is apparently working as a slave, and being treated with the utmost cruelty."

"A slave! Slavery is surely extinct?" The skipper knitted his brows. "Where could he be working as a slave?" he asked.

"I will come to that, captain, but first let me acquaint you with certain happenings of fifty years ago. Strange as it may seem, they are indirectly connected with my lost boy."

He paused nervously to light a cigarette. He puffed at it abstractedly, then continued:

"Like yourself, my grandfather was a sea captain, and he found wealth in the following of the sea. In his cruising he discovered an uninhabited and uncharted island somewhere in the heart of the Pacific, in which were signs of rich deposits of silver.

"He was very reticent about his discovery; but he dropped a hint that he had secured a lease of the place from a Government he did not name.

"He remained in England only long

enough to fit out an expedition to return to the place and arrange about working the silver mines, and he set sail on the tenth of June, 1870, in a vessel called the Seagull. From that day to this he has never been heard of, and there is little doubt that the ship foundered with all hands."

"And the island—its whereabouts?" the skipper jerked, keenly interested.

"Has remained a complete mystery," Mr. Harmer answered, "though I have spent a large sum in financing an expedition to try to find it, which, as I have already made obvious, failed. Yet, listen! There is a slender clue by which the island—which is now mine by right of inheritance—could be identified."

"It is?"

"Some giant rocks upon it shaped exactly like a gigantic sphinx, which my grandfather mentioned before he set sail for it never to be seen again. And now to return to my son Dick."

He threw away his half-smoked cigarette, and with fingers that shook with the excitement that was gripping him, fumbled in an inner pocket of his coat.

He produced a fairly large, square-shaped envelope, which he passed to the skipper. The latter saw that it was addressed—in typewriting—to Mr. Harmer at his house at Beech Marshes, and, on opening it, found it contained a photograph.

The skipper always did things methodically, and he noted that the envelope was postmarked as being posted in the West Central district just over a week previously.

He glanced at some more typewriting which appeared on the back of the photo before he examined the picture itself.

"You will never see him again," ran the sinister message. "He is far away, and will work as a slave, as you see him here, for the rest of his life."

His eyes very hard and bright, Captain Kentish turned over the piece of pasteboard and studied the photograph.

It depicted a handsome lad, who was stripped to the waist and using a pickaxe at the base of some rocks. He looked as though he might be hewing stone. Beside him was a villainous-looking man in white ducks, who held a heavy whip. The figures were small, and the photo showed tropical scenery in the distance.

"The lad is your boy?" Captain

Kentish murmured, still studying the photograph.

"Yes," Mr. Harmer answered huskily; then: "Do you notice something else in the photograph that is significant—startling?"

The skipper knitted his brows, then uttered a sharp cry as he noticed the shape of some towering rocks appearing in the background.

"By James!" he exclaimed. "These rocks—they are shaped like a sphinx!"

"Precisely," Mr. Richard Harmer leant sharply forward. "Captain," he said impressively, "my boy has been taken to the very island that has been lost to we Harmers for so long—the island that is rich with silver, and mine and his. That is, unless an almost unbelievable coincidence has occurred."

Hardly able to suppress his excitement, Captain Kentish emitted a long, shrill whistle.

"There is no clue to the sender of this picture?" he asked.

"None."

"And you are not inclined to think it a 'fake'—a cruel hoax?"

"No. I believe that Dick is a slave there, as the photograph would have me believe, though why he has been sent to this living death, and the fact made known to me to add to my anxiety and suffering, I am at a complete loss to imagine."

"You have shown this to the police? Ah, you have! What do they think of it?"

"They are reluctant to express an opinion, because, I think, they are as mystified as myself. Scotland Yard has worked tirelessly to get to the bottom of the mystery surrounding my boy's disappearance, but all to no avail."

"You want me to set sail: try to find the island and rescue your son, Mr. Harmer?" Captain Kentish suggested.

Mr. Harmer inclined his head.

"The expedition will swallow all the money I have left out of a once large fortune," he said, "but it must and shall be made, if you are willing to undertake it."

The skipper jumped to his feet with an energy that jerked his pet monkey out of a doze and caused it to chatter disagreeably.

"I am your man!" he tapped, his alert eyes a-gleam with enthusiasm. "It's like looking for a needle in a haystack, but I'll leave no stone unturned to find the place, rescue your lad, and enable you to come into your own!"

"Heaven bless you!" Mr. Harmer said, his voice breaking. "I hardly expected you would accept the mission, let alone jump at it as you have done."

Fate is a capricious goddess, and, curiously enough, at practically the same moment that Mr. Harmer was discussing the photograph with Captain Kentish, the sender of it was gazing at another that was to give him an ugly shock.

This person, the reader need hardly be told, was Jasper Standish. He had been back in England some three weeks, and had lost little time in completing his revenge by posting to Mr. Harmer the picture, which he himself had taken of Dick shortly before bidding Slave Island adieu.

His lawyer, at his orders, had employed one of the best and most far-reaching detective agencies in existence to try to learn what happened to Jasper Standish's daughter when he had been in prison and his wife had died of privation and want, and after numerous inquiries and endless investigations, the agency had come upon a valuable clue.

This took the form of a letter found at the house in the East End where his wife had died. It had been addressed to him at Bleakmoor Prison, but was marked

to the effect that it was not yet time for him to receive another communication after his wife's last, and had, therefore, been re-directed and returned to her.

Before she could post it again, Mary Standish had breathed her last, and, unopened until the detectives unearthed it, the letter had remained with the poor woman's landlady.

In the envelope was a letter full of love, tenderness, and hope, which brought a mist to Jasper Standish's eyes, and, enclosed with it, was a photograph of their child, then a girl of about eight.

Standish took one look at it, then gave a hoarse cry.

Fair, with but one difference—that it was younger and more childish—the face was that of the girl whose life Dick Harmer had saved on Slave Island—the land to which he—Standish—had been, yet might never be able to go to again, having not the least idea of its whereabouts, save that it was somewhere in the heart of the vast Pacific.

Fate Takes a Hand in the Game!

HIS own child sharing a similar fate to that of the lad he had made the victim of his vengeance!

Jasper Standish felt stunned. He reeled beneath the shock. It was Nemesis—a cruel yet fitting judgment upon him, he thought at first—and he was tempted to make efforts to free both his daughter and Dick Harmer, though that mood was not upon him for long.

Nemesis! After all, who ever heard of Nemesis and retribution other than in the pages of some sensational story? Such happenings did not take place in real life.

His daughter must have been on the island long before he even planned to send Dick Harmer there, so she would have been there in any case—whether he had had the boy kidnapped and condemned to slavery or otherwise.

No! He would show neither Richard Harmer nor his son a scrap more mercy than the elder man had shown his wife when, breaking his pledged word, he had indifferently left her to starve and die! He would do his utmost to rescue the girl—his girl, whom he had heard called Elaine—but Dick Harmer should remain on Slave Island and work beneath the lash until he died of old age, so far as he was concerned.

He began to pace the room, thinking, thinking. He pulled up abruptly. Dick Harmer had saved his daughter's life. For the moment that had not come home to him.

Just for an instant the hard look left his eyes; then it crept back again.

But for Dick Harmer's father, Elaine would hardly have been on Slave Island and in danger, he assured himself. Had Richard Harmer given her and her mother a home and money, as he had sworn on oath to do, the child would not have been parted from Mary and have drifted to that wild spot in the Pacific.

How to get her away from Slave Island—that was the problem. To think that she had been within his grasp, and, ignorant that she was his child, he had let her go again.

For two days Jasper Standish shut himself in his study, and was inconsolable.

He refused to see even the old family lawyer, Ames, and neither ate nor slept.

Where was Slave Island? What was its latitude and longitude?

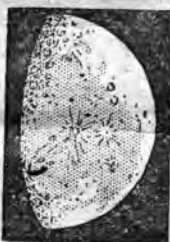
In vain he puzzled his brain for a clue, however faint, that would give him some inkling of the island's exact position in the Pacific; but, apparently, there was not one to be found.

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He only knew that, both in going and returning from the land of slavery, they had steamed for quite six days after passing other islands, and that it lay South—far South.

There seemed only one way of rescuing Elaine, and that was to wait with what patience he could muster until Hans Meppel made his next trip to Thursday Island.

Jasper Standish had already half made up his mind to journey thither at once

in his steam-yacht, and remain there until the Dutchman should appear; but he was still the prey of many haunting fears.

Elaine seemed a girl full of an indomitable pluck and spirit, and what would happen to her if she again defied the iron discipline of the island?

The man shuddered, and was torn with a maddening anxiety. Hans Meppel would not be likely to spare her the second time, and long before he—

Standish—could meet the Dutchman on Thursday Island, Elaine might have been done to death in the tyrant's arena!

When these thoughts came to the Britisher he clenched his fists, and silently vowed that, if he found his child had come to harm at his hands, he would choke the life from Hans Meppel, no matter what the consequences of his action might be.

(Another grand instalment of this romantic adventure serial next week.)

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