

"FOR HONOUR'S SAKE!" A Powerful School Story by Famous
MARTIN CLIFFORD Inside.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

No. 839.
Vol. XXV.
March 8th, 1924.

The GEM 2^D

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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



POMFRET'S PRISONER!

A Dramatic Incident from the Grand Long Complete School
Story of Tom Merry & Co. contained in this issue.



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
 "THE MAGNET" Every Monday
 "THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
 "JUNGLE JINKS" Every Thursday
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My Dear Chums,—Next week will prove to be a real red-letter one for any number of my chums. There is bound to be a bigger rush than ever, for the issue of the GEM, published next Wednesday, will contain the Results of the Great Football Competition.

NEXT WEEK'S THE WEEK!

Make a note of this fact, please! I have been pretty well swamped with inquiries as to when the results would be made known. The job has been one that would have suited our old friend Hercules. It was a mammoth task. But only seven days more, and then everybody will know what is what; and though it is not in the running for everybody to get a prize, all the same there will be much cause for jubilation among many readers of the GEM.

"GUSSY'S GROCERY STORE!"

By Martin Clifford.

More excellent news! Next week's story of St. Jim's will be an extra long one, and in every respect the splendid yarn, which shows D'Arcy busy on good works, will be extra special. Tom Grimes, the grocer's boy, makes his reappearance, and this cannot be other than welcome, for everybody who knows anything of Grimes appreciates his manliness and sportsmanlike qualities. Sad to say, however, that in next week's yarn Tom Grimes comes to utter grief when on his rounds, for he falls among thieves. Grimes' employer is a hefty, hasty party, the sort of man who will not listen to reason, however urgent it may be for him to do so. The consequence is that Grimes is "fired" for no fault of his own.

WHAT DOES GUSSY DO?

Gussy comes to the rescue. The swell of St. Jim's is naturally very sorry for Grimes. D'Arcy keeps warm corners in his roomy heart for all cases of acute distress. But the scion of the house of Eastwood does not stop short at sympathy and its outward expression. It is not a bit of good telling the victim of misfortune to go away and be well fed and clad and to have a good time. A particularly wise personage pointed out this homely truth many centuries ago. Gussy decides to set Grimes going in a grocery establishment of his own. It is a right noble idea, and the working out thereof is productive of some situations as amazing as they are mirthful.

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It is Gussy's Grocery Store—don't forget that part—but it is worked for the benefit of worthy young Grimes. You can form some conjectures of the fine use Mr. Martin Clifford makes of such a promising theme. The yarn is just delightful, and you will laugh till the tears come.

"CYCLONE SAM!"

By Gilbert Chester.

Sam Watson was the right man in the right place. You will hear all about him in next week's splendid tale of the West. But there is no harm in effecting a slight introduction to the daring individual who happened along so appropriately just when a certain circus champion had quarrelled with his boss, the proprietor of the show. Sam finds that the circus artist, whose job it was to loop the loop, is leaving his berth in a huff. Of course, Cyclone Sam chips in and is taken on with good results for him and the circus, naturally, but not without making the displaced rival furiously jealous. Sam not merely loops the loop, but Fate wills it that he has to take part in the motor-race for the California Cup, the big event of the season. I am not going to say any more concerning this supremely fine story. The struggle between the two men goes on in ding-dong, hammer-and-tongs style, and there is a climax which throws into relief the unlimited treachery of a peppery, disgruntled circus performer. But that is not all. The curtain falls on a sensation so thrilling that it is bound to make the reader gasp. It is the best yarn of the track ever penned.

THE "ST. JIM'S NEWS."

Look out for a capital issue of the supplement the week after next. I am very glad to note the thoroughly warm reception the "St. Jim's News" has enjoyed. As a matter of fact, I am

always reading letters which run something like this: "Do let's have more of the 'St. Jim's News'!" The popular feature has lots to recommend it. The issue you will see in a fortnight's time carries on with the best traditions of St. Jim's, to say nothing of its own bright and lively history as a premier school paper.

"TOM OF THE AJAX!"

All GEM readers have followed the adventures of Tom Gale with the keenest interest. There are some very exciting episodes in the next instalment. I have had abundant evidence offered me in connection with this serial that my chums thoroughly appreciate a story which tells of the sea or the big river, where the trading ships steam up with big cargoes. The plot of "Tom of the Ajax" rivals in ingenuity anything we have had in the famous Wednesday story paper which everybody likes and reads.

OUR COMING SERIAL!

With every sort of confidence I can speak of the great merit of our new serial. I am not going to give the secret away, but I can certainly promise my chums a real treat. For long past I have been carefully taking note of the many hints which reach me as to precisely what sort of serial is best liked. Suggestions of this sort are a real help to me. My one aim is to please the greatest number possible of GEM readers, and the new serial can be relied upon to accomplish that feat.

THE TUCK HAMPER.

There is some little doubt among readers as to where they should send entries for the Tuck Hamper Competition. These storyettes should be addressed to the Editor, the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4, and marked "Tuck Hamper" in the corner. I want to remind my friends once again that they should use post-cards, thus saving a halfpenny stamp, and also greatly facilitating the work of judging all the merry little anecdotes which are sent in.

Another reminder! Don't forget that next week's GEM will contain an extra-long story of St. Jim's and also the result of our Great Footballers' Names Competition. Don't get left by leaving your order too late!

YOUR EDITOR.



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Thanks to Ralph Reckness Cardew's handling of the mysterious plot, Leonard Lee sees light at last and resolves not to be a party to the scheme of the rascally Claude Pomfret!



FOR HONOUR'S SAKE!

A Powerfully-Written Long Complete School Story of the World-Renowned Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By Famous
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Not Quite Satisfactory!

"POMFRET!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully.
"Yaas, wathah; Pomfwet!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically.

Tom Merry smiled. Manners and Lowther chuckled. Arthur Augustus, standing in the doorway of Study No. 10 in the Shell, turned his eyeglass inquiringly and a little severely upon the Terrible Three.

"I don't see anythin' to gwin at!" he remarked.

"There's a looking-glass over the mantelpiece!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Wats! Now, Tom Mewwy—"

"The fact is, Gussy—"

"P'way listen to me, deah boy! I wegard this as a mattah of some importance," said Arthur Augustus, coming into the study. "You are makin' up the list for the Gwammah School match—what?"

Tom Merry nodded.

He was seated at the study table, with a sheet of impot paper before him, and a pencil in his hand. He had been chewing the end of the pencil thoughtfully when the swell of St. Jim's appeared in the offing. Arthur Augustus had interrupted him.

There were thirteen or fourteen names scribbled on the paper. Only eleven were wanted, and Tom Merry had been crossing the others out. Twelve remained uncrossed; so evidently one more had to go. Tom Merry had been deeply considering that point.

"Am I intewwuptin' you, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, as he took a seat on the corner of the study table.

"Yes."

"Sowwy, old scout—"

"You can leave off interrupting," suggested Tom.

"Yaas; but this mattah is wathah important," explained Arthur Augustus. "We want to beat the Gwammawians, don't we?"

"Certainly!"

"I heah that they are in gweat form, too. That is why I have weighed in, Tom Mewwy!"

"You don't feel disposed to weigh out?" asked Tom.

"Wubbish! I want to make suah that you don't make a bloomah on this wathah important occasion. You are simply bound to play Pomfwet in this match, Tom Mewwy."

Tom smiled again.

"You think so?" he asked.

"I am absolutely suah of it," declared Arthur Augustus, with emphasis. "Pomfwet is a wippin' playah—simply wippin'! I know he is a new fellow at St. Jim's, Tom Mewwy, and some of the fellows will think it is wathah

early to twy him in a school match. But you needn't let that influence you.

"I won't," said Tom.

"Good! Don't, deah boy! You noticed how Len Pomfwet played up in the House match last Saturday—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Didn't it stwike you that he was just the man wanted for the Gwammah School match?"

"Just so!"

"Bai Jove, you are weally a vewy sensible chap, Tom Mewwy! You agwee with my opinion exactly!"

There was a chortle in Study No. 10.

"I have made a fwend of Pomfwet," continued Arthur Augustus. "I like the chap vewy much."

"He seems a good sort," agreed Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! He has stopp'd Mulvaney fwom bullyin' poor old Tompkins in Study No. 4, you know."

"Good! But that isn't exactly a reason for playing him in the Grammar School match."

"Vewy twue, deah boy; but he is a top-hole footballah! He kicked the winnin' goal last Saturday, with Fatty Wynn between the posts. You simply can't leave him out of this school match, Tom Mewwy!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

"Of course, you are juniah captain, Tom Mewwy, and it is not weally my bizney to advise you—"

"Has that just occurred to you?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"

"It's not your bizney, but you're going to do it all the same?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"Yaas, wathah! You see, I was afwaid that you might make a bloomah! If you have decided to play Pomfwet, it is all wight."

"Right as rain!" said Tom cheerily. "Len Pomfwet goes down. But, you see, somebody else will have to stand out to make room for him. Can't play twelve men on Wednesday."

"That's all wight."

"Oh, it's all right, is it?"

"Yaas, wathah! No weally good sportsman would object to bein' dropp'd out of the team to let in a bettah man."

"But the chap who's dropp'd mightn't think Len a bettah man!" remarked Tom.

"Probably not—fellows are so conceited," assented Arthur Augustus. "But then you will have to use your authority as juniah captain, and ovahwule the chap, you see."

"I see," assented Tom.

He glanced at his list again, and wetted the end of the pencil. Arthur Augustus glanced at the list also.

"Let's have some more advice, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

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blandly. "It's jolly good of you to help your skipper out like this!"

"I wavy don't mench, deah boy!"

"Fatty Wynn's in goal," went on Tom. "Can't improve on Fatty there. Kangaroo and Herries at back."

"They're all wight—especially old Hewwies!"

"Redfern, Clive, and Lowther, halves."

"Weddy is vevy good, and Clive it all wight, but I am not suah about Lowthah."

"What?" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"The twuth is the twuth, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I think you are bettah as a half than as a forward, but I think Dig would be bettah still."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And now for the front line," said Tom Merry cheerily.

"If Pomfret hadn't come to St. Jim's, the front line would have stood thusly—Talbot, Levison, little me, D'Arcy, Figgins. I want to put Blake in, but there's no room for Blake. What do you think of that for a front line, Gussy?"

"Vevy good indeed, deah boy! You can't vevy well leave out yourself to let in Pomfret, of course—"

"Not quite," smiled Tom; "and I don't think we could spare Talbot. One of the others will have to go."

"The New House fellows will be vevy watry if you dwop Figgins, Howevah—"

"Can't drop Figgins," said Tom Merry decidedly. "Figgins is one of the best!"

"Powwaps so. That leaves only Levison," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

The Terrible Three grinned.

"Can't spare Levison," said Tom. "Levison's too good. I've put him in instead of Blake, because he's at the top of his form."

"But you want to play Pomfret?"

"Certainly!"

"You've decided to do so?"

"Yes."

"Then somebody must stand out, you know."

"Quite so! Here goes!"

Tom Merry drew the pencil through a name in the list. The name was D'Arcy!

Arthur Augustus stared.

"You are cwossin' out the wong name, deah boy," he said.

"How's that?"

"You have cwossed out my name."

"That isn't wrong—it's right!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"As you said, old scout, somebody will have to stand out to make room for Pomfret," said Tom. "And you mentioned that a really good sportsman wouldn't mind standing out to make room for a better man. I was just thinking out how I should break the news to you, old top, when you butted in and put it so nicely."

"Bai Jove!"

"So that's settled," said Tom cheerily. "Thanks so much for your advice, Gussy! I'll ask you again next time I'm in doubt."

"You uttah ass—"

"What?"

"You fwabjous clump—"

"Eh?"

"I suggested puttin' in Pomfret, but not leavin' out a bettah man!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"But I haven't," said Tom innocently. "I've left you out."

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

The expression on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face just then was worth, so to speak, a guinea a box.

"As you mentioned," continued Tom blandly, "fellows are so conceited—"

"Bai Jove!"

"So a football skipper has to use his authority and override the conceited individual who thinks he oughtn't to be dropped—"

"You cwass ass!"

"You don't mean to say that you're not satisfied with the list, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, raising his eyebrows in surprise.

Arthur Augustus slid off the study table.

"I veward you as a pviize ass!" he said. "I only hope, Tom Mewwy, that the Gwammah School match will not be thrown away by your uttah incapacity as football captain! It is not un-common for a football skippah to be a cwass ass, but I veward you, Tom Mewwy, as the limit—the vevy outside edge! Wats!"

And with that valediction, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked out of Study No. 10, with his noble nose in the air—leaving the Terrible Three chuckling.

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CHAPTER 2.

The Grammar School Match!

"YOU'RE coming, Cardew?" Levison of the Fourth asked Cardew that question on Wednesday afternoon. The brake had arrived to take the St. Jim's junior footballers over to the Grammar School at Rylcombe, and Levison and Clive, who were in the team, were ready to start. Ralph Reekness Cardew, who was not in the team, was taking his ease in the study armchair when his chums looked in upon him.

"Comin'?" Cardew sat up lazily. "Comin' where? Anythin' on this afternoon?"

"You've forgotten that there's a match with the Grammar School, I suppose," observed Sidney Clive sarcastically.

"Dear me! Is there?" asked Cardew.

"Yes, there is, you slacking ass!"

"Does dear old Thomas want me to play?" yawned Cardew.

"Haven't you looked at the football list?" exclaimed Clive. "You're not in it, or any other slacking duffer!"

Cardew grinned.

"Clive, old man, it's good for a fellow to pal with you," he said. "It prevents a chap from gettin' conceited."

"Well, are you coming over to see the match?" asked Levison.

"What rot! I can see football matches when I want to, without walking over to Rylcombe."

"We'll find room for you in the brake, if you're too lazy to walk," grunted Clive.

"It will be crowded, you know," said Cardew.

"Can't you stand a crowd, fathead?"

"And I mayn't get a seat in the brake comin' back," said Cardew plaintively. "Lots of fellows will walk over, and they'll all make a rush for the brake comin' back. I know them!"

"Take your chance," said Levison. "Look here, Cardew, what's the good of frowsting in the study while your pals are playing football? Come over and cheer our goals."

"If any!" suggested Cardew.

"Anyhow, Pomfret will bag a goal or two," said Clive. "That new chap is a regular corker at footer!"

Cardew looked interested at last.

"Is Pomfret in the team?" he asked.

"Yes, ass! Everybody in the House knows that excepting you. Gussy was dropped to make room for him."

"Poor old Gussy!"

"Well, Pomfret's a more valuable man. I shouldn't have groused if Tom Merry had left me out for him," said Levison. "It's amazing how Pomfret plays soccer—simply amazing!"

"I don't see that," yawned Cardew. "He's had lots of practice, and was always a good man at the game."

"What rot! I don't know how much soccer they play in Switzerland, but it stands to reason that Pomfret never got much practice at school in Lausanne."

"In Lausanne!" repeated Cardew.

"He was at school in Lausanne before he came to St. Jim's. You know that."

"Oh! Ah! Yes! I'd forgotten!" Cardew laughed. "I—I see! Well, I think I'll come. I'd like to see him knock the stuffin' out of the Grammarians in his old style!"

"In his old style!" repeated Clive. "What the thump do you know about his old style, when you never saw him before a fortnight ago?"

Levison fixed his eyes on Cardew.

"You've made a lot of queer remarks about Pomfret, Cardew," he said. "To hear you talk, anybody would think that you'd known the chap for years, before he came to St. Jim's."

"Would they?" yawned Cardew.

"Yes—and you couldn't have known him, so what do you mean?" demanded Levison impatiently.

"I mean to be more careful how I talk, that's all," said Cardew blandly. He detached himself from the armchair.

"Wait a tick while I get my coat—it's cold."

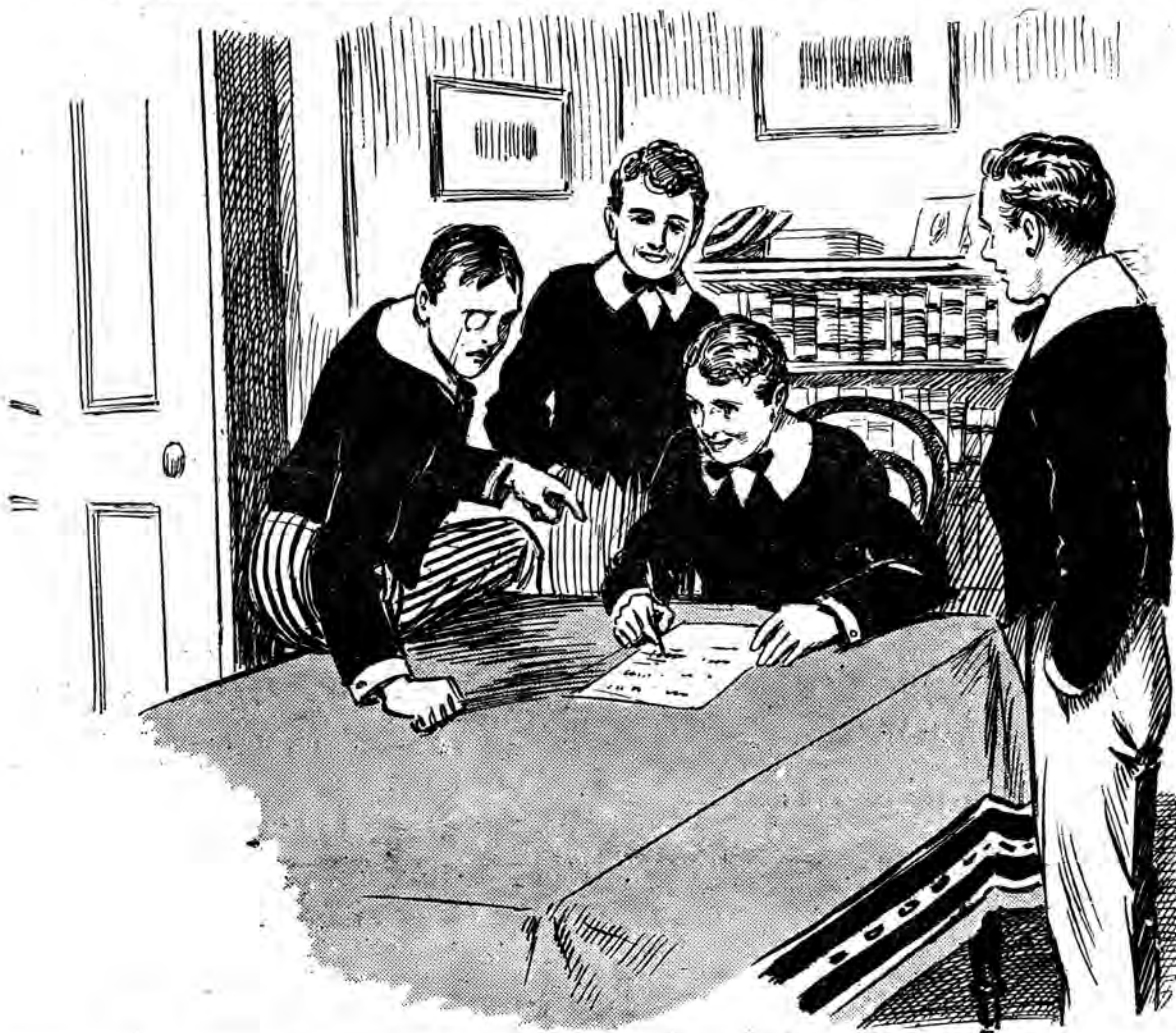
"Buck up, then!"

Cardew went downstairs with Levison and Clive. The footballers were already mounting into the brake. As many fellows as the vehicle would hold intended to go with them, and there was rather a cram. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Blake and Digby pushed for places—their chum Herries was the only member of Study No. 6 who was in the team, and the three were going over to encourage him with their presence. Tompkins of the Fourth, though usually a diffident and backward youth, shoved manfully for a place—he was determined to go over with Len, his new study-mate, whose coming to St. Jim's had made life in Study No. 4 much more comfortable for Tompkins. Levison and Clive were, of course, entitled to places in the brake, and they contrived to squeeze in Cardew with them.

"Shove up, there, you fellows!" called out Tom Merry.

"Can you make room for Cardew on that seat, Pomfret?"

Len looked round at Cardew, and there was a steely gleam



"You've decided to play Pomfwet?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Certainly," answered Tom Merry. "Then somebody must stand out, you know." "Quite so. Here goes!" Tom Merry drew his pencil through a name in the list. The name was D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus stared. "You are cwoessin' out the w'ong name, deah boy!" he said. (See page 4.)

in his eyes as he met the glance, half-mocking, of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Yes, if you like," said Len briefly.

"Thanks!" drawled Cardew.

He sat down beside Len.

"That's the limit, I think," said Tom Merry. "We're crowded already. You chaps will have to walk."

"Look here, I'm coming in the brake!" roared Grundy. "Turn that slacker Cardew out! What does he care about footer?"

"Get on, driver!"

"Look here—" roared Grundy indignantly.

But the indignant Grundy was left behind.

The brake rolled away, and two or three dozen fellows followed it on foot or on bicycles. Tom Merry's eleven generally had a good many loyal followers; and on this occasion many were keen to see how the new fellow, Len Pomfwet, would shape in a school match. Len had shown up remarkably well in games practice, and in a House match, and, new as he was to St. Jim's, most fellows agreed that Tom Merry was wise to capture him for the junior eleven.

Len was not looking his best at the moment. He was perfectly fit, but his brow was thoughtful and indeed gloomy. A good many fellows had observed that Len had not looked as cheery as usual since the House match, though nobody but Ralph Reckness Cardew knew the reason.

Cardew glanced rather oddly at the handsome fellow sitting silent at his side. Levison looked at both of them, puzzled. That Cardew knew something about the new junior—something that was not generally known, Levison could not help guessing; but what it was was a mystery to him. Levison, keen as he was, was not likely to be able to guess that Len Pomfwet of St. Jim's had once been Len Lee

of Wodehouse—Cardew's old school. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther knew it, but they kept their own counsel. And Cardew, so far, had kept his own counsel also—he had not imparted the secret even to his chums, though his careless talk had excited their surprise and curiosity.

"Feelin' fit, Pomfwet, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus cheerily.

Len nodded and smiled.

"Fit as a fiddle!" he answered.

"That's wight!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "You will have to play up like anythin' to-day, you know. It will be wathah an uphill fight—much more so than usual."

"How's that, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the captain of the Shell with lofty dignity.

"Because you have left out your best man, Tom Mewwy," he answered.

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"P'way don't think that I mind, Pomfwet," continued Arthur Augustus graciously. "I am vewy glad to see you get a chance in a school match."

"Thanks!" said Len.

"Not at all, deah boy! Beat the Gwammawians, and it will be all wight," said Arthur Augustus nobly.

"Oh, we'll beat them," said Cardew. "Pomfwet's ahead of anythin' the Grammar School chaps can put in the field. Tom Merry's bagged a good man in Pomfwet—better than you know, in fact!"

"I don't quite see that," said Tom, laughing. "Certainly I think I've bagged a good man. Oh, you mean—" Tom Merry broke off, colouring.

He understood that Cardew was retreating to Len's former life at Wodehouse, where Len had been the best junior footballer in the school.

"Just so!" said Cardew calmly. "I shall expect to see you do terrific stunts to-day, Pomfret."

Len turned his head away without answering.

CHAPTER 3.

Len Receives a Shock!

LEN sat silent as the brake rolled on towards Rylcombe Grammar School. He did not join in the cheery chat of the St. Jim's footballers.

His heart was heavy.

Cardew glanced at him occasionally, and though his look was half mocking, there was in it a trace of the strange compassion that Len had noticed on the day of the House match.

What did Cardew know?

He knew, as the Terrible Three knew, that Mr. Claude Pomfret, the wealthy stockbroker, had adopted Len Lee in the place of his nephew, Leonard Pomfret, who had been drowned in the Lake of Geneva. That Mr. Pomfret had insisted upon his adopted nephew taking his dead nephew's name, and coming to St. Jim's in that name.

So far as Len could see, and so far as Tom Merry & Co. could see, there was no harm in what had been done.

They were only surprised that the hard-faced stockbroker had done such an act of generous kindness to a homeless waif.

It was impossible, for them, at least, to think of any other motive Claude Pomfret could have had for the adoption of the fellow who had once been at Wodehouse School, and who had afterwards been reduced to want, almost to beggary.

It was a good thing for Len, an act of kind benevolence on the part of the stockbroker; and the Terrible Three, and Len himself, were content to let it go at that.

Not so with Cardew.

Possibly Cardew did not find it so easy as the others to believe in kind benevolence. Possibly he was keener than the other fellows—undoubtedly he was more suspicious.

He had said, on the day of the House match, that he had found out Mr. Pomfret's motive, and that it was a guilty one. And Len had refused to listen.

It had seemed to him like treason to his benefactor to listen to such an accusation.

But almost before Cardew had left him, Len had repented of his refusal. He would have been glad then to hear what Cardew had to say—what he had discovered, or believed that he had discovered. Deep down in his own heart was a fear, a lurking suspicion, that he was being used as a catspaw.

But his bitter words had driven Cardew away; and since then the dandy of the Fourth had carefully avoided him—until to-day. Now he was sitting beside him in the brake, but in the presence of the crowd of footballers it was impossible to speak of any private matter.

Len was silent as the brake rolled on, but his thoughts were busy. Cardew had spoken of a scheme—of prison—of shame and disgrace! What could he have meant? He had not offered to speak a second time, and Len was too proud to ask him. But the black doubt was a torture to the unhappy boy.

"Heah we are, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus suddenly.

The brake arrived at the Grammar School.

The St. Jim's crowd turned out of it, and walked to the football-ground. Len found himself walking beside Ralph Reckness Cardew. The impulse to speak came suddenly on him.

"Cardew!" he said in a low voice.

The dandy of the Fourth glanced at him casually.

"Did you speak?" he drawled.

"Yes. You told me—the other day—the day of the House match—that—that—" Len faltered.

Cardew made a gesture to stop him.

"Leave it at that!" he said.

"You told me that my guardian—the man who has been kindness itself to me—was a scheming scoundrel!" muttered Len.

"Somethin' of the sort," assented Cardew lazily.

"I ought to have knocked you down for saying so," said Len, with a flush of anger. "It was ungrateful of me to listen to it without silencing you."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Then why raise the subject again?" he asked.

Len breathed hard.

"Because—because it's tortured me ever since," he muttered. "You should have said nothing or told me all."

"I came to your study to tell you," answered Cardew quietly. "You called me a spy."

"You couldn't have found out anything about Mr.

Pomfret's private affairs without spying, I suppose?" said Len bitterly.

"Let it go at that, then," said Cardew. And he quickened his pace. Len hurried after him.

"I can't let it go at that," he said. "I don't know whether I ought to knock you spinning, for slandering my guardian, or—"

"Or what?"

"Or listen to what you have found out, or think you have found out," said Len miserably. "I—I don't know what I ought to do."

Cardew smiled satirically.

"We've never been friends, either at Wodehouse or at St. Jim's," he said. "But though I never liked you, I believed you were straight. I believed that Mr. Pomfret was makin' use of you for his schemes without your knowledge."

"That's true, at least, if there is any scheme, which I don't believe—cannot believe."

"Which you don't choose to believe, you mean," said Cardew coolly.

Len started.

"What?"

"You used to be a Wodehouse chap, before your grandfather died and left you penniless," said Cardew. "After that you were on the rocks—tramping for a livin', I understand. Mr. Pomfret picked you out of the gutter and put you at St. Jim's. It was as good as your old life over again. If you break with him you go back to rags and tramping. If you knew the truth you'd have to break with him or join him in a swindle. And you don't want to lose what you've got."

Len panted.

His eyes gleamed, and he clenched his hands and halted. Cardew stopped, too, eyeing him coolly.

"You—you think that?" breathed Len.

"Isn't it so?"

"No!"

Cardew gave another shrug of the shoulders.

"You think I don't want to know the truth because it would drive me away from St. Jim's, back to what I came from?"

"That's about it, I think," said Cardew coolly.

"I—I wonder!" muttered Len.

His mind was in a torment. He was happy at St. Jim's. The shadow of his strange secret was upon him, but he liked the school, he liked his new friends. St. Jim's was a haven of rest to him, after his weary days of tramping the roads. Was there, indeed, at the bottom of his heart, a reluctance to learn anything that would force him to give up all he had gained by Mr. Pomfret's generosity?

It was a troubling, torturing thought. He hardly knew whether it was so or not. Perhaps, sub-consciously, there had been some such reluctance in his breast; and Cardew had understood him better than he understood himself.

Cardew watched him with a curious expression.

Len's hands unclenched.

"You may be right," he said in a dull voice. "Heaven knows I never meant to be anything but straight. It will be a blow to me to lose everything and go back to want. But, if it's true that I am being made a party to a swindling scheme, I shall not hesitate. My eyes are open now, at least. Tell me what you know."

"You mean that?" asked Cardew.

"Yes."

"I'm glad!" said Cardew quietly. "It had to come. I couldn't keep silent for ever and let it go on. But I hoped that the first word would come from you, Lee. If you break with Claude Pomfret, and speak out, you can save yourself. If it is left for me to speak you will be in the same boat with that scoundrel. Nobody would ever believe that you were innocent."

"Innocent of what?" breathed Len. "What is the scheme you think you have found out?"

"A scheme to rob Leonard Pomfret's relations of the fortune they should have inherited at his death!" answered Cardew quietly.

CHAPTER 4.

A Chance for Gussy!

LEN started back.

Cardew had spoken very quietly, but every word rang in Len's startled ears like a pistol-shot.

There was no proof—as yet—of what Cardew said. Len could not even imagine how he had made the discovery, if in actual fact he had made it.

But he did not doubt.

It was like a flash of lightning in the darkness, illuminating all that had hitherto been hidden from him.

He remembered the scene in the dark wood by the Wayland Road. How long ago it seemed now, though it was only a few weeks. Claude Pomfret, alone in the shadowy wood,



"Lee, if you know the truth about Mr. Pomfret," said Cardew, "you'd have to break with him, or join him in a swindle." It was a troubling, torturing thought for Lee. "If it's true that I am being made a party to a swindling scheme," he said in a dull voice, "I shall not hesitate. My eyes are open now, at least. Tell me what you know." (See Page 6.)

The pistol in his hand, raised to take his own life! Len had stopped him—had saved him from self-murder. The rest had followed—all that he had never understood. Len stood staring at Cardew with a colourless face. He understood now.

The two juniors stood silent, facing one another. They had forgotten, for the moment, where they were—forgotten that they were on the grammar school football ground, and did not observe that curious glances were turned on them.

Len broke the silence at last.

"I—I understood from Mr. Pomfret that Leonard was dependent on him—"

"He lied!" said Cardew.

"Then the boy, when he was drowned, left a fortune—"

"Twenty thousand pounds!"

"Good heavens! But—but Mr. Pomfret is his relative, his uncle. Would he not inherit—"

"With others," said Cardew. "In case of Leonard Pomfret's death the money was to be divided among a number of relatives. Mr. Pomfret was one of them."

"I—I see!"

"Claude Pomfret is his guardian and a trustee," said Cardew. "So long as Leonard Pomfret lived Mr. Pomfret had the control of his fortune, with the other trustee, and received three hundred a year from the estate for his support. So long as Leonard Pomfret is still supposed to be alive Mr. Pomfret continues to draw that sum. That is robbery."

"Oh!" gasped Len.

"Pomfret!" Tom Merry came up, looking greatly surprised. "Dash it all, what are you up to? We're waiting for you!"

"Waiting for me?" muttered Len dazedly. "Oh, I'd forgotten! All right!"

Tom looked at him anxiously.

"Come on, old chap! Anything the matter?"

"I—I'm all right!"

Len tried to pull himself together. He had received almost a stunning shock. His whole world seemed to be falling into pieces round him.

Tom Merry gave Cardew a sharp look.

"You've been rowing with Pomfret again?"

"Not at all," said Cardew.

"Well, I can see that something's up," grunted Tom.

"You're looking pretty seedy, Pomfret. Come on, we're keeping the Grammar School chaps waiting."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sauntering gracefully up. "What are you hangin' about for, Pomfret, deah boy?"

"I—I—"

Len stammered. The football match had quite gone from his mind, and he knew that he could not play football now. What kind of a game was he likely to put up, knowing now what he did? His guardian—the man who had taken him from want—was a swindler and a thief, and how much better was he himself? He had not known—he had not dreamed of anything like this—but was he not, in the eyes of the law at least, the accomplice of the plotting scoundrel who had made a catspaw of him?

His brain reeled at the thought.

"Bai Jove! Are you comin' or not, Pomfret?" asked Arthur Augustus, slipping his arm through Len's.

"I—I—" Len tried to think. "I—I'm sorry, Tom Merry. I can't play—"

"Can't play!" repeated Tom blankly.

"It—it's impossible! I—I'm not fit! I'm sorry. Let D'Arcy take my place, there's a good chap."

"It's rather late in the day to tell me that, isn't it?" said Tom Merry dryly.

"I—I'm sorry, but—but—"

"Pomfret's had some bad news," put in Cardew quietly. "You'd better let him off, Tom Merry."

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"Well, he looks pretty sick, I must say," said Tom, in wonder. "Is it bad news, then, Pomfret?"

"Yes—no—yes!" said Len confusedly.

"Right—you stand out, then," said Tom. "We shall want you after all, Gussy."

"Imposs, deah boy!"

"What?" roared Tom.

"Pway do not wear at a fellow, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gently. "I have often mentioned how I dislike bein' woreed at."

"You silly ass—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You frabjous chump—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Are you standing on your twopenny dignity because you were dropped from the team, you burbling jabberwock?" demanded Tom.

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a burblin' jabbah-wock—"

"Look here—"

"And I'm not standin' on my dig, deah boy. But I have not brought my football clobber with me, not expectin' to play."

"Is that all, you burbling dummy? Can't you wedge into Pomfret's things, you josses?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"Think of it now, then, ass!" growled the captain of the Shell.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"And get a move on. The fellows are waiting."

"I am not suah that Pomfret's things will fit me—"

"Do you want a fashionable fit for a game of football?" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Tom.

"Howevah, pewwaps I can stretch a point for the sake of the school," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "I will twy on Pomfret's things, at all events."

"Come on, ass!"

Tom Merry grasped Arthur Augustus by the arm, and rushed him away to the dressing-room. Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School, were already in the field, waiting for the St. Jim's footballers.

Fortunately, Arthur Augustus discovered that he could, at a pinch, make Pomfret's football rig do. And, in Pomfret's jersey and shorts, the swell of St. Jim's lined up with the side, and the ball was kicked off, and the match started.

"Where's Pomfret?" a dozen voices asked, as Arthur Augustus was recognised in the team, and the new junior was missed.

"Seems to be standing out," remarked Blake. "Well, Pomfret's a good man, but a man from Study No. 6 is better."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Digby.

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

Len was soon forgotten by the St. Jim's crowd, in the excitement of the football match. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy played up well in the missing winger's place; but even Blake & Co. acknowledged that the great Gussy was not quite so useful in the front line as Len. But a goal came to Gussy soon after one had been taken by Gordon Gay for the Grammar School; and the score remained equal almost to the finish.

Then, amid loud cheers from the St. Jim's crowd, Talbot of the Shell put the ball in.

St. Jim's came off the field winners by two goals to one.

"Good enough!" said Tom Merry, after the match. "By the way, where's Pomfret? Anybody seen Pomfret?"

Nobody had.

He had not been seen on the Grammar School ground during the match; and he did not enter the brake with the footballers to return to St. Jim's. And Tom Merry, having time to think of him now that the Grammar School match was over, wondered where he was, and what was the matter.

CHAPTER 5.

Facing the Facts!

LEN had forgotten the football match. He was only conscious of relief when Tom Merry left him to himself.

Cardew stood waiting.

He had come over to Rylcombe with his chums, to see Clive and Levison in the match, and to watch Len playing in the old style of Len Lee of Wodehouse. But he had forgotten that now. Cardew was not, perhaps, of a sympathetic nature—he was rather given to viewing the troubles of others, and indeed, his own, with an ironical eye. And he did not like Len Lee—it was not probable that they could

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ever have been friends. Yet at the present moment he was feeling deeply for Len, and he would have done much to help the unhappy fellow who had been placed in so terrible a position by no fault of his own. Cardew, perhaps, would not have felt that position so keenly as Len—his mocking humour would have come to his aid. But to Len, frank and honourable and straightforward, unsuspicious of evil, the discovery of his true position came as a shattering blow, and he broke under it.

"Pull yourself together, old scout," said Cardew at last. "Better get away from here, what? You don't want your bag—Gussy will bring that along."

Len was not thinking of that.

His face was dead white, and he stood unsteadily. Cardew passed an arm through his.

"Come along, kid."

Len went with him, dumb, scarcely knowing what he did. In silence they turned their backs on the Grammar School, and walked away towards the village.

Cardew stopped in Rylcombe Lane, and Len leaned heavily on a stile. His face was still white; but he was master of himself now. Terrible as the blow had been, he had courage to face it; and he realised, too, that he had to act.

Cardew did not think of leaving him. He sat on the stile by his side, waiting for Len to speak.

The hapless junior spoke at last.

"You've told me all this, Cardew. I—I suppose you know what you're talking about? But I can't imagine how you know so much. Have you any proof?"

"Naturally."

"I don't see—"

Cardew smiled slightly.

"It's simple enough," he said. "There was no need for spying, as you called it."

"I'm sorry I used that word," muttered Len. "But—I don't understand. You never knew Len Pomfret—"

"Never heard of him before you came to St. Jim's," answered Cardew.

"Or my guardian?"

"No."

"Then how—"

"It's simple enough. When I knew you as Len Lee, a Wodehouse chap, I couldn't help suspecting—as Tom Merry seems to have done—that you had taken in Mr. Pomfret somehow. That was how it looked. You took us to see Mr. Pomfret so that he could explain to us how he had adopted you in the place of a dead nephew he'd been fond of, and all that. That satisfied Tom Merry."

"But not you."

"No. Mr. Claude Pomfret didn't look that kind of benevolent Johnny, to my eye," said Cardew dryly.

"Nor to mine, perhaps!" muttered Len. "But I thought the facts spoke for themselves. And Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther thought the same. I—I admit that doubts crept into my mind sometimes. But I couldn't imagine—"

"You didn't know the facts," said Cardew.

"But how do you know them?" exclaimed Len, with a quick, sharp look at the dandy of the Fourth. Perhaps, at the bottom of his heart, a faint hope still lingered that Cardew was mistaken—even that he was being guilty of a heartless trick.

Cardew understood the look, and smiled grimly.

"There was no need of spying, as I said. I did not believe that Mr. Pomfret, who looks a very hard case, had acted from pure benevolence. And even if he had, why did he want to keep his benevolence so dark? He wanted it to be believed that you were his nephew, not by adoption, but actually the genuine Leonard Pomfret himself. I wanted to know why. I couldn't guess; but there was a way of finding out. Leonard's father was Captain Pomfret, an old St. Jim's man who was killed in the war. It was left in his will that Leonard was to be sent to his old school. You told me that much. And it occurred to me that there might be something else in Captain Pomfret's will that would let light into the subject."

"Oh!" said Len.

"I suppose you know that copies of wills can be seen, in the proper quarter?"

"But you couldn't. You never went to London!"

"There was no need. I wrote to my family solicitor—or, rather, my jolly old granddad's solicitor. I asked him to get a look at the will of the late Captain Pomfret, and let me know the details that concerned his son Leonard."

"Oh!" said Len again.

"The legal Johnny obliged me, and I got his letter on the day of the House match," said Cardew. "The letter's at St. Jim's, and you can see it if you like. All the captain's property is left in trust for Leonard. There are two trustees, and Mr. Pomfret is one of them. The other is an old gent who lives at Biarritz. If Leonard should die before he came of age—as has happened—the money is to be divided equally

among a certain number of relatives—six or seven, I think, of whom Claude Pomfret is one."

Len listened in silence.

"Claude Pomfret, as I told you, draws three hundred a year on his nephew's account. That should have stopped when Leonard Pomfret was drowned. The terms of the will should have been put in force—the trust money produced and divided. That has not, of course, been done. Leonard Pomfret's death is being kept a secret."

Len started.

"You—you think——"

"I know," said Cardew coolly. "Mr. Pomfret put you in his nephew's place to keep the death a secret. That was his motive for adopting you. It's clear enough when you know the terms of the will."

"But—but Mr. Pomfret is a wealthy man. Three hundred a year could not be such an object to him."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Possibly not—if he is wealthy. Perhaps he has had bad luck on the Stock Exchange. The big slump last Christmas caught a good many napping, according to the papers. And possibly, if the will had to be carried out, it would turn out that the trust money isn't there any longer. Claude Pomfret must have had something jolly serious to hide, anyhow, to play a game like this."

Len shivered.

"And I——" he muttered.

"You're a screen for him," said Cardew coolly. "You're keepin' him in the position he was in while his nephew was alive. Whether he was fond of his nephew, I don't know, though I doubt it. But the kid's sudden death left him stranded, I imagine, and that was why he jumped at the chance of putting you in his place and keeping it up that Leonard was still alive."

Back into Len's mind came that scene in the wood, of the desperate man whom he had saved from the crime of suicide. He knew now, knew only too well what that meant, and how Leonard's death had indeed left the stockbroker "stranded"—left him in such a position that he had determined to take a desperate way out of it.

On that point, Len knew more than Cardew could have told him. That wild scene in the wood was proof.

There was a long silence.

"Now I've told you," said Cardew at last. "You see, it wasn't a case of spyin'. The information the solicitor got for me was open to anybody who chose to look for it. Only, as Leonard Pomfret was drowned in a foreign country, his guardian had a chance of keeping his death a secret from people in England by playing the trick he has played."

"But are you sure?"

"My dear fellow, the fact that the will hasn't been acted upon is proof that Leonard's relations don't know of his death."

"I—I suppose so."

"It's a secret, and you're helping a scoundrel to keep it," said Cardew. "You've got time to get out of the affair now, you know. But if it comes out while you're still at St. Jim's in Leonard Pomfret's name, what will people think? What will the police think?"

Len shuddered.

"That I am an accomplice in a crime!" he whispered.

"Yes."

"Then what can I do?"

"Go to the police at once."

Len shook his head.

"I must see Mr. Pomfret first. It is possible. He may have some explanation. At least, I am bound to give him a chance. I shall go to Pomfret Lodge, and telegraph to him. I must see him."

"All serene," said Cardew. "You know best about that! But the sooner you act the better. Pomfret took a desperate chance in playing this game, and it may come out. Send the telegram from Rylcombe, and then get away to the lodge. If you're late for call-over at St. Jim's I'll explain that you've gone home."

"Right!"

Len stepped away from the stile.

"Thank you," he said quietly. "We've never been friends, Cardew, and—and I'm afraid I've misjudged you a little. You've done me a good turn in this. Goodness knows what you've saved me from."

He held out his hand.

Cardew pressed it silently.

Then Len started for the village, and Cardew, with a grim and thoughtful brow, walked away slowly toward St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co., in the brake, overtook him as he reached the gates of the school.

"Seen Pomfret, Cardew?" called out Tom.

Cardew glanced up.

"He's gone home for the afternoon," he answered.

"Oh, all serene!"

And the footballers went cheerily in.

CHAPTER 6.

Startling News!

"TOM MEWWY!"

The Terrible Three smiled as Arthur Augustus looked into Study No. 10 in the Shell after a late tea. Tom Merry made a gesture of welcome.

"Trot in, Gussy! I've been thinking about the team for the Rookwood match, which comes along in a week or two. Give me some more of your valuable advice."

Manners and Lowther chuckled, and Gussy frowned.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Whom would you advise me to drop you out for, old scout?" asked Tom gravely.

"I wegard you as an ass, Tom Mewwy," said the swell of St. Jim's severely, "and I have not come heah to talk football. I have b'wought you a message from the House-mastah."

"Oh dear! What does Railton want?" asked Tom.

"He wants you, deah boy. You are to go to his studay," said Arthur Augustus.

"Br-r-r-r!" said Tom.

"I don't think it's a lickin', old man," said Arthur Augustus reassuringly. "Mr. Wailton was lookin' quite good-temphed."

"Oh, good!" said Tom.

The captain of the Shell left Study No. 10, and proceeded to Mr. Railton's study.

"Come in, Merry!" said the Housemaster, and Tom entered the study. Mr. Railton's face was grave, but quite kindly, and Tom wondered what was "on." "Do you remember, Merry, a few weeks ago you mentioned to me a meeting you had had with a homeless boy named Lee?"

Tom started violently.

The question was utterly unexpected.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" he stammered.

"This boy you met in an old hut in Wayland Wood, where you had taken shelter from the rain," said Mr. Railton. "He told you his story, how he had left Wodehouse School and fallen into want. You very properly acquainted me with the matter, and the boy was looked for, but he seemed to have disappeared from the neighbourhood."

"Yes, sir!" murmured Tom.

He wondered what on earth the Housemaster would have said had he divined that the vanished waif was now at St. Jim's, in his own House, under the name of Pomfret.

Tom was feeling extremely uneasy. He had undertaken to keep Len's secret—never dreaming that the matter would ever be mentioned again by Mr. Railton. Questions on the subject of Len Lee came very awkwardly in the present state of affairs.

"You looked for the boy, and I made some inquiry after him," resumed the Housemaster. "He had disappeared, however. You believed the story he told you——"

"Every word, sir!"

"I was disposed to believe it also," said Mr. Railton. "As he could not be found, I communicated with the headmaster of Wodehouse School."

"Oh!" said Tom.

He had not thought of that, though he felt now that he might have guessed something of the kind. Having interested himself in the case of the homeless wanderer, Mr. Railton was not likely to let the matter drop without inquiry.

"In reply," went on Mr. Railton, "I learned that a boy named Leonard Lee was at Wodehouse till the Christmas holidays, and he left with a schoolfellow for the vacation. He had been reduced to a penniless state by his grandfather's sudden death, leaving him utterly unprovided for. The boy with whom he went home can only say that Lee left his house before the vacation ended, and knows nothing of what became of him afterwards. All this bears out the story the lad told you."

Mr. Railton paused.

"Lee's late headmaster is anxious that something should be done for the boy," he went on. "He had written twice to Lee's uncle, resident in the South of France, and received no reply. From this he had been driven to conclude that Lee's relations did not desire to be burdened with the orphan, and this seems to have been Lee's own impression——"

"So he told me, sir!"

"Nevertheless, it was a misapprehension, as the Head of Wodehouse is now aware, and has told me," said Mr. Railton. "Lee's uncle at Nice, Sir George Lee, is a semi-invalid, who resides abroad for his health. He had gone on to Naples for a couple of months, and his correspondence remained for him at his villa at Nice. Lately he returned there, and found the letters from Wodehouse. He wrote at once to the headmaster. That is a very simple explanation, Merry, of what Lee seems to have thought the heartless indifference of his nearest relative."

"Oh, sir!" said Tom.

"Sir George Lee, as soon as he knew the facts, wrote immediately, offering to bear the charge of Lee's remaining at his school, and of placing him in the world later," said Mr. Railton. "He begs the Head of Wodehouse to make every effort to find him, employing detectives, if necessary, at Sir George's expense."

"My hat!" murmured Tom.

"If Lee can be found, therefore, his troubles are over," said Mr. Railton. "The question is how to find him. He seems to have become somewhat friendly with you, Merry, at your brief meeting with him, as he told you the story you reported to me. That is why I have sent for you now. Have you seen anything of him since the meeting you mentioned to me?"

"S-s-seen him?" stammered Tom.

"Or heard from him—a letter or anything?" asked Mr. Railton.

Tom Merry was silent.

He had seen Lee every day of late, since the outcast had come to St. Jim's as Leonard Pomfret.

But he could not tell Mr. Railton that. Len's secret was his own, and Tom had promised to keep it.

The confusion in the junior's face did not escape Mr. Railton's eyes.

"I see that you know something of Lee's present whereabouts, Merry!" he said very quietly.

"Oh, sir!" stammered Tom.

"You have seen him since the meeting in Wayland Woods some weeks ago?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Do you know where he is now?"

"I—I—"

"Come, Merry," said the Housemaster, a little impatiently. "You need have no hesitation in speaking, surely. Lee's uncle, Sir George, has no desire but to befriend the boy. As soon as Lee is found he will be saved from want and rags, and taken back to Wodehouse School. You are surely anxious to see such a change in his fortunes!"

"Ye-es, sir; but—but—" stuttered Tom.

"But what?"

"It's a promise, sir," said Tom. "I—I must ask Lee before I speak, sir!"

"I do not understand this, Merry!"

"I—I can't explain, sir, but—as it happens, Lee has found a home—I can tell you that much—he has been taken up by a wealthy gentleman, who has adopted him—"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"He has taken this gentleman's name," said Tom. "I—I don't know what he will do when he knows that his own people are willing to take charge of him. But I've promised to say nothing about his affairs, sir, so—so I must ask him."

Mr. Railton looked searchingly at the Shell fellow.

"That is an extraordinary story, Merry!"

"I—I know, sir!"

"When can you see Lee?"

"To-morrow, sir," said Tom.

"Very well; if you are, as you say, bound by a promise, I shall not ask you to break it," said Mr. Railton. "If you can see the boy to-morrow, see him by all means; tell him what I have told you, and ask him to come to me at once."

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom.

The captain of the Shell left Mr. Railton's study with his brain almost in a whirl. Manners and Lowther were beginning prep when he came back to Study No. 10.

"Well, what did old Railton want?" asked Lowther.

"Why, what's the matter, Tom?"

"Not a licking?" asked Manners.

"Nunno! It's about Lee!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Phew! Railton's found out that Pomfret—"

"No—no; he hasn't any idea that Lee is at St. Jim's. But—but—well, it's a regular corker!" said Tom. "Blessed if I know how Lee will take it! He can't chuck Mr. Pomfret over, after all he's done for him, but—"

"What are you driving at?"

Tom related what Mr. Railton had told him. Manners and Lowther listened in amazement.

"Well, that beats it," said Monty, with a whistle. "A month ago the chap hadn't a home—now he's got the choice of two! It never rains but it pours!"

"Blessed if I see how he can throw Mr. Pomfret over!" said Manners. "Rotten that this didn't come a few weeks earlier!"

"He's bound to want to get his own name back, and to get back to his old school," said Tom. "But—but—"

"It's a queer position for him," said Manners. "His real uncle seems to be rather a brick. So does his adopted uncle, for that matter. Lee's lucky in the avuncular line."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, it's for Lee to decide," he said. "I can only tell him what Mr. Railton says, and he will have to decide. If he keeps on here as Pomfret, we shall have to keep his

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secret, though goodness knows now I shall satisfy Mr. Railton in that case. I told Railton I could see Lee to-morrow."

"You can see him to-night, if you like," grinned Lowther. "It's not a long walk to Study No. 4 in the Fourth."

"I couldn't tell Railton that. To-morrow will be soon enough," said Tom. "Anyhow, he's not back yet. He missed call-over. I wonder what he will decide to do."

The Terrible Three wondered a good deal on that point. They little dreamed of what was happening to Len in those very moments.

CHAPTER 7. Struck Down!

"YOU young rascal!"

That was Claude Pomfret's greeting to Len.

Len was waiting in the library at Pomfret Lodge.

He had waited long. Night had fallen, and the time for calling-over at St. Jim's was long past. But Len was not thinking of the school. If what Cardew had told him was true, there was no more school for him. St. Jim's was a thing of the past.

And he knew that it was true. He was bound, he felt, to give his guardian a chance to explain; but he felt in his heart that there was no explanation that the stockbroker could give.

At last he heard the grinding of the wheels of a car on the drive. He heard Mr. Pomfret's sharp voice in the hall. Then the hard-faced City man came in.

His eyes gleamed at Len. He shut the door, and turned on the boy with a black look.

"You young rascal! What does this mean?"

Len rose to his feet, wearily. He was feeling tired—tired out by the shock and the emotion of the weary afternoon.

The stockbroker produced a telegraph-form from his pocket, and almost thrust it into the boy's face.

"Look at this! What do you think will be thought of this? You young fool!"

It was the telegram Len had sent from Rylcombe. It ran:

"I know everything now. I must see you at once. I shall wait at the Lodge.—LEN."

Pomfret gritted his teeth. He pitched the telegram into the fire, and turned savagely on Len.

"Now explain yourself," he said harshly. "You've brought me down from the City to Sussex, you impudent young rascal! What do you mean?"

"I mean what I said in the telegram," said Len steadily.

"I know everything now."

"What is there to know?"

Len smiled bitterly.

"You are keeping secret the death of Leonard Pomfret in Switzerland."

Mr. Pomfret started back.

"How do you know? I mean, what has put that idea into your head? And, in any case, what does it matter to you?"

"His money—"

"He had no money!" snapped Claude Pomfret. "He was dependent on me, as you are in his place."

"His father's will says differently."

"His father's will! What do you know about his father's will?" exclaimed Mr. Pomfret blankly.

"I know all about it."

"By gad!" The stockbroker gritted his teeth hard. "So that is the innocent schoolboy you are! You thought of that! You have been up to London to look at Captain Pomfret's will! By gad! You have dared to—"

"I—"

"That will do. You know the terms of Captain Pomfret's will. You know how my brother left his money?"

"Yes," said Len.

Claude Pomfret gave him an evil look. But he calmed himself. He realised that it was necessary to be careful now.

He sat down, and took a cigar from his case and lighted it. Len would have spoken, but the stockbroker motioned him to be silent.

"I must think this out," he said.

"Very well," said Len.

He sat down and waited. The hour was growing late; it was bed-time at St. Jim's. He did not think of that. Indeed, he was not thinking of returning to St. Jim's at all.

He had to hear what Claude Pomfret had to say; but already he felt that Cardew's story was confirmed. And that being the case, St. Jim's was no longer a place for him.

For a quarter of an hour or more Claude Pomfret sat silent, while the smoke curled from the cigar. Then apparently he had thought the matter out to his satisfaction. He rose, threw the stump of the cigar into the fire, and touched a bell.

The butler appeared at the library door.

"I shall want nothing more to-night, Jenkinson," said Mr.



"I—I can't play," said Lee. "Let D'Arcy take my place, there's a good chap. I'm—I'm sorry—but—but—" "Pomfret's had some bad news," put in Cardew quietly. "You'd better let him off, Tom Merry." "Well, he looks pretty sick, I must say," said Tom, in wonder. "Right—you stand out, then, Lee." (See page 7.)

Pomfret. "I shall walk to the station with my nephew. You may lock up and go to bed."

"Yes, sir!"

The door closed on the butler.

Mr. Pomfret sat down again, and fixed his eyes on the St. Jim's junior. Len waited.

"Now we'd better go into this," said Claude Pomfret. "You've found out so much that you must know the whole story now. You're in the game with me now, my boy."

"I am not!" said Len indignantly. "If I'd had any suspicion that it was a swindle—"

"Silence! You had no suspicion, and it was all the better so. It suited me. I fancied you a simple schoolboy; it turns out that you are sharper than I supposed. While you were taking benefits at my hands, you were spying on me!"

"I was not. I—"

"Call it what you like. You have made a discovery of a matter that need not have concerned you," said Mr. Pomfret. "We need not fence with words. You know too much now, and for that reason you must know more, and then you can decide whether to go in with me or not."

"I—"

"Listen to me. Leonard Pomfret, my nephew, should have inherited twenty thousand pounds when he came of age. The money was in my hands as trustee, with another trustee. You've seen the copy of the will, so you know that I drew three hundred a year from the income of the trust money to spend on my nephew."

"It is robbery! I—"

"Let me finish. I have kept my nephew's death a secret, as you guess. You helped me."

"I never knew."

"That is not all. Twenty thousand pounds should come to Leonard Pomfret when he reached the age of twenty-one. The securities could not be sold without the signature of both the trustees. They have been sold, however. Not a shilling remains."

Len stared blankly at the man.

"Then—then—"

"I signed as trustee, and I signed also as the other trustee," said Claude Pomfret grimly.

"You forged his name?" whispered Len.

"Precisely."

"Good heavens!"

"Now you know my position, when I received a telegram that day from Lausanne, informing me that my nephew had been drowned in the Lake of Geneva," said Claude Pomfret, with grim calmness. "I had lost money in speculations—my own money and the trust money. I was in debt—living on credit. So far from accounting for the trust money, I could not have accounted for a shilling of it. I stood face to face with utter ruin. As soon as Leonard's death was known the other heirs would come forward, automatically revealing the fact that the trust fund no longer existed, and that I was a forger. Ruin and a long term of penal servitude stared me in the face, and there was absolutely no way of escape—no way but one. The telegram was handed to me as I was getting into my car. I read it on the road. I knew what I had to do. I drove the car to a lonely place, stepped out of it into the wood, and—"

Len shivered.

"You know what happened next," said Claude Pomfret. "You were tramping the road—you saw me, and stopped me. You saved my life—like a fool as you were! And then—I learned your story—and the coincidence that your name was Leonard struck me, and helped to put a new idea into my mind."

"I—I see."

"I am accustomed to rapid decisions—that's necessary on the Stock Exchange," said Claude Pomfret. "I thought it out quickly and decided. My nephew had died in a foreign country—it might be possible to hush up his death—at least to prevent the news of it from reaching his relatives in England. The boy was completely under my charge—his relations had not seen him for years. I had intentionally kept him out of their way—the less he saw of them the better, I considered, in view of the way I was dealing with his fortune."

"You villain!" breathed Len.

"But the death could not be hidden, unless he was supposed to be still living—it was necessary for someone to take his place—and you came in there. According to the terms of my brother's will, Len had to go to his old school—St. Jim's—arrangements had already been made for that. I had to carry out those arrangements—there would have been interference from the relatives otherwise, as well as from the other trustee. I adopted you in the place of Leonard Pomfret,

gave you his name, and sent you to school. It was a good thing for you—a beggar in rags."

"I—I—"

"That tided me over," resumed Claude Pomfret, with the same grim calmness. "I expected matters to come round—and to a certain extent they have come round. I cannot replace the trust money; but I have at least a few thousands now—and with time I hope to reach my old prosperous position. So long as my nephew is believed to be living, I am safe—and by the time you are twenty-one, I think all may be well."

"I—"

"You—as Leonard Pomfret. I was able to manage matters at Lausanne—Leonard's death is unknown in England. You are Leonard Pomfret now. I shall, I hope, replace the trust money by the time you come of age, and then I shall hand it over to you—as Leonard Pomfret. You will be rich. At all events, in the meantime you are provided for at an expensive school."

Len sprang to his feet.

"Do you think I will go on—that I will be a party to a robbery?" he exclaimed.

"If you know your own interests—yes."

"Then I do not know my own interests!" said Len bitterly.

"I will not go on as before—not for a single day!"

The stockbroker eyed him.

"You're resolved on that?"

"Fully!" said Len, between his teeth.

"Then what are you going to do?"

"I am going to leave St. Jim's," said Len steadily. "I am going to tell the truth to the headmaster."

"After what I've done for you?"

"What have you done for me?" exclaimed Len savagely and fiercely. "You've made me an accomplice in a swindle—you've spent stolen money on me, for your own villainous purposes! You are a criminal! You did nothing for my sake!"

Pomfret nodded.

"Quite so—I claim no credit," he said coolly. "You might have died of hunger in a ditch, before I would have thrown you a crust! You see, I am frank. But your interests are now the same as mine, and we sink or swim together."

"Then we sink!" said Len. "I am going!"

Pomfret rose.

"It is for you to choose," he said. "Do as you like! You are no longer Leonard Pomfret—"

"Not a second longer."

"And to-morrow the police will know the facts—what?"

"Yes! You have to-night to escape in, if you choose, and if you can!" said Len. "I shall not go back to the school. I shall write to Dr. Holmes. I shall tell him everything, and he will tell the police. You know what to expect, you—you villain! That's all!"

Pomfret smiled.

"Yes—I know what to expect," he said. "And as this house is no longer your home, I will see you safe off the premises."

He opened the door.

The house was silent—the hour was late. Only in the hall a light still burned.

Mr. Pomfret opened the front door; a cold gust of wind blew in.

"Come!" he said.

Len followed him. They walked side by side up the darkened drive to the gates on the road. Under the over-arching boughs of the trees the drive was very dark.

Mr. Pomfret stopped suddenly.

"For the last time, boy," he said in a strangely husky voice, "you are resolved?"

"Yes."

"Then I am—also!"

Claude Pomfret's hand rose, with something in it. And then Len, guessing the man's desperate intention, made a spring to escape. But it was too late!

Crash!

A thousand lights danced before the boy's eyes. Then—utter darkness.

Claude Pomfret bent over the insensible schoolboy as he lay. He glanced up and down the shadowy drive, and listened. His face was white as he lifted Len from the ground and threw him across his shoulder. A minute more and he was bearing the schoolboy into the thickest depths of a plantation.

Len's eyes opened.

His head was aching and buzzing.

He tried to move, but his limbs were still. With an effort he raised his head to look about him, but he could see nothing. All was dark.

Strong rope bound his hands and his feet. A gag was fastened in his mouth. Where was he?

The chill of damp earth was below him—chill, damp, the

scent of earth all round him. Slowly, through his aching brain, knowledge came. He remembered, from the days he had spent at Pomfret Lodge, a disused and dismantled cabin in the heart of the plantation, with an earthy cellar, half-choked with rubble, beneath it. He knew where he was now—bound, gagged, in the hidden cellar—far from all human knowledge.

He had refused to keep the guilty secret, now that he knew it; but it was a desperate man that he had to deal with. As he lay, with chilled limbs and aching head, Len Lee realised the terrible truth—that he was left to die!

CHAPTER 8.

Cardew to the Rescue!

"POMFRET—"

"What about Pomfret?" asked Tom Merry.

"That is the question, deah boy. Where is he?"

"Where?" repeated Tom blankly.

"You see, he didn't come back last night," explained Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He was not in the dorm, at any wate."

"My hat!" said Tom.

That day Tom Merry had intended to tell Len what he had heard from Mr. Railton. It was a complete surprise to him to learn that Len had not returned to the school.

When the Fourth Form went in to lessons that morning Len's place was empty in the Form-room. Some of the fellows wondered where he was. But as Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, made no comment on his absence, that absence had apparently been explained to the masters.

Cardew had mentioned that Len had "gone home" for the afternoon the day before. So the general conclusion was that Len was staying on at Pomfret Lodge for the day, and some of the fellows envied him the extra holiday.

But that did not satisfy Cardew.

Only Cardew knew why Len had gone home. And he knew that, howsoever Len's interview with his guardian turned out, the schoolboy was not likely to stay on at the Lodge for a holiday. Cardew had been surprised when Len failed to appear in the Fourth Form dormitory the previous night, but now that he had not returned to St. Jim's in the morning Cardew's surprise became tinged with alarm. During morning classes, he debated the matter in his mind. Had Len, knowing the truth now, determined not to return to the school? It was probable enough, and in that case he would naturally have written to the Head, giving an explanation. That might be all there was about it; but Cardew felt that he had to know for certain. And when Mr. Lathom dismissed the Fourth, Cardew stayed behind to speak to the Form master.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, stopping at Mr. Lathom's desk, "may I ask where Pomfret is?"

Mr. Lathom blinked at him over his glasses.

"Certainly, Cardew! He went home yesterday to visit his guardian, as it was a half-holiday, and he is staying a few days with Mr. Pomfret."

"Staying with Mr. Pomfret!" repeated Cardew. "I—I didn't know the Head had given him leave, sir, for a few days."

"Mr. Pomfret telephoned last night, asking for leave for his nephew, Cardew," answered Mr. Lathom. "Although it is somewhat irregular, the Head gave his consent."

"Thank you, sir."

Cardew left the Form-room. His face was very grave now. It was almost incredible that Len was staying on at the Lodge—Cardew, knowing what he knew, could not believe it. But if it was not that, where was he, and what had happened? Had he gone to the Lodge to face a man who was, practically, a criminal—to tell him that he knew everything, and did not intend to keep silence? How had Claude Pomfret taken that? Was it possible—

Cardew felt a chill in his heart; a black, terrible thought forced itself into his mind. He knew that the stockbroker must have been hard driven to play such a risky game as had been played—imposing Len Lee on the world as his nephew Len Pomfret. Did he dare to let the boy tell the truth in public—and if not, what measures might he not have taken to secure his silence? The thought was so terrible that Cardew repulsed it, with horror and incredulity; yet it would return, and it haunted him.

He paced under the elms in the quad, thinking it out, and avoiding Levison and Clive. After dinner he looked for Tom Merry & Co. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther knew Lee's true story, and Cardew determined to consult with them.

He found the Terrible Three in the quad, and the gravity in his face made them look at him curiously.

"I want to speak to you fellows about Lee," said Cardew abruptly. "Come up to your study, will you?"

"Right-ho!"

The chums of the Shell accompanied Cardew to Study No. 10. The Fourth-Former closed the door.



Mr. Pomfret stopped suddenly. "For the last time, boy," he said, in a strangely husky voice. "You are resolved to have nothing more to do with me?" "Yes!" answered Lee sternly. Claude Pomfret's hand rose, with something in it. And then Lee, guessing the man's desperate intention, made a spring to escape. But it was too late. Crash! A thousand lights danced before the boy's eyes. (See Page 12)

"Do you fellows know what's become of Lee?" he asked. Tom Merry nodded.

"I've asked Mr. Railton," he said. "The Head's given Pomfret leave to stay at home a few days."

"So I've got it from Lathom. It seems that Mr. Pomfret telephoned to ask for leave for him."

"That's it," said Tom.

Cardew gnawed his lip.

"I'd better tell you," he said. "You fellows know about Lee, so you may as well know the rest. Goodness knows what's happened to him; but it's impossible, to my mind, that he's having a holiday at Mr. Pomfret's house. and I—I fear—"

He broke off and then, in hurried tones, he told the Shell fellows of the discovery he had made. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther listened in silent astonishment.

"Now you know how the matter stands," said Cardew, in conclusion. "Len Lee went to the Lodge to tell Mr. Pomfret that he knew the facts—knew that he was a plotting thief and swindler. If Mr. Pomfret was able to explain, or to bamboozle him, Lee would have come back here, naturally. But that was impossible. Has he done anything to keep Lee from giving him away?"

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom Merry, his face paling. "It seems thick, I know," said Cardew. "But the man must have been desperate. Likely enough, Lee never mentioned how he knew the facts. Mr. Pomfret mayn't know anything about my havin' rooted them out. Lee naturally wouldn't mention my name. Tom Merry, what do you think has happened to Lee?"

Tom Merry knitted his brows. The revelation of Claude Pomfret's true character had been an utter surprise to him. But that revelation made it probable, at least, that in going to Pomfret Lodge to confront the plotter, Len had been unconsciously going into danger. He had not thought of that—Cardew had not thought of it the day before. But Len's

absence from the school brought that fear irresistibly into the minds of his friends.

"If Mr. Pomfret has done somethin' with him, he would naturally telephone some yarn to the Head to stop inquiry in time!" said Cardew. "A few days at home—that gives him time to think, and make plans. After that, he may let the Head know that he's decided not to send his nephew back to St. Jim's at all—that wouldn't excite any suspicion here. After that, goodness knows! But where's Lee?"

"We've got to find out," said Tom quietly. "It sounds almost unbelievable, but if there's a chance that Len has had foul play, we've got to see to it. Luckily, as it happens, he's got no more need of Mr. Pomfret—he can go back to his old school in his own name now."

"How's that?"

Tom explained, and Cardew's face lighted up.

"Good!" he explained. "If he's found, then, he's all right. But—but if he's been made away with—"

Tom Merry shuddered.

"It can't be so bad as that!" he said. "It can't! But we've got to see about it—"

"How?" asked Manners.

"Anyhow, I've got to see him, to give him Mr. Railton's news," said Tom. "I told Mr. Railton I'd be seeing Lee to-day. I'll ask Railton for an exeat, and tell him it's to go and call on Lee. He will let me off class for that. And I'll bike over to Pomfret Lodge and ask to see Len. If he's there I shall see him, and it's all right."

"And if he isn't—"

"Then we shall know."

"But—but—" stammered Lowther. "If there's been foul play, and the villain suspects that you know, Tom—"

Tom shook his head.

(Continued on page 16.)



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

SHADES of Shakespeare! I guess you will sit up and take notice when you see that this is a Special Theatrical Number.

I can tell, from the large number of letters I receive week by week, that lots of my readers are very keen on amateur theatricals. Many of them have already taken part in plays and sketches and musical comedies. They help to brighten the long winter evenings, besides providing plenty of amusement for enthusiastic audiences.

Not all audiences are enthusiastic, of course. Some are very much the reverse. I well remember my first appearance on the stage. I had to play the part of a ghost, and I was so jolly nervous that I went tripping across the stage at a very unghostlike pace. Then I forgot my lines, and said them wrongly, and the audience began to hoot and hiss. What was worse, they pelted me with ancient eggs and cabages and various other missiles which they had brought into the hall. I took a wild plunge towards the wings, and made my exit long before it was due!

The majority of audiences, however, are good-natured and tolerant. Instead of hooting a fellow who acts badly, they feel sorry for him.

Amateur theatricals have always been in favour at St. Jim's. As the President of the Junior Amateur Dramatic Society, it is my job to select the plays and also the players. There is no lack of talent either in the School House or the New House.

George Francis Kerr is probably our best junior actor, but there are others who run him very close for the honour. Jack Blake, and Cardew, and Talbot, and Redfern can play many parts, and with great success, too. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would be a good actor but for his unfortunate drawl.

I hope you will all enjoy this issue. There are some sparkling new numbers coming along!

Tom Merry

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RING DOWN THE CURTAIN!

By Dick Brooke.

The concert-hall was crowded out. The audience gave an eager shout: "Let Baggy Trimble sing a song, That we may laugh both loud and long! He is both musical and clever, His singing is a joy for ever!" But when the podgy youth appeared, He murmured, while the audience cheered:

"Ring down the curtain! For goodness sake, hurry!
I don't feel like singing, I'm in such a flurry.
I've got nervous tremors, my face has turned white,
So ring down the curtain! I can't sing to-night!"

They urged His Corpulence to sing, And voices cried, "Buck up, old thing! Sing of the land where shamrock grows, Or where the Swannee River flows. Sing of the roses round the door That make you love your mammy more!"

But Baggy Trimble shook his head. In tones of deep distress he said:

"Ring down the curtain! I can't sing a note.
I've twisted my larynx and got a sore throat!
Besides, I am famished. I've not had a bite,
So ring down the curtain! I can't sing to-night!"

But still they clamoured and requested: "Sing 'Where my caravan has rested,' Sing us the strains of 'Annie Laurie.' To miss such music we'd be sorry. Transport us to the seventh heaven By gaily warbling 'Glorious Devon.'" But Baggy Trimble sadly sighed: "I couldn't do it if I tried!"

"Ring down the curtain, I earnestly plead,
I'll sing on condition you stand me a feed!
But you've brought me no tarts and no Turkish delight,
So ring down the curtain! I can't sing to-night!"

TRIMBLE THE "STAR TURN!"

By Himself.

"YOU'RE certainly a good actor, Baggy!" said Jack Blake to me the other day. "When you chalked your chivvy and pretended to faint in class, so as to dodge lessons, you quite deceived old Lathom. And when you strut about, puffing out your chest like a prosperous propheteer, nobody would suspect that you hadn't a penny in your pocket. Yes, my fat tewlip, you're a first-class actor!"

Now, there's a grate deal of trooth in what Jack Blake says. Of corse, I'm a jolly good actor!

Being a direct dessendant of Shakespeare, who was an actor as well as a playwright, it natchurally follows that I possess the ability to act.

I can play any part, from the Ghost in "Hamlet" down to Dick Deadeye in "H.M.S. Pinafore."

The part that suits me best is Fat-staff, bekwase I'm a roomy sort of fellow—rather broad in the beam, to use a naughtycal eggspression.

The Junior Amateur Drammatick Sossietty at St. Jim's would be a farce and a failure if it wasn't for me. I am the life and sole of it. I organize all the plays and stage-manage them, and fill the most important part, and make a stewpendus sucksess of the whole thing. They can do without Baggy Trimble on the football field, but they can't do without him behind the foot-lites! There isn't another fellow at St. Jim's who could play the part of Fat-staff, for instance. They are all so skinny and skraggy.

Quite a lot of "St. Jim's News" readers have been clammering and crying out for a Special Theatrical Number, and this week Tom Merry is giving them their hart's desire. I had a chat with Merry about it, and gave him destructions how to get out a really good number. It would be a wash-out without me, of corse.

Some of the critticks—they're nasty people, these critticks!—may object to this issew on the grounds that there is too much Trimble in it. But think what a terribul-tragedy it would be if there was too little Trimble!



A MUSICAL TRAGEDY!

By Monty Lowther.



IT was Tom Merry's fault. He ought to have given the New House bounders a fair show.

Tommy had arranged a grand performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's musical comedy, "H.M.S. Pinafore." But he preferred to make it wholly and solely a School House affair; and Figgins & Co. of the New House had to take back seats.

"It isn't that I want to be unfair," Tommy explained. "But with such a wealth of talent in the School House there's no need to draw upon the New House for our performers."

"Quite so," agreed Manners. "Let's confine it to our own House."

I didn't agree. I said I thought Figgins & Co. ought to come in. But I was in a minority, and my opinion was overruled.

Well, we had a rehearsal two nights a week in the concert-hall, and everything went swimmingly.

I rather expected that the New House fellows would attempt to wreck the rehearsals. But nothing happened. We were left to our own devices, without any interruptions.

Perhaps I ought to give the gentle reader—or the ungentle one, as the case may be—a list of the most important characters. Here we are:

ADMIRAL SIR JOSEPH PORTER,
K.C.B. (First Lord of the Admiralty).
TOM MERRY.

CAPTAIN OF THE PINAFORE,
ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY.

RALPH RACKSTRAW (an able seaman), **REGINALD TALBOT.**

JOSEPHINE (the captain's daughter),
SIDNEY CLIVE.

DICK DEADEYE (a very able seaman),
MY WORTHY SELF.

Then, of course, there are lots of jolly Jack Tars and fair maidens—all School House fellows.

I said just now that everything went swimmingly at the rehearsals. But there was a bit of a "breeze" between Gussy and Manners. Gussy was captain of the Pinafore; Manners was just an ordinary seaman. Manners considered that they ought to change places. Gussy considered that no change was necessary. They jolly nearly came to blows over it; but Tom Merry, with his usual tact, poured oil on the troubled waters.

At last the evening of the performance came.

We made no charge for admission to

the concert-hall, so it was not surprising that the big room was crowded.

All the fellows trooped in, in a very orderly manner. I half-expected some of them would bring pea-shooters, and bad eggs, and apples that were well past the prime of life. But there was no sign of any missiles, and everybody seemed well-behaved—the New House fellows particularly so.

At eight o'clock the curtain rose, and the fun began.

The opening chorus, "We sail the ocean blue," was well received; and so was Talbot's song, "The nightingale sighed for the moon's bright ray." Talbot has a ripping tenor voice, and his song was applauded to the echo.

But it was Gussy who tickled the audience most of all. As the captain of the Pinafore, he came striding on deck, arrayed in a most gorgeous uniform, which was more suited to the First Lord of the Admiralty than a common or garden skipper.

Then Gussy introduced himself as follows:

"I am the captain of the Pinafoah,
An' a wight good captain, too!
I'm vewy vewy good, an' be it undah-
stood,
I command a wight good ewew!
Though welated to a peeah, I can hand,
weef, an' steeah,
Or ship a salvagee;
I am nevah known to quail at the foww
of a gale,
An' I'm nevah nevah sick at sea!"

"What, nevah?" yelled the audience.
"No, nevah!" chanted Gussy.
"What, nevah?" repeated the audience.
"Well—hardly ewah!" sang Gussy.

And the fellows were rocking in their seats with merriment.

The performance proceeded merrily. Gussy was regarded as the comedian of the piece, and he made a great hit. So did Tom Merry, as Admiral Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B.

My own part—that of Dick Deadeye—was only a small one. But I thoroughly enjoyed joining in the choruses.

Presently we came to a part where we were all on the stage together—the admiral, the captain, his daughter, the crew of the Pinafore, and all the rag, tag, and bobtail, so to speak.

The admiral and the captain were engaged in a fierce battle of words. They were warning to their work, and barking at each other for all they were worth, when suddenly—

Crash!

The wings of the stage—consisting of painted screens—suddenly toppled over.

They swayed for one dizzy second, and then fell inwards, and came crashing upon the heads of the performers.

Of course, they could not have fallen of their own accord. Somebody must have pushed them. But we hadn't time to think about the matter just then. The screens fell upon us with a loud crash, and for a few moments we were literally buried alive!

A struggling mass of humanity fought and kicked in a wild endeavour to get free. And a chorus of muffled yells arose.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

"I am feelin' uttably cwushed, bai Jove!"

"Help!"

"Rescue!"

The audience was almost in hysterics. Instead of rushing to the aid of the unhappy performers, they sat tight in their seats and yelled!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what a glorious mix-up!"

"An unrehearsed effect, by Jove!"

It was a long time before we managed to sort ourselves out. And then we discovered that it was Figgins & Co. who had been responsible for that "unrehearsed effect." At an arranged moment, they had pushed the screens over on top of us, and caused all the chaos and confusion and commotion.

Tom Merry hastily rang down the curtain, as soon as he had got free. And then we had to erect the screens again.



The struggling humanity fought and kicked in a wild endeavour to get free.

and chase Figgins & Co. off the premises, and put ourselves straight, before we could proceed with the performance. But we did proceed with it; and I am thankful to say that the last part of the play went without a hitch.

And if only Tom Merry had taken my advice in the beginning, there would never have been any hitch at all! But he insisted on leaving the New House fellows out, and we had to pay the penalty by being made to look "uttably widie," as Gussy would say, in the eyes of the school!

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"FOR HONOUR'S SAKE!"



(Continued from page 13.)

"I shall simply ask to see Len Pomfret. If he's not there, some yarn will be spun me. We can judge when we hear it. I sha'n't give away that I suspect anything. It's all right."

After a little further discussion, Tom Merry sought Mr. Railton, and obtained leave for the afternoon to see Lee. Just before the other fellows went into class, Tom Merry rode away from St. Jim's on his bicycle.

It was with rather anxious hearts that his chums watched him go. Afternoon classes that day seemed very long to Manners and Lowther and to Ralph Reckness Cardew.

But classes were over at last, and the juniors came out of the Form-rooms. Tom Merry, a little tired from his long ride, had just returned. Manners and Lowther and Cardew sought him coming up to the House from the bike-shed.

"Well?" said the three at once.

Tom's face was grave and set.

"Len's not at Pomfret Lodge?" he said.

"Not!" breathed Cardew. "I knew it!"

"Mr. Pomfret has gone up to the City, as usual," said Tom. "I saw the butler, a man named Jenkinson. He was surprised at my asking to see Len—he said that Len was there yesterday, but had left the same night. He supposed he was back at school."

"That settles it!" said Cardew.

"Len's disappeared!" said Tom quietly. "At Pomfret Lodge they suppose he's at St. Jim's. At St. Jim's they believe him to be at Pomfret Lodge. Where is he? That's what we've got to find out, for his own sake, poor chap." He paused. "We agreed to keep his secret—it was as good as a promise—but now circumstances have changed. For one thing, he's free to resume his own name and go back to Wodehouse; and now he knows Mr. Pomfret in his true colours, he's certain to choose to do so. So really the secret's a secret no longer."

"That's so!"

"But in any case, I think we should speak, for it may be that his life is at stake," said Tom. He shivered. "It may even be that it's too late to save his life. Goodness knows! My opinion is that we should all go to Mr. Railton now and tell him everything that we know. What do you fellows think?"

"We're bound to," said Manners, and Monty Lowther nodded.

"Without losing a minute!" said Cardew.

And the four juniors proceeded at once to Mr. Railton's study, where the Housemaster listened to a story that made him open his eyes wide with astonishment.

CHAPTER 9.

After Darkness—Light!

LEN started and shivered.

A gleam of light fell upon his dazed eyes.

How long he had lain in the damp, earthy cellar he did not know—hours, or days—it seemed like long, long years that he had lain there, in darkness and despair.

Hope had fled from his heart.

He knew that he was left to die. He knew that the scoundrel who had used him as a catspaw, threatened with exposure and prison, had taken the last desperate step in crime. The unhappy boy's life was to be sacrificed to the plotter's safety!

Len knew it, and he had no hope of discovery or rescue. Once or twice he thought of Cardew, remembering that Cardew knew why he had visited the Lodge that day. Possibly Cardew might suspect something, but that hope was too faint to be called a hope. As the hours lengthened, and the chill of the damp earth crept into the very marrow of his bones, Len sank into black despair.

The sudden gleam of light on his eyes startled him. He had been sunk in half-unconsciousness, but dimly through it there had come the sound of something—he was too dazed to realise what. But now, as the blessed light gleamed on him, he knew what it was. Heavy articles that had been piled on the trapdoor had been dragged away. The trapdoor, fastened securely down, had been prised up. It was the gleam of an electric lamp that shone on his dazzled eyes.

"There's someone there!"

He heard a voice above.

Someone dropped into the cellar. A face bent over Len in the light. In utter amazement he recognised Mr. Railton.

"You've found him, sir?"

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"Yes. This is the boy."

The gag was taken from Len's mouth, a knife slit through the ropes that fastened him. Mr. Railton lifted him to his feet. The boy staggered, the Housemaster's strong arm saved him from falling.

"Courage, my boy. You are safe now!"

And then Len fainted.

It was days later that Len knew what had happened. His terrible experience had told severely upon him. For long days and nights he lay in the sanatorium at St. Jim's, unconscious of his surroundings.

But he was himself again at last.

Cardew was the first visitor admitted to see him. And it was from Cardew that Len learned of his rescue.

"You see, in the circus, we felt bound to pitch the yarn to jolly old Railton," Cardew explained in his airy way.

"You should have seen his chivvy when we told him. And he found out that Lee, the chap he wanted to find, had been under his nose all the time as Pomfret of the Fourth!"

Len smiled faintly.

"You see, he's in touch with your esteemed avuncular relative, Sir George Lee, who's keen on finding you and sending you back to Wodehouse," said Cardew. "You're luckier in genuine uncles than in adopted ones, Lee."

"Is it possible? I never knew—"

"Huntin' for you right and left," said Cardew. "Quite a jolly old brick! No more trampin' for you, what?"

Len lay back on his pillow, his face very bright. That dazzling change in his prospects did him more good than even Miss Marie's nursing.

"Railton swallowed the yarn, after askin' us a lot of questions," went on Cardew. "Then he hopped on a motor-bike and scudded off to Wayland Police-station. He didn't let any grass grow under his feet. For some reason he didn't take me with him."

Len grinned.

"So we had to wait on jolly old tenterhooks," said Cardew. "But it seems that there was a search-warrant, and bobbies went with Mr. Railton to the Lodge, and they ransacked the place for you, up and down and round about, without findin' you, and then they started on the grounds. And then the lodge-keeper remembered there was a disused shed in the plantation, and they looked for you there, and found you, not in a happy state. Close call for you, old scout!"

"And—and Mr. Pomfret?"

"Dear man!" said Cardew. "It must have been no end of a surprise for jolly old Claude when he was nabbed in the City. But he was nabbed all right, with all his imperfections on his head, as Shakespeare would have put it. He's in chokes now, to stand his trial for forgery and embezzlement and attempted murder—all sorts of things to keep him busy. I don't suppose he's bored at all with all that to think of."

"You saved my life, Cardew."

"Well, I had a hand in it," admitted Cardew. "Pomfret denies that he intended you to peg out in that cellar, but there are no takers, I believe. He's a cool card and a keen one. He may get off with seven years, scarcely less. Of course, he had put you in the cellar for keeps. Lucky for him, now, that he was too cautious to give you a final knock on the head. Lucky for you, too. You have all the luck, old man!"

"I sha'n't forget that you saved my life."

"Oh, the other chaps had a hand in it, and Railton, too. We'll whack out the giddy glory," said Cardew. "Buck up and get mended, old scout. I've heard from Wodehouse, and they're keen to have you back. And St. Jim's will give you a send-off, you bet."

Tom Merry & Co. were glad to see Len when he emerged from the sanatorium. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy greeted him joyously. Len stayed a few days longer at St. Jim's, the cynosure of all eyes, now that his strange story was known.

But his old school was eager to welcome him back. There were letters from old friends there, from his headmaster, from his uncle, letters that made Len's face shine as he read them.

His dark days were over. His last days at St. Jim's passed like a pleasant dream, and when he left for Wodehouse, Tom Merry & Co. and, of course, Cardew, went in a body to see him off.

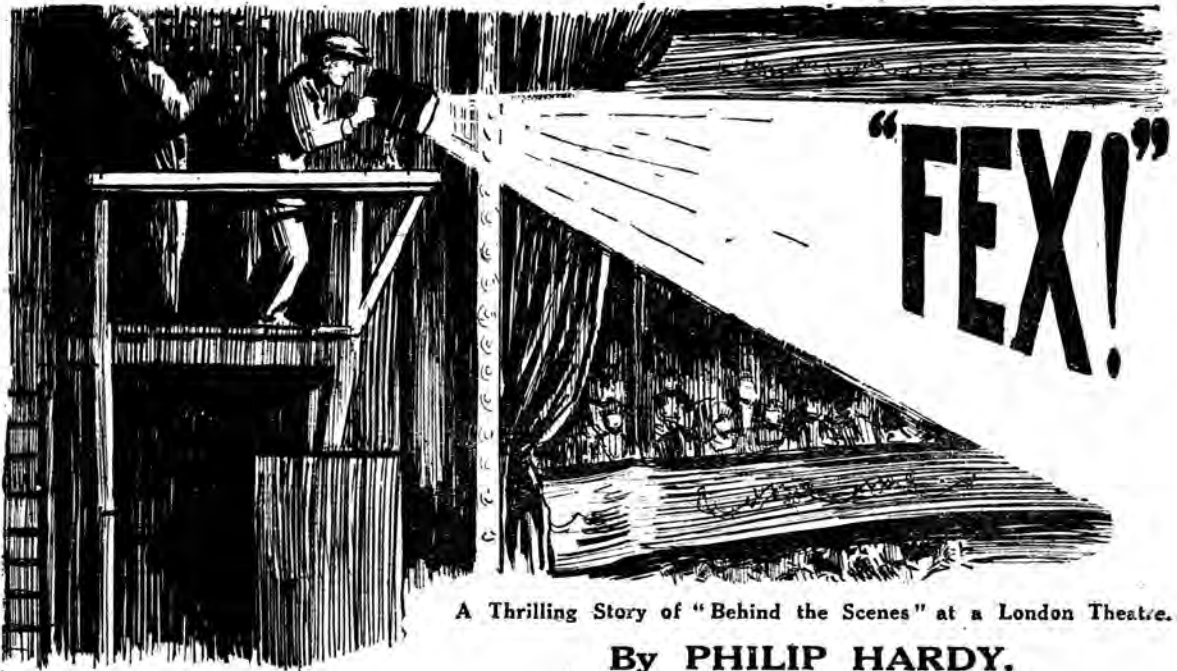
"He's a good chap, and I'm sorry he's gone," Tom Merry remarked, as they walked back to St. Jim's.

Len was happy at his old school, as his letters to his friends at St. Jim's told them. Life was very bright now to the junior who had risked so much for honour's sake.

THE END.

(You will all be pleased to learn that there will be an extra-long story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "GUSST'S GROCERY STORE!" By Martin Clifford. Don't miss this splendid number, in which will appear the result of our Great Footballers' Names Competition.)

Ambitious young "Fex" meets with extraordinary success in his new venture behind the scenes, but earns for himself the jealousy of his fellow workers!



A Thrilling Story of "Behind the Scenes" at a London Theatre.

By PHILIP HARDY.

CHAPTER 1.

"Blow wind,—come wrack."

—"Macbeth"

"ALL off the stage, please! Let fly with that storm! That's right. Now, steady. Up she goes!"

The curtain glided silently upwards, and the darkened stage was revealed for brief seconds by the blaze of wonderfully realistic lightning, while the thunder pealed and rolled, worked up into a deafening crash, and died into sullen mutterings as Casca and Cassius made their entrance.

"Dashed clever kid you've got at that thunder-sheet, Dexter," remarked the leading actor, as he watched the scene from the wings side by side with the young stage-manager. "Just listen to that, and never a word lost!"

Geoffrey Dexter laughed.

"Yes, Fex is worth his weight in gold to me."

"Not much of a compliment, old man, considering his size," said Reginald Fenton, glancing across at the diminutive figure that wielded the thunder-sheet so skilfully. "How old is he?"

"Sixteen. Doesn't look it, does he? Go and have a chat with him, Fenton; he's a proper nib, I can tell you!"

Fenton strolled across the stage, and watched the antics of the busy lad for a few moments in silence. Then he remarked carelessly:

"Don't you use cannon-balls, or something, for the heavy peals?"

Fex turned a freckled countenance towards him, and grinned.

"Nah, guv'nor! Why, them balls sound about as much like thunder as a kid's rattle. Listen to this 'ere!"

The scene had come to an end, and the thunder rolled and pealed, rising to a roar like artillery, and dying into a pitiful crackle.

"How the dickens do you manage it?" exclaimed Fenton, genuinely astonished.

"Knack, guv'nor!" came the chuckling reply.

Reginald Fenton studied the lad before him with keen eyes. Fex was just one

of the bright, intelligent youngsters to be found in the streets of London—sandy-haired, blue-eyed, and with a grin that endeared him to almost everyone he met.

What his real name might have been was a mystery. Dexter had found him hanging round the thunder-sheet one morning, discovered that he had no home, and, for a joke, allowed him to try his hand at a peal. His success was astonishing; and, being in need of a man to work the effects, Dexter had engaged the waif.

He had long been known as the "boy who did the effects," and this lengthy description had been abbreviated until he was universally known as "Fex."

Dexter had often wondered how the lad managed to get into the theatre at all, but Fex would grin, and say:

"Lor', guv'nor! There ain't nothing I couldn't do—not if I wanted to!"

While Fenton was studying him, Fex was summoned by a call from Dexter.

"Say, kid, run across and get that back-cloth straight."

"Right-ho, guv'nor!"

The thin, wiry figure sped across the stage, and Fenton smiled.

"You're a kind of superman in Fex's eyes, old chap!" he remarked to Dexter; and the stage-manager smiled, too.

Fex adored the man who had been responsible for his entrance into the happy family which made up the actors and staff of the Shakespeare Repertory Theatre, London, W., and Dexter appreciated the waif's love.

Meanwhile, Fex had reached the offending back-cloth, and was studying it with evident disapproval. It represented a cloudy sky; but, unfortunately, the scene-shifters had failed to strain it sufficiently.

"Looks like mother's Saturday wash," observed Fex. "'Ooever saw a sky with folds in it? You 'ave got 'eads—I don't fink!"

With a twist of the strainers, an adroit touch or two, he had the cloth taut and smooth. Then he doubled back to Dexter, leaving the scene-shifters to grumble to thin air.

"Ain't they a lot, guv'nor? Makes me sick!"

Dexter ruffled his sandy hair, and told him to be off. A few minutes later the actor who was playing the part of Cæsar came majestically up to the stage-manager, and by his face Dexter knew something was wrong.

"I cannot understand your allowing that boy to order the scene-shifters about in such an impudent manner!" the actor exclaimed. "I wonder the men stand it!"

Geoffrey Dexter frowned.

"Look here, Andrew, Fex knows his place all right. Those men are slackers, and Fex is as keen as I am for this theatre to be a success. You leave him alone."

"Oh, well, if you uphold him there's nothing more to be said!"

And James Andrew walked away.

"Merry Andrew" been grousing?" asked Fenton, coming over to his friend's side.

"Merry Andrew" was the nickname which had been given to James Andrew, because, as Fenton explained, "He wasn't."

Dexter laughed, his frown relaxing.

"Saying that Fex is officious," he replied.

Fenton's handsome face grew angry. He bestowed a glare on the unconscious back of James Andrew and sniffed—a most unclassical action for Mark Antony to indulge in.

"Like his cheek! What's Fex got to do with him? 'Tisn't as though he's been here from the first, like Belyoir and Darch; he's a newcomer, the same as myself, and he ought to mind his own business."

They were standing beneath the switchboard, and at this point their conversation was interrupted by Fex himself. He came down the ladder like a very active young monkey, and grinned into their astonished faces.

"What have you been up to now—eh?" demanded Dexter.

"Mr. Shaw's bin a-givin' me a lesson in THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 839.

switchboard work, guv'nor. Ain't it interestin'?"

Fenton patted the boy on the shoulder.

"You're a good lad! You'll be something pretty high up the scale one of these days, mark my words!"

Fex's face glowed with pleasure.

"I love to 'andle them switches, guv'nor. Wot wonderful lights we could get with all them colours!"

"Stick to the thunder-sheet a bit longer, kid, and we'll see if we can't promote you a bit nearer the lights."

His mind was so full of the promised new work—for when Dexter spoke as he had done to Fex he meant it as a promise—that he let his breakfast grow cold, studying the effect of the sunlight on a dusty mirror.

"Ain't you well, Fex?" demanded the landlady anxiously.

Fex gave a start that nearly caused disaster among the crockery. Then he turned dreamy eyes upon the questioner.

"Wot colour's moonlight, Mrs. Murphy?" he asked.

Mrs. Murphy set hands on hips and regarded him in amazement.

"You're not getting silly, are you?" she inquired.

Fex got up, remembering that his worthy landlady had little interest in such vital questions.

"No, I ain't," he answered, rather shortly. "I was thinkin'."

And, catching up his cap, he hurried off to the theatre.

The Shakespeare Repertory Theatre stood in Soho, an unpretentious little place, but as well-known among Shakespeare lovers as the Old Vic itself, though it

could not boast of the stars which illuminate the performances held in that historic theatre.

It was famous for the good-nature which existed between its staff, actors, and managers. The two joint-owners of the theatre, both first-class actors themselves, were kindly and just to their company, leaving the actual running of the theatre almost entirely in the hands of Geoffrey Dexter, and it was due to this that Dexter had been able to engage Fex without first consulting them. Never an actor but longed to enter the Repertory Theatre's company, and lucky indeed were those who managed to enter the magic portals!

James Andrew was the only thorn in the roses, and Fex made up his mind to please the unpleasant man, if he could, "for the guv'nor's sake." He had caught some of the words which had passed between Dexter and Andrew, and intended to make what amends he could.

It was "King Lear" to-night, and James Andrew was playing the part of the ill-fated king. So Fex gathered four reliable stage-hands round him, and proceeded to rehearse the storm, awaking the echoes with the aid of the thunder-sheet and the wind and rain machines, while the fizzing of the live cable which provided the lightning filled up any intervals which might have remained.

By the time the company arrived for rehearsal, Fex was confident that his efforts had been crowned with success. When the great storm-scene approached, Fex whispered a few words to his companions, urging them to do the best that was in them, so as to please Mr. Andrew.



Dexter smiled at the thin face as he spoke, and Fex simply beamed.

"Will yer, guv'nor? Crumbs! I'll work like billy-ho!"

And he sped away to lend a hand with some pillars for the Senate House scene.

All that night Fex tossed and turned in his bed, dreaming of blue spot-lights and red floods, till he awoke and found a stream of wintry sunshine slanting across his little room.

Fex lay and looked at it.

"Now, we oughter be able to imitate that," he declared, to nothing in particular. "Goldy-yellow, and a sorter mist abart the rays."

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Without making a sound, James Andrew watched, and saw a shadowy form swing a couple of wires from the switchboard and fasten them carefully to the thunder-sheet.

"E's a queer bloke," Fex confided, "an' e might kick up if we cut off any of 'is sentences. So remember, don't go raging when e's tryin' to speak!"

Accordingly, the storm was manipulated to suit the requirements of the text, and Dexter came across to congratulate the four perspiring workers.

"That was great, Fex. Been practising?"

"Hever since eight o'clock, guv'nor," grinned Fex. "They ain't 'arf done well, 'aven't they?"

"You've all done wonders!" replied Dexter, and the bright blue eyes twinkled with delight, until a cold voice struck across Fex's happiness.

"Not enough energy in that storm, Dexter. I'm out in a howling wilderness, not a summer garden!"

James Andrew was standing beside them, his face set in its most haughty lines. He turned to Fex before the stage-manager could reply.

"Look here, youngster, you've got to put some pep into that thunder. I won't have you slacking about when you're working for me. So don't let me have to speak to you again!"

He strode away, leaving Fex at first dismayed, and then more and more angry.

"Don't you worry, kid!" soothed Dexter. "Mr. Andrew doesn't understand artistic effects when he hears them."

"That's all right, guv'nor!" replied Fex. But the impish spirit of his street-arab birth was working within him, and would not be put on one side. He knew that Dexter was right, but he ached for revenge—and he determined to have it.

"He wants thunder, and by Jiminy, he shall have it!" he chuckled, as he entered the theatre that night. A few words to his three companions, and the chuckle passed round them, too, for they had no love for the officious actor, and jumped at the chance of paying off a dozen old scores.

During the first storm scene, when only Kent and a Gentleman were upon the stage, the thunder-sheet was manipulated with Fex's usual care, and when the curtain fell, Andrew, in his flowing robes, swept over to the storm-makers and repeated his warning of the rehearsal.

"Don't you worry, sir," Fex assured him. "You'll 'ave a grand storm—a fair ripper!"

He winked at his companions with the eye farthest from the actor, but James Andrew nodded haughtily.

"Very well. Don't forget!"

The curtain rose, and Lear made his entry to a peal of thunder that made the theatre resound. He opened his lips to speak. Another peal roared out and trembled away. Every time he spoke, he was drowned by the too realistic storm. The wind machine screeched, the lightning hissed, and the thunder reverberated. Louder and louder the unfortunate king shouted, but he couldn't out-do that storm! And the audience, well-behaved as it was, began to titter.

In the wings, Dexter knitted his brows, turning to Fenton with a worried look.

"What on earth is Fex doing? He's simply drowning Andrew!"

At this moment Kent entered, and the storm sank to its usual dimensions. Andrew's speech had been ruined, and that was all that Fex intended to do.

But when the scene was over, James Andrew came across to the thunder-sheet white-hot fury in his eyes.

"You deliberately ruined that scene! You spoilt my speech—"



"I've got a confession to make, lad," said Andrew, seating himself in the chair beside Fex, his face burning with shame. "I—I was jealous of you, and wanted you to get hurt." "Jealous o' me, guv'nor!" exclaimed Fex. "Yes, Fex—jealous of your popularity!"

He was incoherent with rage, and he caught the boy by the shoulder brutally so that Fex winced. What he would have done in the heat of his passion will never be known, for a quiet voice spoke behind him, and he turned to behold Richard Gervase, part-proprietor of the company.

"Let go that lad, Andrew!" said Gervase sternly. "You seem to be forgetting yourself!"

James Andrew released Fex and began to pour forth his accusation; but Gervase held up his hand.

"You complained when Fex was giving you his best work, and you have no right to criticise what you yourself asked for," he said. "Go and get into a better temper, Andrew, and don't be a fool!"

For a moment the furious actor faced the speaker, and then he swung round and strode away. Gervase turned to Fex, who was ruefully rubbing his shoulder.

"Hurt, kid?"

"Not me, guv'nor! I ain't made o' chiney. Sorry I made trouble."

Gervase nodded and smiled a little.

"That's all right. Only don't play tricks again, even if Andrew asks for it. You see, it makes the public laugh in the wrong place, and that's bad for all of us. See?"

"I see, guv'nor. I—I didn't think of it that way. It sha'n't 'appen again."

Richard Gervase nodded again, patted Fex reassuringly on the shoulder, and walked away. Fex turned to his silent companions.

"That's what I call a real gent!" he observed.

CHAPTER 2.

"Lights! Lights!"—"Hamlet."

"I DON'T know how I shall get through that scene, Mr. Dane," said Marcia Clare—otherwise Gervase—miserably. "I've got a brute of a headache, and my nerves are all on edge."

Ernest Dane looked down sympathetically at the young wife of the partner. She had been unwell all the week, and now she was playing Lady Macbeth, the strain of the part was all she could bear. She had refused to give in, but as she prepared to make her entrance in the sleep-walking scene, her courage failed her.

"Shall Miss Dainton go on instead, Mrs. Gervase?" asked Dane.

As he had hoped, and expected, this caused the actress to pull herself together, and she laughed shakily.

"Indeed, no! The poor child would have a fit, such short notice for such a vile scene. I'll play it myself. So long as there is no terrible interruption I shall be all right."

The cue came, and she made her entrance. The taper in her hand cast weird shadows on her lined face, and the dim blue lights heightened the effect of eeriness.

And then it happened. A sudden flood of brilliant white light cut through the gloom, falling straight upon Lady Macbeth as she stood in the centre of the stage.

For a second Marcia remained frozen into inaction, and then, bursting into hysterical tears, she fled from the stage.

In an instant there was chaos. Dexter rang down the curtain, dashing up the ladder to the switchboard to find out the

reason of the dreadful fluke. Dane was endeavouring to persuade the sobbing actress to continue the scene, while Fex, seeing that she was on the point of collapse, sped away to the box-office to summon her husband to her side.

"What ever happened?" demanded Richard Gervase hurrying back with Fex, his forehead lined with anxiety.

"I don't exactly know, guv'nor, but the white lime was turned on Mrs. Gervase in the middle of her speech, and it just did for 'er."

"I should think so, the dashed fools!" growled Gervase. "She was not fit to go on to-night, anyway, and a shock like that— The sentence remained eloquently incomplete, as Gervase ran across the stage to his wife's side, and Fex stood awkwardly by.

In the meantime, Dexter had discovered that the fluke had nothing to do with Shaw, who was tearing his hair at the switchboard and apostrophizing the limelight boy in no very sweet terms.

"The confounded young ass!" he roared. "How he missed his cue is past my comprehension. I wish to goodness I had young Fex to help me!"

Dexter swung himself down the ladder and shouted lustily for the offender.

"Come down, you incompetent lunatic! Come down before you do any more mischief!"

Bert Jones came sulkily down the ladder and stood before the exasperated stage-manager.

"You can help the stage-hands till your week's up and then you can go, and good riddance to you!" said Dexter.

"Hi! Fex, lad, come here!" Fex came sprinting across to him, and he pointed up to the lime. "Can you work that, d'you think? You've only got to follow the cues, and they're all written up."

"You bet I can!" cried Fex, beaming.

"Right-ho!"

"If Fex is going to work the limes I'll go through the scene again."

Marcia smiled at the blushing lad, and Gervase, who was about to announce the illness of his wife and go on to the next scene, bundled the Doctor and Gentlewoman on to the stage, sent Fex sprinting up to the deserted lime, and rang up the curtain.

The scene went without a hitch. The green lime followed Lady Macbeth as though it were glued to her, and when the curtain fell, a soft voice called Fex to the stage, where he found Marcia waiting with shining eyes and a rose pulled from a bouquet.

"There, Sir Knight! Wear this for your prowess!" smiled the actress, pushing the flower into Fex's buttonhole. "You have deserved well of your country!"

And she walked away, leaving Fex alternately hot and cold for very delight. That a leading lady should take notice of him—should praise him! Well, he was not sure whether his feet were on solid wood or on clouds!

"Am I to go on, guv'nor?" he asked Dexter breathlessly.

"Good heavens, yes! Who d'you think is going to do it?"

"But the battle noise?"

Dexter laughed.

"One of the stage hands can do that. I shall want you to work the thunder-sheet to-morrow, though. I'll see to the limes while you're doing it, and then you must instruct one of those chaps who helped you yesterday. I want you to remain with the lights."

Fex bounded up the ladder again, his heart singing and his face unusually flushed. He had attained more in an hour than he had hoped to win in a

month. He was actually working his beloved lights, and Mrs. Gervase had praised him and given him a rose!

In the shadows of the wings, Bert Jones sneered and turned to one of the few scene-shifters with whom Fex was unpopular.

"Bloomin' little swanker! Look at 'im sportin' that there rose wot Clare gived im! Jolly sight too big fer 'is boots, that's what 'e is! Wish I could take 'im down a peg or two."

Jones had heard the conversation between Fex and the stage-manager, and one sentence had stuck strangely in his head: "I shall want you to work the thunder-sheet to-morrow."

"If I could do somethin' to that there sheet," he thought, sitting behind some scenery for a quiet smoke. And as he pondered, a grin spread over his face, and he rubbed his hands complacently.

When the stage hands left the theatre after the play, Bert Jones suddenly paused and turned back.

"Blow me if I ain't forgot me fags!" he exclaimed. "Arf a mo! Don't look up for a sec! I'll sprint back and get 'em!"

"Ere, take the key an' lock up yer-self!" grunted the doorkeeper, handing him the key and shambling off.

Bert Jones hid a grin of triumph and returned to the deserted stage.

He knew a bit about electricity—enough to be dangerous, had he realised it—and now, making sure he was alone, he clambered up to the switchboard.

But someone else had cause to return to the stage that night. James Andrew, after turning his dressing-room upside down in a vain search for his boots, remembered that he had changed them in the wings, and hurried down to the stage, his stockinged feet making no sound. Like the other principals, he had a private key, so that the absence of the doorkeeper would not matter to him.

He picked up his boots and was returning to his room when a thin beam of light, high up in the wings, caught his attention. Without making a sound, he watched and saw a shadowy form swing a couple of wires from the switchboard and fasten them carefully to the thunder-sheet.

Then the figure descended to the stage, and Andrew recognised Bert Jones.

The ex-limelight boy, unaware of the watching eyes, dusted his clothes and grinned.

"I bet you'll get a surprise when they turns on the limes, an' you lays 'old of that!" he muttered maliciously. Then he picked up a packet of cigarettes, pushed them in his pocket, and walked away, whistling shrilly.

James Andrew waited till the coast was clear, and then returned to his room. His heart was pumping heavily, and he felt strangely excited. He knew well enough what Jones had done. He had fixed wires to the thunder-sheet so that when the limes were turned on the iron would be electrified. Anyone touching it would receive a severe shock. Fex would be the one to catch hold of the thing, and Fex would get the shock—Fex, the cause of his embarrassment yesterday.

"Serve the little beast right!" muttered Andrew, as he let himself out of the theatre. "I'm not going to speak of it. It's not my business, anyway."

He walked homewards through the moonlit streets, and tried to banish the thoughts which came to torture him.

Suppose the current was too strong? Suppose the shock killed the boy?

"Rot! It can't be more than two-fifty, and that isn't dangerous, unless—"

He turned up his coat-collar and

pushed his hands more deeply into his pockets.

Leaving Shaftesbury Avenue, and crossing New Oxford Street, he was about to turn into Hart Street, when the clock of St. George's tolled midnight. He started and then muttered an imprecation. What a fool he was! One might think him a criminal!

He walked on more quickly, and, reaching Bloomsbury Square, let himself into his flat and turned on the light.

Electric light! He had once got a pretty bad shock from a bare flex. What kind would anyone holding on to bare metal with both hands receive? Suppose the lad had a weak heart?

Andrew had his supper and got to bed. But he did not sleep. He was haunted by fears—fears that were unformed and yet were terrible.

He wished he had never gone down for his boots—wished he had never joined the company, and then determined to tell Dexter what had happened the very first thing next morning.

After which he went to sleep.

CHAPTER 3.

"Beware, my lord, of jealousy!"

"Othello."

MORNING brought other thoughts than those which night had awakened. James Andrew called himself a fool, and laughed at his fears.

"Do the little beast good! He's getting a darn sight too conceited. And now that Dexter's promoted him, he'll be unbearable."

Had Andrew been really honest with himself, he would have seen that his own dislike for Fex was caused more than a little by jealousy.

The boy was too general a favourite to please the somewhat unpopular actor, and he hated him accordingly. Had he taken much thought, he would also have remembered the words which he himself had to speak in the character of Iago.

"Beware, my lord, of jealousy."

But James Andrew never looked deeply into his own faults, and he contented himself by saying that Fex deserved all he got.

He strolled down to his club and there met Shaw, the electrician of the theatre. Shaw greeted him affably, though he did not altogether care for the officious actor, and they got into conversation.

From one thing to another the talk drifted, till Shaw spoke of Fex's admirable work the night before.

"That lad's a perfect genius," he said enthusiastically. "He'll become electrician before he's finished. Seems to know what's wanted without being told."

He rattled on, while Andrew listened without interest. His thoughts wandered, to be brought back to earth, as it were, by a sentence that stabbed him like a knife.

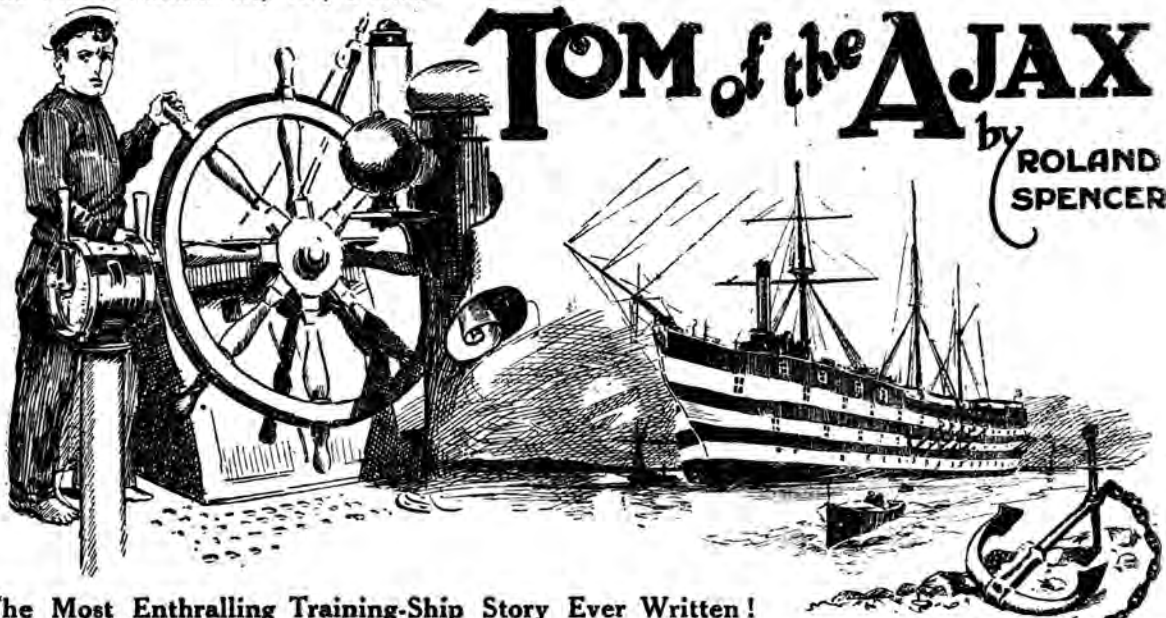
"Electricity's a queer thing," Shaw was saying. "It seems to affect one person in entirely a different way to another. There's Fex, for instance. He got a little leak on the lime one day, and it nearly laid him out. It just tickled me. He seems peculiarly sensitive to even a low voltage. What would happen if he ever got a bad shock, I'd hardly care to say—"

Shaw stopped short and stared at his companion. Andrew's face had lost every vestige of colour; it was the dull hue of lead, and he clutched the arms of his chair with convulsive fingers. "Good heavens, man, what's the matter?"

Andrew rose to his feet. His eyes

(Continued on page 27.)

The Finest Instalment, Yet, Chums!



The Most Enthralling Training-Ship Story Ever Written!

The Death-Trap!

"ALL hands make sail, Mr. Bowser!"

Captain MacNayre's voice galvanised all to action.

Wheep-wheep!

The bo'sun was piping to the ship's company to stand by.

"Stations, everybody!" yelled the mate. "Man main an' mizzen halliards an' shake out the foretops'ls!"

"I'll have every stitch of canvas she can carry, Mr. Bowser!" Captain MacNayre was cool and collected. He turned to the doctor. Tom and Dicky, at the mizzen halliards, heard.

"The Skerries look lively over there, old man."

"Going to beat up out of it?" returned the doctor.

"No good," replied the captain. "Must just run her through it all. The tide's sluicing us down to the Skerries at seven knots an hour. We'll drag clear of the Skerries all right, if these lads look smart in making sail. But it's the Lothar Reef I'm worrying about."

"What luck! Of course, the accident must happen to deprive us of mechanical power just here, with barely time to make sail and no opportunity to hold out to sea."

Captain MacNayre laughed.

"All in the day's work, my dear man!" he shouted, for the wind suddenly whipped up to a fury that made all gasp and bend their heads to it. "I've said some nasty things about the Lothar Reef in my articles for the nautical almanack!"

"Ah!" returned the doctor jocularly. "Well, the reef'll maybe get her own back now. But look, those smart lads on the foreyards have already got the topsails loosed."

"Sheet home!" sounded down to the deck from the yards.

"Now the t'gallant and royal, ye cripples! Look alive, and cut all them ties. She feels her hellum, there?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Then bear away more—more. So! Let her drag through it at that!"

In twenty minutes the Ulysses was staggering along, close hauled under

all plain sail. She was being swept mercilessly sideways towards the raging Skerries, the water boiling and lashing round the stone lighthouse tower. Would she drag ahead enough to clear?

Tense faces looked across at the raging water as the Ulysses leapt her length as she felt the full drag of her canvas. She was carrying more than safety for the spars permitted. Her list was terrifyingly heavy, the scuppers boiling and hissing with the sea. The wind whistled and howled in her rigging in mooking fury. It was the old, old story of weak man pitted against the terrific forces of Nature—a handful of weak men and a ship.

Lurching and crashing, green water roaring and hissing over the catheads

and sluicing down the decks, rigging strained to breaking-point, and masts and spars bending sickeningly, the brave old barquentine strove to save herself from disaster.

To Tom, standing fearless and entranced near the lee mizen rigging, the ship seemed to be alive. The boy's hands gripped the rail, and he only just choked back a cry to the ship to stick it, to drag far enough forward for her stern to miss those cruel rocks.

Captain MacNayre was muttering to himself. He was not looking at the yelling and leaping water over and around the Skerries, so terribly near in their lee. His eyes were searching through the columns of spray beyond the lighthouse.

He stood there, quite cool and unmoved, his pipe in his mouth. But he was thinking of something.

"Hurrah! We'll clear!" was shouted at last by one of the seamen. But Captain MacNayre and Mr. Bowser, the latter standing watching the two seamen at the wheel like a cat watching a mouse, did not seem comforted by the report.

The Ulysses' stern swept down past the rocks, clear, but only just.

"Keep 'er steady, wither ye!" gritted out Mr. Bowser to the men at the wheel. His round, red face was tense and strained.

At last another cry—a yell of fear, a frantic shout from the look-outs:

"Breakers and a beacon dead ahead!"

Captain MacNayre and Mr. Bowser were unmoved.

"Wither ye for a son of a gun!"

gritted out Bowser to the helmsmen.

"Keep 'er steady! Be ready for them flamin' kicks o' the rudder! Let 'er lurch like that agen, an' I'll not answer! Ye know what it'd mean if we started a brace now!"

There was a world of meaning in the mate's remark. A started brace would mean wrecked head-gear. And the Ulysses was even now straining the heart out of her.

Still Captain MacNayre stood chewing the stem of his pipe, gracefully balancing himself to the terrific lurches of the barquentine. He was watching the cauldron of breaking seas on their beam. They were getting nearer—nearer!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 839.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

TOM GALE, a sturdily-built youth and chief petty officer of the starboard watch aboard the famous old training-ship Ajax.

STONIKY BURR, C.P.O. of the starboard watch, a bully of the first water.

DICKY WEST is a cheerful ginger-headed youth and a staunch chum of Gale's.

Trouble arises when a mysterious, sinister man in green spectacles approaches Burr. He gives him the name of KALCHE, and he enlists the aid of Burr in a plot against Tom Gale, without, however, giving any reasons.

Following this Tom falls an easy prey to a trick of Burr's, is disgraced, and struck off the list of boys detailed to sail on the annual cruise round the British Isles aboard the Ulysses.

A mad impulse seizes him, however, and, stealing out of his bunk at night, Tom plunges over the side of the Ajax, swims to the Ulysses, clambers aboard, and stows himself away in the chain-locker. His wild adventure comes to a sad ending, for, on reaching Harwich, he is taken ashore and delivered to the guard of an express for his journey back to the Ajax.

The train is wrecked. Tom is crawling out of the wreckage when he is rushed upon, overpowered, and carried to a car, in which he is conveyed to a lonely house on the moor. He effects an escape, however, but Kalche and his men are soon hot on his track.

With the aid of AVALANCHE HUME, the famous detective, Tom gains his freedom, and reaches the Ulysses in time to win the boxing contest for the "Avalanche" Cup.

Excitement of a more dramatic nature follows when, in the treacherous waters of the Firth, the Ulysses strikes a submerged wreck, loses its propeller, and the order, "All hands make sail for their lives!" is given.

(Now read on.)

Crack! Crash!

A strangled cry from the seaman! A splintering roar from forward! Down went the fore-top-gallant mast with its awful tangle of spars and gear lashing in the lee of it.

"Oh, heavens, the weather braces has started!"

Mr. Bowser groaned out the words as he pounded past Tom, then he yelled above the roaring of the gale:

"Five hands aloft with hatchets to cut away wreckage!"

As his order tailed off, Captain MacNayre gave voice.

"Training-ship boys to look to the falls of the boats! See all clear for running down! Bear up a bit at the helm, there!"

Then, as Tom leapt past the officers towards one of the boats, he heard Captain MacNayre say quietly to the doctor:

"The loss of that propeller has done for us, my buck! That's the Lother Reef to port, and it's as bad as I've ever seen it!"

Tom and Dicky and Hemming tugged and pulled at the tackles of the life-boat they were overhauling. They saw Burr, crouching with his face ashen with fear, in the shelter of the Ulysses' bulwarks near by—handy for a boat. Then, sharp and clear and incisive above the roaring of the gale, came Captain MacNayre's voice again:

"All hands but those at the helm and cutting away wreckage, stand by the boats! Swing out and hands to the falls, ready to lower on the order! All above from the engine-room and stokehold, engineer?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Then stand by the weather boats! Clear the lee decks; that's where the spars will fall!"

The Lother Reef, its presence just beneath the water known by the beacon and the lashing overfalls behind the hump of water this side of it, was only a hundred yards on the weather beam!

The Ulysses was swept sideways by the irresistible tide, and soon those on the barquentine were conscious of nothing but fury let loose in a mist of hissing and driving spray!

The vessel struck! She quivered from stem to stern and heeled over heavily towards the rocks, the raging tide boiling and smashing against her weather side and cascading over the leaning gunwales on to the sloping deck.

At the shock wreckage came down from aloft with a crash that was hardly heard above the shouting of the gale and the roaring of the water. In the frightful turmoil of intermingled spray, lumps of green water, crashing spars, and twisting and tangling steel wire rope and hempen cordage, Tom was conscious of heavy gear from aloft coming down to the deck just to windward of him.

He slipped on the deck, and, helped along by a fresh over-burst of seething sea, he slid swiftly to the lee scuppers, where he got caught up by confused twists and coils of steel wire rigging.

The ship began to right herself. Wonders of wonders, they were water-borne again! They could feel the heave of the decks with an accompanying shiver from stem to stern as the keel crashed down on to solid rock!

There had been no time to lower boats—indeed, the boats could not live in those terrible overfalls—and the Ulysses was free of the reef! But was she stove in—sinking? Had she been washed over, as other ships have been before, only to be beaten down by the

heavy overfalls, to fill and sink in the deep water hard by the reef?

Tom struggled frantically in the tangle of ropes and gear. Great blocks crashed at his legs, bruising them, and threatening to break his limbs at any moment. The lad tugged and strained to free himself, but his frantic efforts were of no avail.

No distinction could be made between air and water. Aloft, the spars still standing were hidden by what seemed like driving mists. But Tom's heart leapt with a new-born hope as he felt the gallant old Ulysses heave heavily. She was evidently being washed into calmer water—water with more uniformity in the run of the waves.

Heavily rolled the stout craft, star-board rail down now, now the port. The misty, flying spray was clearing. The spars above could be distinguished—the stump of the fore-topmast, the wildly lashing gaff of the mainsail, its vangs adrift and snaking about in the air. Someone had thrown free the sheet and had drawn in the sail, the head of which ran on an iron traveller along the gaff. The topsail was blowing free in ribbons! But the masts were standing—that was the main thing. The crash on the reef could not have been so heavy as it seemed.

Tom was still a prisoner amongst the tangled ropes. He was jerked to star-board and to port with force enough, it seemed, to tear his legs from his body at every heavy roll of the ship.

Frantically the lad peered round the now-visible decks. They he cried aloud in horror, for death stared him in the face. The Ulysses was evidently comparatively safe; but he, imprisoned there by those terrible ropes and lines, jammed against the bulwarks, was in a veritable death-trap!

A loose, broken yard was on the deck—the fore-top-gallant sail-yard, with fragments of the sail wrapped round it. And the Ulysses was rolling heavily to port, the heavy spar rolling down across the deck, straight towards Tom, lying helpless and entangled there by the port scuppers!

The yard would crush him to death against the bulwarks!

A Gallant Act!

TOM made one more frantic effort to free himself enough to enable him to sit up, at all events, and prevent the yard from stoving in his ribs. But he was held in a relentless grip, and the spar now slipped down with greater velocity!

The boy gave up all hope. But suddenly, from aft, the form of another training-ship boy darted towards the spot. His face was hidden by a fluttering fragment of main-topsail which had been torn free from the rest of the sail. It was the clew of the sail, hanging by the sheet from the gaff-end.

The boy slipped on the deck intentionally, and came sliding down towards near where Tom was lying. He got his feet against the stringer plate at the bulwarks, and caught the sliding spar with his shoulder, thus holding it up by, it seemed, a super-human display of strength. He was using himself as a human wedge, lying there on the deck, to keep the spar from closing in against the bulwarks and crushing Tom!

Young Gale felt his senses swim. So he was, for the moment, safe. But could that plucky fellow withstand the weight of the spar for long enough?

It would perhaps be many minutes before the desperate situation was seen by others on the vessel.

Who could it be, straining there to keep the spar off the bulwarks? Tom could see the back of his head only. It wasn't a head covered with fiery hair, so the boy couldn't be Dicky West.

The Ulysses lurched over to star-board again, and the weight on the gallant boy's shoulder was eased of its burden for a spell. But the port roll would come again, all too soon, so the lad must keep himself ready to take the weight of the spar against his shoulder again.

He was in great danger of being crushed himself, and he evidently realised it, for he shifted his position now the ship was over on her star-board beam ends almost, and the spar had rolled back over the deck, away from him and Tom.

The vessel recovered, lifted, and began to lurch to port once more. The spar came thundering across the deck again, and Tom winced, more for the crush against his rescuer's shoulder than for the danger to himself, should his rescuer fail.

The boy lowered his shoulder to take the spar, and Tom saw his face.

Hemming!

With no more time to do anything but gasp with surprise before the spar brought up against the Blake fellow's shoulder, Tom marvelled at his rescuer's courage and tenacity. Hemming's face was contorted with pain as he took the weight of the spar and braced his muscles to hold it there. The veins stood out on his face and the blood rushed up from his heart to his head, reddening his features, so terrible was the strain. A low, painful gasp escaped the lad as he lay there, the human wedge fending off death from a mess-mate.

The Ulysses was being got under control, though Tom had had little time to ponder over the work going on on the ship. But a shout sounded out at last. The danger to Tom and Hemming had been seen, and seamen and training-ship boys came sliding down the deck to the rescue.

As the vessel lurched to starboard again in her sickening roll, strong ex-naval seamen grasped the spar, and, some pushing, some tugging, they fetched it up to the mainmast, and there lashed it securely with one of the tangled braces trailing across the vessel's length.

Tom was saved! Training-ship boys crowded round, Dicky one of the foremost, and tugged away at the tangle of wire rope and hempen line holding the lad down. They soon had him free. And as they hauled Tom to his feet, the Hood youngster saw two seamen carrying the senseless form of Hemming to the quarter-deck, which had remained pretty free from wreckage throughout the whole nerve-shattering experience on the Lother Reef.

Tom, apart from bruised legs and aching joints, was little the worse for his experience, and he was soon moving about with the others over the rolling decks, clearing wreckage here, sheeting home a fluttering sail there, sorting out mixed-up cordage, and wrenching at broken spars to clear halliards and sheets—in fact, effecting a general tidy up, for the ship must be brought under some sort of steerage way, or they may yet find themselves grinding about on the rocks at that perilous part of the Scottish coast.

The fore-staysail was now drawing; the torn mainsail had been drawn out, and the sheet hove short. The sickening, dead roll of the vessel had changed

to a lurching heave. They had steerage way on her; but she was only half the ship she had been.

The well had been sounded and four feet of water registered. She was leaking badly somewhere. Pumps were manned, wreckage trailing overside cut adrift, more canvas spread, and within less than an hour the Ulysses was running steadily, her stern lifting and scending heavily in the big following seas.

The islands of Swona and Stroma were a-beam, one on either side of the ship. They were an exceedingly lucky company on that vessel, and they cheered loudly when Mr. Bowser, who had been here, there, and everywhere forward, while Captain MacNayre himself looked after things aft, reported that the leak was "only a gentle weep," and that the pumps could easily keep the water down.

The Ulysses was now running easily under her fore upper and lower topsails, treble-reefed mainsail, and a couple of staysails at the head. The carpenter was kept with a strict eye on the well, his chalked rod busily being lowered and raised to judge the extent of the leak every quarter of an hour.

Happily the leak was not nearly so bad as was thought. The strained plates, while grinding on the rocks, must have had their seams held open by the pressure. Now they felt no pressure but the comparatively gentle press of the water at each lift of the stern the water was not coming in nearly so fast. Also, a great amount of water must have sluiced down deck openings when the ship was being buffeted about in the overfalls of the tide-rip.

There they were, a woe-begone sight 'tis true, but a brave ship bravely running on, with her main and after-mast, at least, very little damaged.

The north-easterly wind held, so they made excellent way. Surveys were made of damage done, and Tom took the opportunity of going below to the boys' quarters to see Hemming. He had been put into his bunk, and a group of boys stood round the place.

Dicky West was there, having slipped down before Tom. As Tom approached the boys made a path for him. Hemming had been examined by the doctor, who had announced that he was suffering from strain due to overtaxing his strength. The boy was sleeping, and the doctor had told the other boys not to shout while below decks.

Tom looked at Hemming seriously. The lad was well tucked in, and only his white, strained features could be seen. Young Gale turned to Dicky.

"By Jingo, Dicky, Hemming was a trump!" he said huskily. "I owe my life to him!"

"That you do, Tom," said Dicky. "Hemming's showing-up in a new light. His shoulder is black and blue with bruises. I saw the doctor dressing the place where that heavy spar kept clumping him. No bones broken, though, and the doctor says it's a wonder—"

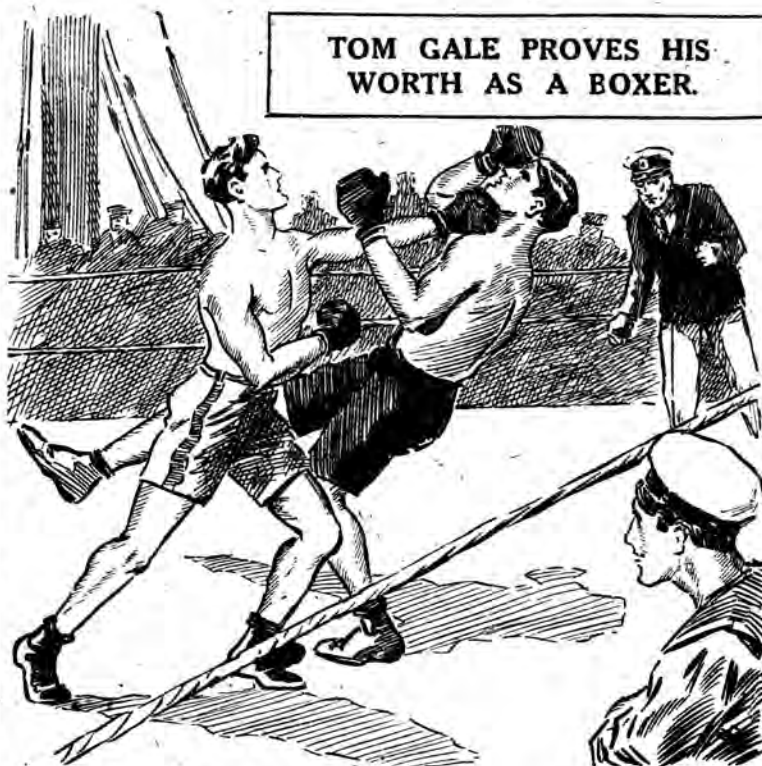
"Thank goodness for that!" said Tom heartily.

"Yes, it would have been rotten if anything had happened."

"As it is, we've two seamen down, one with a broken arm and the other with a fractured leg. Starling and Trim got out and torn a bit," put in Dicky.

"Yes, they're in their bunks. Nobody else hurt much, and no one overboard—"

"And we're not hurt much, either!"



TOM GALE PROVES HIS WORTH AS A BOXER.

broke in the voice of Starling from his bunk. "Doctor's swaddled us up a bit. We got jammed like you, Tom Gale, when we were helping to clear some wreckage away round the foremast. Berry got a clout on the head with a clew cringle of the fore-staysail, but he's now as lively as anyone!"

The boys began to chatter, recounting their separate adventures during the turmoil of the tide-rip. But all were silenced as a training-ship boy came below with a message from aft.

"All-boat Bowser sent me down to say that the ship will be run while favourable winds last," he said. "We're to keep busy tidying up wherever we can find raffle that we can clear."

"Crumbs, we won't have difficulty in finding that!"

"I heard the bo'sun report that, though strained, the standing rigging of the fore-top and fore-masts is fit to carry on. The main an' mizen rigging is all right, except for setting up tight again. The bo'sun's sorting out new sails now. Got the deck hatch of his locker off. All-boat's going to rig up new back-stays for the stump of the t'gallant mast. We're to carry on to the Clyde if the leaks don't get worse."

"Crumbs, isn't there a docking port nearer than that?"

"Dunno! Anyway, the Clyde's good enough for me! I heard Bowser say as we'd pick up a tug off the Mull of Cantyre. Cap'n MacNayre has ordered him to signal Lloyd's station at Cape Wrath for a tug to be ready to pick us up. A seaman's sorting out the flags now."

"Jumping Jupiter, what luck! We shouldn't have smelt the Clyde if it hadn't been for this bit of a bust-up!"

"No," said a boy who dimly remembered Glasgow in the past; "an' when y'do smell it, y'won't be best pleased, I'm thinking!"

This raised a laugh. But the voice of Mr. Bowser broke up the group, and

the lads scuttled apart to get busy on some sort of work.

"No skulking below, there! Turn up, an' look alive, ye milksops! I'll haze ye all good and hearty if this raffle ain't cleared in twelve hours! I'll make ye wish as ye'd never been born! Jump to it, y'crippled sojers! No shinnanikin' on this ship, and so I tell 'e!"

Yes, the Ulysses was settling down to her pre-accident comfort with a vengeance! Mr. Bowser's bullying shouts were more of an assurance that danger was past than anything else could have been. A lion in danger, a mock-bully in peace—that was All-boat Bowser from truck to keel.

Hemming Breaks with Burr!

THE barquentine rounded Cape Wrath, her signal flags, fluttering gaily from the signal halliard. The message was acknowledged by the signal station on the bold headland beside the lighthouse, and the ship sped on.

She passed with good speed down through the Minch Sounds, between the Inner Hebrides and the Outer Hebrides, the boys having the different islands pointed out to them by one or other of the seamen, or by Mr. Bowser or the bo'sun.

Night saw the slow flashing of the Skerryvore Lighthouse broad on their port bow. The strong breeze from the north-east having held well, it didn't take many hours to put the light low and weak astern of them, with the fixed white light of Rhu Vaal, north of Islay, and the quick flashing of the Rhyns of Islay.

Dawn saw them off Cantyre, with the double flash of the Mull Light dimming in the gathering daylight. The tug was hard by, her blood-red nose

light dipping about half a mile away, and her siren bellowing its "Boo-boo-o-o-boo-boo!" the signal for the Ulysses to heave-to.

Mr. Bowser's voice rang out:

"Hullum hard down, you at the wheel, there! Stations to heave to! Man the fore-braces! Hold her like that, you at the wheel, there! So! Shorten in the main-sheet and weather-vang! Look alive, ye cripples! I'll have a peak o' mizen sail!"

Tom, Dicky West, and two other boys with a seaman had their stations at the mizen mast. They sweated on the halliards and jerked at the winches, and the big mizen sail, already thrown loose for the job, began to belly to the blustery breeze.

"We got sternway!" now bawled Mr. Bowser. "Hard a-port, every spoke! She feels her head, bo'sun?"

"Ay, ay, sir! Square sail's hard a-back, braced up sharp!"

"So! Well, the braces—make fast an' coil down. Over wi' the head-sheets, for'ard there! Shorten in that there mizen-vang, ye sojers, you! Put a jerk into it! Dang me, ye'd think there wasn't no purchase! So! She lies comfortable now! Well all! Can anyone see that there blamed tug?"

They had the hawser as soon as daylight was well in, canvas was stowed, and to the lift of the slow, mountainous Atlantic swell rolling down the North Channel, the valiant little tug, with the hawser, grinding about on her towing-rail, conducted them triumphantly round the Mull and up into the wide Firth of Clyde.

The Isle of Sanda drew over the port quarter, and Paddy's Milestone—Ailsa Craig—looking like the bald head of a giant in the sea, was in view to starboard.

The mountain on the Isle of Arran—Goat Fell—was a-beam in two hours' time after leaving Sanda, and before noon the tug and barquentine were past the narrows between the Isle of Bute and Big and Little Cumbrae.

The trippers on the many excursion steamers which passed, with the strains of the bands softened by the distance, crowded the rails and stared in awe at the sea-scarred old barquentine, with its wrecked headgear and top-gallant-mast. Some of the trippers, noticing the training-ship boys in their blue sailors' uniform, broke into cheers, and the boys returned the cheers with interest.

Gourock and Greenock were passed to starboard, and the misty stretch of water on the port quarter, signifying the presence of the Gare Loch, was soon dead astern.

The river was narrowing rapidly, the obelisk at Bowling a-beam. Erskine Ferry was passed, Dalnair, Clydebank!

The Ulysses dropped her hawser and sheared in towards the shore, Captain MacNayre in charge on deck. Mr. Bowser was standing by the anchor.

"Let go!" cried Captain MacNayre clearly, and just loud enough to be heard.

The great anchor splashed into the water from the cathead and the cable roared out, almost drowning Mr. Bowser's belated "Stand clear o' the cable!"

"Down clean, sir!" shouted Mr. Bowser to the captain.

"Give her fifteen fathoms!"

The chain still roared, then suddenly

stopped. The Ulysses felt the jerk as the anchor pulled her round, nose up to the tide. A pause, then:

"Cable growing broad on the port bow, sir!" from Mr. Bowser.

"Good!" returned Captain MacNayre. "Lash the wheel, there!"

The anchor deck was cleared and the cable looked over to see that it was quite secure on the bitts. Then Mr. Bowser, clapped his hands together and rubbed the palms one against the other.

"That'll do, men!"

The trip was over for the time. The mighty shipyards of the Clyde were hard by, many a huge, red-rusty new stern poking out obliquely at the water's edge ready for the hull to slide down to its mother—the curdling mud-stream below its heel.

Clang, clang, clang! Clang, clang, clang! The mighty shipyards of the famous old river rang merrily as the riveters swung their hammers. Every rivet to be made an honest and workmanlike job. Clang, clang, clang, day and night, night and day, the dark hours flaring and brilliant with the light of innumerable crackling arc-lamps. The shipyards of Glasgow, the cradle of many a fine vessel safely and triumphantly ploughing here, there, and everywhere over the proverbial Seven Seas of the world, not to mention the other round score.

The Ulysses was accommodated in a dry-dock hard by, and the marine surveyor of the firm put on the job pooh-pooched over the stout old vessel's hurts.

"A week'll put that all right, sir," he said to Captain MacNayre. "Say three new garboard shell-plates and a new No. 4 frame. You've had a nasty crack there. Eh, the Lother Reef! By havers, I congratulate you, sir, on being here! Wonder your engines weren't jerked off their beds! But they're all right. We'll give them a more careful overhaul, too, though, if you wish it. Yes, I'll see you clear in a week!"

Mr. Bowser, with a grim look, promised to see a new fore-top-gallant mast sent up, rigged and sparred, rattled and tarred down within the week. So gone were the hope of the boys of a free time to range about Glasgow.

The training-ship boys were accommodated as comfortably as their ship. They had a spare barrack-room in a near-by barracks placed at their disposal, with two seamen in charge of them. The soldiers—a Highland regiment—made a big fuss of the boys, and they all chummed up wonderfully in the evenings, after the soldiers had finished parades for the day, and the boys, with black, tarry hands, had finished their day's rigging under slave-driver Bowser on the Ulysses.

For all Mr. Bowser's threats, the lads did have a bit of off-time. They were also paid all the pocket-money due to them. Dicky West, Burr, and the other chief petty officers got as much as a shilling a week. But poor Tom had dropped much wealth in pay with the badges he had dropped after his disrating for what he had not done—namely, painting the nose of the Ajax's figure-head red! Tom still thought it was Stoniky Burr who had done that.

One evening, while Dick and Tom were seated in an alcove in a small restaurant on the Dumbarton Road, enjoying a big and cheap plate of fish and chips, two other training-ship boys came in. They were talking loudly, angrily.

Tom threw a swift, meaning glance at Dicky.

"Hemming and Burr," he whispered rather delightedly, "and rowing like fun!"

Tom had thanked Hemming for what the lad had done for him during the peril of the rolling spar. But Hemming had only flushed and shuffled in embarrassment. So Tom, after expressing his gratitude fully, said no more of the matter, but thought a good deal. The young Hood had great hopes of Hemming breaking with Burr and running a straight course in the future.

Stoniky Burr was sneering.

"Give up your old rotten ways?" he was saying, as the precious pair clattered into the next alcove to Tom and Dicky. "Milk-sop Hemming! He'll be a good little boy in future, then! Oh, my eye, what's the world coming to? Garn, y'peach, don't be a fool!"

"I'm not going to be, Stoniky! I've had enough of being a fool!" returned Hemming. "You've made enough of a fool of me for some time past, and I'm going to chuck it!"

"And chuck me, too, I suppose! Come on, Hemming, is that the way to treat a pal?"

"I'm sick to death of you, Burr! I've been the swab you have used to wipe your feet on long enough! I've done things you hadn't the pluck to do yourself! There's that—"

"Shut up, you idiot! I tell you, it'd have been dangerous for me to do it!"

"Yes, it was a dangerous job, I can tell you!"

"Hang you, Hemming, I don't mean in that way! I'll punch the life out of you if I get much more of your lip! I wasn't afraid!"

"No, you weren't afraid when you quitted in the fight with Peel of the Grenvilles, and let your watch down in the boxing tournament, were you? You weren't afraid when I saw you crouching down gibbering near the quarter-deck rail when Gale was just about to be crushed by that rolling spar!"

"Blow Gale! I tell you Gale's done for! I know—I tell you I know!" Stoniky Burr hissed out the words with evil vehemence, and Tom was about to get up angrily, and confront him, when Hemming clattered to his feet.

"Gale's not a bad chap at all!" he cried. "And, what's more, Burr, I'm finished with you! Don't call me a pal of yours again! I'm done with you! I won't muck in with grub here with a rotter like you!"

Hemming was half-way to the door of the restaurant, Burr on his heels. The swing-doors swished to after them, and Tom and Dicky got up, half inclined to run out and protect Hemming. But Tom sat down again with a laugh.

"Let 'em go, Dicky," he said. "Let Hemming fight his own way. Burr can't kill him; and we'll see if Hemming is really true blue after this!"

One Mystery Solved!

THE incessant clang of the Clyde shipyards had now died away, and the Ulysses, under power, with a brand new propeller threshing the curdling water of the big river to yellow foam, was heading for sea.

She was proud in her new finery of shining jib-boom and uppermost foremast gear. Sail was made when well down the Firth, and the interrupted trip along the west coast of Ireland, with a long reach out into the Atlantic, miles and miles from the land, to

demonstrate to the boys deep-sea navigation, was resumed.

The wind being favourable, Captain MacNayre took his departure—that is, noted their exact position with reference to the last point of visible land—from Tory Island, just to the north of Bloody Foreland, Donegal. Ireland faded away astern, and the Ulysses, under full sail, held out into the Atlantic Ocean.

Fair weather favoured them through out the week's ocean sailing, and there was not a lad there who could not find the ship's position by the sextant and chronometers after Captain MacNayre had finished with them. The patent log was demonstrated—that little brass implement and long, plaited line by which a ship's speed through the water is registered. Dead reckoning navigation was thus practised by the boys, gauging just how much they had picked up from Mr. Cosine, in theory, on the Ajax. And Captain MacNayre was surprised at the knowledge the boys already had.

They saw no land at all as they dragged down into a higher latitude, and then pointed in, just below 50N, for old England.

Tom and Dicky had lived every moment of their deep-water sailing. They were the most promising pupils Captain MacNayre had, and the little ex-naval commander told them so. Their lives were before them, and they had chosen the Merchant Service. And the start they would have, having been so well trained in matters maritime, was something that would be envied by many of their shipmates when they should set off on their new work, the old Ajax days behind them and the world ahead.

They sailed in towards England, and Soundings, as the shallower water near the coast is called, were only a short sail away.

The training-ship boys were squatting on the deck mending clothes, yarn-ing, or whittling at pieces of wood, or in some way amusing themselves. It was the first dog-watch, and they were expected to make their landfall during the second dog-watch—at seven o'clock in the evening, to be exact.

This day Tom and Dicky were off duty during the second dog-watch, so they shinned up to the top of the fore-top-gallant shrouds, to see if they could be the first to sight land. The boys felt a thrill, up there so high above the deck, where the mast was slender and the shrouds so close together.

The leaning stick of the Ulysses reeled about below them, and with the wind blowing their loose trousers about wildly, the two daring youngsters clung on and searched the horizon to the eastward. The rim of the sea was unbroken, save for a smudge of smoke here, or a sail there, the boat hull down on the horizon.

Mr. Bowser cocked his eye aloft at the lads as he stumped about with the bo'sun.

"They'll do," he said to his companion, with a wink, as the two old sea-dogs, with a deep-sea roll, turned in their walk to and fro along the deck.

"It'll be a lucky chief mate who gets 'em," returned the bo'sun. "Ay, and every other lad on this ship! All except that fellow!"

"Burr—eh? Stoniky Burr they call him. Stoniky means rope's-end in training-ship slang, I've noticed." Mr. Bowser paused in his turn for a fresh perambulation along the deck. "Did ye notice Burr during that shemozzle at the Lother Reef?"

"Ay, ay, I did!" growled the bo'sun.



With a superhuman display of strength Hemming held up the sliding spar with his shoulder to keep it from closing in against the bulwarks and crushing Tom.

"Well, I perdict as Burr's sea life ain't goin' to be a bed o' roses. They wouldn't stand conduc' like that in a well-disciplined merchant ship, I know. And as for the Navy—"

Mr. Bowser did not finish what he was going to say. He understood.

"Ay, ay, you're right!" he said.

The worthy pair stumped on for a little while in silence, then Bowser spoke again.

"I reckon it'd be a good thing if we was empowered to administer a bit o' the stoniky to yon Burr," he said. "It'd be a kindness to him!"

Suddenly a clear voice piped out from aloft:

"Land—ho!"

Garments were dropped, boys sprang to their feet and leapt for the fore-rigging. They swarmed up the ratlines, mounting higher and higher, past the boy who had been posted in the fore-top to watch for land, but who could not see it yet. Up, up they went, passing the top-mast rigging and the foremost crowding on to the top-gallant rigging below Dicky and Tom.

There, about four points on the port bow, they saw the land, merely a blur on the horizon, it is true, but unmistakable land. It was the Scilly Isles. England!

All went down on deck again at the changing of the watch. Tom and Dicky went on duty for the first watch, and had to get busy with the sounding gear, for Captain MacNayre, who had come up on deck at the report of the landfall, had luffed slightly into the south-westerly wind, and was pointing for latitude 49° 15' North, where sounding would commence, and be continued till the Lizard Light, Cornwall, had been picked up, and the pin-point position on the chart ascertained.

After the sounding-gear was prepared for the seamen, Mr. Bowser busied himself about preparing the anchors ready for dropping. Anchors are stowed on the anchor deck when in the deep sea, the hawse-pipes blocked up,

and the cable all in the chain locker, which Tom had every reason to remember so well.

Mr. Bowser remembered Tom's adventures when he first boarded the Ulysses—stowing himself away in the chain locker—and with a twinkle in his eye he said:

"Here, you, young Gale, and you, West, get below into the chain locker and see that them crowbars are out o' the way o' the cable. If one o' the bars got through a link when the chain's runnin' out, there be the flamin' deuce to pay! Jump to it, Gale! You're dead nuts on chain lockers, as I well know!"

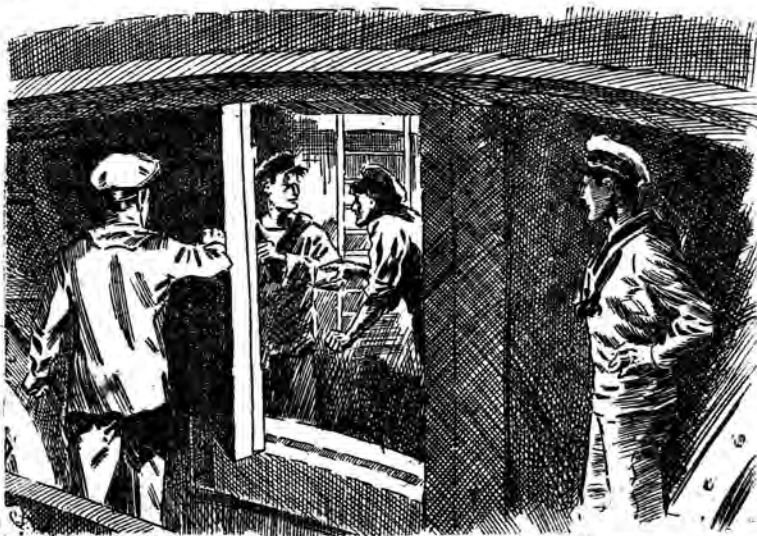
With broad grins, Tom and Dicky nipped below, passed through the bo'sun's locker, and then through the opening of the water-tight door in the bulkhead, and so into the gloomy, damp, clammy chain locker. The great heaps of cable bulked up on either side of them, and, true enough, as Mr. Bowser had feared, the crowbars were not in their rightful place. They might easily foul a running-out cable, lying on the heaps as they were.

"All-boat Bowser's thorough, by jingo!" remarked Dick.

"You're right! A chief mate's got to be. If he doesn't think of things on a ship no one will. It's true that a ship's safety lies in the hands of the chief mate. Yank up that crowbar, Dicky. Put it up on the hooks. I'll see to this one!"

There was silence for a minute or two as the boys put the crowbars well out of the way of the chain. Each was thinking of the time when Tom was nearly crushed to death in that locker by the falling of the heaped-up cable, way back at the commencement of the cruise.

Dicky opened his mouth to speak, when a footfall sounded from the bo'sun's locker. Dicky remained silent, and cocked his head to learn who it was who had entered.



Tom Gale and Dicky West halted at the sound of Burr's voice in the bo'sun's locker. "Crumbs, look at those pots of red paint, Hemming. Does that remind you of anything?" Burr accompanied his words with an ill-natured laugh.

"What sort of blamed rope does he want, I wonder!" came the voice of Burr through the opening.

"He said an odd bit of two-inch manilla," was the reply made in Hemming's voice. "This is about two-inch rope. Let's take that up to him."

"Crumbs, look at those pots of red paint, Hemming! Does that remind you of anything?" Burr accompanied his words with an ill-natured laugh.

Hemming replied with some heat.

"Yes, you rotter, it reminds me of a job I did for you—a job you fuked yourself! Well, what about it?"

"Oh, nothing! Only that I'll split if I get much more of your lip! If it was known on the Ajax that it was you painted the figure-head's nose red—"

A stifled cry rang out from Hemming.

"My stars, you're a bigger cad than I thought you were, Burr!" he voiced hoarsely.

Tom Gale and Dicky West, in the gloom of the chain locker, stared at each other in silence, their eyes wide with surprise.

So it was Hemming who had done the trick for which Tom had been blamed—for which he had already suffered so much!

True Blue!

A QUEER, startled look had leapt into Tom's face at the words that had come to them through the opening of the water-tight bulkhead door. He drew a swift, gasping breath.

A half-stifled exclamation broke from Dicky West. The eyes of the two chums met, and each read sheer amazement in the other's.

"My hat! Hemming! Hemming, of all chaps! I'd never have thought he had the pluck to do it!"

Dicky's words, scarcely audible as they were, did not penetrate Tom's mind. His brain was in a whirl. So it was not Burr after all—not the bully of the

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 839.

Ajax, but his crosby, the fellow who had apparently turned over a new leaf, the fellow who had saved his life!

Tom's lips set queerly. Burr's voice came to them again, with an ugly ring in it:

"Yes, I tell you you'd better not cross me, Hemming! I can land you in the soup right enough any day. If I tell it was you that painted the nose of the figure-head—"

He broke off threateningly. Tom and Dicky heard Hemming breathing hard. Hemming's low voice was curiously jerky when he spoke.

"Fool, Stoniky! You daren't do it!" Burr laughed harshly.

"Daren't I? What gave you that idea, Hemming? I can thundering well prove you painted Ajax's nose, but you can't prove I egged you on!"

"How can you prove it?" muttered Hemming hoarsely.

"Oh, that's easy enough. All that red paint inside your kit-bag where you hid the paint-pot, of course. You know jolly well the stains are still there, and they'll be there till doomsday!"

Burr laughed an ugly, taunting laugh, but Hemming did not reply. Tom, his face tense, suddenly realised that he and Dicky, though inadvertently, had been eavesdropping, and made a sudden move as if to pass through the bulkhead door into the bo'sun's locker, to show himself. But as he did so he heard the retreating footsteps of Burr and Hemming, and came to a standstill, uncertain. The footsteps died away.

"They've gone," muttered Dicky.

Tom nodded, but did not speak.

"Well," said Dicky impatiently, "that's that! Now we know who was cad enough to paint that figurehead and let you suffer in his place!"

"Yes, we know at last," repeated Tom quietly.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Dicky.

For a moment Tom did not reply. When he did speak his voice was very quiet and level.

"Nothing, Dicky."

Dicky stared at his chum and gasped.

For a minute he seemed too flabbergasted to speak. Then he burst out:

"Nothing! Have you gone potty, Tom? Do you mean to say you are going to let this go on—you suffer in the place of a rotter like Hemming? You must be cracked! Why, you'll be made chief petty officer again—just one word from you—"

"He saved my life, Dicky."

"Dicky West breathed hard and scratched his carrotty head.

"Yes, that's right enough," he said. "But, hang it all, he couldn't do very much else, could he? He couldn't very well stand by and see you smashed up by that fallen spar?"

Tom laughed.

"Some fellows could," he said. "It's no good, Dicky. Hemming may have been a rotter in his time, but I tell you there's true blue in the chap at bottom. Burr got hold of him, and Hemming was too weak to resist Stoniky. I don't believe Hemming is a rotter at heart. He just hadn't got the pluck to own up to that figurehead painting business, and you can bet Stoniky Burr didn't encourage him to own up!"

There was a determined light in Tom's eyes, and Dicky groaned. He was not thinking of Hemming. His chum was all he cared about.

"But I'm hanged if I'll stand by and see you disgraced when you could be made C.P.O. again to-day!" he exclaimed warmly. "It's not good enough! The Hoods jolly well need you as leader again, Tom, and I'll see they get you!"

All the red-headed youngster's hot blood was boiling with resolve. He turned abruptly through the bulkhead doorway to make his way up on deck. But Tom took a swift pace after him and gripped his arm like a vice.

"You won't, Dicky," he said quietly—"not if you're a real pal of mine! Hemming saved my life, and I'm going to repay that debt now as far as I can. If it hadn't been for him I shouldn't have been here now, disgraced or not!"

Dicky's lips opened, but he checked the words that were upon his lips. He saw in Tom's eyes that further argument was useless.

"You're a fool, Tom!" he said, chagrin in his voice. "A blithering, soft-hearted fool!" And then Dicky's voice suddenly changed, and there was a look in his eyes that only Tom had ever seen. "But—well, you're a gentleman, too!"

"Then you'll stand by me, Dicky? You won't breathe a word of what we've heard here?"

"Right ho!" assented Dicky gloomily. "I'll keep as tight as an oyster! Trust me—"

He broke off, to add warmly: "But I'll jolly well give Hemming a bit of my mind, I can tell you!"

"I'd sooner you didn't, Dicky. Honest! He thinks no one but Burr knows, and I'd sooner he went on thinking that."

Dicky snorted. "Oh, right you are, you old ass!" he said irritably. "If you want to be a fat-headed chump, I suppose you can!"

And Dicky snorted again as he turned to lead the way up on deck.

(Look out for another full-of-thrill instalment of this powerful serial in next week's bumper number of the GEM, which will also contain a magnificent extra-long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's and the Result of our Great Footballers' Names Competition. Disappointment can only be avoided by ordering your copy well in advance.)



(If You Are Not a Prizewinner This Week You May Be Next.)

All attempts in this Competition should be addressed to : The GEM, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

MOVING DAY!

A man was moving to a new house, when a friend met him, carrying his chicken-run on his back, in the pouring rain. "Why didn't you get someone to help you, Tommy?" asked his friend. "I did," replied Tommy; "but he's inside. You see, it's no use both of us getting wet!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Norman Howe, 3, Highbury New Park, N. 5.

HARDLY!

"And you were really guilty of the charges brought against you?" asked a woman who was visiting one of the prisons. "Well, lidy," replied the convict, "seein' as they copped me in the 'all of the 'ouse with a sack of silver in me 'and, and seein' as all the silver was missin' out of the dinin'-room, and like-wise seein' that it took three policemen to get me to the station, not countin' the one I laid out with my jemmy—well, you'd ardy call me a hinjured hinnercent, like they 'ave in the pictures, would yer?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Eric Williams, 117, Renwick Street, Marrickville, N.S.W., Australia.

"HARD" LUCK!

Foreman: "What! Late again! What has kept you this time?"

Pat: "Sure, sorr, it was all over that old mule I have. Bejabers, if it didn't kick me ould mother-in-law on the jaw, and I had to stay behind to bandage up

the mule's foot!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Jeanne Drover, Brighton, Mill Hill, Cowes, I.O.W.

LOW VISIBILITY!

Sinkins considered himself a humorist. He sent a collection of his original jokes to the editor of a paper, and confidently awaited a remittance. His excitement ran high when he received a letter, obviously from the office of this particular periodical. He opened it with feverish haste. There was no cheque, however; just a short note as follows: "Dear Sir,—Your jokes received. Some we have seen before; some we have not seen yet!" Half-a-crown has been awarded to: Miss M. L. Hurley, 29, Homesdale Road, Bromley, Kent.

TUCK FOR LIVERPOOL!

THAT CAPPED IT!

A New Yorker tells of his sojourn at a certain hotel in the Carolina Mountains. At about eight in the morning he was aroused from a sound slumber by knocking on his door. "What is it?" he shouted. "Telegram for you, boss," replied a darkie on the other side of the door. "Will you open the door?" "No, I will not!" cried the New Yorker furiously. "Can't you slip it under the door?" "No, boss," came the quiet response, "it's on a tray!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious tuck, has been awarded to Frank Voce, 6, Latham Grove, Seaforth, Liverpool.

FATHER'S SHOES.

"Well, my lad, I expect you will step into your father's shoes some day!" "Yes, sir, I spect so. I've been wearing all his old clothes ever since mother learned 'ow to cut 'em down for me!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. M. Watson, Weston-on-Trent, near Derby.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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"FEX!"

(Continued from page 20.)

held a glassy stare that was terrible to behold, and Shaw caught him by the arm, howling for the waiter to bring a strong whisky.

"My dear fellow, you're ill! For Heaven's sake, sit down and drink this!"

Andrew swallowed the spirit, and clutched at Shaw's arm.

"Are they—are they rehearsing the lights to-day for 'Cæsar'?" he asked hoarsely.

Shaw stared at him in amazement.

"My dear fellow—"

"Don't waste time—are they?" almost shrieked Andrew.

"Yes, I think so. And the storm—What, in Heaven's name—Where are you going?"

But James Andrew was out of the room and rushing blindly down the stairs.

"A taxi—quick!"

The commissionaire, staring at the ashen-faced man, hatless and dishevelled, obeyed the command, and Andrew tore open the door, shouting to the driver:

"The Shakespeare Theatre, Soho—and break every limit there is! Never mind the fare!"

The taxi sped down Piccadilly, and reached the Shakespeare Theatre in record time. Hardly had it stopped before Andrew was out, and had flung a pound-note to the astonished driver. Then he dashed through the stage-door, thrusting aside the doorkeeper, and rushed at breakneck speed down the stairs to the stage.

As he pushed open the door he heard Fex sing out, "All serene, guv'nor; on she goes!" then, breaking through the crowd of stage-hands, Andrew shrieked out his warning. But he was a second too late. The lines flared out, there was a brilliant flash and a cry—and Fex lay stretched full length on the stage!

Then Dexter, dazed by the unexpected accident, heard a frantic voice shouting for aid to administer artificial respiration.

"It was a shock—Jones—revenge!" gasped Andrew, tearing off his coat. "Don't touch the thunder-sheet while the lines are on!"

For an hour willing hands toiled at their task. For an hour it seemed that their labour was vain. And then the heart began to throb beneath their hands, and they knew that the lad was saved!

"Here's a visitor for you, m'dear," announced Mrs. Murphy, entering the room where Fex, wrapped in dressing-gown and rugs, reclined in the best arm-chair the worthy soul could find.

Fex looked up with a smile, expecting Dexter or Gervase. His expression changed when he saw Andrew, but he held out his hand cordially enough, since he had heard of the part James Andrew had played in the saving of his life.

"Kind of you to come an' see me, Mr. Andrew!" he said. "'Ow's things in Soho?"

"Waiting for our expert," smiled Andrew. And Fex noted with astonishment the lack of sarcasm in his voice, and the pleasant expression in his eyes. "We can't get on without you, Fex lad. But I've not come here just to talk—

(Continued on page 28.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 339.

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(though I'd like to say 'hurry up and come back.'")

"You bet, guv'nor!"

"I've got a confession to make, lad. And I shan't be happy till it's off my chest."

Fex stared at Andrew in silent astonishment, waiting for him to continue. Andrew seated himself by the armchair, and without any more ado told Fex all that had passed since the night when Bert Jones had prepared his cowardly revenge.

"I wasn't going to warn you, Fex. I wanted you to get hurt," said Andrew, his face burning with shame. "I—I was jealous of you!"

"Jealous o' me, guv'nor?"

"Yes, Fex—jealous of your popularity. You see, I'm not what one would call a sociable chap."

Fex's hand stole down towards the ones that were clasped so nervously on Andrew's knee, and glided over them. Andrew looked up and smiled, catching hold of that thin hand and gripping it.

"I guess we'll try to forget what's gone by, eh, kid? I'd like to start again, with you to help me."

"Crumbs! You make me feel a regular toff, guv'nor! But I ain't a-goin' to forget 'ow you saved my life—not even if you ask me!"

Andrew laughed.

"Well, kid, you hurry up and get well. Dexter's got some new colour effects he wants to discuss with you."

"Discuss wiv me? Wot to! I'll be back in no time, don't you worry!" He paused a moment, and gripped the actor's hand. "I'm sorry as 'ow I spoilt yer scene, Mr. Andrew. It was a kid's game. But I'll make up fer it nex' time! An'—an' it's just rippin' of you to come an' see me like this 'ere! Good-bye!"

THE END.

(Look out for the most exciting and pulsating story ever written next week, chums, entitled: "CYCLONE SAM!" It's TIP-TOP!)



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