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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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THE HERO OF THE HOUR!

In the hour of his triumph Ralph Reckness Cardew cares nothing for the black looks of Racke, the rascal of St. Jim's! (An exciting incident from the grand long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford, inside.)



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
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

MY DEAR CHUMS,—Grundy is always a welcome visitor. You can detect his heavy tramp a great way off, and when he arrives on the scene he brings with him the sure and certain knowledge that there will be excellent work done, and a topping St. Jim's story to please all Gemites. Our chief feature next week is a brilliant and extra-long yarn of the chums of the great school in Sussex. The tale runs to twenty-five thousand words, and I know that circumstance will cause pleasure to friends everywhere.

"GRUNDY'S FEUD!" By Martin Clifford.

In this new story we get a picture of Grundy at his best—that is to say, the Grundy we all know and admire as a fellow who barges into a quarrel in defence of the weakest. It does not matter to Grundy that he is likely to be outmatched. It is the cause of justice he pursues with such praiseworthy energy. Knox and Baggy Trimble also figure in the yarn. Knox is a bully of the first brand. They do say that Knox bullies for the sheer love of tyranny, but however that may be, the tyrant does use his giant's strength most unfairly. Grundy catches him ill-treating Baggy, and then the fat is in the fire. The subsequent happenings are sensational to a degree. Grundy learns from Baggy that Knox holds a guilty secret. The details of that secret will interest you immensely. Over and over again Knox has been close to the limit, but on this occasion he outdoes all past efforts in this line. The senior is up to the eyes in a difficulty which is close akin to tragedy. How Grundy comes to play the part he does you will see when you have next Wednesday's GEM in your hands. The situation is an amazing one, full of unexpected changes; but, after reading the story, I am confident that you will not think any the less of George Alfred Grundy, the honest, good-hearted, clumsy fellow, who is such a good sport all through.

A GRAMMARIAN NUMBER!

At last it is coming! We have long wanted an issue of the "St. Jim's News," which dealt with that merry blade, Gordon Gay. Next week we shall have a supplement which concentrates on the bright spirits of the Grammar School. You can rely on plenty of fun in the

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new number, for the sparks of humour always fly when Gordon Gay and his chums are on the scene.

MAGNETIC AS EVER!

Our companion paper, the "Magnet," has an extra-strong draw in its new and entertaining competition. The weekly prize for the skilful winner is a "Royal Enfield" Bicycle with all equipment complete. By the way, the "Magnet" has another score in its magnificent serial, "Sherwood Gold," an entrancing romance of Robin Hood and his comrades of the greenwood.

THE TUCK HAMPER!

There seems to have been some misapprehension about the splendid Tuck Hamper which is to be won every week by a GEM reader who sends in the merriest yarnlet. The Tuck Hamper was not first started by Friar Tuck, the celebrated quarterstaff champion and learned man of Nottingham, though the Friar always took a hamper with him when out on a picnic! All the same, the famous GEM Tuck Hamper is making history for itself, and its popularity grows apace. Send in your finest storyette. You may win the prize. Entries should be addressed to the Editor, the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!" By Roland Spencer.

Next week's instalment of our serial outstrips all preceding chapters for real excitement and romance. The great quest for the lost treasure of the golden galleon, the Maria de Castellon, continues, and the plucky adventurers find themselves up against big odds. There have been numerous yarns of the Spanish Armada, and without a doubt many more are yet to be written, but it seems to me "The Secret of the Galleons!" can be trusted to keep its front-line place for sensation and drama.

THE "T.H."

Meaning the Tuck Hamper. It is still going strong, and is a universal favourite. A London reader of the GEM sends me the following concerning this well-established feature: "I am writing to let you know that the Tuck Hamper you so very kindly awarded me arrived quite safely. The contents are just lovely, and I consider myself very lucky indeed." And that's that!

NEW BOYS WANTED!

Jack Clark, of Hawthorn, Melbourne, writes: "I live in Australia, and I get the GEM every week. I would like you to have a few new boys to start at St. Jim's. I think Baggy Trimble very funny, and Tom Merry, Jack Blake & Co. are very good." The suggestion is noted, but it may be pointed out that Mr. Martin Clifford always brings in a new character where and when chance offers.

Your Editor.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyette sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke, to me.

This Week's Winning Effort. To Feed the Brute!

He was the stylist of the village cricket team, and was noted for the elaborate preparations he made before facing the bowler, after which he invariably came out first ball. The local folk got tired of him at last, and there came a day on which he was making even a larger hole than usual for his block. "What's 'e doin' that for?" demanded an impatient spectator. "Oh, 'e's diggin' for a worm to feed his duck!" came the prompt reply from near by.—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to C. W. Chapman, 80, Haylings Road, Leiston, Suffolk.

A COOL RETORT!

The fussy old gentleman on the bus listened carefully for the pronunciation of each stopping-place as the conductor shouted it out. "Ammer-Smith!" shouted the conductor. "Now, my man," said the old chatterbox triumphantly, "you have dropped something, haven't you?" "Yes," answered the conductor coolly; "but that's all right, we're pickin' up at Hoxford Circus!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. R. Maxwell, Corbie-tree, Helensburgh, Scotland.

OBEYING ORDERS!

A certain millionaire decided to have a butler to announce his guests at a ball he was giving, so he chose a man who kept strictly to orders. The first arrivals at the ball were the Potts family, and so the butler came up to the ball-room door and announced: "Mr. Potts, Mrs. Potts, and Master Potts." A little later on the host came to him and told him to be more precise, and to make his statements shorter. About five minutes later the Crown family arrived, comprising Mr. Crown, Mrs. Crown, and Miss Crown. "Fifteen bob!" cried the butler, coming up to the doorway and announcing the new arrivals.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to V. Bebbington, 35, Normanby Street, Moss Side, Manchester.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

Ralph Reckness Cardew's deadly deliveries spell disaster to the Rookwood cricketers in the great junior match!



THE HERO OF THE HOUR!

A Rattling School Story, dealing
with the popular chums of St. Jim's,
Tom Merry & Co.

By Famous
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Grundy to the Rescue!

"**T**OM MERRY—" "Don't bother!" snapped Tom. "Look here—" "Dry up, Grundy, for goodness' sake!"

Tom Merry, usually one of the best-tempered fellows at St. Jim's, seemed quite cross that morning. His usually sunny face was clouded, and his eyes glinted.

Any fellow but George Alfred Grundy would have seen that the junior captain of St. Jim's was in no mood to be badgered. But Grundy of the Shell did not think of observing it, or of taking heed even if he observed it. It was said of old that fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

The summer sun shone down on St. Jim's, gleaming on the fresh green of the cricket-ground. Outside the pavilion most of the junior team were gathered. It was the day of the Rookwood match—a day long looked forward to by the junior cricketers. But most of the fellows were looking thoughtful, or worried, or angry. Evidently something had happened!

Tom Merry's brow was knitted over the problem he had to solve, and it was just like Grundy to "butt in" at such a moment. Grundy had arrived on the spot clad in spotless flannels, with a bat under his arm. That looked like preparation for cricket; but, as Grundy was not in the eleven, and had not the remotest earthly chance of wedging into the eleven, Grundy's crickeling array was rather inexplicable. But Grundy proceeded to make the mystery clear.

"Just listen to me, Tom Merry," said Grundy, unheeding the snappish tone and grim frown of the junior skipper. "You can't keep the Rookwood men waiting all day—"

"I know that, ass!"

"Cardew's let you down at the last minute—"

"I know that, too! Cheese it!"

"I warned you," went on Grundy, regardless. "You can't say I didn't warn you. I told you plainly that if you trusted Cardew of the Fourth, he would let you down. Didn't I?"

"You did! Shut up!"

"Weally, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "it is wathah fatheaded to say 'I told you so.' Hadn't you bettah take a little wun, Gwunday?"

Grundy did not heed the swell of St. Jim's. He confronted Tom Merry with a very determined expression on his rugged face.

"Now it's happened just as I said," he went on. "Cardew's gone off for a joy-ride with Racke, and left you in the lurch. Well, you can't fetch him back and make him play cricket. Can you?"

Tom Merry did not answer.

At that moment, if he could have fetched back Cardew of the Fourth, he would have been more disposed to give him the licking of his life, than to make him play cricket—much as Cardew was needed in the St. Jim's junior team.

"You want a new man," went on Grundy. "My own opinion is that Cardew wasn't much good—too flashy, in my opinion. A showy ass—not a reliable man at all. That's my opinion, for what it's worth!"

Grundy's manner implied that, in his own estimation, his opinion was worth a great deal. But nobody else seemed

impressed. As a matter of fact, the cricketers had more important matters to think of than Grundy and his opinions.

"Anyhow, he's gone, and you want a new man," resumed Grundy. "Well, I've offered my services before. I offer them again."

Tom Merry laughed impatiently.

The defection of Ralph Reckness Cardew had left him in a difficult position just before the match—one of the most important fixtures on the junior list. Cardew's place could not be filled satisfactorily—but it had to be filled somehow. But certainly Tom was not likely to fill it with George Alfred Grundy, who was not merely the worst cricketer at St. Jim's, but probably the worst cricketer that ever was. Even Baggy Trimble was not quite so hopeless as Grundy. Even Racke and Crooke were better men at the game. But that was one of the many things that George Alfred never could see.

"I offer my services!" repeated Grundy firmly. "As you see, I've changed for the match."

"Change again!" snapped Tom.

"I'm ready to play!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Gwunday—" urged Arthur Augustus.

"You shut up, D'Arcy! You don't know anything about cricket."

"Oh! Bai Jove!"

"The fact that Tom Merry is playing you shows that he's not much good as a cricket skipper," said Grundy severely.

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"It's a pretty patchy crew, anyhow," went on Grundy, with a very disparaging glance at the cricketers. "You're no good, D'Arcy, and Blake's not much better—"

"What's that?" snapped Blake.

"Redfern is a rotten bat and a worse field—"

"You cheeky ass!"

"Lowther's a funny duffer at cricket as at everything else, and—"

Monty Lowther took a grip on the cane handle of his bat as if meditating laying it about the burly person of George Alfred Grundy. Grundy ran on unheeding:

"Levison's rather a dud, too. And Clive's no good at all. Wilkins is my pal; but I'm bound to state the truth. Wilkins isn't much of a cricketer. Nothing like my form, anyhow."

"Nothing like your form, certainly," said Wilkins fervently.

"Oh, you admit that?" asked Grundy.

"Dear man, I'm willing to proclaim it from the house-tops!" said Wilkins. "Nothing at all like your form."

"Wathah not!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"With Talbot away, and Fatty Wynn and Figgins in sanny, you've lost your best men, Tom Merry. You're bound to put up rather a patchy team, anyhow. But you've got one good man you can rely on. Now," went on Grundy impressively, "I want you to do the sensible thing for once, Tom Merry. Play me!"

"Ass!"

"The eleven's all at sixes and sevens, and you're booked for a licking, as matters stand. You ought to ask me to play. You haven't asked me. Well, I offer! It's the only way of pulling the match out of the fire, and I'm ready."

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"Gwunday to the rescue!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, Grundy to the rescue, if you put it like that!" exclaimed George Alfred. "And I can tell you that it's the only way to beat Rookwood. Put me into the team, Tom Merry, and you won't miss Cardew. I guarantee that."

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" remarked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"You hear me, Tom Merry?" demanded Grundy, as the cricket captain did not answer.

"Eh—what? I wasn't listening to you, Grundy. Go away, old man! It will have to be Digby, I suppose!" said Tom Merry.

"Better than nothing—what?" asked Dig rather tartly.

Tom Merry nodded.

There was an angry snort from George Alfred Grundy.

"Are you playing me or not, Tom Merry?" he demanded.

"Not, you ass!"

"Do you think it's cricket, at a time like this, to keep up your rotten envy, and keep the best man at St. Jim's out of the team?" inquired Grundy.

Tom Merry did not answer that question.

"Clear off, you ass!" said Blake. "For goodness' sake, Grundy, don't bother now."

"Yaas, wathah! Wun away, Gwunday!"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Get out of the way, Grundy!" snapped Tom. He was more than fed up with the eloquence of Grundy of the Shell. Another snort from George Alfred.

"Look here—"

"Oh, buzz off!" exclaimed Tom impatiently.

"I've told you you're a silly ass—"

"Yes, yes! Now get out!"

"And a burbling chump—"

"Get out!" roared Tom.

"And a cheeky dummy," continued Grundy. "You won't do the right thing. I've a jolly good mind to mop up the field with you. That's what you're asking for."

"Grundy, old man—" murmured Wilkins.

"Shut up, Wilkins!"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Shut up, D'Arcy!"

"Push that idiot away, you fellows!" said Tom Merry.

"Look here—" roared Grundy. "Hands off, you silly asses! By gum, I'll mop up the lot of you! I'll—I'll—I'll— Yaroooop!"

Half-a-dozen of the cricketers collared George Alfred Grundy. They collared him by the arms and the legs and the ears and hair, and carried him away.

George Alfred Grundy went unwillingly, but he went; he had no choice about that. He went uproariously, with arms and legs waving in the air, struggling wildly, and his yells could be heard far across the field on Big Side, causing some of the seniors there to look round in surprise.

Right off the field Grundy was carried, and he was dumped down on a gravel path. He smote the gravel forcibly.

"Now, are you going to clear off, and shut up?" demanded Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Yow! No! I—I'll—"

"Bump him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bump!

"Whoooop!" roared Grundy.

"Is that enough?" grinned Blake.

"I—I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! I'll—"

Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

"Are you going?" grinned Lowther.

"Ow! No! I—I—"

Bump!

"Ow! I'm going! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And George Alfred Grundy went, considerably rumpled and dusty, and quite breathless, and thrilling with indignation. But even to the obtuse mind of George Alfred Grundy it was clear now that, wonderful cricketer as he was—in his own opinion—he was not going to play in the Rookwood match. On that point there was no doubt—no possible probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever.

CHAPTER 2.

The Rookwood Match.

LEIVISON of the Fourth came up to Tom Merry, with some hesitation in his manner. Both Levison and Clive had stood silent while the St. Jim's cricketers were talking of Cardew and his desertion. They were Cardew's chums and study-mates, and they could say nothing in his favour; there seemed nothing to say. So far as appearances went, Ralph Reckness Cardew had "let down" the team at the last minute, with even more than

his usual volatile recklessness. Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, had arrived at St. Jim's, and it was close on time for play, and it was then that Tom Merry had learned that Cardew was gone. It was a heavy blow, for he was relying on Cardew—against his better judgment, perhaps, he had included Cardew in the eleven, and placed his trust in him. And Cardew was wanted—badly wanted—for his bowling; almost any other man could have been better spared from the team. It was natural that Tom, kind and good-natured as he was, should feel bitterly resentful at what he could only look upon as a betrayal.

Levison understood his feelings well enough. Cardew's desertion had been a shock to the chums of Study No. 9. They had believed at first the message Cardew had sent by Clampe of the Shell, that Cardew had been called away to the sickbed of his grandfather, old Lord Reckness. The other fellows had doubted it, but they had believed, and Levison had sought proof by telephoning direct to Reckness Towers. And he had been utterly staggered by the answer, that Lord Reckness was not ill, and that Cardew had not been sent for from home. That finished the matter, in the opinion of the St. Jim's fellows; but Ernest Levison still clung to a faint hope that there might be some explanation, somehow.

"You're putting in Digby?" he asked, as Tom turned a rather dark look on him. No pal of Cardew's was likely to find favour in Tom Merry's eyes at that moment.

"Yes," said Tom shortly.

Levison paused.

"I don't know how you'll take what I'm going to say," he said at last. "But—I can't believe that Cardew has let us down as you think. He couldn't—and he wouldn't."

"He has!" said Tom.

"I know he's gone," said Levison.

"With Racke and Crooke—those two blackguards!" said Tom Merry bitterly. "Gone for a joy-ride in Racke's father's car—leaving us in the lurch. I'd never have trusted him if he hadn't given me his word of honour to stand by the team. He's broken his word, and left us with a silly lie to account for his absence."

Levison bit his lip.

"I can't believe it!" he said.

"Weally Levison!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The facts speak for themselves, you know. I am very sorry to think badly of a fellow who is a distant relation of mine; but Cardew has played a rotten trick on us."

"We'll win without him!" growled Redfern. "If only we had Fatty Wynn to bowl for us, Cardew wouldn't matter. It's dirty of him to let us down when old Fatty's in sanny and can't play."

"It's because he does matter, as it happens, that he's played this trick on us!" grunted Kangaroo.

"I can't believe it!" said Levison. "I know that Cardew is a bit uncertain—perhaps a bit flighty, if you prefer it that way—but I've never known him break his word. When he promised to play against Rookwood to-day, he meant to play."

"And changed his mind at the last minute, and went off joy-riding with Racke!" growled Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here, it's clear that he did have a telephone-call," urged Levison. "It came for him in the New House, and Mr. Ratcliff sent for him to take it. It may have been a spoof call, but he had it."

"A flimsy excuse," said Tom. "I suppose he put up some pal to call him on Ratty's phone, to give a little colour to his excuse. Anyhow, we know that the message he sent by Clampe was a lie. His grandfather isn't ill, and Cardew hasn't gone home."

"He's thrown up the match for a giddy joy-ride with Racke," said Blake, with a nod. "Clear as daylight. I suppose he felt ashamed of himself, and felt that he'd better put in a lie to cover it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He will be barred by the school for this," said Tom Merry quietly. "Any fellow who speaks to Cardew again will be barred along with him. I'm sorry, Levison, as he's your friend; but a dirty trick like this can't be overlooked. He will get a House beating, and he will be barred for good."

"If he's let us down, he deserves it," said Levison. "If it's proved, I shall turn him down with the rest, and so will Clive. But give a fellow a chance; a man's innocent till he's proved guilty."

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture.

"What do you want me to do, Levison? Keep the Rookwood chaps hanging about all day in case Cardew should change his mind again and come back, or what?"

"Of course not. Give him a chance, that's all. Clampe says he was in a hurry to get to the station, and Racke gave him a lift in his car. You think they've gone off on a joy-ride—"

"Yaas, wathah!"



Mr. Lodgey brandished his stick and stood in the road in the way of the rider. "Stop, or I'll knock you off that bike!" he shouted. Cardew heeded not. Within six feet of the threatening ruffian he whirled round the handle-bars, and his machine ran up the green bank and then rocked down into the road again. Then Cardew drove hard at the pedals, with his back to Mr. Lodgey. (See page 8.)

"Well, it seems that Clampe was going out with Racke and Crooke," said Levison. "Racke went off with Cardew to the station, while Clampe brought us Cardew's message. He promised to come back for Clampe, and Clampe's at the gates now waiting for the car. That doesn't look as if the party have gone off on a joy-ride, does it?"

"Anyhow, he's gone," said Blake.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" asked Tom Merry again. He could not see what Levison of the Fourth was driving at.

"Racke is coming back in the car for Clampe—he can't be long now. See him before you decide about Cardew. He can tell us where Cardew is, for one thing—and whether he took him to Wayland Station to catch the train for home. If he did, it looks to me as if Cardew has been tricked into going home, by some cad who wanted to make him miss the match—"

Tom Merry started.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"Well, I know it sounds thick, but it's not impossible," said Levison quietly. "If Cardew's gone home he'll find out at once that he's been tricked, and he will come back. If we bat first, he may be in time for last man in. If he's been tricked, he's not to blame."

"Bai Jove! It sounds awfully steep, dear boy!"

"I know it does! But I will never believe that Cardew broke his word intentionally, if I can help it."

"I'll see Racke, anyhow," said Tom Merry abruptly. "A few minutes more or less will not make any difference."

And Tom Merry walked away to the school gates, where

Clampe of the Shell was waiting for the car. Levison went with him, and two or three other fellows.

Tom was unwilling to leave a chance untried. He placed little faith in Levison's theory, which indeed was only too obviously the outcome of Levison's desire to shield his chum. But there was a chance, at least, that some enemy of Cardew's had tricked him—and certainly Ralph Reckness Cardew had made a good many enemies for himself during his career at St. Jim's. But it was barely possible that Cardew had gone home, called by a false message. And in that case, there was still a chance for him to get back in time to play. Aubrey Racke of the Shell could let in some light on that subject.

Racke's big car was in sight on the road when Tom Merry & Co. joined Clampe at the gates. The car came to a halt; and Racke and Crooke, seated in the car, glanced curiously at the little group of cricketers. Racke closed one eye at his comrade. He could read the signs of anxious thought in Tom Merry's face; and the blackguard of the Shell found entertainment therein.

Tom Merry stepped up to the car as it halted.

"It seems that you gave Cardew a lift to the station, Racke," he said.

"That's so," assented Racke. "He told us somethin' about his grandfather bein' ill, and wantin' to get home quick. I don't know whether there was anythin' in it."

"Rather less than more, I fancy," grinned Crooke. "Cardew's always pullin' somebody's leg."

"Did you put him down at the station?" asked Tom.

"Oh, no! We haven't been to the station at all," said Racke airily. "There was engine trouble, and Cardew decided to walk. We were delayed only a few minutes, but he wouldn't wait."

"Do you know whether he went to the station?" "Couldn't say. He just walked off." Racke called to Clampe. "Waitin' for you, old bean. We've wasted enough time already."

Clampe of the Shell got into the car. Tom Merry stepped back. He had learned all that Aubrey Racke could or would tell him, and it was little enough.

"Hold on a minute, Racke!" exclaimed Levison of the Fourth.

"Well, what is it?" asked Racke impatiently. "I thought you fellows were playin' cricket to-day. I know I'm goin' motorin'."

"Where did you drop Cardew?"

"In one of the lanes between here and Wayland."

"Which way did he go?"

"He went into the wood by one of the footpaths."

"Which footpath?" persisted Levison.

"Blessed if I know. There's dozens—and I don't know one from another," said Racke still more impatiently. "I know I've wasted enough time on him, an' I'm sorry now I offered him a lift."

"You know whether he was heading for Wayland Station when he left you?"

"I never noticed, but I suppose he was, as he said he was. His old grandfather's ill, or somethin', and he's goin' home—at least, that's what he told us. I dare say he was pullin' our leg, though; you never can tell with Cardew."

"We've learned that his grandfather is not ill, and that he's not been called home," said Tom.

Racke whistled.

"Deep!" he said. "He took us in! I suppose he wanted to get out of the cricket—that's about it."

"He's not waiting for you somewhere, to go on a joy-ride for the holiday?" asked Blake suspiciously.

Racke laughed and shook his head.

"Oh, no! I'm not chummin' with Cardew just now. Now I come to think of it, he may have expected me to ask him. Get goin', Tomlinson."

The chauffeur started, and the car glided away down the lane, with Racke and Crooke and Clampe. Levison's face was downcast. Tom Merry gave him a grim look.

"It doesn't look as if Cardew's gone home, after all," he said. "But he's gone off for the day, at least. He's let us down!"

"I believe he'll have some explanation to give when he gets back," muttered Levison.

"Very likely; but it's another matter whether anybody takes his word about it," said Tom Merry scornfully. "But I'll give him a chance. If he gets back in time to play, well and good. If he gets back after the match we shall all know what to think—and he will be barred by St. Jim's. And, I fancy, he will get out of the school, unless he's got a hide as thick as a rhinoceros."

Levison of the Fourth made no reply to that; his face was deeply troubled as he walked back to the cricket-ground with Tom Merry. He clung to his faith in his chum, and yet he realised that all the evidence was that Cardew was utterly faithless.

At all events, matters had to proceed without the deserter. The Rookwooders were on the ground, and it was time. Tom Merry tossed with Jimmy Silver, and won the toss, and elected to bat. That was a relief to Levison. St. Jim's were good for a good innings—the team was strong in batsmen. It was in bowlers that they were weak, owing to the absence of Talbot and Fatty Wynn and the desertion of Cardew. Tom Merry opened the innings with Kangaroo at the other end, and Jimmy Silver went on to bowl for Rookwood. Levison and Clive stood among the group of waiting batsmen.

"There's a chance yet," Levison muttered to Clive. "If Cardew's gone home he can get back in time to play—unless the innings peters out very quick."

Clive nodded without speaking.

"Rot!" said Digby of the Fourth. "Cardew hasn't gone home, and he's not coming back."

Dig was down for last man; but it was understood that if Cardew should turn up after all, he would take his place in the team, and Digby would not be wanted. Dig was very keen to play for school, and he did not believe for a moment that Cardew would return—the wish, perhaps, being to some extent father to the thought.

"Yaas, I vegaard that as wot, too, Levison," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Cardew has left us in the lurch, like an uttah wottah. I don't want to say anythin' against a chap in his absence, and I shall wefwain fwom doin' so; but I must remark that Cardew is an uttah wottah and a wank outsidah!"

"Fathead!" was Levison's polite reply.

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"Weally, Levison!"

"I suppose there's a ghost of a chance, as Levison says?" observed Blake thoughtfully. "Let's hope for a good long innings, anyhow. Oh, my hat!"

"How's that, umpire?" came a Rookwood yell.

"Bai Jove! Tom Mewwy's down!"

"What rotten luck!"

Tom Merry, with a grim face, carried out his bat for three. St. Jim's had not started well.

CHAPTER 3.

A Surprise for Mr. Lodgey!

AUBREY RACKE grinned, as the big car glided swiftly down Rylcombe Lane. Matters were going well for Aubrey.

The black sheep of St. Jim's were booked for a joy-ride in the big, expensive car belonging to Sir Jonas Racke. They were going as far as the sea, with an expensive lunch to follow, and cigarettes and billiards to follow the lunch, and Racke was debating whether it would be quite safe to pay a visit to the races at a good distance from the school. But best of all, his scheme had been a success; the dandy of the Fourth had paid in full for all the injuries—real or fancied—that Racke had suffered at his hands. And there was nothing to connect Racke with the matter; he had laid his schemes too cunningly for that. Cardew would remain away from St. Jim's all day. He would return after the match was over—and lost—and the story he had to tell would not find a single believer. Cardew, the disdainful, the supercilious, the fellow whose alternate patronage and contempt had galled Racke to the quick, would be barred by the school. Even his own chums would turn him down with the rest. Racke felt no remorse, not the slightest twinge of it; he only rejoiced in his success. His cup of satisfaction was full to overflowing.

Crooke shared his satisfaction to the full. Clampe, who was not in the plot—Racke was slow to trust even his friends—was rather puzzled by the glee of his comrades.

"Hallo, there's old Lodgey!" said Clampe, as the car turned a corner in the lane, where Wayland Wood skirted the road.

A dingy, podgy man, in shabby clothes and a disreputable bowler hat, stood by the roadside, evidently waiting for the car. Racke signed to the chauffeur, and the car stopped.

"Not taking Lodgey on board, surely?" exclaimed Clampe in surprise. "Dash it all, Racke!"

"Of course not, you ass!" said Racke irritably. "I've got to speak to him, that's all. Come on, Crooke! You stay in the car, Clampe."

"Glad to," said Clampe dryly. "Blessed if I want to be seen speaking to that seedy bounder so near the school. Keep your eyes open for prefects."

"Oh, rot!"

Racke and Crooke descended from the car, and crossed the belt of grass by the roadside. Mr. Lodgey touched his battered hat and grinned.

"All serene?" asked Racke in a low, eager voice.

"Right as rain, Master Racke. I was on the path in the wood ready for cheeky Mr. Cardew," grinned Lodgey.

"You didn't let him recognise you?" asked Racke, rather anxiously. "He's as keen as mustard, the cad."

Mr. Lodgey tapped a red-spotted handkerchief that half-hung from a pocket of his shabby coat.

"I had this over my face," he answered.

"Good egg!"

"It was easy as winking," said Lodgey with a dingy grin.

"I downed him on the path and put a cord round his flippers."

"You didn't leave him on the path?"

"No fear! I took him right into the wood, and tied his nibs to a tree. Don't you worry. Nobody won't find him there," said Mr. Lodgey. "He offered me all he had about him to let him go, as he was anxious to get home to see his sick grandfather."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I let on that the message was spoof, Master Racke. He seemed cut up about the old gentleman at home," said Lodgey. "He won't have an easy time, anyhow, tied up in the wood for the best part of the day. He ain't the least idea why and wherefore he's been collared. I've made him believe that I had something up agin him personal, and he don't fancy for a minute that it was one of his schoolfellows at the bottom of it."

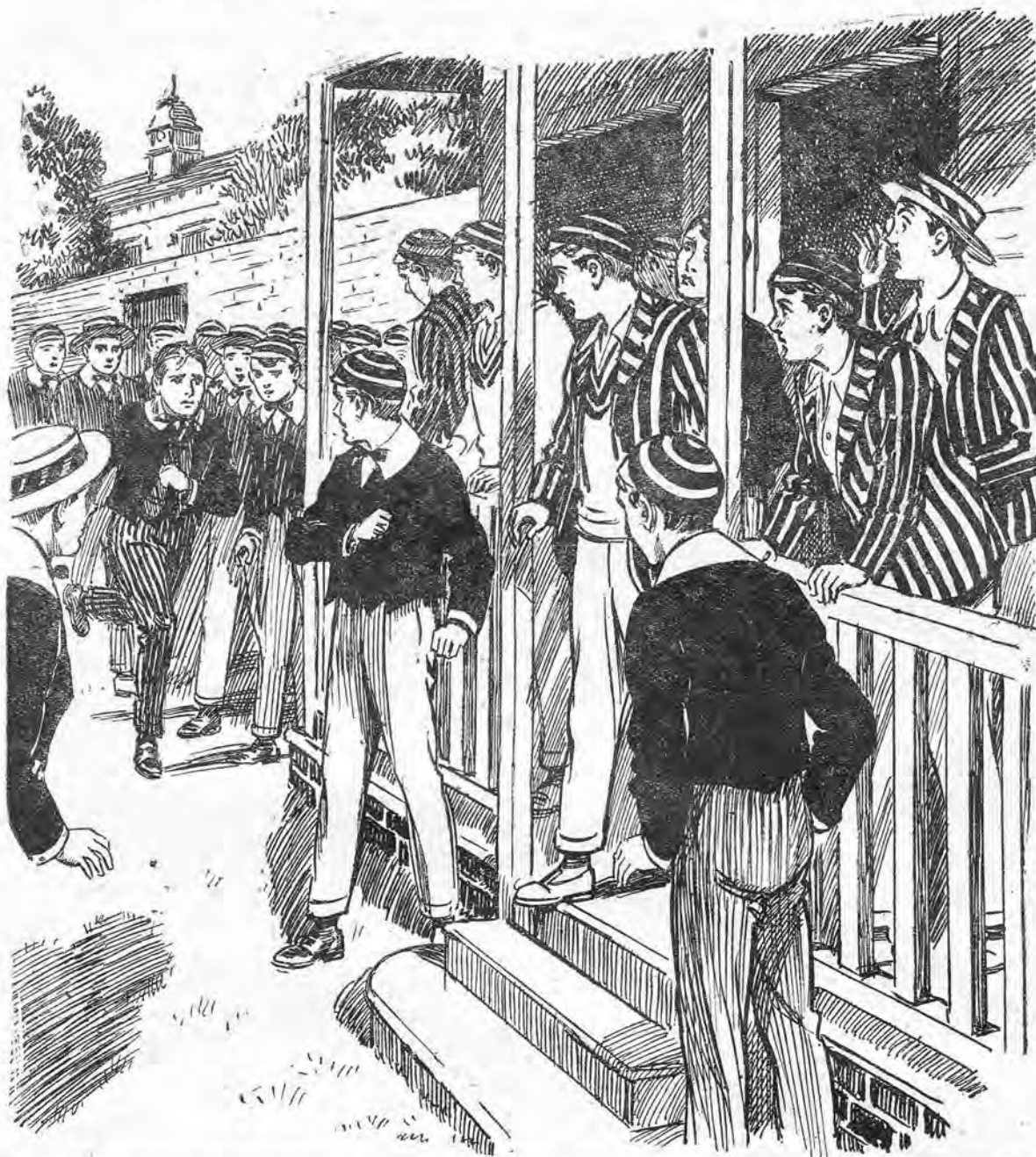
"Good!" said Racke. "You're sure he can't get away?"

"Quite sure."

"You'll go back about four o'clock and let him go?" said Racke. "That will be about right. Mind he doesn't see your face."

Mr. Lodgey chuckled.

"Rely on that. I ain't looking for a spell in chokey, Master Racke," he answered. "I'll take care of myself. He's as safe as houses till I go back and let him loose."



"Bai Jove!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Heah comes Cardew, deah boys!" Tom Merry fixed his eyes on the dandy of the Fourth, who was coming across to the cricket pavilion at a tearing run. His clothes were rumpled and soiled and looked as if they had been through hard usage. "Am I in time for the match?" asked Cardew breathlessly. (See page 9.)

Nobody never goes into that part of the wood—it's too thick."

"Right-ho!" said Racke cheerily. "There's another quid for you, Lodgey, when the job's done."

Racke and Crooke walked back to the car. Leslie Clampe eyed them curiously.

"Well, what's it all about?" he asked. "Backing horses?"

"Somethin' of the sort," said Racke carelessly. "Get on with it, Tomlinson."

The big car glided away, bursting into great speed, leaving behind it a scent of petrol and a cloud of dust. Mr. Lodgey stared after it with his bleary eyes, and grinned.

"Precious young raskils!" he murmured. "Oh, precious! Master Racke's people must be proud of him—I don't think! Well, quids are quids in these 'ard times, and a cove can't be too pertickler."

Mr. Lodgey, at least, was never over-particular, in hard times or soft.

The beery gentleman watched the car out of sight, and

then sat down on the green bank by the roadside, to smoke his pipe and idle away the morning. A cyclist came pedalling along from the direction of the school, and Mr. Lodgey gave him a careless glance. It was Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth Form, an extremely undistinguished youth, who was personally unknown to Mr. Lodgey, and excited no interest whatever in that gentleman's beery mind. Mr. Lodgey did not give him a second glance, yet, as it happened, Tompkins of the Fourth was destined to play his part in the proceedings of that eventful day. For Tompkins of the Fourth was led into the woods that summer's day by the lure of botany, his favourite hobby. And perhaps Mr. Lodgey might have felt a slight uneasiness had he known that Tompkins, a little farther on, wheeled his bike into the footpath through the wood, and then, leaving the bike on the footpath, plunged into the thickest recesses of the woodland.

But Mr. Lodgey did not know that. He smoked his pipe

and thought of the liquor upon which he was going to expend Racke's "quid," which he was to receive when he "job" was over. He wondered, too, whether he would be able to "stick" Master Racke for something further, by a hint that otherwise he might let Cardew know who was at the bottom of the kidnapping. But Mr. Lodgey shook his head over that thought. He made too good a thing out of Racke at billiards already to risk the resentment of the war-profitier's son and heir.

Mr. Lodgey's meditations were interrupted suddenly by the sound of a bike on the road. A cyclist was coming up the road, heading for the school, at a furious pace.

It was the same bicycle that had passed Mr. Lodgey in the opposite direction, nearly an hour before. But it was not the same cyclist.

Lodgey sat up, staring blankly, as he recognised the rider. It was Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's!

Mr. Lodgey could scarcely believe his eyes as he stared at the reckless rider, tearing up the lane as fast as the bike could be driven by furious pedalling.

Mr. Lodgey's beery brain did not work quickly, and it did not occur to him that Tompkins, straying into the recesses of the wood in botanical pursuit, had chanced on the bound junior and released him. Knowing nothing of Tompkins of the Fourth and his botanical manners and customs, Mr. Lodgey did not even think of him at the moment. He stared at Cardew, blankly, in utter dismay.

Cardew, whom he had left tied to a tree in the heart of the wood—safe for the day, as he supposed—Cardew was here, under his eyes, mounted on a bicycle, riding for the school as if riding for his life. Mr. Lodgey rubbed his eyes, wondering for a moment whether it was a beery vision, a result of the strong waters he had already imbibed that morning at the Green Man.

But it was no vision—it was Ralph Reckness Cardew, and he was coming on fast—in a minute more he would have passed Mr. Lodgey. The whole scheme had fallen through—by what chance Mr. Lodgey did not know. He glanced up and down the lane—there was no one in sight, save the desperate cyclist riding hard for the school. Bent over his handlebars, putting every ounce of energy into his pedalling, Cardew had not noticed the ruffian ahead of him by the roadside.

Mr. Lodgey set his teeth.

He jerked out the big red-spotted handkerchief, and tied it across his beery face, as he had worn it when he had attacked Cardew in the wood. Again he glanced up and down the lane, like Moses of old, and still it was deserted to the view. Mr. Lodgey sprang out into the road as the junior came racing up on Tompkins' bike.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"Get aside!" shouted Cardew.

Mr. Lodgey had a stick under his arm. He slid it down into his hand and brandished it, as he stood in the road in the way of the rider. Cardew's eyes gleamed at him. The red-spotted handkerchief on the man's face was sufficient to tell him whom he had to deal with. His release by Clarence York Tompkins had been a stroke of good fortune—but his fortune had failed him again. But Cardew was in a desperate mood now.

"Stop, or I'll knock you off that bike!" shouted Lodgey. He brandished the stick over his head.

Cardew did not stop.

The lane was a narrow one for turning a bicycle, especially one going at a high speed. But Cardew did not hesitate.

Within six feet of the threatening ruffian he whirled round the racing machine.

For a moment it looked as if he must whirl over, or plunge headlong into the hedge with the machine; but only for a moment. The bicycle ran up the green bank, and almost pitched over; but Cardew's grip was like iron on the handles; the machine rocked down into the road again, and Cardew drove at the pedals, with his back to Mr. Lodgey.

With a curse the ruffian rushed after him, but the machine fairly flew. Lodgey stopped and hurled the stick after the cyclist.

But Cardew had guessed that that was coming; the machine swerved to and fro in the road, and the missile flew wide. It dropped in the hedge, and Cardew, noting it, laughed breathlessly. He did not cast a glance back. Back the way he had come, he rode hard—and in a couple of minutes the winding of the green lane hid him from Mr. Lodgey's beery eyes.

Mr. Lodgey ran a few paces and stopped, breathless. He tore the red-spotted handkerchief from his face, and jammed it sullenly into his pocket. The game was up, so far as Mr. Lodgey was concerned; and he bade a mental good-bye to Master Racke's other "quid."

Headless of the ruffian he had left behind, Cardew turned at the first turning, and by various by-lanes got back to the Rylcombe road at a safe distance. He had lost time; but

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the way was clear to the school now; over the treetops the grey old tower of St. Jim's was in sight.

Breathless, streaming with perspiration, Cardew tore on. There was a shout from two or three fellows as he came up to the school gates.

"Cardew!" roared Herries of the Fourth.

"I guess it's Cardew, as large as life!" exclaimed Wildrake.

"Where did you jump from, Cardew?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew leaped from the machine. It spun away, and Wildrake caught it.

"The match has started, I suppose?" he asked.

"What? I guess so—long ago."

"I'm left out?"

"What did you expect?" snorted Herries.

Cardew did not answer that.

"Who's in?"

"St. Jim's."

"Good!"

Cardew ran on; leaving Tompkins' bike in Wildrake's hands, and the juniors staring after him. From the cricket ground came a shout:

"Well bowled, Silver!"

Cardew ran on breathlessly.

Racke and Crooke, joy-riding on the country roads in the big car, were enjoying themselves. But probably they would not have enjoyed their joy-ride so much could they have guessed what was happening at St. Jim's in the same moments.

CHAPTER 4.

Last Man In!

"MAN in!"

"Last man!"

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

"We have not weally done vewy well, Tom Mewwy, deah boy. Play up, Dig, old man, and do your best for the old school!"

Dig grinned a little as he buckled his pads and let Levison of the Fourth have the benefit of his grin.

Clive was at the wickets now, and Lowther, his partner, was coming out, clean bowled by Jimmy Silver of Rookwood. The St. Jim's first innings had not lasted so long as the home cricketers had anticipated. And the score was not impressive. Nine wickets down for forty-six runs was nothing, as Kangaroo remarked, to "write home about."

Tom Merry had had cruel luck at the beginning. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had gone on intending to make centuries, or at least a century; but he had, to his surprise, made only six. Levison of the Fourth had done well—he had twenty to his credit. But on the whole, the innings was not a happy one; and as St. Jim's depended chiefly on their batting, prospects were not rosy.

Dig was last man in—the missing Cardew having shown no sign of turning up. Indeed, no one but Levison was thinking about Ralph Reckness Cardew now. He had deserted the side, he had let down the school; and there was an end. Tom Merry said to himself savagely that he ought to have known better than to trust Cardew an inch; and with that he dismissed the fellow from his mind.

Dig was ready, and keen. Dig was a good man, in a quiet and steady way; but his comrades did not expect him to last long against such bowling as Jimmy Silver's and Mornington's. Rookwood had sent over very good men this time, and St. Jim's needed to be up to their full strength—and they were nowhere near that point. Tom Merry & Co. seemed booked to fight a losing battle through the long summer's day, with defeat to crown their efforts at the finish. If anybody thought of Cardew it was with an intense desire to kick him. Only Ernest Levison did not share that general and natural desire; and even as Robert Arthur Digby buckled his pads, Levison of the Fourth cast a last anxious glance round, in the faint hope of yet seeing some sign of Cardew.

"Nothin' doin', deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus, catching Ernest Levison's glance, and comprehending it. "You won't see that uttah wottah again till aftah the match. And, bai Jove! Won't we give him a wecord waggin' when he does turn up, the feahful outsidah!"

"Won't we!" grunted Blake.

Levison did not heed. His grave and troubled face had lighted up suddenly. In the distance he spotted a running figure.

"Cardew!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry spun round.

"What's that?"

"Cardew!" roared Levison, in delight.

"Gweat Scott!"

Dig's face fell. He was ready to go on; he had his bat under his arm, and was actually stepping towards the pitch. But, keen as he was to play for School, Dig was loyal; he paused, and cast an inquiring glance at Tom Merry. Deep

down in his heart Dig knew that Cardew was a much more valuable man for the side, and he was ready, though sorely against the grain, to take a back seat if required to do so.

The field were waiting for the incoming batsman—and as a rule St. Jim's did not keep the field waiting. On this occasion, however, the Rookwooders had to wait. An unusual state of affairs reigned at the pavilion.

"Cardew, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "He has changed his cheeky mind and come back. I wathah think, Tom Mewwy, that I wouldn't play him, aftah all."

Tom did not heed.

His eyes were fixed on the dandy of the Fourth, who was coming across to the cricket-pavilion at a tearing run. Cardew was still in Etons, as he had left the school that morning; his clothes were rumpled and soiled, looking as if they had been through hard usage. His handsome face was flushed and dewed with perspiration. All eyes were fixed on him as he came up, panting.

"Cardew, old man!" exclaimed Levison gladly. "You're in time!"

"Weally, Levison—"

Cardew stopped, breathing hard and deep. Tom Merry made a step towards him. His look was cold and his eyes glinted. If the deserter had repented and come back to do his duty Tom Merry was prepared to give him a chance, but certainly not to welcome him with open arms.

"Am I in time?" asked Cardew.

"Yes," said Levison, with an appealing look at the junior captain.

"Hold on a minute, Dig!" said Tom.

"Right-ho!" answered Digby rather glumly. He clumped his bat down. "Have you come back to play, Cardew?"

"Yes."

"There's no time for talk now," said Tom quietly. "It's last man, and the field are waiting. But there's something I must know. If I play you at all there must be no more tricks. You'll be wanted all day. You understand that?"

"Naturally!"

"Tom Merry," exclaimed Levison, "you can't think that Cardew would desert the side in the middle of a match?"

Tom's lip curled.

"How do I know?" he snapped.

"Quite so!" said Cardew, without a sign of resentment. "Quite natural in the circumstances. There's no time to explain now; but I will explain after the innings. Just now I will only say that I've been kept away by a trick, and got here as fast as I could. Is that good enough for you, Tom Merry?"

Tom's clouded face cleared a little.

"I said so!" exclaimed Levison.

"You did!" admitted Tom. "I'm willing to believe it. If Cardew can explain, well and good; nobody will be more pleased than I if he can show that he hasn't played us a dirty trick. Get into your flannels, Cardew, and get on the wicket."

"Right-ho!"

Levison hurried in with Cardew to help him change. The Rookwood field were waiting, and exchanging glances. Hitherto the wickets had fallen fairly fast, but next man had always been ready. Now there was a prolonged wait.

"Is this a game of cricket, or a jolly old nerve rest?" Arthur Edward Lovell of Rookwood inquired of his comrade Raby.

"Something's up, old chap," answered Raby. "Looks as if they've found a lost man at the last minute."

"What rot!" grunted Lovell.

"Utter rot!" agreed Newcome. "We manage things rather better at Rookwood—what?"

"If we didn't, we'd jolly well sack our skipper!" growled Lovell. "Looks as if we've got to wait while that fellow, whoever he is, changes his togs. Call this cricket!" Lovell sat down on the ground with an air of protest.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry was explaining a little to Jimmy Silver. The Rookwood junior skipper was kind and accommodating.

"You see, our man has been delayed," said Tom. "I was going to play another man but he's turned up at last. You don't mind hanging on for a few minutes?"

"Not at all," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Take your time."

Sidney Clive, waiting at his wicket, was staring towards the pavilion, puzzled but pleased. He had seen Cardew arrive, and he was glad to see him. The delay showed that Cardew was to play, after all, as well as the fact that poor Dig was disconsolately unbuckling his pads. But Ralph Reckness Cardew was not losing time; he could hurry when he liked, and he was not long in getting ready. Tom Merry eyed him rather anxiously when he came out with his bat. Tom had noted the signs of haste and fatigue in the dandy of the Fourth, and he realised that, for whatever cause Cardew had been kept away, he had had to exert himself to get back to the school in time.

"Feeling fit?" asked Tom.

"Fit enough," answered Cardew. "Fagged a bit, of course. I've been through some things this morning. I'll do my best; but, of course, it's not my battin' you want. I shall be right as rain by the time you want me to bowl."

"Good!" said Tom. "Get on."

Cardew ran lightly out to the wicket.

Sidney Clive had the bowling now, from Mornington of Rookwood, and he stood up to it steadily. He did not score from the bowling, but he kept his wicket intact. The field crossed over, and Jimmy Silver went on to bowl against Cardew.

The St. Jim's crowd watched Cardew keenly.

His unexplained absence, his sudden and dramatic arrival just in time to play, had concentrated all attention upon him—he was the cynosure of all eyes now. It was as a bowler that Cardew excelled; but he was a good bat, and no one would have been surprised to see him put up a brilliant innings. From Cardew it was, so to speak, always the unexpected that was to be expected. With only 46 to their credit, St. Jim's wanted runs badly.

Cardew started well.

The first ball was cut away for 2, and the second for 4. But Cardew realised that he was not in a state for a hard innings; he was badly in need of rest. He grimly exerted himself and did his best, but the bowling was too good for a fellow who was not up to the top notch of his form.

"How's that?" came a roar from Rookwood, when the third ball came down from Jimmy Silver.

The umpire did not need to answer—the wicket was in pieces. Cardew gave a slight shrug of the shoulders and walked off.

"All down for 52!" said Monty Lowther. "We've got to pull up our socks, you fellows!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sorry!" said Cardew, as he came off the field with Clive. "Chap can only do his best, you know."

"All serene!" said Tom Merry. "My lot was only 3, so I'm not grouching. After all, it's bowling we want from you."

"And I trust, Cardew, that you will not disappear befooh the Wookwood innin's begins!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"Fathead!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cardew—"

"Bow-wow!"

Cardew turned away with Clive and Levison, leaving Arthur Augustus pink with indignation.

CHAPTER 5.

Cardew Clears Himself!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW sat in the shade of a tree, resting his back against the trunk, imbibing lemon-squash. He needed a rest, and he was making the most of the short interval before the visitors' innings commenced. He did not look much like the fellow who had arrived in hot haste, flushed and panting, so brief a time ago. His usual nonchalant coolness had returned, and he sipped his lemon-squash through the straw with an air of lazy satisfaction. Levison and Clive sat on each side of him in the grass, and a crowd of St. Jim's fellows had gathered round. Tom Merry stood before him, with a rather uncertain expression on his face. Tom had been deeply and bitterly angry with the deserter; and he still had the impression that Cardew's return was only a late repentance, that the volatile and unreliable fellow had changed his changeable mind once more, and decided upon cricket, after all, instead of a joy-ride. Glad as he was to have the champion bowler in the team, Tom Merry was of no mind to be played with like that. School matches were matters of serious import, whatsoever view Cardew chose to take of them. A place in the eleven was not a thing to be lightly taken and lightly thrown aside, according to a fellow's whim.

But Tom was willing to give the dandy of the Fourth every chance. He did not want to find Cardew guilty; he wanted to find him guiltless, if he could.

"Have some lemon-squash, old bean," said Cardew, as the junior captain came up. "Warm day, what?"

"Never mind the lemon-squash," said Tom. "We've time now to hear what you've got to say, Cardew."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically.

"We want to know why you deserted the side!" growled Blake. "Coming back at the last minute is all very well. But why did you go?"

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold, as jolly old Shakespeare remarks," said Cardew gravely. "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry impatiently.

"How can I help it, dear man? Every fellow must follow out his destiny."

"Look here, Cardew—"

"Of course, he can't say anything!" snorted Grundy of the

Shell. Grundy was in evidence again, though not in flannels now. George Alfred Grundy never could keep in the back seats. "He's going to spin us a yarn, of course. I warned you that he'd let the side down, Tom Merry, and you can't deny it."

"Give us a rest, Grundy."

"Playing a fellow who bolts in at the last minute!" snorted Grundy. "And what's he done for you? Six! Do you think I'd have come off with six if I'd batted?"

"No feat," said Redfern. "You'd have come off with a big round nought, old scout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" roared Grundy.

"Shut up, Grundy!" shouted half a dozen fellows. Somehow or other Grundy never could realise that he was not incessantly wanted to play a speaking part.

"Do dry up, old chap!" murmured Wilkins. "Cardew's waiting to tell us about it."

"Oh, let him run on!" said Cardew cheerily. "His voice isn't musical, but it's amusing to watch him. Go it, Grundy!"

But Grundy was pushed away, and Cardew took up the tale. The juniors listened quietly while Cardew explained the matter, very concisely.

"There was a telephone message from Reckness Towers—at least, I believed so when I got it. I had to get off at once. I was told that Lord Reckness was sinking. I asked Clampe to tell you. I suppose he gave you the message?"

"Yes," said Tom.

"Racke's motor-car happened to be outside the New House, where I got the call. He offered me a lift to the station. The car broke down, and I took a short cut through the wood. There I was set on—"

"Set on!" said Tom.

"A Johnny with a rag tied over his face jumped on me and downed me. I was tied to a tree and left rejoicing. Only he was good enough to tell me that I'd been spoofed, that the message never came from my grandfather at all. The good man had telephoned for me from Wayland, and then laid for me in the wood—see?"

"I don't see," said Tom coldly. "How could the man possibly know what path you would take through the wood, and whether you would go on foot at all?"

Cardew smiled.

"That's what I wanted to know," he answered. "He couldn't have nailed me in the wood if Racke hadn't given me a lift in his car, which happened to break down just at that precise place. I'm goin' to ask old Aubrey if he knows anythin' about it."

"Racke!" breathed Levison.

Tom Merry started.

"You accuse Racke of being at the bottom of it and fixing up the whole thing?" he exclaimed.

"Not in the least. I haven't an atom of proof. I don't accuse Racke. But that's what I believe."

"It sounds awfully thick," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well," said Monty Lowther, eyeing the dandy of the Fourth very curiously, "we've got as far as your being tied to a tree. How does it happen that you're not still tied to that jolly old tree?"

"Perhaps the man left the cords loose. Obliging sort of chap perhaps," remarked Digby sarcastically.

"Or perhaps Cardew's seen something of the sort on the films, and is giving it to us at second-hand!" observed Manners.

Levison and Clive eyed their comrade anxiously. They believed him; they were determined to believe him. But they could not deny that the story sounded steep. There was one point in Cardew's favour. He had turned up in time for the match. Had this story been told after the Rookwood match had finished it would have been rejected with scorn by all hearers. But since Cardew had returned, evidently in hot haste, it was only fair to believe that he had not kept away of his own accord. Nevertheless, there was deep doubt and suspicion in most of the faces round Cardew. The story was strange and startling, and Cardew's leg-pulling proclivities were only too well known.

Cardew glanced at the circle of doubting faces, and smiled genially. He had a trump card yet to play, but he was in no hurry to play it. It entertained him to observe the doubt and suspicion, which it was in his power to dispel with a word when he chose.

He listened calmly to the remarks of the juniors, all of them doubting and ironical, and sipped his lemon-squash with enjoyment. Tom Merry broke in at last.

"If all this is true, Cardew—"

"If!" repeated Cardew, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, if," said Tom hotly. "I suppose you don't expect us to swallow a yarn like this without some proof, or at least without some probability. You say you were tied to a tree, and you hint that Racke planned the whole thing, and put a man to keep you away from the match. I dare say the

fellow's capable of it, but that's not the point. Did this man do the work so badly that you were able to get away?"

"Not in the least. He did his work remarkably well," drawled Cardew. "I assure you that I had the tussle of my life with that rope after the man was gone, and it didn't give an inch."

"But he put you somewhere where a passer-by was likely to see you and let you loose?" grinned Dig. "What an obliging man!"

"Not at all. He tied me up in the deepest depths of the wood, where it was practically certain that nobody would come."

"Then how—" snapped Tom Merry.

"Have you ever read jolly old *Æsop*?" asked Cardew pleasantly. "He was an ancient Johnny, who dealt in fables."

"Never mind *Æsop* now!"

"But this is quite to the point. *Æsop* tells us that a lion once did a good turn to a mouse—"

"Look here—"

"Later on, in his leonine career," went on Cardew calmly, "the jolly old lion was caught in a net. The mouse came tricklin' by and spotted him, and gnawed the net through, and let the jolly old lion loose. That's what happened in my case."

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"What do you mean, if you mean anything?" he exclaimed.

"Just what I say. It was a case of the mouse and the lion over again. Have you ever heard of Tompkins?"

"Tompkins of the Fourth?"

"Yes. He was the mouse in this case. I was the jolly old lion," yawned Cardew. "T'other day—I forget when—Racke and Crooke ragged Tompkins of the Fourth, and mucked up his botanical collection. Like a silly ass, I butted in and stopped them. It made me late for games practice. I remember, thereby drawin' down on my devoted head the wrath of Thomas."

"I remember," said Tom. "But what—"

"You see, to-day bein' a whole holiday, what does Tompkins do? Ignorin' the tremendous events that are makin' history on Little Side at St. Jim's, he goes forth rootin' in Wayland Wood after botanical specimens. His stravin' foot-steps bring him to the thicket where a champion bowler is tied to a tree." Cardew grinned. "You should have seen Tompkins' face when he saw me tied up there. It was worth a guinea a box!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

"Tompkins," resumed Cardew, "has generally been supposed to be neither ornamental nor useful. I'm afraid he never will be ornamental—his features are against it—but he has been useful for once. He let me loose, I bagged his bike, which he'd left on the footpath, leaving poor old Tompkins to walk home after he'd finished rootin' about, and hit out for St. Jim's at top speed. Even then my giddy adventures weren't over. I nearly ran into the man who had nailed me, in the lane, but luckily I dodged him and got clear. After that, as the novelists say, you know the rest."

There was silence after Cardew had finished. But there was no longer doubt. He had played his trump card. Every fellow knew Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth—a simple and inoffensive fellow. If Tompkins of the Fourth bore out Cardew's statement, all was clear. And as Tompkins would soon be there to be questioned, it was clear that Cardew had stated the facts.

The dandy of the Fourth smiled cheerily.

"What's the verdict, gentlemen of the jury?" he asked.

"Guilty or not guilty?"

There was a laugh.

"Of course we believe you!" said Tom Merry at last. "It sounds a queer story, but if Tompkins found you tied to the tree, that settles it. Any fellow who likes can ask Tompkins, but I shan't take the trouble. I believe you."

"For this belief, much thanks!" murmured Cardew.

Tom Merry looked round.

"We've said, and thought, some pretty hard things about Cardew, you fellows," he said. "It's up to us to take them back. There's been a dirty game played, and Cardew was the victim."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I thought you'd broken your word to me, Cardew," went on Tom. "I thought you'd deserted us. I can't blame myself. I couldn't guess anything of this sort, and you've played the goat too often for a fellow to place much reliance on you. Still, I'm sorry!"

"Good man!" said Cardew lightly. "But suppose—"

"Suppose what?"

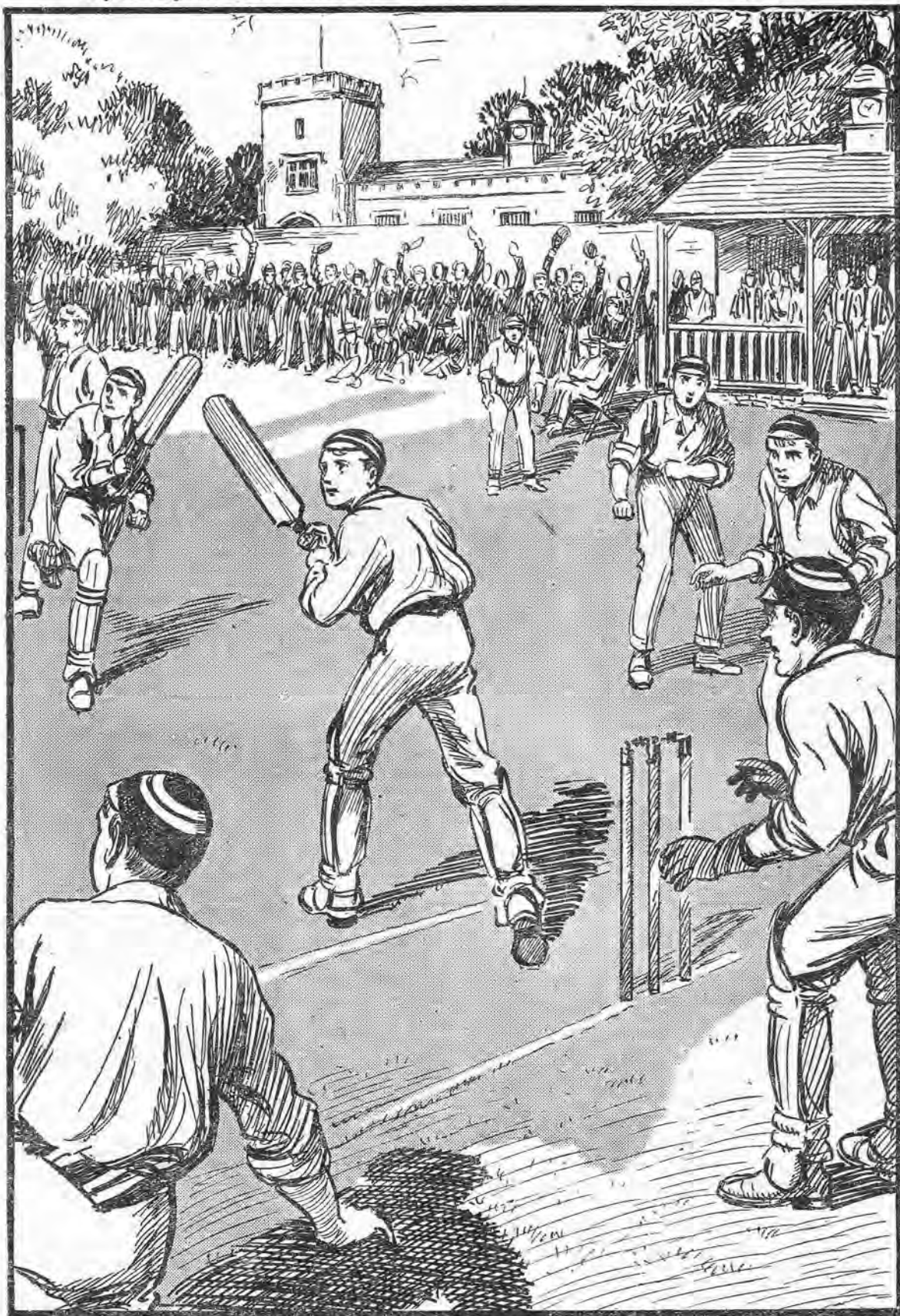
"Suppose Tompkins hadn't gone rootin' in the woods to-day, and suppose I'd stayed there till the man chose to let me loose, and then, suppose I'd come back and spun you this yarn? What would you have thought then?"

Tom Merry did not answer.

"You wouldn't have believed a word of it?"

"Well, no," said Tom slowly. "I shouldn't; and you

(Continued on page 12.)



With Tom Merry and Ralph Rackstraw Cardew at the wickets runs came thick and fast. The score was fairly jumping—seventy, eighty—and the St. Jim's crowd roared their appreciation. The Rookwood fieldmen began to look as if they suffered a little from that tired feeling. And still Tom Merry was scoring, manfully backed up by Cardew at the other end. (See page 16.)

couldn't have expected it, either. You'd have got a House ragging, and you'd have been barred by the school."

"What an escape!" yawned Cardew.

"And it would have been your own fault," said Tom Merry quietly. "If you can't be serious about serious things you can't expect to be taken seriously."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A Daniel come to judgment!" said Cardew admiringly. "Go on, Thomas! I like you in the judicial style."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "Anyhow, it's no good supposing what might have happened. It's all clear now, but we've got to find out, some time, who played that rotten trick on you. That will keep, though. Get a move on, you fellows—the Rookwooders are ready. You feel fit to take the first over, Cardew?"

"Fit to take a dozen overs," said Cardew cheerfully, and he picked himself up out of the grass, stretched himself, and yawned. "If you're quite sure you wouldn't rather have Grundy to bowl—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In a cheery humour, the St. Jim's cricketers strolled back to the field.

CHAPTER 6.

Just Like Cardew!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. of Rookwood, were feeling quite bright and sanguine. The home innings had not been impressive, and the general opinion of the Rookwooders was that they had a fairly easy thing before them. They were destined to change that opinion before the game was ended.

Tom Merry & Co. went into the field, and the ball was tossed to Cardew. Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell opened for Rookwood, the former getting the bowling. Round the field there was a big crowd of St. Jim's fellows, and all eyes were fixed eagerly on Cardew. So far as the bowling was concerned, he was the chief hope of the side. There were two or three good change bowlers, but nobody within leagues of Cardew's form in that line. Cardew, undoubtedly, intended to do his best, and his best was remarkably good. But once more it was the unexpected that happened.

The fact was that Cardew's experiences that exciting morning had told on him more than he guessed. He had been tied to the tree in Wayland Wood more than an hour, struggling to get free. He had had a hard ride back to St. Jim's, not to mention the stress of feeling he had been under while he believed the false message that his grandfather was in danger. It was really surprising that he was in good form at all; and much to his own chagrin, and to the disappointment of the St. Jim's crowd, he was nowhere near his best.

Rookwood had gathered, by this time, that St. Jim's expected a great deal from Cardew, and the batsmen watched him carefully. But the balls that came down were scarcely dangerous. The over gave Jimmy Silver eight, and his wicket was never in peril.

When the field crossed, the ball was given to Redfern to deal with Lovell, and Cardew dropped into his place in the field, biting his lip.

He was not keen on games, and he did not pretend to be keen. But he was very keen indeed on playing a great part in that special match. He wanted to beat Rookwood, with the eyes of all the school on him. He wanted Racke, when he returned from his joy-ride, to learn not only that his victim had escaped from the snare, but that he had covered himself with glory on the cricket-field. And he wanted his side to win, anyhow; and he knew how much depended on himself. But it could not be helped; and he bore his disappointment as philosophically as he could.

Many of the fellows were not so philosophic. Grundy of the Shell, in the crowd, was loud in his sarcasm. Many fellows shrugged their shoulders, and opined that Tom Merry was, after all, an ass to have played Cardew.

"The fellow's never to be depended on for a minute," Herries of the Fourth remarked to Manners of the Shell. "The other day he was taking Sixth-Form wickets in no end of style, and we thought him a giddy prodigy. Now he can't touch junior wickets. He's always the same—never what you expect."

Manners nodded gloomily.

"He's jolly clever, by fits and starts," he agreed. "Brilliant sometimes, and at other times a dud. Not a fellow to play in school matches."

"I should jolly well think not!" snorted Grundy. "Rot, I call it! Rotten ill-luck that he turned up again at all!"

"Reddy's going it!" remarked Wildrake.

Redfern, fortunately, was very good. He had not been expected to approach Cardew in form, but Lovell's wicket went down to him. And when Newcome came in to finish

the over, he finished it—caught and bowled Redfern. There was a roar for Redfern from the St. Jim's crowd, especially from the New House fellows—Reddy being a New House man.

Tom Merry's face brightened.

"Good old Reddy!" he said. "That's the style. We want you to give them some more of that."

Raby came to the wickets, and Cardew glanced at Tom Merry. Tom hesitated a moment, but he nodded. Cardew went on to bowl again.

Tom was bitterly disappointed. He did not blame himself for playing Cardew, since he had shown such wonderful form in the past few weeks. He made allowances, too, for what Cardew had gone through that morning. But he began to doubt his wisdom in putting Cardew into the team after all, after his return in a state of breathless fatigue. It looked as if Dig might have done better. But it was too late to think of that now, and Tom dismissed the thought from his mind. The disappointment over Cardew was very keen, but Tom did not allow himself to grouse. He knew that his man was doing his best, and he could ask no more than that. If anyone was to blame, it was the unknown rascal—probably Racke—who had played the trick on Cardew that morning.

Cardew went on in a bitterly resolute mood to bowl his second over. But he knew that it would not be a success—not the kind of success he had intended, at all events. He was not at his best, and he knew that it would be some time before he felt at his best. He put all he could into the bowling; but every ball was stopped, and runs came from the bowling.

Kangaroo took the next over, with some luck. But when the field crossed again, and Cardew glanced at Tom Merry, the St. Jim's junior captain shook his head. Cardew's bowling, of which so much had been expected, was too indifferent; the change bowlers were better, and Tom wisely decided to stick to them.

Cardew remained in the field, watchful for chances. But he realised that he was fatigued, and that his hand and his eye were not so certain as they should have been. A ball from Jimmy Silver's bat dropped quite near him; Cardew missed it by inches.

There was a deep groan from the St. Jim's crowd.

"Butter-fingers!" roared Grundy.

Cardew flushed crimson.

He tossed the ball in, after a run had been taken. He met Tom Merry's eye, and approached his skipper for a moment.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "I hoped for somethin' better than this! I'm sorry, old bean!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Can't be helped," he said. "Perhaps you'll pull yourself together a bit later on. The day's young yet."

"Thanks!" said Cardew quietly. "I know you're not the man to grouse, Tom Merry. Thanks!"

"Grousing" from his skipper would probably have made Cardew careless and indifferent. But he knew that Tom Merry understood, and that he had no reproaches to expect. That was more than enough to make Cardew put all he knew into the game.

Once, and once only, there came a flash of the old quality during that innings—when Cardew, bringing off a difficult catch, robbed Jimmy Silver of his wicket. There was a ripple of cheering for the catch, which was indeed good value for the St. Jim's side—for the Rookwood skipper had been piling up runs at a great rate.

"That's better, old man," murmured Levison of the Fourth, in great relief. And Clive gave his chum a cheery grin.

But it was only a flash in the pan; after that, Cardew was little more than a passenger. Rookwood were seven down for fifty-six when play was stopped for lunch. With three wickets in hand, they were ahead of the home score, and their confidence was now great. After lunch, when play was resumed, Rookwood finished with a total of eighty, and all had cheery, satisfied faces. Tom Merry tried Cardew once more after lunch, but he tried him in vain, and gave the rest of the bowling to Redfern, Blake, and Wilkins.

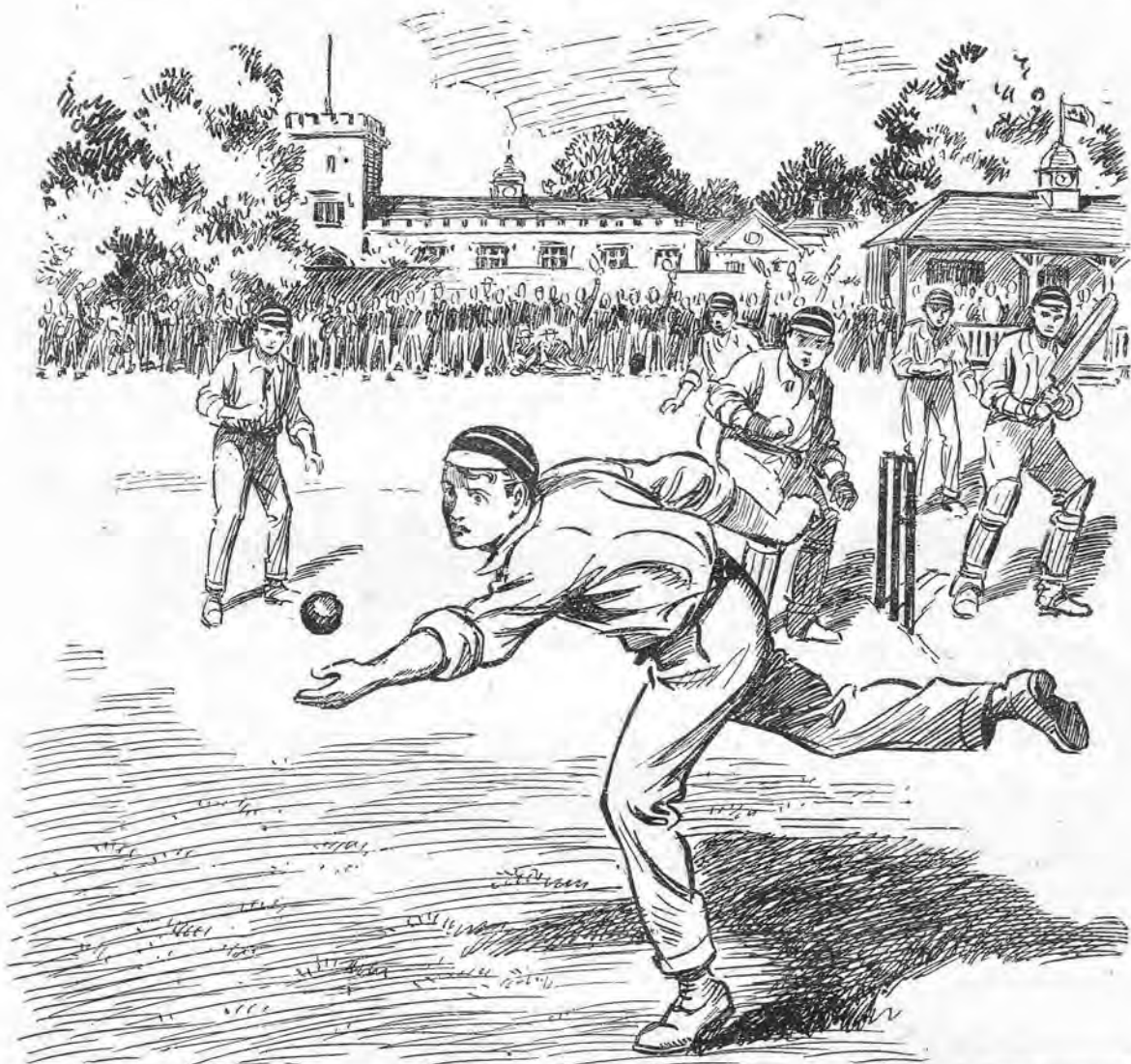
"Twenty-eight to the good!" Jimmy Silver remarked to his comrades. "Looks like a good thing for us—what?"

"It do—it does!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "I say, that man that they were waiting for doesn't seem much class, does he? They must be hard up for men when they play duds like that."

"If he's a good man, he's off colour," said Jimmy Silver.

"Right off, and no mistake!" grinned Lovell. "I shouldn't wonder if we don't have to bat a second time at this rate."

But Jimmy Silver shook his head. He was not given to counting his chickens too early. Among the St. Jim's crowd there were many comments on Ralph Reckness Cardew, and Grundy's was not the only voice raised in sarcasm and scorn.



Praises were falling thick and fast upon Ralph Rockness Cardew. His name was roared and shouted amid rippling cheers. Suddenly there came a hush as one of the Rookwood batsmen sent the ball whizzing through the slips. Cardew was at the required spot, his hands in readiness to receive the falling leather. "Oh, well caught!" came the cry, for the ball was resting safely in Cardew's palm. (See page 17.)

"What I want to know," snorted Grundy of the Shell, "is what all the fuss was about. There are about sixty or seventy fellows on this ground who'd have done better than Cardew's done, so far. When he was missing this morning, you'd have thought the giddy earth was stopping going round, from the fuss that was made! And now he's here again, what good is he?"

"Echo answers what?" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glumly. "It weally is fwightfully disappointin', you fellows. I weally don't see what's goin' to happen to St. Jim's, unless I make a centuwy in my next innin's. That will set us wight."

But the general opinion seemed to be that if that was required to set matters right, matters were likely to remain wrong.

CHAPTER 7.

Play up, St. Jim's!

TOM MERRY opened the St. Jim's second innings, with Kangaroo at the other end. Fortune, always fickle, smiled on the St. Jim's side now. Tom had had cruel luck in his first innings; but he made up for it in his second. Jimmy Silver and Mornington exhausted all they knew against his wicket, but in vain. Loud and louder cheers rang over the field as Tom added hit to hit; giving the Rookwood field more leather-hunting than they had dreamed of expecting.

Wickets fell, and batsmen came and went as the sunny

afternoon wore on, and still Tom Merry remained impregnable. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined him, fully determined to make the century that was so much needed. The swell of St. Jim's stopped to speak to Tom, who was at the pavilion end, as he went in.

"Wippin', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are keepin' your end up in gweat style, old chap."

"Thanks!" said Tom, with a laugh. "Praise from Gussy is praise indeed. Run along!"

"No huwwy, deah boy! Pewwaps, you will not mind my makin' a wemark—"

"Not if you buck up."

"You have been battin' wemarkably well, old chap, but I could not help thinkin' that some of the hits were wathah wisky."

"Nothing venture, nothing have!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! All the same, we can't afford to throw away wickets. Now, my ideah is that you should play a stone-wallin' game, deah boy."

"Eh?"

Arthur Augustus nodded sagely.

"That's the ideah, Tom Mewwy. You play a stone-wallin' game while I'm at the othah end, and leave the guns to me—what?"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Get on, Gussy—and try to live through the over!"

"I wegard that wemark as asinine, Tom Mewwy. Of

(Continued on page 18.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 856.



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THIS Special "Photographic Issue" of the "News" was suggested to me by Manners some time ago, but, unfortunately, I was not able to act at once upon the suggestion, as I found it almost impossible to obtain contributions.

Very few of the fellows apart from Manners know much about photography, and they are, naturally enough, rather backward in coming forward, so to speak, with contributions on a subject of which they have no knowledge. (I have heard, of course, that a really good journalist is capable of writing a brilliant article on any topic, whether he knows anything about it or not; but, unfortunately, we have nobody of that type on our Editorial staff. Grumpy, of course, has the necessary cheek, but unfortunately he lacks the grey matter, and, in any case, he's not on the Editorial staff—neither is he likely to be.)

I need hardly say that Manners is capable—and, I suspect, would be even eager—to write up the entire issue himself, but for many reasons that wouldn't suit either you or me. For one thing, he's such a giddy expert that his contribution, if extended to any length, would most probably resolve itself into a highly technical treatise, which would be of little interest or use to the average reader—except to read himself to sleep by. And there would most certainly be no humour, for Manners takes his hobby very seriously indeed, and is absolutely incapable of appreciating that there is anything at all funny about photography.

And, for the matter of that, I don't know that there is when you have to share a study with an enthusiast.

Of course, he does most of his work in the dark-room at the end of the upper corridor, but he prefers to use the study when we allow him to do so, especially in the winter, when the dark-room is a pretty cold place.

I might add that he secured the second prize in the competition to which Monty refers in his article, so that this issue is very timely, affording a sort of celebration of his success.

Unfortunately, from the point of view of Monty and I, the award has turned out to be certain photographic apparatuses, of which there is already too much in the study, and not a cheque which would have conferred a common benefit on the Co. We don't even get an extra spread out of it!

Tom Merry

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 856.

WANTED— A SUBJECT!

By Monty Lowther.

PHOTOGRAPHY, in the case of Manners, can hardly be described as a hobby. It is more of a disease.

I think he must have been bitten by a camera when he was very young, and it's caused him to develop photographobia.

I hope you've noticed the play on the word "develop." I think it "lens" "tone" to an article when a few puns are included I won't "enlarge" upon it, but I'm "positive" that anybody who "reflex" for a moment will agree that to "expose" your abilities in this way—(If I get any more of this sort of thing, I shan't "print" it.—T. M.)

Manners said to me the other day: "I want you to 'camera' minute and—" (Oh, help! And I refuse to believe that Manners said anything so truly awful.—T. M.)

You see, the "Weekly Whistle"—or else the "Daily Drivel," I forget which—was running a competition for amateur photographers.

Of course, Manners was going in for it. "The trouble is, I don't quite know what to take," he confessed, with a worried look.

"Well, they say that Kruschen's is jolly good stuff," I told him. "The old chap in the ad. looks pretty sprightly on it, anyway."

"I'm not talking about medicine, you fat-head!" he grunted. "I'm talking in a photographic sense."

"That's impossible," I replied, with conviction. "There's absolutely no sense at all about photography."

"A fat lot you know about it. Now, I want an arresting subject."

"That's easy!" I declared, trying to be helpful. "P.-e. Crump!"

"Ass!" he said, in a tone of deep gratitude. "I mean something that arrests the attention."

"Well, that's about the only thing old Crump is likely ever to arrest." I pointed out. "So I should have thought he'd just suit."

"A fat chance I should stand—"

"A very fat chance, if it was as fat as your subject," I agreed. "Crumpy's about four yards and a bit of string round the Hippodrome."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he implored. "I want an out-of-the-way subject."

"Then P.-e. Crump is the very goods," I replied triumphantly. "He's always out of the way when he's wanted."

"I might explain, idiot, that I want to submit a photograph of something really beautiful."

"H'm! That rules poor old Crump out definitely," I admitted. "However, there is no need for you to despair. I don't mind sitting for you."

And, would you believe it, Manners was positively rude!

CAMERA CRAFT!

By Harry Manners.

PHOTOGRAPHY'S always been my hobby, ever since I was quite a tiny kid.

One of my uncles, who's a well-known amateur photographer—he exhibits regularly at the Royal Photographic Society's Shows—gave me a camera, and promised me a bob for every decent picture I turned out with it, and I won enough in about six months to buy a better camera, and then I went in for photography really seriously.

There aren't many fellows at St. Jim's who know much about the hobby. Several of them have cameras, certainly, but they're not what I call photographers, but merely "button-pressers." They buy a roll of film, snap the trigger of the shutter release in a happy-go-lucky manner, and then leave the exposed film at the chemist's to be developed and printed.

Well, that's all right in its way, perhaps, but it's not my way by a long chalk. I'm out to get the best results, and I think I may say, without swank, that I often do get the best results, or something pretty close, anyway.

Readers of the "St. Jim's News" don't properly realise what they owe to my camera. Half the pictures in the "Gem" are worked up from photographs that I've taken. If it were not for the material I supply to the artist who illustrates the stories, you wouldn't know what Tom Merry looked like, and, for the matter of that, what Blake, Herries, Talbot, Cardew, and the rest of them are like. You wouldn't believe in Baggy Trimble's very existence, because he's got to be seen to be believed, and it's due to my snapshots of him that you get a chance of seeing him.

The school library contains a shelf full of thick albums packed with photographs I have taken.

Every term I take groups of the prefects, the senior and junior elevens, the boat crews, the fives' teams, the fellows who represent St. Jim's at the public schools' boxing and fencing tournaments, and so on, for the purpose of permanent school records.

Dr. Holmes has often complimented me upon my work when I've submitted the prints of these to him. So has Mr. Railton, and he's not a photographer himself; but, in spite of that, he's a first-class chap, and knows good work when he sees it. He's very keen on having as many albums full of snapshots of the School House fellows as it is possible to get. He says they'll be invaluable in years to come when we've left, and the fellows who come to St. Jim's in the future want to know what life at the school used to be like.



MOST readers of the "St. Jim's News" will probably be amazed to learn that Grundy once made an attempt at taking up photography for a hobby.

You see, Grundy's always receiving tips and presents from his relatives, and on one occasion, not so long ago, an uncle sent him a camera.

Now, a camera, however posh an affair it may be, doesn't make much of a show on a festive board.

It was pretty hard luck on us, and, for that matter, I didn't see that Grundy himself had any cause for voicing the glad "Ha, ha!"

A camera was as much good to him as it would have been to us, our knowledge of photography being such that it could well have been represented by a "0." Grundy's is even less than that in one sense, since while we might be capable of learning something about it, Grundy is definitely and absolutely incapable of learning anything—whether about photography or any other subject.

There was a very complete outfit included in the box of tricks which accompanied the camera. There seemed to be quite enough apparatus and material to set three or four chaps up in business as professional chivvy-recorders, and then have something over with which to amuse the children on a wet Sunday afternoon.

There was a book of instructions, which Grundy scornfully tossed aside when he was unpacking and investigating the contents of the box.

I picked it up, and tried to swot up the rules and regulations a bit, more out of curiosity than in the hope of finding out anything worth knowing.

"If I were you, I should ask Manners how to manage the thing," suggested Gunn. "That is, if you really want to use it. He knows all about the business."

"Manners!" snorted George Alfred. "I can see myself asking that idiot anything! There's nothing he can tell me that I don't know. Why, taking photographs is as easy as—as well, it's so easy that even you two asses could do it after a little instruction from me. All you have to do is to point the camera at what you want to snapshot, and then you press this thing—or else that one there. I'm not quite certain which. No, I think it's this one—or else this. Anyway, it's one or other of 'em."

"Why not press 'em all and make certain?" suggested Gunn sarcastically.

"H'm! That's quite a good idea," approved Grundy, who can never tell when his silly leg's being pulled. "Though, of course, I should have thought of it myself in another moment. Anyway, when you've taken the picture, you have to take the film out and put it into this box—or else this one. Then you light a red lamp."

"What ever for?" inquired Gunn, in amazement. "I thought you did all the process in daylight when you use one of these tank affairs."

"Don't be silly, Gunn!" said Grundy, in a pitying voice. "Don't display your ignorance. Everybody knows that photographers use a red lamp."

"Of course they do, when they're working in a dark-room," agreed Gunn. "They need one to see what they're doing."

"Well, I shall use mine to see what I'm doing," explained Grundy.

"But when you're working in daylight you can see what you're doing without a lamp, can't you?"

"I don't care whether I can or not," snapped Grundy. "I shall use a red lamp. That's enough for you. If you can't understand that photographers always use red lamps, I'm sorry for you."

"Not half so sorry as I am for you," murmured Gunn.

It was exceedingly fortunate for him that Grundy didn't quite catch the remark, because otherwise Gunn would have found good use for all the sorrow that was being wasted.

"Then you take one of these packets of chemicals and dissolve it in water," went on Grundy.

"Which one?" I inquired.

"Any you like," replied Grundy.

"But there seems to be several different kinds," objected Gunn, who had been examining them. "Do you mean to say it doesn't matter which you use?"

"It would if you were using them," explained Grundy condescendingly. "But to an expert like me, one chemical is just the same as another."

"Oh!"

"But this book says that—" I put in.

Grundy turned on me with a contemptuous snort.

"Don't bother me with what the book says!" he snapped. "If the book says different from what I'm telling you, then the book's wrong. Take that from me. And, in any case, it's only beginners who have to take notice of books and keep to the rules. Experts like me have our own way of doing things."

We let him get on with it. The result was just what we had expected.

The first three films he used were more trouble to Gunn and I than anything we've ever had to put up with in any of Grundy's previous stunts.

He posed us in Etons, in running togs, footer togs, swimming costumes, and flannels; in the study, in a boat, at the nets and in the quad, and in the gym. We had to stand exactly as he made us stand, sometimes for a quarter of an hour at a time, while he fiddled about with all the gadgets on the camera, trying to remember what to turn and what to press.

Then he spent the whole of an evening developing them. They came out as black as ink.

"I can't understand it," he growled. "There must be something wrong with the

camera. I know the films were all right, because I had a look at them."

"You what?" gasped Gunn. "Do you mean to say you opened those rolls of films before you put them into the camera?"

"Of course I did!" snapped Grundy. "You don't suppose I was fool enough to use 'em without making certain they were all right?"

"I certainly didn't suppose even you were fool enough to open films in daylight," returned Gunn disgustedly. "Why, you ass, they were spoilt before you used them."

Well, even that experience didn't deter Grundy. As I've often said, he hasn't the sense to realise what a hopeless idiot he is. He went plodding along in his asinine fashion, and, strange to say, he did have one or two streaks of something remotely resembling success.

Then, of course, he put his hoof into the mud in the completest manner.

It happened this way. We'd missed a big cake from the cupboard, and naturally we'd got more than an idea that Trimble was the culprit, especially as he seemed to be keeping out of the way.

That same evening Grundy developed a roll of film, and after he'd fixed and washed it he was examining it against the light when we heard him gasp.

"I say!" he called out to us. "It wasn't Trimble who bagged that cake! It was Talbot!"

"What?"

"It's true! Come over here and see!"

To our amazement, the film contained a picture of Talbot standing against the open door of our study cupboard. It was a pretty dud picture, certainly, but Talbot's chivvy was clear enough.

"B-but Talbot wouldn't bag our cake!" said Gunn incredulously.

"There's the photograph," pointed out Grundy. "You can't get away from that. Cameras can't lie."

Anyway, we went along to Talbot's study. He vowed he hadn't been in our den for years—more or less. He was more amused than angry, luckily for Grundy.

"Of course, it's so much rot," he said. "Besides, may I ask how it is that you didn't see me when you took the photograph, if I really was there?"

That was a facer. Obviously, if Grundy had taken a photograph of Talbot in our study, then Grundy must have seen him when the exposure was made.

It was left to Manners, who happened to come in at that moment, to clear up the mystery—which wasn't much of one, after all. Grundy had used the same section of film twice over, taking a photograph of the study and then a snapshot of Talbot without winding up the spool. The pictures had merged one into the other, giving a smudgy impression of one picture representing Talbot in our study.

Anybody want a second-hand camera that can't tell lies? It's going cheap!



THERE isn't another hobby in the world as fine as photography is.

You can't beat it. I've been keen on it for years, and the more I find out about it, the keener I get.

Because the more you know, the better results you have, and that bucks you up no end.

When you first start using a camera you're quite satisfied if you produce prints that give some sort-of any sort-of an impression of what you've taken, but as you gain more experience you begin to do better work, and yet it doesn't please you as much. You know enough by then to realise what it should be like, and so you do one of two things—you either throw it up in disgust, or you settle down to really serious work. Which course you adopt depends entirely upon what manner of chap you are.

But photography isn't a hobby to trifle with—though thousands of people do it. I know. To let other people do your developing and printing, for instance, is to forgo

the most pleasurable part of photography.

And I don't like daylight developing tanks much. It always seems to me that you get better results when you use a dark-room. It may be a little more trouble, but you've got the advantage of knowing what you're doing all the while you're at work. And for first-class work plates are preferable to films.

Of course, I'm speaking for myself. Photography is my one hobby, and I don't grudge time, trouble, or expense. For a fellow who's got other hobbies and interests, and can't spare too much time, roll films, with daylight loading and daylight development, are absolutely O.K. There's not much point in toiling to turn out a salon picture when you merely want a memento of a picnic or just to stick in an album.

Of course, I stick lots of my photographs into albums, for the matter of that. I certainly don't despise what I might term "souvenir photography," and I take plenty of pictures merely for the sake of providing myself with records of enjoyable times.

But what I mean to say is that I don't regard the "Happy Memories" type of work as the be-all and end-all of photography as a hobby. I'm convinced that a photograph can be as much a work of art as any oil painting or water-colour drawing, and it's that type of picture that I'm always aiming to produce.

And when one considers that I've won several awards at photographic exhibitions, I think I may modestly lay claim to some degree of success.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 856.

"THE HERO OF THE HOUR!"

(Continued from page 13.)

course, I know it is not for a man to give advice to his skippah, undah genewal circumstances; but you see, we want to pull this game out of the fiah. For that reason, Tom Mewwy, I weally think you ought to put in some steady stone-wallin', you know, and leave me to get the runs, and I must say—Yawooooop! Don't poke that bat into my wibs, you ass!"

Arthur Augustus trotted on to his end.

There was a trace of indignation in Gussy's noble brow as he took up his stand. Feeling in the mood for great things, and prepared to knock the Rookwood bowling all over one hemisphere, if not over two, Arthur Augustus felt that it would have been wise of Tom Merry to think chiefly of keeping the innings alive, while these great things were done by his brilliant partner. Tom Merry did not seem to see it, however. For reasons best known to himself—inexplicable to Gussy—he was not content to confine himself to stone-walling while Gussy got the runs.

Arthur Augustus determined to get the runs, all the same, and open Tom Merry's eyes to the real state of affairs. And he started with a boundary hit to Mornington's bowling. That is, it should have been a boundary hit—that was what it was intended to be. Had Arthur Augustus been a betting fellow, he would have been ready to bet ten to one on that boundary as soon as the ball left the willow. But he would have lost the bet, for the ball, hot from the bat, found a resting-place in the palm of Arthur Edward Lovell, of Rookwood. Up from Lovell's hand went the ball, straight as a die, to be caught again with a sounding smack.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite dazedly.

"Man in!"

"Bai Jove! This is weally vewy surpwisin'!"

"Get off the grass, Gussy!"

"Call that cricket?" roared Grundy of the Shell. "Ye gods, what a team! You fellows ought to be playing hopscotch!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put his handsome bat under his arm and trotted back to the pavilion. He passed Cardew coming in.

"Did you see that, Cardew?" he asked.

"I saw it, old bean."

"Extwardinary, wasn't it?"

"I could hardly believe my eyes," said Cardew gravely.

"Yaas, wathah! It was weally a surprise."

"No end of a surprise, old bean. Your bat actually hit the ball!"

"What? You utter ass—"

Cardew walked on his way, and Arthur Augustus joined the grinning crowd at the pavilion. For the next quarter of an hour Arthur Augustus was busily occupied in explaining to all who would listen how that hit ought to have been a boundary, and, indeed, properly speaking, was a boundary, only it hadn't come off.

Cardew was last man in, and the general opinion was that the innings was practically over. The St. Jim's score stood at sixty, more than half contributed by Tom Merry.

"All down for sixty!" Monty Lowther was already saying. "Good old Tommy! First man in and not out! If we only had another Tommy or two—"

"Yaas, it's all up with St. Jim's!" sighed Arthur Augustus. "There's just one chance."

"And what's that?"

"I will ask Tom Mewwy to put me on to bowl in the Wookwood second innin's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, there is nothin' to cackle at. I wegard that as the last chance of pullin' the game out of the fiah."

But once more Arthur Augustus seemed to be alone in his opinion. Meanwhile Cardew, who never could be counted on to perform the expected, was surprising the natives once more. The innings, instead of being practically over, began to take on a new lease of life. For several overs Cardew contented himself with slow and steady stone-walling, leaving the game in Tom Merry's hands. And good hands they were! Now and then he stole a single run to give Tom the bowling, and Tom was still impervious to the best that

Rookwood could do. The powerful swipes that Arthur Augustus regarded as "wisky" still went on, and the runs came fast, and the risk did not seem to materialise.

The score was fairly jumping—seventy, eighty! The St. Jim's crowd roared their appreciation. The Rookwood field began to look as if they suffered a little from that tired feeling, and still Tom Merry was scoring, manfully backed up by Cardew at the other end. And when the finish came it was not Cardew who fell. Tom Merry was stumped in a gallant attempt at four.

"Cardew not out!" grinned Levison.

"Bravo!" roared Clive.

"Ninety for us!" said Blake gleefully. "You never know what to expect in this jolly old game. Bravo!"

Tom Merry clapped Cardew on the shoulder as they came off.

"Good man!" he said.

"My dear chap, I've made a score of six," drawled Cardew. "But you've given me a lot!" smiled Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "You have weally done wathah well, Cardew. You don't seem to be able to bowl, old fellow, but you can keep up a wicket, affah a fashion. Tom Mewwy, old scout, I weally think we shall beat Wookwood yet, if you give me the bowlin' next."

Tom Merry laughed.

Meanwhile, Arthur Edward Lovell of Rookwood was considering the score, with a thoughtful brow.

"We want sixty-two to tie, sixty-three to win," he said.

"We made eighty in our first innings, so it's all right. This is our game!"

"Looks that way," agreed Jimmy Silver cheerily.

And after an early tea Rookwood prepared for their second innings in a cheery mood, which was destined to change before the innings was over. There was a surprise in store for Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 8.

Cardew's Triumph!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW strolled over to Tom Merry as the St. Jim's side went into the field. Cardew was looking and feeling quite his old self again now.

"Like to give the most unreliable member of your team another chance with the bowlin'?" he asked.

Tom Merry glanced at him dubiously.

"You feel like it?" he asked.

"Well, a man can't answer for results, of course," said Cardew lazily, "but I've got a sort of feelin' that I could send down a few. Richard's himself again, you know, as the johunny says in the play. But suit yourself, of course. I'm not pushin' my claims."

Tom Merry smiled.

"You know how much we depended on you, and you know how much we want your bowling," he answered. "Anyhow, one over won't do much harm one way or the other, and I'll be glad to give you a trial."

"Pway excuse my buttin' in, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity, "but don't you think I had better take the first ovah? It would encourage the fellows, you know."

"But we don't want to encourage the Rookwood fellows, Gussy," said Tom innocently.

"I was not wefewwin' to the Wookwood fellows, you ass!"

"But your bowling wouldn't encourage our fellows, old man. More likely to make them weep!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Give Cardew the ball," said Tom, settling the point.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his noble head seriously as he went into the field. He greatly feared that the last chance was gone of pulling the game out of the fire.

Cardew was put on to bowl against Jimmy Silver of Rookwood. But all eyes were not upon him eagerly now. He had disappointed the St. Jim's crowd now, and they had given up expecting anything of him. Indeed, many fellows asked, with Grundy of the Shell, what all the fuss had been about on Cardew's account.

But once more the unexpected happened, as was generally the case where Ralph Reckness Cardew was concerned. It did not happen all at once, however. But in that over Jimmy Silver bagged only two runs, and he found that he had to be very careful. In the next over Raby scored six from Redfern's bowling. Then the ball was tossed to Cardew again, and he found himself opposed to the Rookwood skipper once more. Tom Merry's keen eye had been on Cardew, and he had noted, with rising hope, that the dandy of the Fourth had seemed to be getting back his old form, and Tom, at least, was looking for a change in the programme.

And Tom proved to be in the right.

Jimmy Silver stopped one ball, and then he stopped

another. The third ripped his middle stump out of the ground, and there was a delighted roar from the St. Jim's crowd.

"How's that?"

It was "Out," and Jimmy Silver walked back to the pavilion, and as he passed next man, he murmured to him to look out for a ball that looked like a wide, but most decidedly wasn't. And Mornington went on with his eyes open, prepared for that tricky ball. But it was quite another ball that came down. And Morny of Rookwood, much to his astonishment, found his willow sweep the empty air, and heard the clack of a falling wicket, and stared.

"Out!"

Arthur Edward Lovell was next man in. Arthur Edward came on in a determined mood, quite determined that after the inglorious fall of two wickets he was going to show St. Jim's that Rookwood batsmen knew how to keep their sticks up. That confident and determined mood lasted till the ball came down—a slow ball that broke in at an unexpected angle and deprived Lovell of his middle stump, leaving his wicket with a toothless sort of look.

"How's that?" shrieked all St. Jim's.

"Bravo!"

"Well bowled, Cardew! Oh, well bowled!"

"Bai Jove! The jollay old hat twick, you know!" yelled Arthur Augustus, waving his Panama hat frantically in his excitement. "Bwavo, old bean! Huwvah!"

Newcome was next man in, and he came in somewhat uneasily. His uneasiness was not without grounds, for the last ball of the over lifted his bails, and Arthur Newcome went bootless home.

There was a roar on Little Side. Cardew's name was roared and shouted, amid rippling cheers.

"Four wickets, deah boys!" chorled Arthur Augustus. "Do you know, old beans, I'm wathah glad Tom Mewwy gave him the bowlin' instead of me. Weally, you know, I don't think I could have done bettah than that, honest injun."

"Well bowled, Cardew!"

The whole crowd roared. From Big Side, where a First Eleven game was proceeding, several seniors strolled across to look on, a rather unusual compliment to a junior side.

"Hot stuff, that youngster!" Darrell of the Sixth remarked to Langton, with a nod towards Cardew.

"Mustard!" agreed Langton.

And Cardew, who heard their remarks, smiled. After the great men of the Sixth had passed their verdict, there was really nothing more to be said.

The St. Jim's crowd rocked with enthusiasm. Even George Alfred Grundy was cheering with the rest, forgetful of his own overlooked claims, and of the strong opinions he had expressed about Cardew. Even George Alfred understood, now, what the fuss was about, and realised what an asset Cardew was to the team.

Four Rookwood batsmen—three of them the best in the team—had gone down in swift succession to Cardew's bowling; and a change had come over the scene in consequence. Four down for a handful of runs was a score that made Jimmy Silver and Co. feel like blushing. The following batsman was glad that Cardew couldn't take the next over. But the dandy of the Fourth was not at the end of his tether. A few minutes later there was a yell:

"Well caught, Cardew!"

"Oh, well caught!"

The ball was in Cardew's palm, and another man was out. Levison of the Fourth rushed across and clapped his chum on the shoulder, when the ball was tossed in.

"Cardew, old man, it's ripping!" he gasped.

Cardew grinned cheerily.

"Do you really think I'm of some use hangin' about here, Ernest, old bean?" he asked.

"Fathead! You're winning the match."

"What a jolly old distinction! Won't Aubrey be pleased when he comes from his joy-ride?"

"Racke!" Levison had forgotten Racke. "Oh, bother him! Never mind about that! We're beating Rookwood! You're sure of a place in school matches for the whole season, if you choose."

Cardew made a wry face.

"Oh, gad! What am I lettin' myself in for? I'll call in sunny to-morrow and ask Fatty Wynn how long he's goin' to be gettin' over the flu."

Levison laughed, and went back to his place. Another batsman came in, and the innings went on. But the confident anticipations of the Rookwooders were over now. The sun was reddening the west; the shadows of the elms lengthened in the old quad, a glorious summer's day was drawing to its close. Some of the fellows had wondered whether the light would hold out for the finish. There was little doubt about that, now.

Rookwood fought hard, and hat tricks did not come along with every over. But the score went up slowly, and the wickets fell. There was an almost continual roar on Little Side, from the delighted St. Jim's crowd, now envisaging

certain victory after the vicissitudes of the hard-fought game. That roar reached the ears of three Shell fellows who descended from a car at the gates of the school. Racke and Co. had returned from their joy-ride, tired, and morose from the effect of too many cigarettes.

"What's that thumpin' row?" grunted Racke. "Sounds like winnin', but I'll bet my hat they're not winnin'."

"Let's give them a look-in," grinned Crooke. "Cardew will be back by this time—a looker-on. He couldn't have got back much before five, if your man carried out your instructions; they couldn't have played him. We're back in time to see him ragged."

Racke nodded, and grinned savagely. So far, not a suspicion had crossed his mind that anything had gone wrong with his scheme. So far as he knew, Cardew had spent that summer's day a prisoner in the wood, till released by Mr. Lodgey. Doubtless Cardew had returned to the school by this time—to be disbelieved, to be ragged, to be barred by all who knew him! It was quite a pleasant thought to Aubrey Racke. He walked down to Little Side with Crooke, with a smiling face.

A tremendous roar from the crowd there deafened him as he arrived.

"Well bowled!"

"Cardew! Cardew!"

"St. Jim's wins!"

"Bravo!" George Alfred Grundy was roaring. "All down for twenty-four. Ha, ha! Cardew! Bravo! Good man!"

Crooke stared, and Racke turned quite pale.

"Cardew—are they sayin' Cardew?" he panted.

He shoved savagely through the crowd. The cricketers were coming off. Cardew had bowled the last over, and the last Rookwood wicket was down—in the second innings. Rookwood had taken twenty-four. St. Jim's had won the match by thirty-eight runs, and they had won it, as every fellow knew, on Cardew's bowling. Racke of the Shell stared about him. A crowd of St. Jim's fellows had rushed on the field, and Ralph Reckness Cardew was coming off in style—borne shoulder-high by a shouting, cheering mob of enthusiastic fellows.

Racke stared at him blankly.

"Cardew!" he stuttered.

Cardew's keen eye caught Racke's sullen, savage face. He grinned cheerily.

"Hallo, there's the jolly old Racke. Let's speak a word to Aubrey," he exclaimed.

Racke panted, as the crowd swarmed about him. From the shoulders of the hilarious juniors, Cardew smiled down at him.

"Behold a giddy triumph, Aubrey, old bird!" he said. "Awf'ly sorry to disappoint you, but the world's full of disappointments! Did you pay that Johnny much for tyn' me up in the wood?—Sheer waste, old man—shockin' extravagance!"

"I—I—" stuttered Racke.

"Congratulate me, old top, I believe I'm the jolly old hero of the hour. Ain't I, Levison?"

"You are," said Levison, laughing.

"I've taken a wicket or two—"

"Six!" said Tom Merry.

"Hence this elevated position, which is makin' my head swim—chiefly with conceit," said Cardew. "I'm really sorry, Aubrey, old man, but don't look so sick about it! It's an imperfect universe, and everybody can't be satisfied."

Racke shut his teeth hard and tramped away. Cardew suspected, or rather knew, what he had done; the other fellows suspected, he could see that! Proof there might be none; but there was suspicion—and, after all, he had failed! Aubrey Racke tramped away with black bitterness in his breast, while roar on roar of cheering rang out round the fellow he had striven to ruin—round the fellow whose luck, after all, had held good, and who was the hero of the hour.

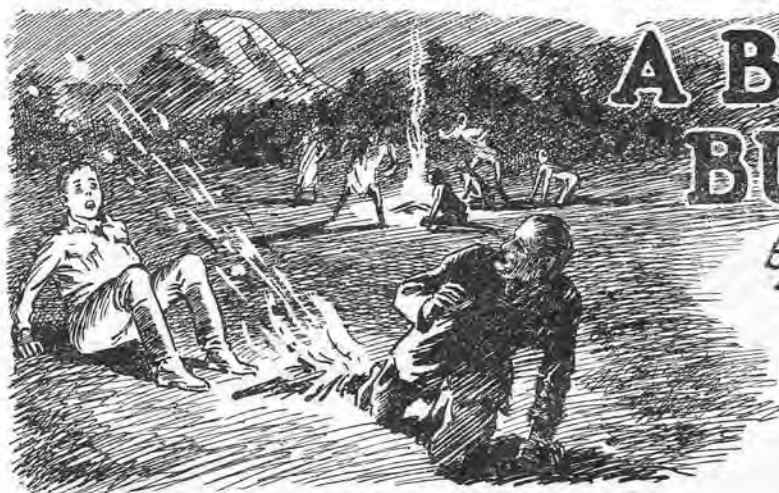
Cardew had triumphed, though the next day, judging by his nonchalant manner, one would have supposed that he had forgotten his triumph. That day was one of fear and trembling to Aubrey Racke, but he had nothing to fear. It would have been difficult to prove his guilt; and had it been easy, Cardew would not have taken the trouble; contempt and disregard were all that Racke had to expect from him. Tom Merry and Co. were more keen on the matter, but they realised that proof was hard to come by, and nothing could be done without Cardew, and Cardew refused to do anything. But in the suspicion and scorn of his schoolfellows, Racke had, perhaps, an ample punishment, and a harder blow still was to see Ralph Reckness Cardew—for the time, at least—the hero of St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Another topping and extra-long yarn of the popular favourites—Tom Merry & Co. next week, chums: "GRUNDY'S FEUD!" By Martin Clifford. Don't miss it.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 856.

Fred Curry and his staunch chum "Tubby" Miles find a false friend in Bergman, and the way in which they turn the tables on the unscrupulous foreigner makes real good reading!



A BLACK BUSINESS!

by Cecil Fanshaw.

A Thrilling Yarn of African Adventure.



CHAPTER 1. A Mystery!

OUT of a brass-bound sky the torrid East African sun beat down relentlessly, grilling the red soil where it showed in the gaps in the dense bush.

Through this scorching wilderness of scrub two ragged figures, both white lads, were pushing their way. But although they were ragged, they were cheerful. Rags tell no tales in the East African bush.

"I'll be jolly glad to reach Kamba's kraal, Tubby!" laughed the elder, a tall, lean youngster of about twenty, as he pulled up suddenly and grounded the butt of his rifle. "We should make it to-morrow, and there's usually plenty of trading to be done with the Masai. Trading with Kyuks is no catch!"

"Tubby" Miles, the younger by a year or two, pushed back his helmet, mopped his streaming, round face, and gasped an affirmative.

Tubby was short and broad in the beam. The heat troubled him even more than it did his tall fellow-trader, Fred Curry.

"Well, let's get moving," said Fred, after a moment's breather. "Here come our 'boys.' And I reckon to reach the Tsavo in another half-hour. We'll make camp by it."

"Right-ho!" grunted Tubby; and both youngsters shouldered their rifles. As they did so a dozen sweating native porters thrust into view.

These were Fred's and Tubby's "boys." On their heads they carried loads of blankets, brass wire, and beads, which, despite the thorn scrub, they manoeuvred marvellously.

Fred and Tubby were old school chums, and had originally come out to East Africa to farm. For a time they had worked on an estate belonging to a relative of Tubby's. But, owing to bad seasons, Tubby's kinsman went broke. After that Tubby and Fred pooled their savings, and took to trading amongst the natives.

They had usually done well, especially amongst the Masai, whom they visited regularly. Their blankets and brass wire frequently fetched good prices, and they lived a jolly, though hard, independent life.

But as Fred remarked, trading at Kikuyu kraals—he called them Kyuks—which they passed on the way, was a poor business. The Kikuyus expected such a lot for their money.

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The two youngsters trudged on in silence, Tubby perspiring freely and occasionally shifting his rifle from shoulder to shoulder. Even their porters, oppressed by the heat, had ceased to chatter.

But at last, a short distance in front, they sighted steam rising over the bushes, and they could hear the hum of water rolling slowly, but steadily. In a very few moments now they would reach the Tsavo River, a broad, dark flood with an unhealthy reputation for crocodiles.

"Thank Mike," began Tubby. "Camp at last—"

But he broke off suddenly, for, from some hidden spot, quite close, there came the voice of that of someone in distress.

"I didn't reckon to meet a white man here!" exclaimed Fred, halting abruptly. Wild, discordant yells rent the hot air.

"B'gosh! That fellow's in trouble, whoever he is!" cried Fred. And, with Tubby at his heels, he hurried himself through the screen of bush in the direction of the sound.

Almost as one, they burst through, emerging on the bank of the wide river. In mid-stream was a spit of white sand, forming a little island about ten yards broad.

On the island, up to his knees in the soft sand, was a powerful-looking, blonde-bearded white man. He struggled violently, only to sink up to his waist.

"Look out!" roared Fred, dancing about on the bank. "Don't struggle, man! You'll sink deeper! Quicksand, eh?"

"Himmel!" bellowed the unlucky giant. "Zat is, I mean yes! I am stuck—fixed! Donner und lightning! I stifle—vat you call suffocate!"

The situation was certainly desperate. Already the man, obviously a German, who was trying to hold his rifle above his head, had sunk nearly to his armpits.

"Throw down your rifle!" shouted Fred, at the same time fumbling at his belt. "I'll come and get you out!"

The German threw down his rifle, which the sand immediately swallowed. Fred got a grip of Tubby's right hand, and waded towards the sinking man.

Fortunately, being the dry season, the river was not deep. But the two young partners ran plenty of risk of meeting a crocodile.

Within a few feet of the distraught German, Fred flung the fellow the end of his belt.

"Catch!" he bawled.

With a mighty effort the German caught the belt, and the two English lads strained on it for all they were worth. There followed several seconds of wrestling with straining muscles. Then the German got his legs free, and all three rolled in the water. Rising, they hastily waded to the bank.

"Lucky crocs didn't smell us!" observed Tubby, as, bedraggled and sodden, he scrambled out. "But how did you get in there, Fritz? It was a darned nasty place!"

"It was 'orrid,'" agreed the big German. "I was homboggled by der sand. Yes, homboggled and bogged—near buried, hein?"

As he scrambled on to dry land, all the German's native assurance returned to him. He drew himself up stiffly.

"I dank you for zat. Perhaps you save my life," he barked. "But my name is not Fritz. It is Bergman—yes, Herr Bergman, of Berlin!"

"Indeed?" murmured Tubby, adding to himself: "One name's as good as another out here, and you look as if you had several, my friend!"

"Where's your camp, Herr Bergman?" asked Fred, chipping in. "You'd better hustle on and get a change, if you don't want a dose of fever. And here are our boys, so we'll have quinine all round after that dip."

"Der quinine!" observed Bergman. "Ah, dot is goot. Dere is always fever in dese rivers. But," he added, with a sudden frown, "your porters carry big loads of blankets und oder dings. You trade with der Masai, hein?"

"You've got it," said Fred shortly, as he took twenty grains of quinine, threw a couple of tablets to Tubby, and offered the bottle to the rescued German. "Is that what you're at down here?"

The self-styled Bergman took his medicine, handed back the bottle, then shook a large, gnarled finger in Fred's face.

"Ah, you vant to know!" he rasped. "Veil, I don't tell you. I keeps my beezness to mineself. I don't tell all der people! I keep him all for me, hein? Got it?"

"Always the little gentleman!" murmured Fred, sensing a threat and staring the blonde giant eye to eye. "We don't care a hoot what your business is. But I reckon you'd best hustle back to your camp and get a change of kit."

"Yes, dot is goot advice," nodded Herr Bergman, becoming strangely affable all at once, "for I haf now lost my rifle, und my camp is two or t'ree

miles away." The big German waved vaguely towards the west, adding: "I was trailing a buck across der river, when I fell in der sand. So now I lose my rifle, and my 'boys' lose their meat. Vair unlucky. However, goot day!"

Herr Bergman, without another word of thanks, spun round on his heel and strode off. But before he had gone a dozen yards he halted and looked back. "I hope you haf plenty goot trade!" he sneered. Then, laughing maliciously, he threw back his lionine head.

A second later and the bush had swallowed him up.

"Once a Hun, always a Hun!" observed Tubby, as he stared after the fellow. "There's gratitude for you, Fred!"

"Gratitude! Tubby," exclaimed Fred, "why I guess that fellow's got a heart about the size of a humming-bird's when it comes to gratitude! Still, no matter. Let's make camp."

In the business of making camp, the two lads quickly forgot the unpleasant German they had pulled out of the quicksand.

The porters piled their loads in a heap, rigged up an awning for their youthful masters, then separated to get firewood and water. Very shortly the thin blue smoke of a wood fire curled heaven-wards, and the porters gathered round to cook their meat.

Lulled by the hum of the river, and thankful to be out of the blazing heat, Tubby and Fred were soon fast asleep.

Tubby woke up with a start, disturbed by the splash of some reptile. Out of the corner of one eye he saw a strange thing.

The porters, tired out like their masters after the long march, were apparently all asleep. But, even as Tubby looked at them, one rose to his knees and looked carefully about him.

He was a fellow called Mbwa, a villainous loafer, always straggling behind the others. Tubby promptly feigned sleep, but watched through half-closed eyes.

Mbwa shot a quick glance towards Fred and Tubby, then scrambled up and slipped off into the bush. Tubby, extremely interested, snatched up his rifle, and followed.

It was not hard for the sweating Tubby to follow Mbwa's plain footprints in the red sand, but he found it a difficult job not to give himself away. However, the porter, not expecting to be followed, never looked back.

Suddenly the bush became thinner, and, stooping, Tubby peered between the trunks of the thorn-trees. What he saw caused him to draw in his breath with a gasp of amazement, for in the centre of an open space stood Mbwa, holding animated converse with Herr Bergman!

Without a second's hesitation Tubby dashed forward.

As the English lad burst through the scrub, the big German whirled round. But the latter still had no rifle, and a glance showed him that Tubby was armed.

"Fool!" he roared at Mbwa, then dealt the astounded porter a blow on the head.

The next instant he was pounding away through the bush, smashing branches as he ran.

Absolutely bewildered, Tubby, who was much too tired to give chase, promptly covered the porter with his rifle.

"Don't run!" he bellowed, in the native dialect. "Stand still! Now what the deuce are you doing out here?"

"I was late reaching camp, bwana (master)," stammered the terrified

Mbwa, frightened by the sudden appearance of his boss into telling the truth. "That big white man met me. He told me to meet him out here when everyone was asleep. He promised much money if I could get all the boys to desert. I came to say he must offer more!"

Tubby whistled. Trying to bribe porters to desert their masters in an African wilderness is about as bad a crime as a white man can commit—meaning death by starvation.

"You're a nice sort of brute, Mbwa!" said Tubby. "For enough cash you'd try and get all your pals to desert with all our food stores—to say nothin' of the blankets an' beads! Lucky for us you were greedy! Now walk back to camp in front of me!"

Tubby drove the traitor back to camp. Then he woke Fred up and related what had happened.

"It beats me!" exclaimed Fred, when his chum had finished. "Why should that Hun want our porters? And what's he got against us, that he'd like us to leave our bones to grill in the desert? It's a puzzle, Tubby. Next time I see a Fritz in quicksand I'll leave him!"

Fred summoned their head-porter, ordering him to keep a close watch on Mbwa. And the latter "ate" a lot of stick from his pals when they learned he had been trying to sell the whole outfit.

But the two white lads were much mystified by the German and his mysterious "beeze" that he kept so quiet.

"I've got it!" cried Fred at last. "He's an escaped criminal, an' wanted to get hold of our boys an' scoff (food), to make a getaway over the border! But you've scared him, Tubby. I bet he's off in the blue now. He ain't worth followin', we sha'n't see him again!"

But they did; that very night! And Herr Bergman signalled his return in a most unpleasant manner.

CHAPTER 2. Forestalled!

WE'LL get moving before dawn, Tubby, an' march in the cool. Then I guess we'll reach Kamba's kraal by midday."

As he spoke, Fred plumped himself down beside a crackling log fire. Tubby hastily joined his pal, and the two lads attacked their supper with healthy appetites.

Dusk had fallen with tropical swiftness. And in Africa nights can be cold, so Fred and Tubby drew close to the leaping flames.

The firelight was supplemented by a hurricane-lantern, which was set on the ground a few yards away to attract ground insects, for a golden moon, riding high in the velvet-black sky, gave plenty of light to see by. Its cold rays showed the giant mass of Mount Kilimanjaro to westward, looking like a great black pyramid as it towered above the flat floor of the desert.

Close at hand rose the deep-toned chatter of the porters, gathered round their own fire. From a distance, through the dark bush, came the ravening howl of hyenas and the bass roar of hunting lions.

The Tsavo bush was waking up, so Tubby and Fred fell silent, listening to the myriad night sounds.

Suddenly snapping out like a whip-crack, a rifle squibbed in the darkness, and something buzzed over Fred's shoulder, zipped into the heart of the fire, and scattered red-hot embers in all directions.

"Jump, Tubby!" yelled Fred, catching up his rifle, at the same time rolling over and over away from the fire.

Even as Fred shouted another bullet pinged through the air, to strike a stone beside Tubby, and then ricochet off, and go screeching away into the darkness.

So sudden had been the wanton attack that, before Tubby had moved a foot, another missile came singing its message



Within a few feet of the distraught foreigner Fred Curry flung the fellow the end of his belt. "Catch!" he bawled. With a mighty effort the German caught the belt, then the two Englishmen strained on it for all they were worth.

of death, and he felt a searing pain in his left leg.

With a howl of wrath he hurled himself into the dark shadows. The panic-stricken porters were trying to find cover behind the heaped-up piles of blankets and other truck.

Tubby, lamed, groped frantically for his rifle.

Fred had got his, and was already replying to the attack. He aimed in the direction from which the shots had come. Three times, in quick succession, his weapon spat red darts of flame. Then, gritting his teeth, he sprang to his feet and dashed forward.

The hidden assailant had ceased firing. But as Fred, tearing headlong through the scrub like a mad bull, burst into an open space, he glimpsed the ruffian.

The white moonbeams clearly revealed a bearded giant, crouching forward with his rifle at the ready.

The fellow had heard Fred's pounding approach. As the lad burst into view, the villain levelled his rifle.

Fred had the wit to cast himself flat; and he heard a bullet whine over him, to thud into a thorn-tree behind. A second later, and Fred's own rifle ripped out quick, staccato reports.

Fred aimed low, anxious only to wound. But the lad was out of breath, and his bullets merely spattered up the dust on each side of his assailant's legs.

The fellow didn't seem to like his own medicine, however, for, with an angry roar, he hurled himself into the bushes on one side.

"Quick, Tubby!" yelled Fred, unaware of the fact that his chum had been hit. "It's that brute Bergman! Get on his right! We'll round him up!"

Naturally Tubby was not there. But neither did the German know that he had scored a hit. So, baffled, and not wishing to take on two armed combatants in the dark bush, he took to his heels.

Fred heard him run, and was quickly in hot pursuit, shouting to Tubby as he ran. Bergman heard the shouts, and, convinced that both lads were on his track, redoubled his efforts.

But the bush was dense, and Fred quickly discovered he had lost his man. He halted, yelling for Tubby, but there was no answer.

Again Fred yelled, at the top of his voice, but only a yapping jackal gave reply.

"B'gosh!" exclaimed Fred, with a sudden prinking up his spine. "Tubby ain't come! Did the blackguard get him? Or, worse, was Bergman drawing me off while he has pals raiding our camp? If Tubby's lying wounded, they'll kill him, sure thing!"

Horrified at the picture his thoughts conjured up, Fred swung round, pelting back towards camp. He knew his direction. For to westward were the stark twin peaks of Kilimanjaro, and high above the southern horizon swung the glittering Southern Cross.

With straining muscles, Fred thudded forward. A short distance from camp he halted abruptly, throwing up his rifle from force of habit. A black shape lay in his path in a huddled heap.

At first Fred took it for an animal. But, as the thing didn't stir, he darted forward. Then, with a groan, he flung

himself down on his knees beside the object. He had recognised Tubby!

"Tubby, Tubby!" yelled Fred, starting in dismay at his chum's white face. "You surely ain't dead?"

To Fred's relief Tubby opened his eyes.

"No, Fred," he gasped, "I ain't dead. But, you see, I stopped one with my leg. Then I heard you shout, so I started crawling out to head the blighter off. After hearing shots and folk running, I reckon I fainted. Rotten idiot I am!"

"Idiot be hanged!" retorted Fred. "You're as game as they make 'em. Fancy crawling out like that with a hole in your leg! Well, Bergman's gone again, so I'll carry you to camp."

Despite Tubby's protests, Fred picked his chum up and carried him back to camp, where his wound was quickly bandaged. Though painful, it was not serious, except that it meant they couldn't move for a few days.

Early the next morning, after having seen that Tubby was comfortable with his rifle ready to hand, Fred set out to track Bergman. He didn't like to leave his chum for long, in case of another attack, for he knew the porters wouldn't put up a fight.

Within a couple of hours he was back, but his face was rather long.

"I reckon I've made some mistake, Tubby," he said as he cast himself down beside that worthy. "That blackguard Bergman can't be a fellow running from the police after all. For he had a camp; I found the tracks and ashes of fires. He must have hiked back yesterday, got his rifle, then tried to blot us out at night. He's got about a dozen boys, I guess, but no other white man—"

"Then why did he want to pinch our porters?" Tubby broke in. "And why the assassin business at night?"

"Can't think!" replied Fred, knitting his brows. "He's obviously up to some game he's anxious to keep mighty dark. I reckon he didn't need our porters, but was merely anxious to out us. Now, I wonder what the deuce that Hun is at?"

But neither of the lads could find a solution to the problem.

Hampered by Tubby's wound, they kept by their camp for a few days. At night they took turns to watch, and also placed porters as sentries in case of another attack. But none came.

In a few days Tubby's wound, only being a flesh one, they were able to move.

"Tain't no use hunting for Bergman now," observed Fred. "And it seems we've seen the last of him, anyway. We'll get on to Kamba's kraal, and get busy trading."

But again Fred was wrong. For, while the two lads had been held up, Herr Bergman had been very busy. He certainly did not want the two English lads hanging around, and he had hit on an excellent scheme to drive them from the region. One, moreover, that involved no possible danger to himself.

But Tubby and Fred were quite ignorant of the German's schemes. So they were feeling quite bucked with things when, about midday, about a fortnight after they had met, and rescued Herr Bergman from a horrible end, they approached Kamba's kraal.

Kamba's kraal, like all Masai villages, was a collection of beehive-shaped huts, surrounded by a stout thorn fence. At the hut entrances lounged fine bronze savages, basking in the grilling sun.

Native women, with great loads on their heads, seemed to be doing all the work. While pariah dogs slunk from hut to hut in vain search for something to eat.

Carefully getting up wind of the kraal—for the atmosphere was pretty strong—Fred and Tubby pitched their camp in the straggling bush. Then they sent word to the chief that they were ready to trade.

The dusky savages lost no time in swarming out. Very quickly the young traders' camp was filled with a jostling crowd.

The Masai men pounced on the blankets and wire, holding the stuff up for each other's inspection, and chattering volubly meanwhile. In the background the heads of the curious women peered over the kraal fence.

As usual, this rough handling of goods went on for some time. Then Fred tried to get down to business. But, to the lad's amazement, the crowd proved hostile.

The air grew thick with muffled whispers and stifled jeers. Fred and Tubby had never before received such treatment from the Masai, and felt very irritable. But, for the sake of trade, they sat quiet for a while.

"Change of fashion, even in the bush, Fred," grinned Tubby. "I expect that's the trouble. Sit tight; I guess we'll do a roarin' trade in beads."

But the beads went off no better than the blankets or brass wire. And then came the end of the astonishing business. Kamba, the chief—a big, grizzled old savage—suddenly gave a curt order.

Immediately all the Masai streamed out of the camp, flocking back to their kraal, and laughing uproariously as they went. Kamba lingered a moment.

"What's this mean, Kamba?" Fred demanded hotly, in the Masai tongue. "Many times have we come to your kraal, and always done trade. This reception is *mbaya sana*! For our goods are the usual sort. We shall never visit you again."

The Masai chief stuck his head on one side, looking at Fred slyly.

"No, don't come again!" he jeered. "No trade here; no good for you."

And Kamba wheeled round, shuffling off after his followers.

"To blazes with him!" cried Tubby. "We won't come again. There are heaps of other kraals. Let's hike."

"It's a jar, all the same," observed Fred. "Kamba's kraal is one of our best trading grounds. I can't think what's cut him up. No matter, we'll trek on."

The following dawn they trekked on, camping later by another Masai kraal. To their horror the same thing happened. There was absolutely nothing doing.

"We'll move again, Tubby!" Fred snapped out as their second crowd of customers vanished without buying anything. "But it's mighty serious. Considerin' the cost of gettin' our stuff down here, we'll soon be broke at this rate."

"I guess," Tubby gritted, "we won't quit the Masai territory till we've found out what all this is about. No one else can be tradin' round here—these are our stamping grounds. Besides, if we've got a rival, the chiefs would tell us—an' no great harm would be done."

However, there was nothing for it but to trek again. But the next day they got to the bottom of the perplexing business.

They were camped outside another kraal, where, again, there was nothing to be done. So Fred, fuming, got hold of the chief—a fellow he knew well.

"What do you Masai want?" he demanded. "What's wrong with our stuff?"

*mbaya sana—very bad.

The chief, a muscular savage, who had always found Fred and Tubby pleasant to trade with, glanced anxiously about. "Rifles—we want rifles!" he whispered. "You bring plenty rifles, and we do trade in other things!"

"Rifles!" cried Fred, recoiling. "Certainly not! It's against the law! You know no white man will sell you rifles."

"One does," answered the Masai chief. "He is selling rifles to all the kraals. He has promised to bring more. But only if we keep all our trade for him."

"What's he like?" Tubby rapped out. "He is big," was the reply, "and wears a yellow beard."

"That blackguard Bergman!" chorused Tubby and Fred. "He has sold many rifles," continued the chief. "If you no sell rifles, you do no trade. Now, will you bring rifles?"

"No!" thundered the two English lads. "Get out!"

The Masai chief strode off, chuckling. "A rifle-trader!" gasped Fred at last. "So that's why he didn't want us about! What a brute! He's a danger to the country, walking around and selling rifles to savages."

Tubby heartily agreed. But how to put an end to Herr Bergman's nefarious career was a problem. There were no police within many miles.

Far into the night the two lads pondered. At last Fred jumped up with a shout of glee.

"I've got it!" he cried, and, bending forward, he swiftly outlined his plan to Tubby.

When Fred had finished the two lads rocked with laughter.

"Where's our 'head-boy'?" yelled Fred, wiping his eyes weakly. "We'll send him into this Masai kraal to discover where our Hun friend is. Then we get moving."

The head-boy was quickly summoned, given his orders, and despatched into the kraal. Fred and Tubby, now chuckling mightily, sat down to await his return.

CHAPTER 3.

A Gigantic Bluff.

"THE big, white trader is two days' march ahead, *bwana. He is the other side of Kilimanjaro. But I know a short way through the bush, and we could cut him off."

The head porter, who had just returned from the Masai kraal, saluted as he spoke.

"Good, Simba!" laughed Fred. "And what about the other things I told you to seek?"

"This Masai chief," grinned Simba, with a flash of white teeth, "will sell those things—for silver rupees. He will trade nothing."

"That's all right, Simba," replied Fred. "Take some porters—"

"I have already done so," broke in Simba, who was a very cute savage and thoroughly entered into his master's plans. "And here are the things."

As Simba spoke three of the other boys staggered into the circle of firelight. Each had a load of hide shields and Masai spears! And, with rattlings and thuds, they threw them down at Fred's feet.

Fred and Tubby went into roars of laughter, breaking off to congratulate Simba. For the cunning head-porter had managed to buy for a few rupees what a white man might not have been able to buy at all.

"Right-ho, Simba!" said Fred. "We move at dawn!"

Then the grinning porters withdrew, and Fred and Tubby settled down to get some sleep. They had a very hard and probably dangerous two days in front of them.

With the following dawn the young traders packed up and moved. They needed to move rapidly. So when they had



Bergman had just emerged from the bush when, through the deepening dusk, he caught the glint of steel on the ridge above him. "Himmel!" he gasped. "Vot vas dat?" The next instant the Masai war-cry pealed forth, and Fred and Tubby, savage figures in their war-paint, charged down upon him.

trekked for about two hours they hid all their trade truck in a small rocky cave, blocking the entrance with boulders.

Then, skirting the base of East Africa's biggest mountain, they marched hard all that day through the sweltering thorn scrub.

Towards noon, the second day, they crested a ridge. Simba pointed to a plain bush trail that wound a zigzag course below them.

"The big white trader will come along that path, bwana," said the head-porter. "How soon I cannot tell. But probably before dusk."

"Then we ain't got much time to lose," observed Tubby.

Fred and Tubby worked with lightning speed. They tore off their khaki English clothes, wrenched open an iron box they had brought along, and dragged out kilt-like girdles of brown cloth and hide, also bought from the Masai.

In the box was also a pot of some dark, evil-smelling juice. With this the two lads dyed their limbs and bodies a rich brown. Then they donned themselves with headresses of feathers.

When Fred and Tubby had finished they were very fair counterparts of Masai "el Moran," from waving plumage to naked stained feet. Even though Tubby's figure didn't quite fit the bill!

"Pickle my bones!" guffawed Fred. "I bet Herr Bergman's porters 'll run till you can't see their heels for dust! You see the brainy idea, Tubby?" he added. "If Bergman's got any fighting natives with him, they might put up a scrap, if you and I attacked alone. But they won't stick by their rotten boss if they think the Masai have turned on him."

"No fear!" cried Tubby. "Then," continued Fred, "we'll collar all his rifles and turn 'em over to the police. That'll about finish Herr Bergman of Berlin!"

"I do feel nice an' light," grinned Tubby. "Wish I could always go about like this. Come on, Simba. Come and

arm those brave warriors of yours. Here's a shield and a spear for each."

The knock-kneed, spindle-shanked porters shuffled forward. Not one of them belonged to a fighting race, and had no intentions of running any risks.

But they had sporting instincts, and, with roars of raucous laughter, proceeded to arm themselves.

"I do hope Bergman doesn't show up till dusk," said Fred, as he surveyed the motley crew. "Then we may pull it off. Otherwise—"

He broke off, shaking his feather-decked head doubtfully.

"Oh, we'll keep well in front!" exclaimed Tubby. "All the porters have got to do is to bunch behind and yell. Hear that, Simba? Bwana Fred and I will dash down. You and the 'boys' keep well behind, but shout as loud as you can."

Crouching in the thorn-bush, Fred's party looked a bloodthirsty crew, viewed from a distance. For each porter wore a tuft of feathers on his woolly head, and clutched a long-bladed Masai spear. Further, each man had a brightly painted shield of zebra or buffalo hide.

But a close observer would have noticed that they were really a very harmless lot indeed. Fred and Tubby were staking on bringing off a gigantic bluff.

The scorching afternoon wore on, and the flaming sun dipped down towards the horizon, but still Herr Bergman did not show up.

Yet Simba's information was not wrong. For while Fred and Tubby lay in ambush, the German, with about thirty porters, was pushing through the bush towards them. As well as ordinary trade goods, Bergman's porters carried long cases containing old-fashioned Martini rifles.

"Dis is goot!" he said to his head-man, as, stroking his great orange beard, he strode at the head of his outfit. "I haf to-day sold twenty rifles, and must quickly get more. Und all der Masai

(Continued on page 28.)

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*bwana—master.

*el Moran—warriors.

"Dare-Devil" Dan Derrick and his chum Brian Carr, aboard the rough-and-ready Result, meet with heaps of exciting adventures in their quest for galleon gold which lies in the depths of Davy Jones' Locker.



THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!



By ROLAND SPENCER.

(Author of our Recent Success: *Tom of the Ajax*.)

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

DON ALONZO GUADIANA DE LA MANCHA, a Spaniard and announcer of the expedition aboard the salagee boat Result.

SARKY MARLINE, a trustworthy, bow-legged old seaman in command of the Result.

DAN DERRICK, a cheery youth, and son of Captain Derrick—known as "Dare-Devil" Derrick—a rugged sea captain of some sixty-five years.

BRIAN CARR, a chum of Dan's, and son of "Amphibious" Carr, inventor of a patent diving-dress which Brian in his research work had perfected.

Their unscrupulous rival, known as the "Rat," a round-shouldered, beady-eyed Mexican half-breed.

The story opens with Dan Derrick seated at the bedside of his sick father. A spell of delirium has just passed, and Dan promises the old sea captain to call upon Don Alonzo Guadiana, a Spaniard whom Captain Derrick had long since befriended, and ask for a job. He is setting out on his mission when he meets Brian Carr, who has perfected a patent diving-dress which has been the lifelong study of his father. The two visit the Don, who has come to England in quest of gold which lies hidden in a hermetically sealed box in the lazaret hold of the galleon, *Maria de Castellon*. A brief interview follows, and the lads, fully aware of the perilous times ahead and the rascality of the Rat, a Mexican half-breed, whose intention is to forestall

them in their quest, show their willingness to accompany the Spaniard on his great adventure. With a note of introduction, the lads are sent to Sarky Marline, the jovial old seaman who is to command the Result. It is then that the chums first meet trouble, for they are viewing the Result, which is to take them on their great voyage of discovery, when the rascally watchman imprisons them in the store-room. The party immediately senses a scheme of the Rat's, and, peering through a ventilator above the iron door, they discover, to their horror, a lighted fuse, the smoke of which, hissing and spluttering, was travelling along straight past the chums' prison towards the explosive store. (Now read on.)

Prompt Action!

FOR the space of one second the desperate people in that iron-bound little cabin stood as if petrified. The three pairs of eyes stared, horrified, out of the ventilator opening above the door. The fuse smoked and spluttered fiendishly, and seemed to race towards them.

Dan Derrick at last uttered a wild cry, and dodged back from the doorway. With eyes rolling like those of a hunted deer, he glanced frantically round the cabin, hopelessly looking for a way out of their deadly peril.

Sarky Marline and Brian Carr, as men in a trance, watched Dan. They swayed where they stood, for the smell of the smoking fuse was now playing about their nostrils. The smoke was just about to pass rapidly before the cabin doorway.

Dan Derrick continued to glance here and there in the cabin. Suddenly, with a low, swift exclamation, he pounced forward. His hand gripped the haft of an axe, and then the lad leapt at Brian, whose body was against the doorway.

With a shout of warning, Dan grabbed at Brian's chest and yanked his chum from the doorway. In the flash of that terrible moment, the thoughts of Marline and Brian was that Dan had gone mad.

But Dan hadn't!

He was head and one arm through the opening above the doorway now—all that the opening would admit. Then Brian and Sarky saw the youngster stiffen suddenly. There was a clang on the iron deck of the alleyway, and at that instant Dan's body relaxed, and the plucky youngster staggered back into the cabin, laughing a trifle hysterically.

"We're saved—we're saved, chums!" he gasped. "Look!"

Dan pointed to the alleyway, and Brian and Sarky got their heads jammed in the ventilator in their eagerness to look out. What they saw made their hearts pound with renewed hope, and Brian shouted in his excitement and admiration for Dan.

The fuse below was severed, and the smoke of the free end was just giving its last splutter. Then it died out. On the steel deck beside it lay the axe. It was that which had made

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he clang just when Dan's body had stiffened as he stretched out of the opening.

Sarky and Brian jerked their heads back from the doorway. They found Dan, now collected and cool, rubbing his shoulder.

"Gosh, I gave my shoulder a nasty crack in my hurry!" he said. "That's the worst of being excitable and nervous over a little thing! Now, a cool, calm, and collected person would—"

Brian gripped Dan's hand, and pumped the boy's arm up and down.

"Dan, you unvarnished hero! You diamond without a setting! You—"

"Pearl of great price! Gem of purest ray serene! Go on, Brian, I like it!"

Brian swung round on Sarky Marline, who was standing hard by, still dazed and wondering.

"Sarky, you old oyster, why don't you speak? Don't you see what Dan did?"

"I don't rightly seem to get a firm grip o' the lines yet," began Sarky.

But Brian soon explained.

"Don't you see?" he cried. "Dan spotted that keen-edged axe, and his wits worked while ours were numbed. He dropped the axe, edge downwards, and severed the fuse by—"

"Great good luck!" cut in Dan, still rubbing his shoulder.

"By great good luck or wonderful skill, it had the desired result. Pull yourself together, Sarky! We're safe! Dan's wits have saved us. Thank Heaven for Dan Derrick!"

A slow smile o'erspread the round, bronzed features of Sarky Marline.

"Ho, so that was it!" he said. "Dan, boy, you're the spit o' yer peppery ol' father. A reg'lar chip o' the old block! Well, don't 'e go for to think as we're out o' this yet, me shiverin' hearties! That there deck-swab, Tom Harner, 'll maybe be back in a minute or two to find out why the Result ha'n't gorn sky-cruisin'—"

"He'll be a fool if he does!" cut in Brian. "If I'd done that noble deed instead of Watchman Tom, I'd be haring off up clear of the Beekton Gas Works by this time. I wouldn't linger to pick flowers on the mound of the sewer outfall on the way, I can tell you!"

"Ay!" said Sarky, nodding his head with satisfaction. "I didn't think o' that! Shiver me," he roared, in a burst of passion, "why is it I be so slow o' thinkin' unless it's a matter o' seamanship? Ay, ay; like enough. Tom Harner, wither 'is eyes, will be puttin' a tidy gap atween 'im an' the Result even now!"

With the tension of the moment relieved, the faces of the three adventurers became serious as reaction set in. Then they set about making as much noise as possible, and, with hammers and short iron bars, the noise they made against the sides of that old tin kettle which had once been an ocean tug was considerable, to put it mildly.

After half an hour's frantic banging and clanging and yelling for aid, a footfall was heard on the deck above. The adventurers fell into a grim silence. Who was this? Tom Harner came back to do properly what he had at first failed to achieve? It seemed all too likely, and the hearts of the three cooped up in that little store beat quickly, and their throats became tight.

A muttered curse was heard. Then came the scraping of boots on the iron rungs of the ladder leading down to the store-deck. Thump, thump! went the feet as the form advanced towards the store.

"What for be the flandin' lights left on, an' where are ye, Tom Harner, ye shifty swab!" the three heard, as the man advanced.

At the sound of the voice Sarky Marline rattled at the iron doorway, the suddenness of his action making the newcomer jump a couple of feet backwards.

"Bust me!" ejaculated the man.

"Bill, me angel, come along with a tin-opener and let us hout!" roared Sarky. Then he turned his big, round, beaming face to the chums. "It's Bill Jenks, as I'm a man, the watchman who was to relieve Tom Harner! 'E'll let us out o' this sardine tin in a brace o' shakes!"

At last Bill Jenks was persuaded that it was Sarky Marline, and not Sarky Marline's ghost, that had accosted him. So the door was unlocked, and in a few minutes Sarky Marline was stamping up and down the narrow alleyway, rubbing his hands and rambling his double chin in a series of delighted chuckles. Brian and Dan explained the situation to the new watchman, who gaped at the cut fuse with eyes which seemed to start out of his head.

When the story was told, Sarky Marline swung round to face the chums, his chest swelling out as if he owned the world.

"Well, boys," he said heartily, "a miss is as good as a sea-mile, if she ain't so good a mister, so I reckon we's ripe for a caulk down now. I'll get up at dawn and rout out the salvage crew. The stokers an' the chief engineer will be along at about low water and will 'ave a full 'ead o' steam at the top o' the tide. Then we'll slip moorings. Bill, 'ere, can be trusted, as I well know, an' I wish I'd never trusted that there Tom Harner! Bill can keep a good watch on deck with 'alf a dozen rifles 'andy, as well as my hauto-matic, if he likes. Bill's our cable man, an' 'e's coming on the yachting cruise with us. Bill, o' shipmate, this 'ere lad who saved us all this night is o' Cap'n Derrick's son. We's all in on this adventure! Ay, Dan Derrick, 'e be, son o' Cap'n Daredevil Derrick!"

Bill Jenks tugged at his forelock, and glanced with keen interest at Dan.

"Now I understand that there haxe business!" he said.

The Spectre of the Woolpack!

At high water the next day, the salvage ship Result, her decks all cluttered with coal and gear, armoured hoses and coils of steel cable, chain tackles, anchors, and grapple-irons, and the hundred and one other things to be seen lying about in disreputable disorder on a salvage ship's deck, nosed out of Bow Creek.

Her tall smoke-stack belched forth black smoke, and, with a bone in her teeth, the powerful, one-time ocean tug breasted downstream, Sarky Marline at the wheel. Don Alonzo Guadiana de la Mancha, the financier of the expedition, Dan Derrick, and Brian Carr, stood together talking on the rusty iron deck just aft of the wheel-house.

"Well, Carr, my boy, we have fixed up our business to our mutual satisfaction," said the Spaniard. "You'll never regret allowing me to charter you and your diving gear, my lad, if we get through this adventure safely. Gallean Gold is a

rare prize to strike for, but we have a perilous time ahead of us."

"Fate threw us all together, sir, just at the eleventh hour," replied Brian. "I believe I'd join in on this, even if there was no money attached to it. But it will be all we'll want in every way—"

"More'n we want in some ways," put in Sarky Marline, twisting his head round from the wheelhouse as if his neck were made of rubber. "You mark my words! I'll take my haffidavit as you'll see red lightning and hear thunder as ye've never experienced it in furin waters, Don."

Then Don and Dan laughed together, and Brian's eyes shone.

"This sort of thing would be meat for my father, senor," Brian said.

"It would," agreed Guadiana, with feeling. "Nothing was too noisy or too risky for Amphibious Carr. But we have people who are not gentlemen as our rivals."

"They's none too perlit, as we discovered in the paint store last night," cut in Sarky dryly, with his distant thunder rumble, which was Sarky Marline's laugh.

And so the passage went on, the Result plunging arrogantly on her course, getting out of the way of nothing and in the way of everything, shaving lighters and buoys and anchored craft till the watchers on the decks gasped.

She pushed her way down the reaches, smaller boats hastening to clear the course and larger craft blaring indignantly at her with their shaking sirens. Long Reach, Greenhithe, Grays, Gravesend, the Lower Hope, were soon astern, and the river widened to clearer waters.

Dan was living every second of the time. Here he was off on the wings of high adventure in a complicated mass of machinery known as a salvage boat. He was smelling the sea, and the fresh breeze was playing about his face as evening closed in, and the beam of the Chapman Light showed astern, with the glare of fairy lights from the town of Southend on the port side.

Sarky Marline was a coaster born. He had commanded a coasting ketch in British waters in his younger days before he had become a deep-water man. And he took command of the Result in a way which dispelled all doubts as to whether he knew his coastwise way about or not.

He took the "overland route" in the gathering darkness, across the Kentish Flats and inside Margate Sand. The heel of the Result touched on the sand once. Everyone felt it, and looked at Sarky swiftly. But Sarky's double chin quivered as he laughed.

"On the edge o' the Puddin' Pan," he said. "I reckoned on that. 'Sori right! Deeper water ahead."

Reassured, the salvage company settled down again. Sarky handed over the wheel to Bill Jenks as the boat entered the Horse Channel. Then he, with the Don, together with Brian and Dan, went up into the bows. Bill Jenks knew the overland route as well as did Sarky.

The four adventurers talked, their words drowned to all but their own ears by the thundering wash under the Result's forefoot. They discussed Brian's wonderful diving-suits,



With a swift yell of mingled rage and alarm Sarky Marline shouted to Jenks to put the helm hard over to starboard, for the indistinct outline of a big ship had leapt out of the darkness just ahead of them.

which were below, and Sarky was being pressed to give an idea as to when they would arrive at Thirlbeach Cove, Cardigan Bay, Wales, where rested the sunken galleon which held the key to the treasure lying off the coasts of England, Ireland, or Scotland. The adventurers could not know exactly where their venture would take them till the hermetically sealed box in the Jazaret hold of the galleon Maria de Castellon had been secured.

The night was as black as pitch, and the Woolpack, a dangerous bank with uneven depths of water over it, could be heard moaning and surging to port. A few lights could be seen at Reculvers on the high land to starboard.

It seemed to Dan rather awesome, forging along at high speed amongst dangerous sandbanks with only a few feet of water under the heel. But Sarky seemed to be unmoved. He measured distance to check Bill Jenks at the wheel every time a buoy was sighted, but his glance always resulted in a grunt of satisfaction. Bill Jenks knew his way blindfolded, Sarky said he could smell his way through a twisting channel even if he hadn't been there before.

"Well, so far, it seems we are to have an uninterrupted start off on our adventure," remarked Dan.

"Y'never know," replied Sarky, with a shake of his head. "Never count yer chickens at sea till the well's dry. Whoy—"

At that instant, Sarky seemed to go mad. With a swift yell of mingled rage and alarm, he leapt up, yelling to Jenks to put the helm hard over to starboard.

In the flash of that moment the three left on the foredeck felt their hearts miss a beat as amazement gave way to wild alarm. There, right in their course, a ghostly form towered above them. It was the indistinct outline of a ship, showing not the faintest glimmer of a light. There was something evil and sinister about the dim shape that seemed to leap sideways out of the blackness just ahead. A squat funnel surmounted a tall, raised mid-structure, and the boat rolled heavily as she lay, apparently deserted, a veritable spectre of the sea, full length across the channel along which the Result had to pass. The Woolpack seemed to roar and rage the more hard by to port.

On the Road!

THE frantic bawling of Sarky Marline, and the other shouts on the deck of the Result, galvanised all to life. The sleepers tumbled up in hot haste from below, being salvage men and ever ready to jump to action instantly on the first alarm. Men floundered about the decks here and there, blundering over the loose coal, and scrambling hastily over coiled-down steel cables, tripping over anchor flukes, and generally making confusion the worse.

Dan was the first to get near the wheelhouse. There he saw Sarky Marline, his face lit by the glimmering light of the binnacle, terrible in his fury. The man had ground the wheel hard over every spoke, and the Result had listed heavily to starboard as she swept round to port.

Suddenly figures were seen running about on the phantom ship ahead, hard by now. The Result grazed the craft with her side, and then the engine-room telegraph of the ghostly sinister vessel clanged out. The powerful screw of the craft began to churn the water in obedience to the ship's throbbing heart.

"She's going astern! They're making things worse!" yelled Dan, who had now been joined by Guadiana and Brian.

"So she will!" grated out Sarky Marline. "She'll sink us if she can. Well, we'll see who knows the Woolpack best—me or them, wither their eyes this night!"

The vessels' sides were grinding heavily now, but the impetus of the Result's bulk drew her clear, and Sarky Marline, with one eye, it seemed, on the raging shoal water before the bows of the tug, and the other on the big overhanging counter of the strange craft, strove to get the Result clear.

Sarky was twisting and spinning the wheel with decision and promptitude. The Result thumped on the hard sand once then lifted clear again. Sarky bawled a message down through the speaking-tube to the engine-room, and the powerful ocean tug shot ahead. Once clear of the danger, she swung round in

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a semi-circle, and stormed off in a smother of foam on her course, while lights began to glimmer on the decks of the craft which had so nearly proved a fatal obstruction to the Result.

Above the weather screen on the high bridge, where a lantern had been quickly lit, the swarthy face of the Rat was seen, the features twisted with malevolence and hate. He shook a bony fist in the direction of the Result as the superbly handled little ship drew clear.

Sarky handed the wheel over to Bill Jenks again. Then he joined Guadiana, Dan and Brian.

"She draws less water than us," he said. "Split me, the sea 'ounds nigh got us that time, before we got clear from Bow Creek—"

"So you know the boat, as well as that picture on the bridge?" asked Brian.

"Know 'er, the ugly, lumberin' 'ay wagon! Know 'er? I should think I do! She's a thoroughbred salvage ship—the best in the London River, by name the Golden Gain. As the Don knows, the Rat chartered 'er yesterday, but I didn't reckon as she'd make sech a smart start. Got the march of us, she did, but we've got the march o' them now. Split me, that was near enough!"

Sarky took off his greasy pilot cap and wiped his knotted brow with a big coloured handkerchief.

"And they's 'ard on our 'eels, the sea 'ounds. We be faster an' andier than they, but I doubt as we'll get to Thirlbeach enough ahead o' them to finish our divin' w'out interference, Don."

"It is too true, Sarky," replied Guadiana, his long, white fingers gently caressing his cheek. "The Rat discovered from the parchment he stole that Thirlbeach was our first objective. But he hasn't got the bearing of the sunken galleon. Is Jenks all right with the wheel now?"

"Oh, ay, we're back on the Route, three and a half fathom at least depth ahead, and Margate Road not so far distant."

"Then come below to the cabin. We must talk." Guadiana led the chums and Sarky down to his own cabin, the only private apartment on the Result. With the door closed, he faced his companions, his fingers still nervously playing about his cheek and chin.

"The Golden Gain is too close on our heels," he said. "We must alter our plans."

"Well, we han't got a airplane, Don," remarked Sarky; but Brian interrupted.

"This is the first Dan and I know of the Golden Gain," he said. "I take it she is under the command of those who are trying to find out the secret of the old Spanish galleons. They will now follow us to Thirlbeach, see where we dive, and then start diving, too."

"Hit it first shot," put in Sarky. "They tried to cripple us just now, either by damagin' of us or drivin' of us aground, so as to delay us an' get there first. Then they'd wait for us, 'stead o' us gettin' the job done w'out them seein'."

"Well, with my diving gear they'll stand a pretty poor chance, even if they can interrupt us in our first salvage operations. We must get there more quickly than by boat."

Brian looked from one to another, and Dan took up the burden of the conference.

"Why not have Brian's diving-suits landed in secret at, say, Dover, senor?" said Dan. "You and I and Brian can then take them overland to Thirlbeach by motor-car. We could charter a car at Dover, for sure. Brian has told me that the diving-dresses are independent of any boat above. I have already had a number of lessons from Brian in the theory of diving, so couldn't Brian and I dress in the suits and walk out from the beach at Thirlbeach, find the galleon, get the box, and so have all ready to steam right away in the Result for the second galleon before that lumbering great Golden Gain can clear the Bristol Channel?"

Sarky Marline thumped the table with his great fist.

"There y'are, Don!" he roared. "All cut an' dried! Who wants a purtier little idea than that? Might ha' come from Cap'n Daredevil Derrick himself! It's the right thing to do!"

Guadiana was now smiling. "That's our next move, Dan," he said, nodding at the boy. "That we must do by all means. Yes, we must work on that idea. It is excellent!"

There was little difficulty in carrying out the idea. The Result steamed on

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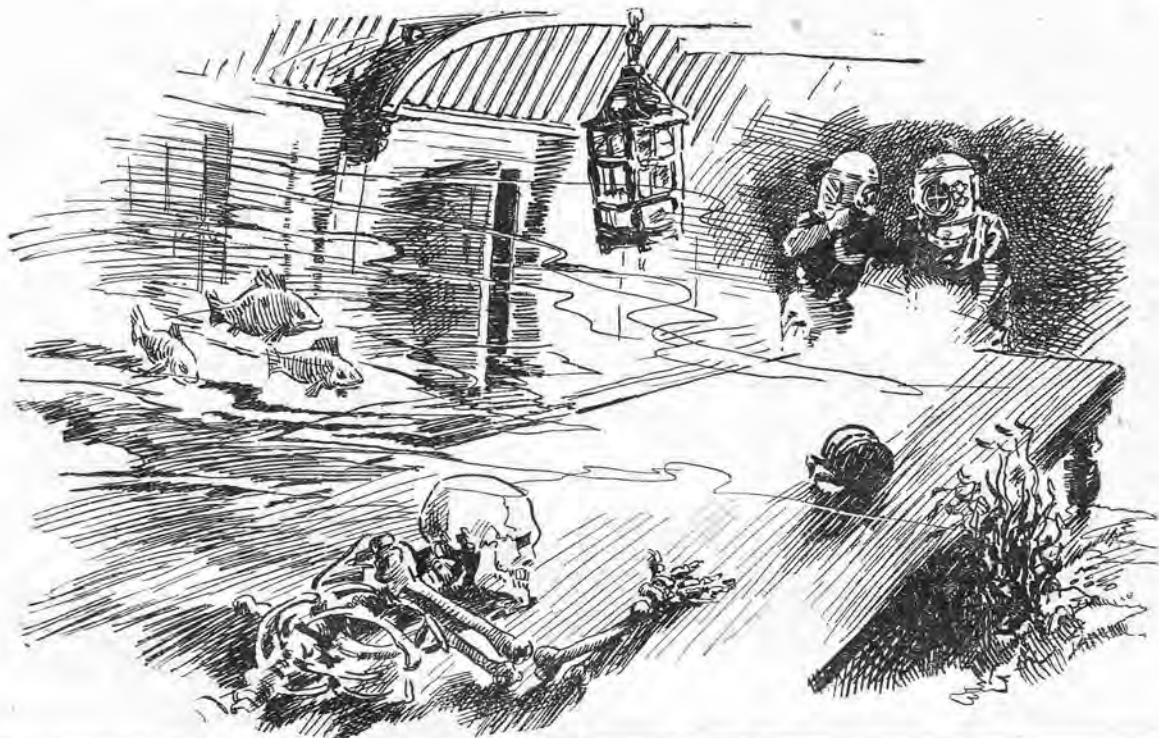
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"Gee, what a sight!" cried Brian, as the light from his torch revealed a skeleton lying sprawled over the table.

rapidly till the North Foreland was rounded, and then, well before dawn, the tug lay to within sound of the monotonous wash of the waves on the sands. The boxes containing the diving-suits were lowered into a boat, in which Guadiana, Brian, and Dan were rowed ashore, and the three were soon speeding off westwards towards the Welsh coast in a powerful closed car.

"We'd best get in as much shut-eye as possible, Dan," remarked Brian, as the car was overtaken by the grey dawn while humming along swiftly through Surrey.

Don Alonzo nodded.

"I'll keep awake while you boys sleep," he said. "We must take no further risks, though I see no reason why Morveno—the rat—should discover we are travelling overland. You will both be quite unfit for diving if you do not get a good sleep now."

Dan replied by resting the back of his head against the upholstery behind him and closing his eyes. Brian did likewise, and soon the youngsters were sound asleep. They were very tired.

Guadiana looked at the chums thoughtfully as they slept. He, too, leaned back in the car, the tips of his long, slender white fingers together; but he did not take his fine eyes off the faces of Brian and Dan.

"Guerra al cuchillo," he said, "and they are splendid boys. I am indeed thrice fortunate in the turn events have taken. There is purpose and unflinching courage in both faces. Those chins speak of wills bordering on obstinacy. And they have inherited from their fathers the intelligence shown by those broad brows. I am a fortunate man indeed."

Don Alonzo Guadiana de la Mancha mused in this way for hours as the powerful car hummed onwards, the chauffeur perfectly efficient and cool. Middlesex was left behind, and the splendid car began to mop up the miles along the Great North Road. Before noon the Great North Road was left on the right, and Birmingham was within easy distance.

The only stops were for petrol, during which the driver, realising the urgency of his task, took his food.

The car was switchbacking along amongst the Cambrian Mountains when Brian woke up.

Brian glanced quickly at the car clock.

"Whew!" he ejaculated. "Dan and I have had a jolly good sleep! Hi, Dan, wake up, you lazy beggar!"

Dan scrambled to his feet in alarm, barking his shins on the boxes containing the diving-suits.

"What—what—" he began.

"It's all right, you ass," said Brian, "no alarm; but we'll be in in an hour, so you and I have to tuck away as much food as we can. We'll be walking out on the bed of the cove in a couple of hours' time, and we must have our food partially digested before we start our first diving operations. I'm a bit out of training, and you've never been down before, so we take no risks. Got the grub-basket, senor? We'll have the cocoa in the thermos, and bread-and-butter, with extract of beef spread over it. Wire in, Dan, as much as you can get down, for you'll have no more till to-morrow morning."

"I'm afraid your diving operations will have to take place in the dark, my boy," remarked Guadiana. "That, of course, will be best for my purposes, but it will increase your difficulties."

"No, it won't," replied Brian. "I've studied the chart about where you say the galleon is. It's lying in ten fathoms, and the last soundings by the Admiralty there showed rock. So it would be pretty dark down at that depth even at noon. My only anxiety is that the galleon is on sand and has become silted up."

"If she has, we'll have to wait for the Result and her suction pumps. That means we will have the Golden Gain about our ears long before we have the box."

"Well, let's hope she's not silted up, that's all."

The chums munched away at their food and drank their cocoa, watching the ever changing panorama of the glorious scenery of wildest Wales as the car sped on through Merioneth. At last they slowed down, and the driver began to search about for sign-posts on the road. He blew the whistle of the speaking-tube, and Guadiana answered the call.

"Do you gentlemen know the country?" he asked. "The byroad to Thirlbeach is about here."

"I have thoroughly explored the district before," replied the Castilian. "The best road into Thirlbeach is the next one on. But drive carefully, for there is a terrible hill with a dangerous twist in it."

"Right, sir!"

An hour before dark the great car slowed down in the quaint little village of Thirlbeach. The glorious sea pulsed on the gleaming white sand to the westward, and the village loungers came over to watch the business of unloading the car hard by the sand at the side of the beach road.

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At Sker Elbow!

"WHERE are we, senor?" asked the youngster, rubbing his eyes and looking out of the window. "Amongst the mountains of Wales, Brian," replied the Don. "See, Plynllymon on the left? Another hour will see us at Thirlbeach."

When the boxes were out, and the driver had been tipped well, and told to put up for the night, and hold himself ready should he be needed again, a stranger joined the group of gapers on the loose, sandy beach. The man was tall and handsome. He had a swooping, light-coloured moustache and wore a panama hat. The yokels touched their forelocks, and one said:

"It is indeed a fine evening, Mr. Rayne."

Mr. Rayne nodded, then turned to Don.

"Going to camp here, sir?" he asked politely, eyeing the boxes.

Dan and Brian grinned as they heaved one of the boxes round on the loose sand.

"No, sir!" replied Guadiana shortly.

"Ah, some sort of sport, I presume?"

"A little in that line, sir."

"Fishing?"

"Yes, of a sort."

"How interesting! I—I—"

One of the boxes was open, and the Welsh people looked on and goggled and gazed stupidly as they saw one of Brian's last word in diving-dresses hauled to light. Brian began to dress himself, Guadiana helping Dan to get into his own suit.

Dan noticed in the eyes of the man the Welshman had addressed as Mr. Rayne a sudden gleam. The man did not look surprised when he saw the diving-dresses, he just looked eager. The other watchers, however, seemed struck dumb with surprise and joy at the distraction offered to them in this lonely, out-of-the-way spot on the coast of Wales.

"Live here, sir?" asked Dan of Mr. Rayne.

"Since yesterday morning," replied Rayne. "I have taken Sker House—up there hard by Sker Elbow. My son is not enjoying the best of health, so I thought that the sea air here would do him good. Would that he had the glow of health that you have, my lad. Are you diving really, or is it the pictures?"

Dan did not reply, because Guadiana at that moment came staggering along with his helmet. Brian was already dressed, and Dan's helmet was at last screwed down. Rayne looked closely at the helmets, particularly at the "gills"—the delicate contraption on each side of the brass domes which had been the life work of Amphibious Carr, and which Brian, in his own research work, had perfected. It enabled the diving-helmets to draw oxygen from the water to the diver inside, and the arrangement worked much like the gills of a fish.

The telephone-wires were connected, so that the young divers could converse when below the water. Dan at once heard Brian speak.

"They can't hear us outside, Dan," said Brian, "but I'll speak low all the same. The bearing of the galleon is Thirlby Spire—that means Thirlbeach Spire, and it's still in the same position—ESE $\frac{1}{4}$ by E and Sker Elbow N $\frac{1}{2}$ by E. We're on the dead line from the spire now, so we'll walk by compass on the reverse bearing. Ready?"

"Quite!"

"Right-ho! Come on!"

The chums stumped painfully forward, Guadiana walking between them and warning off the people who tried to get close. At the water's edge there were some big stones, and many of these Guadiana loaded into the chums' ballast-bags, one of which hung on the chest and one on the back. These would enable the divers to feel the force of gravity from the bed of the sea. By discarding the stones they would shoot up to the surface.

Dan found himself breathing quite as easily as he would in the outer air. The suits were terribly cumbersome, and they had to crawl on hands and knees when ballasted down, splashing out into the water like a couple of curious animals.

Dan began to see the water splashing on his observation port. Then he felt the lift of the water. Soon he could stand upright, his head just above the surface.

"Come on, chum, step it out now!" came Brian's voice, tin-tinny in the receiver of the telephone. "We'll walk all the more easily as the water gets deeper. A quick job is our chief concern. Watch the compass, and don't pull too hard on the telephone wire or the contact pins will break away."

"Right-ho," replied Dan, with a gasp of thrilling joy. "We're right below now, and I can breathe as freely as in the open air."

Dan heard Brian chuckle with pride, and then the pair began their strange walk along the bed of the cove. It was not yet dark, and they could see the bottom, the clumps of weeds, isolated rocks sticking up in the sand, and the big flatfish scuttling out of their way.

"About twenty feet depth now, I see," said Dan, looking

at the depth indicator inside the helmet. "What the dickens is this coming?"

Dan halted in some alarm, but Brian only laughed.

"Big dogfish, that's all. He'll nose about curiously, I expect, but don't worry. He's the fellow they call rock salmon in the fishmongers' shops. We'll meet a blue-nosed shark or two out on the rocks, but they can't hurt us, even if they want to."

Brian was as cool as if he were having a Sunday afternoon walk in the park. A great congerel, seven feet long, came winding and twisting in a dignified way towards them. He circled round them, and Dan gasped. But the lad followed Brian, who was taking no more notice of the sea creatures than he was of the bits of waving weed.

Now the water seemed to thicken, and Brian switched on the light and shone the rays from his powerful inexhaustible diving lamp well ahead on their course. All sorts and conditions of fish began to play about in the powerful white ray of light. Long waving weeds seemed to loom up like ghosts of the grim sea bottom. Then came a wreck-snag, the remains of the foretop of some long-forgotten ship.

The bottom became uneven. At times now they had to clamber over big rocks and occasionally one or the other would blunder forward. But the buoyancy of the helmet brought them to an upright position again. All the time they maintained a hair-line course.

On they went. At last Brian uttered a swift exclamation and pointed ahead with his hand. Following the direction Dan saw a great dark mass, all a-quiver and shimmering in the green water.

"Weeds," said Brian, the eagerness in his voice apparent even through the tinny telephone. "Must be a wreck, and an old one, too. My best shirt against your oldest that it's the galleon."

Now unconscious of the creatures that stared so curiously, or scuttled away in such fear, the young adventurers pushed on, and soon were parting the weeds and feeling below them.

"Timber! Here's a dead-eye! Ancient, too! I'll bet this is the Maria de Castellon de la Plana!" gasped Brian, his voice vibrant with excitement. "A careful survey before we blunder on her decks, Dan. She may be rotten and hollow. Don't tear your wrist-bands. They're the only vulnerable parts of these diving suits, but one must have bare hands to do any good."

"Crumbs, I've found a huge lantern, as big as myself, Brian!" Dan gasped, as he tripped over some old metal-work.

Brian came over.

"A quarter-lantern, by Jupiter! Hurrah! She's a sixteenth century ship. We've found her, Dan! And she's not silted up, except the fore part. Careful! Follow me across the main deck. Gosh, the wood's as hard as anything—"

"I've heard my dad say that elm or oak or any other hard wood like that, kept below water and never exposed to air, is practically everlasting."

"A Spanish galleon would be of oak, of course."

"Still, we'd better step carefully."

Clawing their way through the weeds, the chums came to the break of the high poop. Here they found what could undoubtedly be discerned as a earven rail. They got over it and found themselves on the poop. Then they walked on through the weeds to where they judged the cabin companion-way would be. It was then that a wild cry sounded in Dan's receiver, and Brian's frantic voice, broke off as contact was broken:

"Look out! I'm—"

Brian and his light had disappeared, and Dan was left standing alone in the pitchy blackness, ten fathoms deep, things brushing his bare hands, no answer to his shouts to Brian through the telephone, and the remains of an ancient ship under his brass-shod feet.

In the Lazaret Hold!

A MILD sort of panic seized Dan. He blundered about, but was afraid to move about too much for fear of sharing in Brian's fate, whatever it was. The youngster fumbled for his light, unhooked it, and was about to switch it on when it slipped from his fingers.

He bent down with difficulty, and groped about for the lamp, crawling a yard or two in his efforts.

Suddenly he felt something give below him. He cried out loudly, his voice smothered by his helmet. He clawed with

his hands and felt himself crashing down and down. He landed with a bump on a floor of sorts, and then he rose unsteadily to his feet.

Something clawed at his arm. Dan's heart missed a beat, and he grabbed at the clawing thing to brush it off. The grip tightened. Dan cried aloud again, and hit out. His fist landed on some leathery substance, and he thought he could feel the sliminess of some frightful creature's skin.

Now he was gripped round the body. It was an octopus! It must be! Something was creeping, creeping down his leg. Something was clawing at his arm again! Once more Dan hit out, and pushed at the leathery body, striving to get free. The tighter gripped the creature.

The boy groped for his axe. He was in the home of a devil-fish, for sure. The creature had already killed Brian, doubtless.

Dan's hand felt the axe, but, to his horror, the axe fell from his belt, unhooked, somehow. He resorted to punching again. Again that gripping thing clawed at his arm. It worked down his limbs and gripped at his wrist. Then another feeler came sliding down his left side. Dan raised his foot to kick, but his brass-shod soles were too heavy. He fell limp, and gasped.

Something began to pull at his head. His telephone wire had become entangled in something. One of the arms of the octopus, for sure! One last frantic struggle the boy gave, then he heard a slight "click" in his receiver and a voice:

"You out-and-out frajious ass, Dan! You would have done me in if I hadn't unhooked your axe just in time. You idiotic chump, you might have known it was me! I've lost my light. Why don't you light up, you chump?"

Dan could do nothing but cling to Brian and gasp:

"Lost mine, too!" he jerked out. "What happened, Brian? I—I thought you were a devil-fish! You've no idea what I felt like when your hands were clawing about me."

Brian laughed.

"Poor chap!" he said. "I ought to have remembered that you are new to this game. You're an absolute plucked 'un, Dan! I've seen strong men senseless with fright after their first diving stunt. Well, the poop deck broke and let me through, and the telephone contact broke, so we couldn't speak to each other. I had a device of a job to get the contact pins engaged with you punching at me and fighting for your life. I suppose you broke through, too?"

"Yes, I thought my end had come."

"Well, get down on your knees and grope for my lamp. We'll find yours afterwards. Mine's a bit to the left. If you feel the telephone wire tauten, give way to it, or we'll break contact again."

For a quarter of an hour by the helmet clock the chums were groping on the deck in the cabin of that ancient vessel. At last Dan heard a whoop of joy from Brian, then the place was flooded with light.

The sight that met the eyes of Dan and Brian was something they would never forget. The cabin of an old warship was revealed, the heavy table, its legs half-buried in sand, stretched fore and aft down the room. Doors on each side could be seen, some open some shut. A skeleton sprawled over the table, the bones fallen apart, but lying wonderfully natural in that perfectly still water, even after all these years.

"Gee, what a sight!" hissed Brian. "Well, no time to waste. I've seen more grisly sights than that, Dan. Scrape under the table and clear that shallow sand deposit away. We'll find the lazaret hatch there. Then we'll find the treasure-chests and the hermetically sealed box."

Dan and Brian, worked like Trojans. They scraped and scratched away at the sand till they discovered a ring in the floor of the main cabin of the old galleon. Having located this, they easily cleared the top of the hatchway. Then they tried to raise the wooden trapdoor, but it would not budge.

The trapdoor had to be smashed away with the axes. Then Brian and Dan got below.

Very little sand had got into the lazaret hold, and the various boxes they found were only buried to a depth of about a foot. Most of the boxes were of American softwood, and had broken down and fallen apart. But the treasure-chests would be brass-bound for sure. The sand beneath the chums' feet clouded the water as they walked about.

"Move slowly," said Brian. "Don't kick up such a dust, Dan, or we shan't see a thing in a minute. What's this? Gee-whiz, chum, it's a treasure-chest right enough, all furry and slimy with some sort of weed!"

Dan advanced eagerly to the spot. The youngster saw Brian sweep his hand over the top of the chest. Some carven lettering came to view.

"Gloriana!" ejaculated Dan, as he spelt out the lettering. "Maria de Castellon de la Plana." What a funny way they

lettered in those days! But you can read it all right. What's all that other jumble of lettering?"

"It's old Spanish. It means, in our way of forming warship units to-day: 'Flagship of the second battle-fleet.' We've won, Dan—we've won!"

"Let's get that hermetically-sealed box before we shout, Brian," replied Dan soberly. "And let's examine this treasure. Light here, old sport. I believe I could biff this chest open pretty easily. May as well see what's inside it. The box is marked with an 'I.' That's a number 1 in Roman numerals, I take it."

"Never mind that old box," replied Brian. "This one has a loose lid. We'll see what this contains."

"Right you are, Brian! Let's have a biff at it,"

Both young divers strained at the lid and forced it back. Ingots they saw in plenty, and a scratch with an axe enabled them to see the gleam of the yellow metal through the dullness. Gold—pure gold in tremendous weight!

Brian now excitedly fell on his knees on the deck in the lazaret hold and scraped frantically away at the sand deposit. He worked at the part near enough where the lead box they were after would have fallen when dropped down the hatchway. At last he gasped with fresh excitement, and hauled a small, oblong shape out of the sand. It was obviously of beaten lead, and the joint of the lid had been made air-tight and water-tight by the lead having been melted roughly by a hot iron or some such instrument.

"See," gasped Dan, "there's the mark mentioned on the second parchment the Don had. This is the box. Well, chum, all that remains to be done is to get back now, report that the treasure is ready to be lifted, and have a look into this box."

"You carry it, Dan. I'll take the lamp and get ahead. Pick up your lantern when we're out of this hole. We can easily find it with my light."

Glowing with the pride of achievement and the thrill of treasure-trove, the chums scrambled out of the lazaret hold, crossed the saloon of the galleon, and so on to the rocks.

Dan breathed with relief as soon as they were clear of those broad, slimy, ribbonlike weeds, and were clambering over the rocks, making for the fringe of the sand. The Maria de Castellon was, by great good luck for them, just resting on the outermost finger of the headland known as Sker Elbow.

Feeling rather fagged with their labours, but still breathing easily, the chums watched the water shallowing as they walked back on their compass course. They sucked at their cordial inside the helmets, handy for their lips, and Dan grinned as he spoke to Brian after refreshing himself.

"Gosh, Brian, I never expected to take to a baby's bottle again!" he said.

Brian laughed. He had fitted an ordinary rubber teat on the cordial and concentrated food receptacles inside the helmet.

"We're near the upper air now," Brian remarked at last.

"Got the box, old man?"

"Ay, ay, all secure!"

"Then you drop behind me. There's a sort of sudden lift in the beach here. I'll scramble up first and flash a light for the Don to see. Our heads and shoulders will come out of the water when up this bank, so we can throw our ballast away as soon as we have scrambled up."

Brian headed Dan. He scrambled at the shingle, and Dan followed closely. Brian was up, and Dan himself felt the gentle wash of the surface water about his helmet. Now he was head and shoulders up.

Suddenly he saw dark forms rushing here and there in the darkness. Men splashed out into the shallow water towards him, and Brian just ahead was throwing up his arms to guard.

"Plunge back into the deep water, Dan!" yelled Brian, his voice a screech in the telephone. "Attack! Foul play! Break contact! Walk out into cove and escape with the box. I'm—"

Dan saw Brian go down, helpless in his cumbersome diving-gear. The lad realised the futility of his trying to render aid to his chum. Luckily, he still had his stone ballast.

"Get awa—" began to shriek Brian.

The contact points then broke as Dan jerked at the telephone wire and surged backwards into the deep water just as three men, thigh-deep in the surf, leapt at him!

(Dan has to act quick as lightning to avoid Brian's fate! The Spanish gold they have succeeded in locating is not to be theirs without a struggle, after all! Thrill follows thrill in this wonderful sea-adventure story, so don't miss next week's splendid instalment at any price!)

"A BLACK BUSINESS!"

(Continued from page 21.)

chiefs are under promise not to trade with the English youths! Excellent! Zey will haf to leave der country or starve!"

But a few moments later the unforeseen happened. Herr Bergman had just emerged from the bush, when, through the deepening dusk, he caught the glint of steel on the ridge above him.

"Himmel!" he gasped, swinging round on his head-man. "Vot vat dat?"

Bergman's porters pressed forward, straining their eyes upwards with apprehension. Another flash of steel came, then another.

"Now!" hissed Fred to Tubby. "An', thank Mike, it's nearly dark!"

The next instant the Masai war-cry pealed forth. Fred and Tubby, savage figures in their war-paint, leapt to their feet. Their disguised porters rose up behind them like one man, howling gallantly.

Then the bogus Masai charged down. Fred and Tubby, magnificent bronze warriors, well out in front. And they

sent a hail of bullets whistling over the heads of the German's party.

For a moment Bergman's porters stood irresolute; then, as the savage war-cry crashed forth again, they turned and fled.

"Masai!" they yelled. "The Masai are on us!"

They flung down their loads and took to the bush in blind panic. In vain Bergman stormed and raved; nothing could stay their wild rush.

"You treacherous devils! You thieving dogs of Masai!" he roared.

He flung up his rifle, for he knew that the Masai are vile rifle-shots, and counted on bringing down three or four before they got a bullet or spear near him.

But, to Bergman's dismay, the two leading Masai proved excellent shots. Before he could draw trigger a bullet from the taller leader ploughed through his helmet. Then the short, fat one sent one that ricocheted off Bergman's own barrel.

"Himmel!" he bellowed, as his rifle was knocked skyward. "What shoot-ing!"

Then, as he glimpsed the score of spear-men, now clustering close up to their leaders, he, too, turned and fled. The odds were too great. Fred's bluff had come off!

While Bergman and his porters, scattered to the four winds, were plunging

blindly away through the bush, Tubby and Fred, scooped up the spoil. They gathered up five cases of rifles, leaving the remainder of the stuff behind, in case the Hun's porters should feel brave enough to return for it.

Then, whooping, the "fierce" savages returned to the summit of the ridge. Five minutes later they were decently clad again.

Fred and Tubby then trokked to the nearest police post and handed the rifles in.

Having successfully broken the German's nefarious trade and driven him from the district, the two lads were unwilling to give evidence.

"We've bust him!" said Fred to Tubby. "Let the blighter clear!"

Tubby agreed. But the police insisted that the two lads must give evidence if Herr Bergman was caught. And caught he was, and brought in for trial.

Bergman, learning how he had been tricked, nearly exploded. He received his sentence like one in a dream. Then Tubby and Fred returned to their trading-grounds, finding the Masai now willing to trade.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's magnificent 25,000-word school story of Tom Merry & Co. You will vote it the finest yarn Martin Clifford has written.)

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