

"THE MOTOR-BOAT BOYS!" A topping yarn dealing with the holiday adventures of Tom Merry & Co.

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2!

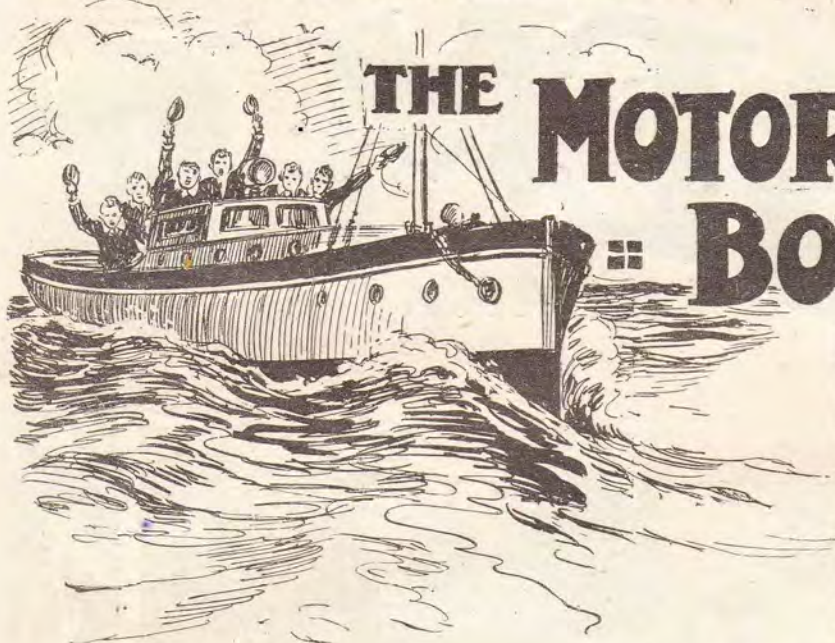
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MONTY LOWTHER CREATES A SPLASH!

A diverting incident from this week's cheery holiday story.

OFF FOR THE HOLS! Tom Merry & Co. board the motor-cruiser "Silver Spray" in the highest of spirits. For them it is "leave your troubles behind you, and hey! for the open sea!"



THE MOTOR-BOAT BOYS!

The first of a rollicking series of stories, dealing with the exciting adventures of Tom Merry & Co. on holiday.

By the inimitable
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Tragic!

"BAI JOVE!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was astounded. He was also utterly dismayed.

The swell of the Fourth at St. Jim's stood by the sunny window of Study No. 6 in the School House and blinked at the letter in his hand.

That letter bore the stamp of Eastwood House, the noble, ancestral home of the D'Arcys, and was apparently from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pater, Lord Eastwood. Usually such letters brought joy and gladness to the heart of Arthur Augustus—possibly because they usually contained a "fiver."

And this occasion was no exception to the general rule. On the table by Gussy's elbow lay a five-pound note, which had just come with this particular letter.

Yet Arthur Augustus barely gave it a glance; it seemed to bring no joy and gladness to his heart whatever. Despite the fact that the letter had contained a fiver, and was from his noble pater, it brought only astonishment and utter dismay to Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove!" repeated the swell of the Fourth. "Oh, bai Jove! How feahfully wotten!"

As if to make sure that he had read aright, Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle farther into his eye and read the letter again.

He had just finished reading it, when there sounded the tramp of feet in the passage outside the study, accompanied by cheery voices. Then the door flew open under the impact of a boisterous kick, and six juniors clad in cricket flannels crowded into the study.

The six were Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three of the Shell. All six wore bright and cheery faces, in sharp contrast to the dismal face of Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo, hallo!" called Jack Blake. "What's that you've got—a letter, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

"From your giddy pater?"

"Yaas."

"Any fiver in it?"

"Yaas; but—"

"Good!"

"Splendid!"

"I'd swop my pater for yours any day, Gussy!" remarked Jack Blake, with satisfaction. "We can now have kippers for tea! Does your noble pater say anything about the vac?"

"Yaas; but—"

"Warning us to be good little boys at Eastwood House—what?" grinned Lowther.

"Nunno! You see—"

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"Read the letter out," sighed Monty Lowther. "These paters and things have to be given their heads at times. Warning us not to play footer in the drawing-room?"

"Nunno. Weally—"

"Nor cricket?" went on Lowther. "Or is it warning us not to tread on the family escutcheon?"

"Weally, Lowthab—"

"Or not to stick pins in the footmen's calves?" inquired Lowther. "It was young Wally who did that, you know—made the poor chap spill the gravy down the back of that military johnny's neck."

"I know that. But—"

"Or is it about locking the butler in his pantry?" asked Lowther. "If you remember—"

"I do wemembah, Lowthab," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway do not be widic, deah boy. The mattah is vewy sewious."

"Not bad news, I hope, Gussy?" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly, noting the deep dismay on the face of Arthur Augustus.

"Yaas—wotten news, deah boy!" mumbled Arthur Augustus, shaking his head dismally. "It is most wemakable, and most distwessin—especially as we bweak-up in four days. It will give you fellows such a short time to make fwesh awwangements for the summer holidays."

"F-fuf-fresh arrangements?" stuttered Blake.

"Yaas. I am vewy, vewy sowwy, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head distressfully. "But it weally cannot be helped."

"Great pip!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared blankly at Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Blake. "Does this mean that our visit to Eastwood House is off, Gussy?"

"I wegwet to say so—yaas," mumbled Gussy. "My invitation to you fellows to spend the first part of the vac at my home will have to be cancelled, deah boys. It is uttably imposs now."

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors stared at Arthur Augustus, and then they looked at each other in dismay. The bad news was out now with a vengeance.

"But—but you asked us, and said it was all right," said Blake blankly. "But if it's illness—"

"Nothing of the kind, deah boy. It is merely an unfortunate lapse of memow on the patah's part. He should have told me that the painters are in—"

"The painters?"

"Yaas—and the decowators and the buildahs, and that he had made awwangements for me to spend the vac with Aunt Amelia in Shropshire," said Arthur Augustus. "It is most wegwettable."

"Well—well—" Words failed Tom Merry & Co.

It really was the "limit"!

Eastwood House was a very nice house, with cricket and boating and fishing and shooting and motoring and billiards

and amateur theatricals—and everything to make a jolly holiday, in fact. And Gussy's people were hospitable to a degree. The juniors had spent many a jolly time there, they had looked forward with no little joy to another jolly time there this summer vac.

And now it was all "off." Moreover, it only wanted four days to breaking-up—little enough time to make fresh arrangements.

No wonder Tom Merry & Co. stared blankly at the news.

"But—but you said—" repeated Blake.

"I am afraid that I am vewy much to blame, deah boys," declared Arthur Augustus regretfully. "I should have waited for the patah's reply before tellin' you fellows that it was quite all wight."

"Great pip! Mean to say you didn't get a reply?"

"I am afraid not, deah boys. You see, it was like this. The patah was on the Continent at the time, and he intended to answah my lettah when he weturned home. Unfortunately, he quite forgot until now—"

"And—and you?"

"I took it for gwant that it would be quite all wight, you know, and I didn't wowwy about it again," confessed Arthur Augustus.

"Well, you—you chump!"

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"You blundering fathead!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, staring indignantly at his wrathful chums. "I have explained how the wegettable misundahstandin' has occurred, and I see no weason for you fellows to get angry."

"No reason—eh?" almost shrieked Blake. "Can't you see you've mucked up our dashed holidays?"

"I am sowwy—"

"Sorry—be blowed!" roared Blake.

"You'd no silly right to say it was all right when you didn't know yourself, you—you dummy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Isn't it just like Gussy?" groaned Lowther. "Letting us down like this, the thumping fathead! I vote—"

"Weally, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "I have not let you down at all. The patah has let us all down. He should have witten at once, and explained that the decowators were in, and that the buildahs are buildin' a new wing, and that Eastwood House would be closed until the work is finished. I do not wegard it as entirely my fault at all, bai Jove. Wathah not!"

But Tom Merry & Co. did.

"We blame you and nobody else," snorted Blake in deep exasperation.

"You shouldn't have taken so much for granted, you silly, blundering owl!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, bump him! Bump some sense into his silly head!" shouted Lowther excitedly. "Teach the fathead not to take too much for granted again. Bump him!"

"That's it, bump the silly dummy!" snorted Herries.

"Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! Don't, you fellows—"

"Hold on," said Tom Merry, laughing.

But Tom's chums did not hold on; they were too deeply disappointed and exasperated for that. They grasped Arthur Augustus on all sides, and sat him down—hard.

"Bump!"

"Yoooop!"

"Now, again!" gasped Blake. "Give him what for!"

"Bump!"

"Yawwooh!" roared the swell of the Fourth. "Oh, you awful wottahs!"

"There!" gasped Blake, as Arthur Augustus sat on the carpet and roared. "Perhaps that will teach you more sense, you idiot!"

"Ow! Yow! Oh, you feahful wuffians!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled up, his aristocratic features crimson with wrath and indignation. Without another word he charged at his exasperated chums.

"Out with him!" panted Blake, as Arthur Augustus was immediately grasped on all sides. "Let him cool off in the passage."

"Yes, rather!"

"Bai Jove! You—you— Yoooop!"

The voice of Arthur Augustus ended in a gasping roar as he was pitched out into the passage and the door was closed upon him. He jumped up at once, and charged at the closed door. Then, finding it locked, he turned away, fairly panting with wrath and burning indignation.

"Hallo! Here you are, Gussy, old fellow!"

It was the fat voice of Baggy Trimble. The fattest and laziest junior at St. Jim's came along the passage just then

and beamed at Arthur Augustus, quite failing to notice D'Arcy's agitation.

"Here you are, old chap," he went on. "Just looking for you, old man. I say—about the holidays? I've been thinking, old chap! I hate the thought of being parted from you all through the vac, so I've thought of a ripping idea, old fellow. I hear you're taking a party of fellows to Eastwood House, Gussy."

Baggy Trimble blinked affectionately at Arthur Augustus, and, like Brutus, paused for a reply. None came, so Baggy rattled on cheerfully.

"Now my idea's this, Gussy. I'll join you for the first part of the vac at Eastwood House, and then you can come along with me to Trimble Hall for the rest of the holidays. How's that, old fel— Here, wharreryou at? I say, leggo, you—"

Arthur Augustus did not explain what he was at. He grasped Trimble by his fat shoulders and sat him down on the floor with a bump that shook the passage. Then he stalked away, fairly seething with wrath. He left Baggy roaring with astonishment and pain. Evidently his bright idea did not appeal to Arthur Augustus. Perhaps that was because Baggy had chosen an unfortunate moment to expound.

CHAPTER 2.

No Takers!

"**B**EAST! They're all beasts—mean beasts!"

Baggy Trimble mumbled that as he scrambled to his feet and ambled away along the passage, his fat face the picture of dissatisfaction and disgust.

"Some fellows have all the luck," he mumbled with a grunt. "Here's D'Arcy and those beasts going to have a good time at Eastwood House, and there's Grundy and his pals going cruising in his rotten pater's steam-yacht, and everybody else going to have a good time but me. The dashed pater isn't even going to take us to Margate this year, blow it! Something's got to be done!"

From Trimble's point of view the matter was very serious indeed.

Here Trimble was, with only four days to breaking-up, and he hadn't succeeded in "planting" himself on someone for the holidays yet. It really was getting serious.

Trimble was very fond of talking about Trimble Hall and its numerous delights—its boating and swimming and shooting, and tennis and cricket weeks, and all the rest of the joys to be had at that splendid mansion. And it seemed

very strange that he never seemed to want to go there himself. On the contrary, he always spent his leisure time just before the vac in trying to "plant" himself on someone else for the summer holidays.

The fact was—as everybody knew—that Trimble Hall—like Trimble Towers—only existed in the fertile imagination of Baggy Trimble. It was, as Lowther often remarked, a mansion in the skies, to be reached by a flight of the imagination only.

At all events, Baggy Trimble never had any desire to go home, and, as he was fat and greedy, and lazy and untruthful, and a nuisance in general, nobody was ever keen on his fascinating society for the holidays—far from it.

Yet Baggy usually succeeded in planting himself on someone, for all that. If he couldn't "wangle" an invite by fair means he usually managed to do it by means that were unfair.

"Yes, something's got to be done," went on the fat junior, with another expressive grunt. "I managed it last year—had a jolly good time motor-caravanning with Tom Merry and those beasts. Now Gussy won't let me come to Eastwood House with them this year, the mean rotter! The beasts seem to think I tricked 'em into taking me last vac. Beasts! Anyway, I'm jolly well not going home. I don't get enough to eat at home, either. Something's got to be—"

"You can't beat it—"

Trimble paused.

His disconsolate wandering had taken him close to the open door of Study-No. 3 on the Shell passage, and it was the loud and enthusiastic voice of Grundy that made him stop.

The great George Alfred was apparently laying the law down to his chums, Wilkins and Gunn.

"I tell you we'll have the time of our lives, you fellows," he was saying. "It's a top-hole place—plenty of good bathing and fishing, and ripping rambles. I've got plenty

of cash, and I've arranged everything. We shall camp right on a nice, sandy beach and go to sleep every night—with the murmur of the splashing waves in our ears," ended Grundy, poetically.

"Good!" came from Wilkins and Gunn. "Ripping, old chap!"

"But that's not all," said Grundy enthusiastically. "I'm also going to hire a sailing-boat for the whole time, and I'll take you chaps for a sail every day."

"Oh!"

From their tones Wilkins and Gunn did not seem so enthusiastic.

"Why not hire a rowing-boat instead?" asked Gunn. "You couldn't smash—I mean there'd be less risk of accidents then."

"Rot! With me to handle it—bosh," answered Grundy witheringly. "You fellows know how I handle a sailing-craft?"

"Ahem!"

"Yes, rather—we do," came from Wilkins feelingly. "I think we'd better have a rowing-boat—if you're going to sail it, Grundy."

"What's that, Wilkins? Don't talk like an idiot!" snorted Grundy. "Now just look here, you chaps! There's to be no rot on this trip. I shall be skipper, and you chaps will do just what you're told. Understand that? I'm standing no—outside, you fat frog!"

This last was addressed to Trimble who had just rolled into the study. Trimble ignored the command—though he kept one eye on the door and the other on Grundy's boot.

"Talking things over for the hols, you chaps?" he asked cheerily. "Oh, good! I hear you fellows are going to Sandbeach. Is that so?"

"Outside!"

"If it is," said Trimble, "then I'm your man. You chaps will be glad to hear that my uncle lives there—he's a city banker, you know. In fact, I'm going to his place, myself—luckily for you chaps—and if you chaps want to be put on a good thing, I fancy I can work it for you."

"You fat fibber—"

"I'll just come along with you chaps and put you up to the ropes and things, and then I'll take you along to nunky," said Trimble generously. "He's a rattling good sort, and if it's a sail you want, then I'll soon fix you up for the whole time and it won't cost you a penny. Nunky's placing one of his ten-ton yachts at my disposal, and I'll be glad of a splendid sailor like you, Grundy, to help me sail it—in fact, I was worrying rather as to how I could get hold of a chap like you who really can handle a boat. Now my idea's this, Grundy—Yaroooooh!"

Trimble shot through the study doorway, only just missing the toe of Grundy's boot.

Apparently neither Trimble's kind generosity, nor his flattery, appealed to Grundy.

Trimble resumed his disconsolate wandering. It was only too clear that there was no chance of "planting" himself on Grundy for the vac. Indeed, Trimble had scarcely expected success. It was just a forlorn hope prompted on the spur of the moment. As a matter of fact, Trimble wasn't at all sure whether he would have enjoyed himself with Grundy. The great George Alfred was just a bit too "handy" with his boot for Baggy's liking.

Something had still to be done.

"I think I'll try Glyn again," murmured Baggy dismally. "He kicked me hard before—the beast—but he may be in a better mood now. I know—I'll pretend to take an interest in his silly inventions. That'll please the beast."

The thought raised Baggy's hopes a bit, and he pushed open the door of Glyn's study. The schoolboy inventor was in the study alone. He was stooping over a queer-looking electrical contrivance on the table, and he glanced round as Trimble rolled in.

"Outside!" The St. Jim's inventor was very brief.

"Oh, really, Glyn, old fellow—"

"Get out—I'm busy, you fat idiot!" snapped Glyn. "Buzz off!"

"I only want—"

"I know what you want, old fat man," said Glyn, without looking up. "You want to shove yourself on me for the holidays, you fat sponger! But there's nothing doing! Clear!"

"I think that remark is extremely unkind, Glyn," said Trimble, with a great deal of dignity. "I came here because I'm interested in your inventions, Glyn, if you want to know."

"Go hon!" grinned Glyn. "You don't want to join in our motor-boat cruise, of course? You haven't come to try to worm an invite—"

"Nothing of the kind, Glyn," said Trimble, in a hurt tone. "You know how interested I've always been in your silly—I mean in your ripping inventions. I heard you'd

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invented a new thing, old chap—a conversing gadget, or something."

"Reversing!" corrected Glyn with a grin. "This is it that I'm working on now. It's to fix to the engine of a motor-boat, and it's going to revolutionise motor-boat engines, I might tell you. With this little invention fixed to the—but this reversing gear won't interest you, Trimble," added Glyn with a chuckle. "Here's a machine that'll interest you."

And the schoolboy inventor crossed to another queer-looking machine in the corner of the study. It stood on four legs, with two handles sticking out, and in front of a box-like arrangement on top was a round disc of glass.

"Now," said Glyn. "Grab hold of those handles, Trimble, and then stare into that disc of glass and see what'll happen."

"Certainly, old chap."

Trimble grinned and grasped the handles. Glyn's tone was quite genial now, and he fancied he was getting on splendidly. Glyn would be bound to be kindly disposed towards a fellow who took such a keen interest in his precious inventions. Usually fellows didn't, with Glyn's inventions. Glyn was undoubtedly very clever, but his inventions so often brought trouble and pain to the fellows who took an interest in them.

"Ready?" asked Glyn.

"Yes, old chap."

Trimble grinned and stared hard into the disc of glass. He apparently imagined the machine to be a new sort of cinematograph.

It wasn't.

As Trimble gripped the handles and stared into the disc, Glyn pressed a button at the back of the machine.

As he did so there came an electric spark from the machine. It was followed by a most piercing yell from Trimble.

"Yaroooooh!"

And as he yelled the fat junior started to dance as if for a wager, giving vent to ferocious howls as he did so. He also shook his arms madly as if to release the handles of the strange machine. But apparently he couldn't let go.

"Yooooop! Stoppit! Ow-yow! Yaroooooh! Murder! Fire! Groooooh! Police! Stoppit, Glyn—Ow-wow!—rotter! Yooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn. "Are you still interested, Trimble?"

"Yaroooooh!"

Two fellows came into the study, and they stared at Trimble as he danced madly, and then they also roared with laughter.

"Go it, Trimble!" laughed Noble. "Oh, good! One of your giddy inventions has come in really useful at last, Glyn."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Clifton Dane. "Give the fat nuisance a nip, Glyn."

"Yaroooooh! Oh crumbs! Stoppit, Glyn!" roared Trimble. "Yooooop!"

Glyn chuckled and pressed another button at the back of the machine, and as he did so the strange whirling sound ceased, and quite suddenly Trimble released the handles and flopped down on the floor, roaring with anguish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble. "Beasts!"

The fat junior sat on the floor, and rubbed his still tingling hands.

"Well, did you see anything, Trimble?" inquired Glyn.

"Yow! Oh, you awful beast! There wasn't anything to see, you rotter," wailed the fat junior. "It's just a rotten shocking machine! Beast! I'm shocked all over! Oh dear!"

"Are you still interested, old chap?"

"Beast!"

"If you are," grinned Bernard Glyn, "I've got another little invention in the cupboard here. It's for dealing with undesirable visitors—like this one. Hold on, Trimble, I'll get it out, old chap, as you're so interested. Wait a minute."

But Trimble didn't wait. He scrambled up like lightning and fairly flew. Even to please Glyn and thus wangle himself into the boat-party for the holidays, he was not willing to take any further interest in Glyn's inventions.

CHAPTER 3.

The Situation Saved!

"WELL, what is to be done?"

That was the question. It was a question that worried Tom Merry & Co. very much indeed.

For the chums of the School House to be separated for the summer holidays was a dismal prospect—one not to be thought of! Tom Merry & Co. looked back on the jolly holidays they had spent together, and they one and all agreed that it was not to be.

Something had got to be done—and done quickly.

Fond of their own homes as they were, Tom Merry & Co. wanted to spend the vac together. And in the case of Digby and Lowther, even this was out of the question. Digby's people were abroad, and so were Lowther's, and they had been given to understand that Digby and Lowther were going to spend the holidays with Arthur Augustus at Eastwood House.

True, all the others were only too willing to take home either Digby or Lowther, or both. But the juniors did not want to be separated at all. And only the noble Gussy's palatial home would have held the lot of them comfortably.

All were agreed on that point. Seven juniors were rather a "tall order"—except for Eastwood House, where there was room to spare.

Something obviously had to be done.

"We could go a tramping holiday," said Tom Merry, rather dolefully.

"But there's scarcely time even to plan and arrange that. And, in that case, old Digby's gammy foot wouldn't stand it."

"That's the trouble."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, it's no good blaming Gussy," he said. "After all, the ass really couldn't help it. He knew that his noble pater would never have refused—would have agreed like a shot. It's harder lines on Gussy than on us. It's just rotten bad luck."

"Well, that's so," admitted the rest.

"It's no good blaming anyone," said Tom grimly. "We've just got to get on our thinking caps and try to think of something. It's just bad luck that Dig sprained his ankle badly a week ago, or we could have gone either cycle-camping or a walking tour. That wouldn't have cost much."

"You fellows go and never mind little me," said Digby.

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

"Bosh!" snorted Blake. "Not likely, Dig. We go together or nowhere. The whole trouble is not having plenty of cash. If only Gussy had plenty like last year when he took us caravanning, we could do the same. But—"

"We can't even if there is the time to make arrangements," said Tom. "Now what about ordinary camping, though? Grundy and his pals—"

"I was hoping to do something really fresh this year," grumbled Blake. "But, after all—Hallo, here's Gussy!"

An eyeglass gleamed in the doorway, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the study. It was some time since he had been helped out by his chums, and Arthur Augustus was still looking grim and indignant.

"Hallo, old top!" remarked Blake affably. "Come back to apologise, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus gave him a frigid look.

"I have not come to apologise, Blake," he said stiffly. "It is for you to apologise for havin' tweeked me in such a wuffianly manner. I have been obliged to enter this study again to get away from that feahful nuisance, Twimble, who is pestewin' me continually."

"Wants you to let him come to Eastwood House for the vac, eh?" grinned Lowther.

"Yaas! The fat wottah is weally a pest!"

"Then why not let him," suggested Lowther. "Don't tell him Eastwood House is closed, of course. Just tell him he can go and spend the vac there if he likes."



As Trimble gripped the handle of the machine and stared into the disc, Bernard Glyn pressed a button. Zzzzzzzh! There was a strange sizzling sound, and a current of electricity shot up Trimble's fat arms. "Yaroooooh!" he yelled, trying madly to release the handles of the strange machine. (See Chapter 2.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that is wathah a good ideah, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus, unbending a trifle. "It will stop his cadgin' and wowwyin', bai Jove! Howevah," he added, becoming frigid again, "I'm forgettin' that I have decided not to speak to any of you fellows until you have apologised for your wotten conduct."

"Woe unto us," murmured Lowther. "Alas and alack! We'd better apologise, chaps, rather than lose the sunshine of Gussy's smile. Anything but that."

"Well, we do apologise, Gussy, old man," said Tom Merry, trying hard to look grave. "After all, it's hard lines on you, and it was too bad of us. We apologise."

"Very humbly!" said Blake.

"Exceedingly humbly!" said Digby.

"We're very, very sorry!" said Manners.

"Do forgive us, Gussy," said Lowther.

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, though he eyed his chums rather suspiciously. "I will accept your apology, deah boys; though I must wemark that I considah your wemarks and tweatment vewy wude and uncalled— Bai Jove! Heah is that feahful nuisance, Twimble, again!"

A step sounded outside, and the door-knob twisted.

"Cushions!" grinned Blake. "Quick!"

"What-ho!"

There was a rush for weapons—Blake and Herries and D'Arcy picked up cushions, while Digby and Tom Merry grabbed shoes, and Lowther and Manners armed themselves with a Latin grammar and a dictionary respectively.

The next moment the door swung open, and—

Whiz, whiz, whiz, whiz!

"Yaroooooh!"

Bang!

The flying cushions, the shoes, the Latin grammar and the dictionary whizzed through the air. The books reached their objective first—the grammar catching the visitor under the chin, and the dictionary full in his chest. The cushions and shoes were equally well-aimed, and they all seemed to hit him at once.

The junior gave a fiendish howl, and sat down with a crash, roaring with surprise and pain.

But it wasn't Baggy Trimble at all!

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry. "It—it's Glyn!"

It was Bernard Glyn, the inventive genius of the Shell. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 965.

He sat in the doorway surrounded with cushions and the other articles, and he gasped and panted, and groaned.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle. "How vewy unfortunate. Weally, Glyn, deah boy—"

"Unfortunate!" gasped Glyn, glaring ferociously at the grinning juniors. "I'll give you unfortunate, you dangerous maniacs! What the merry dickens is this game?"

"Aunt Sally!" explained Lowther cheerfully. "I say, don't sit there in the draught, old chap!"

"You—you—"

"Your own fault, really," said Tom Merry. "Why did you go and walk into all those things, Glyn?"

"Walk into them!" shrieked Bernard Glyn. "Oh, you burbling idiots—you dangerous dummies! You've jolly nearly busted me! Can't a fellow enter a study without being bombarded by a lot of raving lunatics?"

He scrambled up, breathing hard, and evidently contemplating a rush at the grinning juniors.

"Hold on, you ass!" laughed Tom Merry. "It was an accident, Glyn. We thought it was that fat nuisance, Trimble!"

"Blow what you thought!" snorted Glyn, dropping his fists. "You jolly well should have made sure first."

"You should have tapped on the door first, old chap."

"Well, I suppose I should," admitted Glyn, mollified a trifle. "But the fact was I was eager to see you chaps. I'd got rather a surprise for you."

"Now you've got it instead, old chap!"

"You silly asses! I was just coming—"

"I'm rather glad. You did get a surprise, then?" said Tom Merry grimly. "We know your surprises, old chap; we've had some. If it's a new invention you can take it to some other study, old chap!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wun away with it, Glyn!"

"Go and bury it!" said Blake emphatically. "We've had some of your silly inventions before, old chap!"

"You silly idiots!"

"Oh, yes, we know it's a jolly fine invention—clever and all that," grinned Lowther; "but we're having none. Those giddy pepper-bombs you left for us to examine the other day were enough for us, you funny ass!"

"Well," grinned Glyn, "I'll admit I did you there, and you did get a surprise when you touched the triggers and they busted. But this is another matter."

"We know all about that, old chap. Good-bye!"

"Yaas, wathah! We don't want it, old chap!"

"Look here!"

"Good-bye!"

"But—" shrieked Glyn. "I tell you—"

"Good-bye!"

Glyn breathed hard for a moment. Then he grinned and turned to the door.

"Oh, all right!" he said cheerfully. "If you fellows don't want a jolly holiday at my expense, I'll take the offer somewhere else. Good-bye!"

"Eh? What's that?"

"Good-bye!" grinned Glyn.

"Here, come back, you ass!" yelled Tom Merry. "What's that you said, Glyn?"

"But, my dear chap, you've just said you didn't want my surprise," said Glyn. "Good-bye!"

"Come back!" howled Blake.

He jumped after the grinning schoolboy inventor and fairly dragged him back into the study.

"Now, you ass!" said Blake, his eyes gleaming. "What did you mean, Glyn?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, with a rueful grin, "let's hear it again. Shut the giddy door, Lowther!"

Lowther shut the door. Glyn chuckled as the seven juniors surrounded him.

"Oh, well, if you really didn't mean that, you didn't want to hear it!"

"We do want to hear it now," grinned Tom Merry. "If you don't cough it up, we'll scrag you, old chap!"

"Yaas, wathah! Cough it up, deah boy!"

Glyn chuckled and coughed it up.

"It's nothing, really," he said. "Only, I wondered if you chaps would care to join Noble and me on our giddy motor-boat cruise along the South Coast?"

"Great pip!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Glyn, you boundah!"

"Why the thump didn't you say so at first, you ass?"

"How the thump could I?" snorted Glyn. "Anyway, I've not known about it myself for long. The pater was to have taken me and Noble to Italy, but giddy business matters have mucked his arrangements up. So he has placed his motor-boat at our disposal. And a ripping cruiser she is, too, I may tell you!"

"But—but why—"

"I should have asked you fellows before," grinned Glyn, as he saw their glistening eyes, "only I understood Gussy was taking you all to his home. I only heard a few moments ago from Gussy himself that it had all fallen through. Anyway, the offer's there, and the boat's waiting for us at Calmhaven, not far from here."

"And—and you really want us fellows to come?" gasped Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming with delight.

"Of course!"

"All the lot of us?"

"Yes. The pater's given me permission to take eight. Poor old Dane can't come, as he's meeting his people who're coming over from Canada, and will spend the vac with them. Anyhow, what about it?"

The juniors soon showed Bernard Glyn what their views were. Monty Lowther and Blake grabbed hold of him and fairly waltzed him round the study until Glyn howled.

"You silly asses!" he gasped, as they let him go at last. "You needn't start knocking a chap about again. Well, I'm jolly glad you chaps can come. We'll have the time of our lives. The boat's well fitted up, and the pater's going to see we sha'n't be hard up for grub—or cash, either. There's only one trouble."

"What's that?"

"The pater insists that we have an older person to look after us," said Glyn, in deep disgust. "Awful rot and an awful nuisance, as I wanted to run the blessed boat myself. He's leaving the chap who's in charge of it now to look after us and run the boat."

"Well, never mind."

"Blow it!" grunted Glyn. "But never mind, as you say; we'll find a way of getting rid of the merchant, whoever he is. Well, I take it you all agree to come?"

"What-ho!"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!"

"Good man!" said Blake heartily. "I take back all I've said about you being a silly, dangerous lunatic, and all I've said about your silly inventions, old fellow."

"Only, we hope you don't bring any inventions with you, or start monkeying about with experiments on the trip," grinned Tom Merry.

"You silly asses!" said Glyn. "Of course I shall. That's why I'm wild about the pater hiring a blessed man to look after us. B-r-r-r! It's all rot! There's one thing, anyway, I mean to try—a little thing I've just invented. It's a reversing gadget, and I want to try it on the engine. But never mind that now. I want you fellows to come along to Glyn House to tea now—if you haven't had tea yet?"

"Nunno. We'll come."

"Like a shot, old chap!"

"Then come along," grinned Bernard Glyn, "and we'll talk things over at home. The pater will jaw us about being good little boys, I expect; but you mustn't mind him—you know what these paters are."

"Oh, rather! They don't understand."

"That's just the trouble," said Bernard Glyn, shaking his head. "The pater seems to think we shall get into mischief, you know. As if we could! Now buck up and come along to Glyn House!"

"What-ho!"

"Good man, Glyn!"

And Tom Merry & Co. "bucked up" quickly enough, their faces bright and cheery once again. Their troubles were over, the great problem of how and where to spend the vacation was solved, and all was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 4.

Helping Gussy Pack!

"BUSY, Gussy?"
Monty Lowther asked the question with a chuckle. It was really a superfluous question to ask. For anyone with eyes could see at a glance that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was busy.

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Packing for the holidays was a very busy time indeed for the swell of the Fourth. Before the actual business of packing there was a great deal of meditation to be done, and many deep problems for Arthur Augustus to solve. How many coats, how many jackets, how many toppers, and how many pairs of trousers of various kinds and styles he should take with him on the holidays caused Arthur Augustus many hours of anxious thought—not to mention how many neckties and fancy waistcoats and suitable spats and boots and shoes and other articles of wearing apparel too numerous to mention. The selection of a necktie alone had been known to cause Gussy an hour or more of deep, concentrated thought and much mental stress.

Clothes were a very serious matter indeed to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he had an extensive wardrobe—a very extensive wardrobe. His wardrobe was far too extensive for the rest of the fellows in Study No. 6. As Blake often remarked, Arthur Augustus ought to live by himself in a warehouse.

True, on this occasion, Arthur Augustus did not find packing quite such a gigantic affair as he usually did. In the case of Arthur Augustus, Bernard Glyn had made one condition in regard to his inclusion in the party. And that was that Arthur Augustus should only be allowed to take three times as much "clobber" as the other fellows, and not a single article more.

It was a very serious condition to Gussy—the one fly in the ointment of his contentment, as it were. But his pathetic arguments and pleadings had been of no avail—Glyn was adamant on the subject. And as Glyn was the host, and as Arthur Augustus would never dream of going against his host's wishes, he had to bite the bullet and make the best of things.

Yet, despite this sad condition of affairs, Arthur Augustus was very busy indeed. When Lowther looked into the study he appeared to be almost swimming in a sea of neckties and collars and waistcoats.

"Busy, Gussy?" repeated Lowther, entering the room. "Want any help, old chap?"

Arthur Augustus wiped his brow, which was bathed in perspiration, and then he jammed his monocle farther into place and gave Monty Lowther a suspicious look.

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah, Lowthah!" he gasped. "I am vewy busy indeed. But pway do not bothah; I would much wathah pack myself, deah boy. I wemenbah the last time you helped me to pack, you wotten pwactical jokah!"

"Well, I did help you, didn't I?" said Lowther, in a hurt tone.

"Oh, yaas! But it is not the sort of help I like, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus grimly. "Aftah you had finished I discovered a w'etched toad and several othah howwid cweatures in my trunk; and not only that, you wumpled up my clobber most feahfully, you wottah!"

"Oh, Gussy!" said Lowther. "You seem to blame me for everything. It's too bad, you know. I seriously wish to help you, old chap, and I promise not to play the goat."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"But if you wish to spurn my kindness, to tread on my feelings, and to be churlish and standoffish, so be it!" said Monty warmly.

"Bai Jove, if you weally wish to help, Lowthah—"

"I do," said Lowther, turning back.

"Then pway do so, deah boy. I am sowwy I suspected you of ultewior motives, Lowthah! You may, if you weally wish, help me to pack this w'etched bag. I have already packed it twice, but cannot quite awwange the things as I wish without wumplin' them."

"I'm your man!" said Lowther.

And the humorist of the Shell set to work. On the table were piled little heaps of neatly folded neckties and handkerchiefs and collars and spats and some really striking socks.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Lowther, in mock horror. "For goodness' sake get those socks packed in the bottom of the bag, Gussy!"

"Why, deah boy?"

"To smother them, of course," said Lowther. "They're a jolly sight too loud—they fairly shriek like a jazz band. They'll keep us awake at nights, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah—"

"I'll silence 'em!" said Lowther.

And with a swift movement Lowther gathered together the socks; likewise the neckties and collars and handkerchiefs and spats. He gathered them in one big armful and jammed them all into the bag.

There was a horrified shriek from Arthur Augustus.

"Stop! You feahful wuffian, stop! Oh, bai Jove!"

"Eh? What's the matter, Gussy? Aren't I helping you pack?"

"You feahful wuffian!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, gazing at the bundled heap crumpled in the bag, in petrified anguish. "Oh, you—you—"

(Continued overleaf.)



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INFRA DIG!

The comedian was annoyed to find that he was billed to give his performance immediately after that of a troupe of performing monkeys. He sought the stage-manager, and with great indignation complained of such a position on the programme. "I don't want to come on immediately after a gang of monkeys!" he said wrathfully. "Um, I quite see your point," admitted the manager thoughtfully. "You mean you don't want the audience to think you're the encore, eh?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to G. A. Turney, 73, Prestbury Road, Forest Gate, E. 7.

BREAKING IT GENTLY!

Mrs. Brown: "That was a bad accident your boy's gold watch met with." Mrs. Green: "My boy never 'ad a gold watch in his life." Mrs. Brown: "That's a bit of luck, then, 'cause ten ton o' galvanised iron has just fallen on him!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Len Crawford, Walton Road, Bromsgrove.

THAT SILENCED HIM!

Boasting Hunter: "In Africa I was once pursued by a lion. It was nearly upon me, when I turned to it, put my hand down its mouth, and turned it inside out!" Englishman: "I was once chased by a bear, but I climbed up a tree." Boasting Hunter: "Yes, but bears can climb

trees." Englishman: "Sure enough, but I pulled the tree up behind me!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Dudley Baker, 129, Walton Road, East Molesey, Surrey.

KINDLY AID!

"Well, Jim, have you done a good turn to-day?" asked the father of his son, an enthusiastic Scout. "Oh, yes, dad," replied the youngster, with a smile. "I was up before breakfast this morning, and I saw Mr. and Mrs. Brown hurrying to the station to catch the 8.15 train. Thinking they might miss it, I let our bulldog loose, and they caught it, with a few minutes to spare!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. D. Webster, 20, Grango Street, Bare, Morecambe, Lancs.

PAYING THE PIPER!

Pat Casey had got Mike Riley down, and was hammering him unmercifully, when Riley called out several times. "Enough!" As Casey kept on battering him, a bystander chipped in. "Why don't you let him get up? Can't you hear him saying that he's had enough?" "Shure, I do," retorted Casey; "but he tells so many fibs, you can't always believe him!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. A. Mould, 4, Carter's Cottages, Canonbury Road, Highbury, N. 1.

MISUNDERSTOOD!

Railway Porter: "My brother takes up French, Spanish, English, German, and Scotch." Traveller: "Really! And how often does he study?" Railway Porter: "Oh, he doesn't study at all; he runs a lift!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Applebaum, 86, Eric Street, Mile End, E. 3.

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At that moment Monty Lowther chuckled, and that did it.

Arthur Augustus went for him with a ferocious rush, and Lowther fled, roaring with laughter.

But the sight of the rumpled, dishevelled contents of the bag—and Lowther's chuckle—had roused D'Arcy's ire with a vengeance, and he went after Lowther, fairly seething with righteous wrath and indignation.

Both juniors vanished round a corner of the passage in a flash.

They had just vanished thus when a fat youth came rolling along the passage, and he stopped at the doorway of Study No. 6 and looked in.

It was Baggy Trimble, and that fat junior still wore an expression of disconsolate gloom. It was plain that, though it only wanted a day now to breaking-up, Baggy had not yet succeeded in his doleful quest for a haven of luxury and rest during the summer vacation.

"Hallo! Gussy not here!" grunted Baggy. "I believe the beast is dodging me all the time. The rotter seems to think I'm trying to shove myself on him for the hols. Of course, I'm not; only— My hat! I've got it! I'll help him pack; he's bound to be grateful, and I bet I can wangle it if I can only get him in the right mood. He's soft! Here goes, anyway!"

With that, Baggy Trimble rolled into the study and started to help Gussy to pack—in Trimble's own way. He saw the bag half-filled with things, and Baggy grabbed another armful from the table and rammed them well down on the top of the other goods. Then he looked round for more worlds to conquer, so to speak.

On the table was a panama hat and a pair of boots. Baggy rammed these in, and then he picked up a pair of shoes. They were cricket shoes, and very muddy. It would have been obvious to anyone but the fatuous Baggy that Gussy had never intended to pack those.

But Baggy packed them, cramming them well down into the bag.

He had just done this when Arthur Augustus came in, breathing hard and still seething with wrath. It was clear that he had failed to get the satisfaction of catching Lowther.

"Bai Jove, Twimble!" he exclaimed crossly. "What are you doin' here, you wottah? Clear— Oh, bai Jove!"

Gussy sighted the bag at that moment, and his eyes almost started from his head at sight of the muddy shoes crammed on top of the other things.

"It's all right, Gussy, old fellow!" said Baggy cheerily. "I'm going to help you pack, old chap. That's me all over, you know—always looking out for a chance to help a fellow."

"You—you—you—"

"Now, don't worry about me or the job," said Baggy, lifting a fat hand reassuringly. "Leave it all to me; you just sit down and take it easy, Gussy, old man. Leave the packing to me. I don't like to see you overdoing things like— Yarocoooh! Here, wharrer you— Oh crumbs!"

Bump!

Trimble went down with a crash and a fearful howl, and Arthur Augustus fairly rammed his fat features into the study hearthrug.

"You—you fat wascal—you feahful, weckless wuffian!" panted Arthur Augustus. "You are the most—"

"Leggo! Lemme-gerrup!" howled Trimble. "Ow-yow! Oh crumbs! I was only— Yocoo!—helping you pack, you ungrateful— Yarocoooh!"

"D'Arcy!"

It was the sharp voice of little Mr. Lathom of the Fourth. He looked in the study, and blinked angrily at D'Arcy who was kneeling on Trimble's fat back.

"D'Arcy, allow Trimble to arise this instant!" thundered Mr. Lathom.

Arthur Augustus scrambled up. Baggy Trimble staggered to his feet, breathless, and gasping with anguish.

"Trimble, my boy—"

"I was only helping D'Arcy to pack," groaned Trimble, "and he suddenly went for me like—like a madman, the ungrateful rotter!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Twimble—"

"Is that the case, D'Arcy?" demanded Mr. Lathom.

"Weally, sir, Twimble has wumped my things feahfully," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I came in and discovered him wammin' my clobbah—"

"I was only helping you—out of sheer kindness," groaned Trimble tearfully.

"If Trimble was helping you, then I am surprised at your ungrateful treatment of him," said Mr. Lathom, eyeing D'Arcy severely. "You will take fifty lines of Virgil for creating such a disturbance, D'Arcy. Trimble, I would advise you to take your aid elsewhere, where it will be more appreciated."

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"Ow-yow! Yessir!"

Little Mr. Lathom rustled away, and Arthur Augustus breathed hard as he glared at Trimble.

"It was too bad of you, Gussy," groaned Trimble. "I was only doing my best. I came in and found that bag half-packed, and I went on packing it, thinking I was helping you. You know what a generous, helpful fellow I am."

"I know you are a feahful nuisance, Twimble."

"Oh, really, Gussy, that's mean and ungrateful. I only went on packing that bag as it was packed."

"Bai Jove! That is vewy twue, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, in a mollified tone. Arthur Augustus visibly melted, as it were. He was an exceedingly kindhearted youth, and he saw now that Trimble had really been doing his best to help. Certainly it was Trimble's best, and it was clear that Trimble had an ulterior motive in helping. None the less, he had helped, and he certainly had found the bag badly "packed." "Vewy well, Twimble," went on Arthur Augustus, "I will accept your explanation, and I am sowwy I tweated you wathah woughly. I wegwet wammin' your nose into the hearthrug, deah boy."

Trimble chuckled inwardly. Arthur Augustus had softened, and was now in the right mood to ask favours. He would strike now the iron was hot.

"Dear old chap," he murmured. "That is generous and forgiving of you, Gussy. I knew you would understand when I explained, old man. Look here, I'll forgive you freely, and I'm ready to help you pack even now."

"I do not weally need your aid, Twimble—thanks all the same, deah boy."

"Just as you like, old fellow," said Trimble cheerily. "And now let's have a chat about the holidays, old chap. Now I've got a really ripping suggestion to make, Gussy."

"I do not wish to discuss the holidays with you, Twimble."

"Oh, really, Gussy," murmured Trimble, in a really tragic tone. "That's rather unkind, you know. You're booked for a ripping time, and you don't trouble about what happens to other fellows. It's rather selfish, and mean, you know."

"Bai Jove!"

"Look at me," said Trimble pathetically. "Nowhere to go except home. My people are not even going to Margate this year."

"But what about Twimble Hall and Twimble Towers, deah boy?" smiled Gussy.

"Ahem! You—you see—"

"I do see, Twimble. You are a wotten, w'etched little fibbah, Twimble."

"Oh, really, Gussy, don't be mean, you know. You've no idea what it's like at home. And there's plenty of room at Eastwood House, and I like your people, old fellow, and I hate the thought of being parted from you during the long vac, dear old chap. And you'll find me no end useful at Eastwood House, and for picnics and all that."

"I have already told you several times, Twimble, that Eastwood House is closed, and—"

"Drop it," advised Trimble.

And the fat youth winked knowingly. Trimble was very clever, or prided himself on being clever, and he was also a very, very suspicious youth. He had heard that Eastwood House was to be closed from several sources, but he knew better. It was a yarn set about just to throw dust in his eyes—to stop him bothering Gussy.

So Baggy imagined, and now he winked.

"Oh, really, Gussy," he grinned. "I know all about that. Now what about it, old fellow? Am I to come, or not?"

"Bai Jove! I have already told you, Twimble—"

Arthur Augustus suddenly paused, remembering Lowther's suggestion.

"You've told me—yes," grinned Trimble. "But I'm too fly to swallow that, old chap. Try another."

"You do not believe me, Twimble?"

"Not much, old fellow!"

"And you weally wish to go to Eastwood House, Twimble?"

"Certainly, dear old chap!" said Trimble eagerly. "I say, is it a go?"

"Oh, yaas—if you weally wish to go, Twimble. I shall not twy again to stop you, deah boy!"

"You—you'll really let me go there, Gussy?" gasped Trimble, hardly able to believe his ears.

"Yaas. If you want to spend the vac at Eastwood House, then I shall certainly not twy to stop you, Twimble. You appeal to be determined to go. I must wemark—"

"Oh, good! Good man, Gussy! Look here, let me help you to pack, old chap," gurgled Trimble enthusiastically. "Do let me, old fellow!"

"Wathah not, deah boy. Pway do not bothah. Wun away, there's a good chap!"



"You—you fat wascal—you feahful, weckless wuffian!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You are the most—" "D'Arcy!" It was the sharp voice of little Mr. Lathorn. The Fourth Form master looked in the study and blinked angrily at the swell of St. Jim's, who was kneeling on Trimble's fat back. (See Chapter 4.)

"Right-ho!" grinned Trimble. "So long, old fellow! You—you'll keep to your word, old chap?"

"Yaas. If you want to go to Eastwood House I have no objection whatever, deah boy."

"Oh, good! Cheerio, old fellow! See you again before we start off."

Baggy Trimble rolled out of the study in high glee. And Arthur Augustus closed the door after him and chuckled. He had got rid of the fat nuisance at last, and he wasn't likely to be pestered again during that busy day.

Arthur Augustus was right there. Baggy Trimble did not bother him again—possibly fearing that Gussy might want to "back out" at the last moment. He was not going to allow Gussy to do that if he could help it, nor was he going to risk it by worrying him again.

That night, at bedtime, Baggy Trimble met Bernard Glyn, who was chatting at the moment to his chums, Noble and Dane. And Baggy stopped. There was a great deal of spite in Baggy's nature, and he felt he could afford to "tell Glyn off" now.

"Hold on, Glyn," said Baggy, waving a fat hand loftily. "About the holidays!"

"Still hunting for victims?" asked Glyn affably.

"Nothing of the kind!" said Trimble haughtily. "You asked me to join you in your silly motor-boat tour, Glyn, I think?"

"Did I?" ejaculated Bernard Glyn. "I wasn't aware of it, old fat man."

"You did," said Baggy loftily. "Like your cheek, I must say, to expect me to join a crowd like yours. Bah! I wouldn't be found dead in your rotten old tub!"

"Well, I'm blown!"

"Please don't bother to ask me again," said Baggy. "I'm not a particular chap as a rule, but I bar dodging about in a rotten old tub like a Bank Holiday crowd on the river. There's a limit! Please don't ask me to come, for I wouldn't come if you asked me on your bended knees!"

"Wouldn't you?"

"No, certainly not! So put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Great pip! You—you wouldn't come if I asked you?" exclaimed Glyn, staring.

"No, I wouldn't. I might tell you that I'm going with friends of mine—a really decent crowd—to spend the vac. at Eastwood House. D'Arcy has asked me—begged me to come, so I've decided to please them by going."

"You—you're going home with D'Arcy?" ejaculated Glyn.

"Yes! Please don't pester me again with your unwanted invites."

"Oh, my hat!" said Glyn. "But D'Arcy— Hallo, here he is!"

Glyn was surprised—not only because Trimble had given him the astonished assurance that he did not wish to join him on the motor-boat cruise, but because he understood Gussy was coming with him. He couldn't understand it.

"Hold on, Gussy," he exclaimed, as Arthur Augustus strolled up with Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three. "Trimble tells me he's going home with you for the vac. If that is so—"

"Not at all, deah boy," smiled Arthur Augustus. "Twimble has made a little mistake."

Baggy Trimble almost fell down.

"But—but— Oh, really, Gussy!" he gasped.

"I'm coming with you, Glyn, I hope, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Eh? Look—look here, D'Arcy," stammered Baggy Trimble. "You're not going with Glyn on his motor-boat cruise?"

"Yaas! Bernard Glyn has vewy kindly asked me with these other fellows, and I am goin', bai Jove!"

"But you said I could come with you to Eastwood House," almost roared Trimble.

"Nothin' of the kind, deah boy. I merely said that if you liked you could go to Eastwood House and that I would not twy to stop you," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

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"I did not say I was goin', deah boy. As I have already told you several times, Eastwood House will be closed duwin' the vac while the decowators and paintahs are in. If you do not choose to believe me, Twimble, that is your affaiah, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

Trimble's face was a picture of utter dismay and wrath. "But—but you said I could go, you rotter!" he shrieked.

"So I did, deah boy. I am suah I have no objection to you goin' there if you wish, Twimble. You will be able to sit on the steps, or on the tewwace—if the gardeners will allow you—duwin' the vac, and will be able to chat and entahtain the decowators and people with your stowies and whoppahs, deah boy."

"You—you— Oh, you awful rotter!" groaned Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble groaned, and glared at the smiling Arthur Augustus. He understood now only too well. He had been just a bit too clever in being so suspicious and disbelieving. He groaned as he thought of all the fellows he had bragged to about his proposed visit to Eastwood House with his "pal" D'Arcy, and he groaned again as he thought of the little time in which he had to settle his programme for the vacation.

On the morrow St. Jim's would break-up, and it was now bedtime! The matter was very serious indeed. He fairly glowered at the laughing juniors.

"Oh, you—you awful spoofer, D'Arcy!" he spluttered. "Oh dear! I—I say, Glyn, old fellow—dear old chap!—I was only joking just now. I hope you understand that. If you really want me to come with you on that motor-cruise, I don't mind after all. In—in fact, I should love it—being with decent fellows like you."

"My dear man, I couldn't think of lowering your dignity by asking you to accompany a rowdy old gang like ours, old chap," said Bernard Glyn, shaking his head. "And we don't want you to be found dead in our rotten old tub!"

"Oh dear! I was only joking, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bernard Glyn and his two chums strolled on, laughing, and Tom Merry & Co. strolled after them, also laughing. Arthur Augustus stopped a moment to tender a word of advice.

"It weally serves you wight, Twimble," he remarked severely. "Perhaps you will take a fellow's word atfah this, and not be so sharp and suspicious, bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus walked on after his chums, smiling. "Oh, the—the awful rotter!" groaned Baggy. "The—the awful spoofer! Oh dear! What a sell! Oh, the—the—the"

Words failed Baggy Trimble.

CHAPTER 5.

Traffic Trouble!

"O H, confound the luck!"

Aubrey Racke was in a temper—he very often was. Racke, of the Shell, was rather an unpleasant youth at the best of times. And on this sunny morning, when all St. Jim's almost were departing, cheery and light-hearted for their summer holidays, Aubrey Racke was in a very bad temper.

Like most wilful and ill-natured fellows, Racke was always finding himself in trouble of some sort, for which he was always blaming his luck, or somebody else—though it was usually his own reckless rascality that had caused the trouble.

It was Racke's forgetfulness that had caused the trouble on this occasion.

Racke had spent some time packing his numerous belongings, and had, in his usual supercilious and patronising way, told his chums, Crooke and Scrope—who were to be his guests for the vacation—exactly what to do and what not to do while his guests. In fact, all was in readiness for the start on the journey to Calmhaven where Racke was to join his father's palatial steam-yacht at anchor there.

Racke's father—now Sir Jonas Racke—was a very rich man indeed, and his yacht was a very magnificent one. Crooke and Scrope had already heard of its many delights, and they were looking forward to the cruise—though they would doubtlessly have been better pleased had Racke himself not been accompanying them.

Still, they were delighted and quite merry and bright on that bright summer's morning. Only Racke was in a bad mood—a mood that was made much worse on making the discovery that he had forgotten to order a car to take them to Calmhaven.

He had only just discovered it—and it was too late to catch the morning train for Hexham Junction where they could have got a local train for Calmhaven.

There was not another train until the evening, which meant wasting a whole day.

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It really was most exasperating.

Naturally Racke—as was his nature—blamed his chums, his luck, and everything but himself.

"If you fools had only reminded me," he snapped angrily. "Oh, confound the luck!"

"We thought you were arranging everything, Aubrey," said Crooke warmly. "Hang it all, I don't see why you should blame us."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Racke. "Look here, I'll get on the phone and see if I can get a car of some sort from Mildmay's at Wayland."

"Pretty hopeless!" said Scrope. "Every blessed car and bus and taxi will be engaged, you can bet on that. There won't be a blessed wheelbarrow to be had to-day. You see."

"I'm going to try, anyhow, hang you!" snarled Racke. "You shut up, and don't grouse!"

And with that Racke led the way to the prefects' Common-room. There was a telephone there, and the juniors often made use of it—either with permission or without. Just now Racke proposed to use it without.

It was not a risky proceeding to-day, at all events. Most of the seniors had already departed their various ways, and those who still remained were too busy packing. They found both the passage and the Common-room deserted.

Just as the three sneaked into the room the telephone-bell rang.

"Oh, blow!" said Racke crossly. "Anyway, we'll see who it is!"

He took down the receiver and listened.

"That St. Jim's School?" came a deep voice over the wires.

Racke fancied he recognised the voice.

"Yes, it is," he grunted. "What is it?"

"This is Mr. Glyn, of Glyn House, speaking," went on the voice briskly. "I wish to speak to my son Bernard. If you would be so kind—"

"He's about the school somewhere," said Racke ungraciously. "It may take an hour to find him, sir."

"Then perhaps you will be kind enough to give him a message? Am I speaking to one of his schoolfellows?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Will you be good enough to tell Bernard that my car will be unable to call at St. Jim's to take him and his friends to Calmhaven, as arranged? I have, however, arranged for a large car from Turner's at Abbotsford to call for them at eleven o'clock. I myself will return home by train."

"Oh, all right, sir."

"You might also explain that my car has broken down—he knows it was bringing me to Abbotsford first—and he will understand. Oh, and by the way, perhaps you will also tell him that the car is paid for and that he only need tip the driver?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you will tell him that I shall feel much obliged, my boy. Thank you very much! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" grunted Racke.

He rang off, his lip curling.

"Who was it?" asked Crooke. "Glyn's father?"

"Yes. He wants me to find Glyn and tell him the car that was to take those cads away has broken down, and that he's sending another from Abbotsford," sniffed Racke. "Likely, ain't it?"

"You won't give the message?"

"No jolly fear," said Racke. "I'm not likely to do those cads a good turn—not me! Let old Glyn and his lot go to pot. I've got an idea, you chaps!"

He suddenly paused, his eyes gleaming.

"Why not?" he breathed. "Why not collar their car when it comes?"

"Are you potty, Racke?"

"Not at all," said Racke, with a grin. "Look here, you chaps! The car's coming from Turner's at Abbotsford, and the driver won't know Glyn, and Glyn won't know of his coming here. He doesn't know this car's ordered. He and his beastly pals will be waiting for his car. And it's to take them to Calmhaven—just where we're going."

"Phew! You mean—"

"Why not collar it for ourselves and leave those rotters to wait for it—all day, perhaps? It will muck up their arrangements properly, and we shall get a lift free, as it's paid for. By gad! We'll do it, chaps—if only to pay those cads a few scores!"

"Good wheeze!" breathed Crooke. "But—but Glyn's pater—"

"Glyn didn't know who I was, you fool! It's safe enough. Those chaps won't dream the car was for them, either!"

"Let's do it," said Scrope, chuckling. "It's not far off eleven now."

"Come on," said Racke, swiftly. "By gad! This is—Hullo! What d'you want, you fat rotter?"

With a spring, Aubrey Racke jumped for the door and just managed to grab Baggy Trimble, who was standing there—apparently listening.

"You fat worm!" hissed Racke. "If—"

"Yow! Leggo, Racke!" howled Trimble. "I just happened to be passing, and I wondered who was in here talking. Leggo!"

"I think the fat fool's only just come along!" grinned Crooke. "Boot him off!"

"Ow!" gasped Baggy, as he was released suddenly by the relieved Racke. "I say, Racke, old fellow, I was just looking for you. Now about the holidays. There's still time to consider my offer if you'd care to. You lemme come with you for the first part of the holidays, and I'll take you fellows for a Mediterranean cruise with me on my uncle's yacht for—yaroooooh!"

Baggy howled fiendishly as Racke planted a heavy boot behind him. He jumped away and flew for his life as Racke sped after him to plant another kick behind his fat person.

"The fat, sponging sweep!" hissed Racke. "If I thought he'd heard our plan—"

"He didn't hear!" grunted Crooke. "He must have

steps and eyed the juniors enviously. He also eyed them a trifle hopefully. Tom Merry & Co. looked in a cheery mood, and there was still a chance—faint though it seemed. Only when Tom Merry & Co. had departed did Baggy intend to lose hope entirely.

"No, I haven't gone, you fellows!" said Baggy dolorously. "I say, you chaps, you might listen to a fellow. I want to repeat my offer again—the same offer I made this morning. It's still open. You chaps take me for the first part of the holidays and I'll see you fixed up for a jolly time for my Algiers trip. I've only got to drop a word to my uncle, Sir Tupper Trimble, and—"

Baggy was interrupted by Blake.

"Bags!" snapped Blake.

"Eh? Bags?" exclaimed Trimble. "What do you—yaroooooh!"

Trimble suddenly understood as with one accord Tom Merry & Co. raised their bags aloft and made a simultaneous and rather terrifying rush at him. He fled back into the House like a hunted rabbit.

Inside the School House—and having made quite sure Tom Merry & Co. were not following—Baggy halted, panting and gasping. Really, the possibility of wangling himself into the motor-boat party was very remote indeed—Baggy saw that.

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only just come along. Anyway, let's get off. What about our luggage?"

"It's at the gates. Taggles has charge of it!" growled Racke. "Now come on. And mind you leave that driver chap to me. I'll wangle it."

With that Racke hurried his chums to his study. A few minutes later they were hurrying down to the gates. On the School House steps they came upon nine juniors who were standing there with coats over their arms, and surrounded by luggage. They were Tom Merry & Co. and Glyn and Noble.

Racke, Crooke, and Scrope grinned at them and hurried on.

"Good-bye, Racke, old dear!" called Lowther. "Mind you don't smoke too many fags, old chap, during the holidays!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter from the three black sheep was the answer.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, staring after the trio rather suspiciously. "Wacke and his pals appear to be vewy cheewy this mornin', deah boys. That is wathah a pleasant change for Wacke!"

"Yes, rather!" agreed Blake. "Racke usually scowls like a Hun if a chap speaks to him. I wonder—Hullo, here's dear old Baggy. Not gone yet, Baggy?"

Baggy Trimble ambled disconsolately to the top of the

"Beasts!" he mumbled. "Mean beasts! If they'd have agreed to take me I'd have told 'em what I overheard those beasts, Racke and his pals plotting. Serve the mean rotters right to be done in the eye. Oh dear! I'd better try somebody else or I shall get left after all. I'm not jolly well going home if I can help it."

"Hope," as the poet has it, "springs eternal in the human breast," and Baggy still cherished a faint, flickering hope that he would, even yet manage to wangle an invite home from some innocent, unsuspecting fellow. But the trouble was that all the fellows knew Baggy. Baggy was not popular. Still, there was a chance, as several fellows had not gone yet. Even an invitation home from Skimpole was better than going home to the bosom of his own family. So following out the cheery maxim of "Hope on, hope ever," Baggy rolled on his way.

CHAPTER 6.

Rather a Come-Down!

THAT blessed car's a long time coming, Glyn, old chap!"

"Yaas, wathah!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I weally think I shall be able to wush back and change this necktie, after all, Blake. Shall I wisk it?"

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"You'd better not," snorted Jack Blake. "If you do and the car comes back, we'll leave you behind. Understand?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Glyn, looking at his watch. "The pater said the car would be here at eleven, prompt. It's long past that now—half an hour, in fact. Look here, I'll rush in and phone to Glyn House and inquire about the dashed thing. This is a bit too thick!"

All the juniors were agreed upon that—but they were too polite to tell Glyn so. They were, in fact, tired of waiting. They had been standing there well over half an hour now, and they were tired of seeing the constant stream of fellows departing across the sun-lit quadrangle en route for the four corners of the earth—or Europe, at all events! They wanted to be off, too.

Glyn wanted to be off, too, and he was more annoyed about it than his chums, and he made no bones about saying so.

Leaving his chums with the luggage the St. Jim's inventor ran indoors. He was not long away, and when he came back there was a puzzled and astonished expression on his rather mischievous features.

"Well, this beats the band, you chaps!" he said breathlessly. "I've been on the phone to Glyn House, and they tell me there that the blessed car broke down at Abbotsford."

"Oh dear!"

"But that doesn't matter," grunted Glyn, frowning. "The pater had it to take him there on business, you remember, and was sending it back here for us at eleven. Well, they say at home that he rang up St. Jim's to tell us about it, and to inform us that he'd ordered another car from Turner's to call here for us at eleven."

"Great Scott! Then—"

"Something's gone wrong," snorted Glyn. "The pater's too dashed keen a business man to make a mistake or forget. He rang them up at home and told them he'd phoned a message through to me, in any case. It's dashed queer!"

"The dashed car may have broken down on the road here, too," suggested Manners.

"Well, that's possible, of course. We'd better wait a bit longer."

There was nothing else for it, and the chums waited another twenty minutes, and then Glyn lost patience and went to ring up Turner's. He came back looking grim.

"They say the car should have called here," he said, with a snort. "And that it couldn't have broken down on the road between here and Abbotsford, as one of their lorries has only just returned to the garage after passing along the whole of the road between Rylcombe and Abbotsford. It's jolly queer. Hold on—I'll ask Taggles!"

Taggles was just coming down the School House steps with a big trunk on his back. He lowered it, and wiped the perspiration from his brow as Glyn spoke to him.

"Hey? Me seen a car from Turner's call 'ere, Master Glyn?" he panted. "Yes, I reckon as one did call. Master Racke said it were for 'im, and he and 'is friends, Master Scrope and Master Crooke got in it, and it's takin' 'em to Calnhaven, I believe. I 'elped 'em put their luggage in, Master Glyn."

"Did another one call at all—from Turner's?" demanded Glyn.

"No—leastways, I ain't seen none, Master Glyn."

Glyn pressed a florin into the porter's horny palm, and Taggles ambled on with his trunk.

Then the St. Jim's inventor took a deep breath.

"Racke and his pals," he breathed, looking at his chums. "You think those cads would trick us and take the dashed car?"

"They certainly would if it suited them," said Tom Merry, frowning. "But—but they would have a car of their own."

"They may have forgotten to order one," said Blake, whose eyes were gleaming. "My hat! I wonder if the cads have done us. They'd do it if only to let us down."

"Yaas, wathah. Bai Jove! It certainly looks vewy suspicious, deah boys."

All the juniors thought that, and their faces went grim.

"No good waiting any longer," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to have to wait for a train, and, in any case, it means a thumping long journey round, and we may have to wait for hours at Hexham Junction for a local. Blow it! Why not try to get another car?"

"I've already done that," said Glyn, biting his lip. "I've been on the phone to Wayland, and there isn't a blessed car of any kind to be got. And it's the same at Abbotsford. Turner's is the biggest garage there, and all they have is that lorry they spoke of."

"Well, why not a lorry?" grinned Lowther. "It would be better than waiting until late for a train, and taking

the risk of not getting there to-night. We've got to do something. Why not a lorry?"

"What sort of contraption is it, Glyn?" asked Tom Merry.

"An ordinary contractor's lorry," said Glyn. "It would do, of course, if you fellows didn't mind risking getting your clobber dirty."

"Bai Jove! I do not like the ideah at all," murmured Arthur Augustus in alarm. "What about my twowsahs, and my clobber in genewal, bai Jove! I could not possibly wisk gettin' my twowsahs wumpled and soiled. Wathah not! Besides it would be vewy infra dig—"

"Blow you and your silly trousers!" snorted Blake. "I vote we do it."

"Hear, hear!"

"If Gussy won't risk it he can stay behind," grunted Herries.

"Bai Jove! I do not wish to wemain behind," said Arthur Augustus. "Vewy well! If it must be a lowwy, I am weady to wisk it, deah boys."

And so it was settled, and Glyn ran indoors to phone up Turner's and order the lorry. Then the juniors settled down for another wait. It was rather a bad start to the holidays, and as Lowther said, it would be rather a "come down" for Tom Merry & Co. to start off for the holidays in a contractor's lorry.

Still, all agreed that it was best.

It was rather a long wait, but at last Taggles came hurrying to Study No. 6 where the juniors were, to announce that the lorry had arrived, and his announcement was received by Tom Merry & Co. with cheers. They rushed down to the gates, and then they looked at the lorry.

It was, as they had feared, rather a dirty lorry; in fact it was a very dirty lorry. Arthur Augustus almost fainted at the thought of sitting down in it. It was also rather a dilapidated lorry, and had obviously seen its best days. Indeed, Monty Lowther said it looked as if it had suffered badly from shell-shock during the war.

But it was a vehicle, and that was all that mattered at the moment.

"We'll be able to sit on our baggage, anyway," grinned Tom Merry. "All aboard, chaps! Bite the bullet, Gussy, and jump in."

"Bai Jove! What about my clobber in the baggage, though?" said Gussy dismally. "It will get shaken tewwibly on the journey, and will be wumpled up. Oh, deah!"

"Ask the driver for some rope, and tie it up," suggested Tom, laughing.

It was a good suggestion, and Arthur Augustus politely asked the grinning driver for a rope. He went round to the rear of the vehicle and lifted the lid of a big, deep locker just under the rear-board. That locker had evidently been built there to hold contractor's shovels, and pickaxes and such-like. But it didn't hold such things now.

As the driver lifted the lid, he gave a gasp and started back. At the same moment Arthur Augustus and several more of the juniors started back with a yell.

"Trimble!"

"Bai Jove! It is Twimble!"

And it was Trimble!

The fat youth was crouching down, almost full length in the locker, and he scrambled out finding he was discovered, dragging his bag out after him.

"Oh dear!" he groaned. "I—I say, you fellows, I never expected you to find me, you know. Oh, crumbs! I say—Here, leggo!"

But Blake, who had caught him by the scruff of his fat neck, shook him until he howled.

"You fat worm!" he roared. "What the thump are you doing there?"

"Great pip!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, the awful, crafty rotter! He meant to come with us after all, thinking we wouldn't kick him out once he was with us."

"Oh dear! I—I say, you chaps—"

"My heye!" gasped the astonished driver. "I swear I never saw this fat chap get in there. He must have slipped in while I was waiting for you gents. I remember noticing the young raskil comin' through the gates with a bag."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Good old Baggy! Game to the last!"

"Well, it is the last for him!" snorted Glyn. "Bump the fat villain, and let's get on."

"Oh, really, Glyn—I say, it's all right!" gasped Baggy. "Look here. You chaps just give me a lift to Calnhaven; that's all I want. My uncle's steam yacht—the Skylark—is at anchor there! It's starting for—the Mediteranean, and—ow! Leggo, you rotters! Whooop!"

Bump!

Baggy descended to the ground with a terrific bump. Again and again he was bumped, and then he was started off with several boots behind him. After that his bag was slung after him.

Trimble gave it up then as a bad job. He limped away, after picking up his bag, and rolled away along the dusty Rylcombe Lane dismally. Apparently, at last, the fat youth had abandoned all hope.

"That's the last of Trimble for a few weeks, thank goodness!" said Tom Merry. "I'm really sorry for that fat rotter, but he's really a bit too thick. We had enough of him on our last holiday."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, climbing on to his little pile of luggage which he had tied together with the rope the driver provided. "Now we're off at last! Thwee cheahs, deah— Bai Jove! What—what—gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus ended with a wild shriek of alarm. For as the lorry started to move, his silk hat rose from his head like a bird, and as he looked quickly back, the startled swell of the Fourth saw it swinging in the air behind, as if on nothing.

It was really most astonishing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

Then Gussy understood. Lowther had gently passed a loop round the hat and tied it to the branch of an overhanging tree while the driver was "cranking" up. He could even see the string that held it now.

"Oh, you awful wottah, Lowthah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, staring back at the swinging hat as the lorry rumbled on. "Oh, bai Jove! Stop the wotten lowwy, someone. Oh, gweat Scott!"

He yelled wildly at the driver, and as the lorry slowed down, Gussy leaped out and measured his length on the dusty road, and then, scrambling up again, he went pounding back for his hat.

By climbing the school wall and clambering along a branch he managed to reach it at last, and as he came speeding back to the lorry he found his chums almost helpless with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled breathlessly aboard, almost crimson with wrath. His clothes were dusty, and his beautiful silk hat ruffled. Without a word Arthur Augustus laid his hat carefully on top of his luggage. Then he rolled back his cuffs, and went for Lowther with a war-like gleam in his noble eye.

The lorry rumbled on and, locked in deadly embrace, Arthur Augustus and Monty Lowther rolled amidst the straw and muddy brick-dust on the floor of it, while the others looked on, cheering indiscriminately.

And so the holidays started for Tom Merry & Co. amidst strife and excitement. The tour had commenced, and whether more excitement and strife lay in front of the cheery St. Jim's juniors remained to be seen. As they rumbled along Rylcombe Lane they passed Baggy Trimble, trudging dismally along, and they gave him a farewell cheer. Baggy answered with a shake of a fat fist, and a wrathful howl:

"Beasts!"

And that was the last the chums of the School House thought they would see of Baggy Trimble for a few glorious weeks. But they were wrong there. Baggy Trimble was not done with yet by any means. His case was desperate and his hopes had fled; but he was not beaten yet.

CHAPTER 7.

The Hero!

"OH DEAR! Fancy having to go home after all! Oh, the mean beasts. All they think about is their own enjoyment. I don't get half enough to eat at home, and the mater will grouse about me being about the place, and the pater will lead me a dog's life. Oh, crumbs!"

Apparently Baggy Trimble's home was not a very happy home for Baggy, at all events. Probably Baggy's manners and customs at home were as bad as at St. Jim's—possibly worse. In that case it was perhaps no wonder his home was not a very happy home for Baggy. Even Trimble's mater must get tired of continually restocking the family cupboard, owing to Baggy's depredations, and even she

must get fed up at times with his "fibs," and charming manners and customs, as Lowther had often remarked.

But, unfortunately, Baggy Trimble never could see that his unpopularity, at home and abroad, so to speak, was entirely owing to himself; his own greed, untruthfulness, deceit, and questionable manner in general.

With his coat over his arm, and his bag in his hand, the fat Fourth-Former rolled along dismally, reflecting upon the unhappiness of the world, the meanness of mankind in general, and the fellows of St. Jim's in particular.

Until the very last moment Baggy had lingered at St. Jim's, still hopeful. But at last he had been obliged to give up hope. If he missed the next train at Rylcombe he knew he would not be home until late that night—and that would mean trouble with his pater. And if he stayed behind, and missed his train, it would also mean serious trouble with the Head of St. Jim's.

So having no choice left in the matter, Baggy had started out with his ticket in his pocket and his bag in his hand.

Then, on reaching the gates, he had seen the motor-lorry.

Baggy knew for whom it was waiting quite well. He had heard the chums of the School House talking ruefully of their predicament, and he had grinned gleefully and maliciously. But the sight of the big locker at the rear of the ungainly vehicle had brought a sudden, daring scheme into his crafty brain.

Why not risk it and take french leave by stowing aboard the lorry? True, he would be discovered at the other end—possibly before. And it would be a decidedly uncomfortable journey.

But it was worth it—worth taking the risk. He felt pretty certain that once on his way with the party, they would not have the heart to send him home again. Tom Merry & Co. were "soft"—as Baggy himself expressed it. He had done the same sort of thing before, and it had succeeded. Why shouldn't it succeed again?

Baggy had made up his mind swiftly, and he had acted swiftly. In the driving-seat the driver was busy smoking a cigarette and reading the sporting page of a paper, and he wasn't likely to see Baggy slip into the box.

And his scheme had succeeded—up to a point. He had managed to get into the locker—it was a tight squeeze, but he managed it—and it was only sheer bad luck that had caused his discovery. If Gussy had not wanted a rope for his luggage he would have been on his way now.

It was rotten luck, and Baggy's reflections were bitter as he rolled along Rylcombe Lane. As he had none too much time to catch the local at Rylcombe Station, Baggy took a short cut through the woods. He left the lane,

crossed the stile, and it was some minutes after he had plunged into the green, shady trees that Baggy met with his great and glorious adventure.

As he trudged along the shady footpath, Baggy stopped suddenly, and his heart began to thump violently against his fat ribs.

Ahead of him was a slinking form—the form of a dingy, rough-looking man, with evilly-lined features and unshaven chin. He was not a very pleasant-looking man, by any means.

And he was evidently contemplating mischief—Baggy saw that at a glance, and he trembled violently.

Even as he glimpsed the fellow he dodged into a mass of greenery, his eyes apparently fixed on the footpath ahead. Baggy felt exceedingly thankful for that. He had thought at first that the fellow was on his own track.

Then Baggy understood as he saw a tall gentleman coming down the path with firm step. Baggy knew him at once as Mr. Glyn, of Glyn House, and Bernard Glyn's father.

"Oh dear!" gasped the fat junior faintly.

His first thought was to open his mouth to shout a warning; his next was to turn and bolt for his life. But his trembling limbs refused to obey his will. It was clear that Mr. Glyn had not seen the man, and it was clear the man had not seen Baggy.

"Oh dear!" groaned Baggy.

He saw the fellow meant trouble, and Baggy glanced round wildly. Then his heart leapt.

Coming up behind him through the trees were two well-known, athletic forms—Kildare and Darrell, two prefects

of St. Jim's. They were coming along the path, chatting cheerily and swinging their handbags, evidently bound for the station, as he was.

"Oh, good!" murmured Baggy.

The sight of them relieved Baggy wonderfully, and brought his courage back with a leap. He glanced back up the path, and as he did so he saw the footpad lurch out of the greenery and barge into Mr. Glyn.

For a moment the two staggered together, and then Mr. Glyn stepped back with an angry exclamation.

"Look where you are walking, my man!" he snapped heatedly.

"You look where you're walking, mister!" growled the dingy individual; and he lurched on along the path.

To Mr. Glyn, it was obviously just an insolent, drunken tramp's lurching gait that had caused the collision. But Baggy Trimble knew it wasn't.

For in the instant of the collision between the two, Baggy had seen something. He had seen the rascal's hand slide, swift as lightning, into Mr. Glyn's pocket—his breast-pocket. It came out again, just as swift, clutching a wallet, and it slid the wallet into the rascal's own pocket as he lurched on.

The man was not a drunken tramp. His hand, steady as a rock, had been the practised hand of an accomplished pickpocket.

"Mum-my hat!" gasped Baggy.

Barely an instant Baggy hesitated, and in that instant a swift brain-wave came to him. The fat youth was far from being a brave fellow, and in other circumstances he would have acted quite differently.

But with Mr. Glyn on the spot, and with reinforcements coming up behind, as it were, in the form of Kildare and Darrell, Baggy felt that he could afford to be brave.

It would be worth the risk of a knock to get on the right side of Bernard Glyn's pater—the founder of the feast, otherwise Glyn's motor-boat party.

Baggy felt so, and he acted in a flash, even as the man lurched away.

He sprang out into the open, dashed past Mr. Glyn, and fairly leaped on to the back of the unshaven individual.

Crash!

Trimble's weight was no joke, and with the fat junior clinging to him, the pickpocket went crashing down, with a startled howl.

Baggy howled also the next moment—in wild terror and pain. The fat youth had expected help to arrive before the fellow could damage him. But he was mistaken there—the fellow was as slippery as an eel, and far more vicious.

Even as he crashed down he twisted over and lurched to his feet, dragging Baggy with him. Then his fist crashed into the hapless junior's face again and again. Baggy howled and clung on desperately—more to protect himself from the rain of blows than anything else.

But it barely lasted thirty seconds, for just then Mr. Glyn, having recovered from his amazement at Baggy's sudden appearance and action, jumped forward, and his fist, steady as that of a man half his years, smacked home on the rascal's chin.

The footpad yelled, and went crashing down.

Just then there came the rush of feet, and Kildare and Darrell arrived.

In a flash they had the yelling rascal fast.

"Great Scott! What's happened?" panted Kildare. "Trimble—"

"Ow-wow! Oh dear! Ow—ow!" groaned Trimble, tears of pain streaming down his fat and bruised cheeks. "Ow! Oh, the brute's nearly killed me! Ow—ow—ow!"

"Good heavens, boy!" gasped the still bewildered Mr. Glyn. "Why on earth did you attack that ruffian? Are you mad?"

He helped the groaning Trimble to stagger to his feet. Baggy glimpsed the rascal struggling vainly in the iron grasp of the stalwart St. Jim's prefects.

"Hold him! Hold him, Kildare!" he yelled frantically. "He's got Mr. Glyn's wallet—I spotted him take it! Hold the brute!"

"Oh!"

Mr. Glyn seemed to understand, and his hand flew to his breast-pocket. Then he gave a grim exclamation.

"The boy is right, I believe," he said. "Hold the—"

But Baggy Trimble was before him. He jumped forward and plunged a fat hand into the pocket of the rascal's dingy coat. The man muttered an oath as Trimble withdrew the wallet.

"Here it is!" yelled Trimble hysterically. "I saw the brute, and I fetched him down! Here it is, sir!"

He was just handing over the wallet into Mr. Glyn's eager hand when he swayed and would have fallen had not Mr. Glyn and Kildare caught him.

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"The poor kid's about done up, sir," said Kildare. "That brute—Hold him!"

But Kildare's yell came too late. Kildare had released his grip in order to catch the half-fainting Trimble, and it was just what the slippery pickpocket was watching for.

In a flash, he had wrenched himself free, and neatly dodging Darrell's swift grab, he dived into the greenery, and went crashing through the woods.

"After him!"

"No, let him go!" called Mr. Glyn. "I will put the police on the rascal's track."

"That's good!" said Kildare, after a hasty look at his watch. "I'm afraid we shall have to be going, sir. If we lose the local at Rylcombe we shall miss our boat for Ireland, Darrell."

"Then please leave this to me," said Mr. Glyn. "And thank you very much for your help, Kildare."



"Quick!" yelled Tom Merry. The lorry pulled up alongside the car. Racke, Crooke, and Scrope had taken a dozen steps they were following Aubrey Racke furiously. "You're not at St. Jim's!"

"It's Trimble you ought to thank, sir," smiled Kildare, giving Trimble a strange look. "But if that ruffian comes back—"

"He isn't likely to come back," said Mr. Glyn grimly. "And if he does I fancy I can deal with him. Please don't lose your train on my account."

"But Trimble should be catching this train to join the London train at Wayland," said Kildare suddenly.

Mr. Glyn frowned and glanced rather anxiously at Baggy's features which were bruised rather badly.

"He is not fit to travel yet, Kildare," he said firmly. "Leave the boy to me. I will have his hurts attended to, and will see he reaches London in good time."

"Oh, good!"

And satisfied that Trimble would be all right, Kildare and Darrell shook hands with Mr. Glyn. Then they shook hands with Baggy Trimble—an unheard of proceeding—and took their departure.

"My poor boy—"

"I'm feeling better now, sir," gasped Trimble faintly, as Mr. Glyn took his arm. "I—I think I can walk a little way."

"I will take you to Glyn House at once," said Mr. Glyn. "You shall have your hurts attended to, and I will see that you catch an early express for London, my boy. Come!"

Trimble went, leaning on Mr. Glyn's arm—and he was very thankful to do so in more ways than one. He was still sick and giddy from his brutal handling by the pick-pocket. Yet, though he had nearly fainted a moment ago, he still had his object in view.

He had succeeded in getting on the right side of Glyn's father without a doubt, and if he only played his cards well—

Trimble determined to play them well, despite his throbbing head and aching features.



and Tom Merry & Co. fairly hurled themselves from it. Before surrounded an old. "What's this mean, you cads?" snapped a now, you rotters! Let us go!" (See chapter 8.)

"It—it's all right, sir," he gasped feebly. "I shall be all right soon. And you needn't worry about me getting home early."

"But you are longing to get home, I know," smiled Glyn's father. "I know boys are always eager—"

"But I'm not, I'm afraid," said Trimble sadly. "I shall only be too thankful when the vac ends and I can return to St. Jim's."

"Good gad!" exclaimed Mr. Glyn. It was the first time he had ever heard a schoolboy say that. "You really tell me—"

"It's a fact, sir," said Trimble, with a pathetic sniff. "It's all right with some fellows—luckier fellows than me. You don't know what it's like at home with the mater always grumbling at me, the pater always wolloping me, and my sister always cheeking me. And I don't get half enough to eat either."

"Bless my soul!"

"Other fellows—lucky fellows," said Trimble enviously and bitterly, "can go away for caravan trips, and motor-boat trips on holidays, but not me."

"But have you no chum, my boy, who would have been glad to take you home with him? Surely—"

"Oh, yes, sir. I've heaps of pals at St. Jim's and lots of them wanted me to come with them. But I'm such a retiring, modest chap, and I don't like pushing myself on other fellows. Your son Bernard was frightfully keen for me to go with him, but I— Well, I'm afraid I made him think I wasn't keen by my retiring manner. I wish I hadn't now."

"Then—then Bernard asked you, and you—"

"Oh, yes, sir—fairly begged me. But, well, I suppose I was an ass, for I didn't give him an immediate answer, you see? And he must have thought I didn't wish to go, as he didn't ask again. And being such a modest, retiring chap—"

"You didn't care to remind him again?"

"That's it, sir. I couldn't very well go and tell him how frightfully keen I really was to go, and all that, could I?"

"H'm! You are a very strange boy, Trimble. However, you have done me a very great service, my boy. You will be glad to hear that my wallet contained a big sum of money, and that you have saved me from serious loss. For that reason I am very anxious to repay you. I think I can see a good way to do so now, Trimble. You really wish to accompany my son on his motor-boat cruise?"

"Oh, yes, sir—certainly, sir! I—I'm frightfully keen."

"And your parents would not object?"

"Rather not," said Trimble, unable to repress a grin. "When Bernard asked me first, in fact, I wrote and told them I might be going with him. And they wrote back and said they were very glad, you know."

"Then the matter is very simple," said Mr. Glyn, his brow clearing. "We can easily arrange for you to join them at Calmhaven even now. I am quite sure Bernard will be delighted to have you, or he would not have asked you in the first place. You are quite sure that it will be satisfactory to your parents?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I can write and tell them at once—in fact, now I remember, they still think I'm going, as I haven't written home since."

"Very well," said Mr. Glyn, laughing heartily at that. "The matter shall be arranged forthwith, my boy. You have rendered me a very great service—you have shown great pluck, and I shall be very pleased to do my best to give you a happy holiday."

"Oh, thank you, sir. How ripping!" said Trimble, his eyes fairly dancing. "But—but there's one thing, sir. Supposing Bernard is cross about it?"

"Bernard—cross? But why should—"

"He may not like me accepting your invitation, and refusing his," said Trimble craftily. "And he may—"

"Nonsense!" laughed Mr. Glyn. "Bernard is not that sort of fellow at all, I am glad to say. He will be only too pleased—you may rely upon that, Trimble. I will, however, give you a letter to hand to him, stating that it is my wish you should accompany the party, and that he must make you as happy and comfortable as possible!"

"Oh, good!" grinned Trimble. "That will do the—I mean that will make it quite all right. In fact, I know it will, sir."

"I am sure it will. That is settled then," said Mr. Glyn, cheerily. "I think Edith will be back from her shopping expedition with the two-seater by this time, and after you have had your wants attended to, my man shall run you down to Calmhaven at the earliest possible moment."

"Oh, ripping, sir!"

And it was "ripping" for Baggy Trimble. Whether it would be so "ripping" for Bernard Glyn and the rest of his fellow holiday-makers was very doubtful indeed.

CHAPTER 8.

On the Broad Highway!

"B A I Jove! This is weally too awful, deah boys!"

"Talk about the rocky road to Dublin," remarked Lowther. "This beats it to a frazzle!"

Glyn, you're found wanting in your duty as host on this trip!"

"Eh? What the thump have I done now?" demanded Bernard Glyn.

"It's not what you've done, but what you have neglected to do," said Monty severely. "You ought to have arranged to get this dashed road sand-papered."

"Ass!"

"Instead of wasting time inventing silly gadgets for giving fellows shocks, and making unearthly smells, you ought to invent a non-bump gadget for bumpy roads."

"And non-bump wheels for antiquated lorries," groaned

Tom Merry. "If this shaking and bumping goes on much longer, my giddy bones will be rattling loose."

Bump, bump! Rattle, rattle! Bump!

The old motor-lorry was rattling and bumping terribly. It may have been all right for a load of bricks, or timber, but it certainly was rather uncomfortable for the nine juniors.

Many miles had been covered since that lorry had started from St. Jim's, and though the ancient engine sent the lorry ever onwards, it was neither speedy nor luxurious—far from it.

But though the cheery juniors grumbled, they really did not mind—excepting, perhaps, Arthur Augustus, who was very concerned about his belongings in the luggage. The thought of the neckties getting-crumpled, and possibly mixed up with the socks and shoes, made Arthur Augustus tremble with apprehension. And as for speed—well, they had plenty of time before them. They had already stopped once at a little countryside inn for lunch, and now they were rumbling on again cheerily.

Even Arthur Augustus was cheery now. He had had the satisfaction of punching Lowther's nose hard—though Lowther had also punched his hard in return—but the rest of the juniors had separated them long ago, and on Lowther making a very humble—and, it is to be feared—very insincere apology, Arthur Augustus had forgiven him. Arthur Augustus was a very forgiving youth.

And now all was calm and bright—with the exception of the bumping, rattling, lurching contractor's lorry, which was certainly neither calm nor bright.

"Hallo! Breakdown ahead!" said Tom Merry suddenly, as he peered round the front of the lorry. "Some giddy motorist with a bust tyre, or something. What about stopping and asking if we can help, chaps?"

It was just like Tom Merry—always eager to help others who might be in distress.

And the car, standing still in the road ahead, did appear to be in distress. It was quite a nice-looking car, and quite a big one. It held three occupants, whilst another—obviously the driver—was struggling to fix a new wheel on the rear off-side wheel.

Without waiting for his chums' approval—though he knew he would get it—Tom Merry shouted to the driver of the lorry to pull up. But, as it happened, the driver was already pulling up even as Tom shouted.

"Hallo, Jim!" he bawled to the driver struggling with the wheel. "What's up, mate? Had a bust?"

Apparently the driver of the lorry knew the driver of the car as he had addressed him as "Jim."

The next moment Tom Merry & Co. realised that the passengers of the car were not unknown to them either.

"Great Scott!" said Digby. "It's Racke and his pals!"

"Those rotters!"

"Bai Jove! What wippin' luck!"

As a rule, Tom Merry & Co. did not look upon it as "luck"—at least, not good luck—when they met Aubrey Racke & Co. But they looked upon it as very good luck now. They felt they had a few questions to ask Racke—questions regarding a "lost" motor-car.

But Racke & Co. did not appear to want to be asked any questions. They sighted Tom Merry & Co. the next moment, and, after staring in utter dismay at them, Racke gave a startled gasp.

"Oh, gad! Run for it, chaps! Oh, hang the luck!"

He jumped from the car, and Crooke and Scrope, looking greatly alarmed, scrambled hurriedly out after him.

"Quick!" yelled Tom Merry.

Racke & Co.'s hurried action was quite enough for Tom Merry & Co.

The lorry had stopped now alongside the car, and the juniors fairly hurled themselves from it. Before Racke, Crooke, and Scrope had taken a dozen steps, they were surrounded and held.

"What's this mean, you cads?" snapped Aubrey Racke furiously, though he knew only too well what it meant. "Let me go, hang you! We're not at St. Jim's now, you rotters! You can't do as you like on the high road. Let us go!"

"Not much," said Tom Merry calmly. "From what we suspect, it's been 'business as usual' with you merchants, and it's going to be business as usual with us—if we prove right. Did you order that car, Racke?"

Racke looked at the driver slyly and nodded.

"Of course I did," he snarled. "What the thump are you talking about?"

Tom Merry turned to the driver of Racke's car, who was staring at the scene in astonishment—as was the driver of the lorry.

"Is this car from Turner's, of Abbotsford?" he asked.

"Yessir!"

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"Who ordered it?"

"The manager at our place told me as a Mr. Glyn from Rylcombe 'ad ordered it to take these young gents to Calm-haven—though I understood as six were coming. But—"

"Then we were right," said Tom, his eyes glinting.

"You rotten cad, Racke!"

"You awful worm!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, you have a feahful cheek, Wacke!"

Racke licked his dry lips. His face was savage with baffled rage. His chums looked merely alarmed and apprehensive. Racke once again had got them into trouble—as he very often did. But it was useless to deny what they had done now—even Racke saw that.

"It was only a joke," he said. "It was a wheeze—the sort of wheeze you've played yourselves many a time, Merry!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Wacke—"

"Well, perhaps you're right there to some extent," admitted Tom Merry, grinning. "But the motive behind it in this case was neither good-natured nor funny, Racke. We know you, and we know the lies you must have told to work this trick. I suppose it was you Mr. Glyn rang up, and I bet you lied to him. Anyway, we're not standing such jokes from you, Racke—"

"Wathah not!"

"Not likely!"

"You've had your little joke," went on Tom, "and now we're going to have ours, old tops! What shall we do with 'em, chaps? I vote we dip their giddy heads in the ditch, and send 'em back in the lorry."

"Good wheeze! It'll do Racke's hair good—wash some of the scent out. In the ditch with 'em!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here," roared Racke. "If you dare—my father—Ow! Leggo, hang you! Yaroooh!"

Racke roared with dismay and apprehension as he was dragged to the ditch. But his struggles availed him little in the strong hands of Tom Merry & Co. Luckily there was not much water in the ditch, but there was quite enough to cover Racke's head for all that.

Splash!

Held firmly by the legs, the wriggling, yelling Aubrey was slid down the bank, and his scented head dipped again and again in the ditch. Then came the turn of Crooke and Scrope, and despite their struggles and frantic appeals for mercy, they were dipped in turn likewise.

They came out, looking, like Aubrey Racke, dismal wrecks.

Water and weeds streamed from their heads and faces, and they gasped and panted and groaned in a dismal chorus.

"You're such a great practical joker, Aubrey," remarked Tom Merry, "that I'm sure you'll see the humour in this, old chap. Now, my merry men, get a rope and tie them up. Then sling them and their giddy luggage into the lorry and yank ours out. We'll continue the journey in the style suitable to little gentlemen like us. That lorry's meant for rubbish, so it will just suit Racke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared at the suggestion. It was paying back Aubrey Racke in his own coin. They acted upon the suggestion without further delay. By this time the driver, Jim, and the lorry-driver—who both belonged to Turner's, of course—had guessed something of what had happened, and while his chums tied up Racke & Co., Tom explained the rest.

Like Tom Merry & Co., the drivers saw plenty of humour in the situation, and they agreed to the change-over—indeed, they could do little else in the circumstances.

It was done at last, and Tom Merry & Co., helped by the two grinning men, loaded their own luggage on the car, and then they pitched Racke & Co., one by one, into the lorry and sat them with their backs to the boarded front.

Racke & Co. looked fiendish.

But neither their looks nor their remarks troubled Tom Merry & Co.

"Now, driver," said Tom Merry, to the grinning lorry-driver, "you can turn your old bus round and take these merchants back to St. Jim's. Drop them off at the gates and leave them there. We'll go in the car."

"Very good, sir! And thank you!" said the driver, as Tom slipped some silver into his hand.

He jumped into the driving-seat, and with a farewell word to Jim, he tooted the lumbering lorry round, and a few seconds later it went rumbling back along the road, bound for St. Jim's.

"Oh, crumbs!" gurgled Blake. "It was bad enough for us in that bumpy old bus; but Racke & Co. will get it worse being tied up. They'll get bumped into a jelly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All aboard!" sang out Bernard Glyn.

The driver had just been putting the finishing touches to the new wheel when the juniors had appeared on the scene, and as all was in readiness now, the car glided away, bound for Calmhaven. And in the roomy car, comfortable now, and still more cheery, Tom Merry & Co. roared again and again as they thought of the luckless Racke & Co. bumping about the floor of the contractor's lorry among the mud and debris.

CHAPTER 9.

Done in the Eye!

"HERE we are, here we are!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Calmhaven at last!"

"Oh, good!"

"Splendid!"

The juniors stood up in the car to get a glimpse of Calmhaven.

It was not their first glimpse by any means, but they were keen to see it again; as Lowther remarked, the sight of the sea alone was good for tired eyes.

And here it was at last. A sudden turn in the lane, winding over the quiet Sussex Downs, brought the sea in sight. Before them the Channel sparkled and shimmered in the afternoon sun.

"And there's giddy old Racke's pater's steam-yacht!" grinned Lowther, pointing out into the wooded bay.

Out in the pretty bay lay a yacht at anchor, steam rising lazily from its funnel. The sun glimmered on white paint and shone on well-polished brasswork. It looked a very smart and luxurious yacht indeed.

"Bought with cash grabbed by profiteering during the War!" growled Herries. "Blow Sir Jonas Racke, and blow his son and his blessed yacht!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And there's the motor-boat," said Glyn, his eyes gleaming. "At the jetty there."

"Oh, ripping!"

As the car slid down the twisting lane the jetty came in sight. Alongside the jetty was a long, low motor-boat. The sun glimmered on her smooth, turtle-back deck forward and on brass rails and portholes.

"That it!" exclaimed Tom Merry eagerly.

"Yes, that's the Silver Spray, old top!" grinned Bernard Glyn.

"She looks a jolly comfortable, roomy boat, anyway!"

"She is. And she can get along, too!" said Glyn, his eyes gleaming with pride. "She's well fitted up, too, and—Hullo, there's two fellows aboard her! I thought only one chap was to be aboard. Blow him!"

Glyn's face was puzzled as the car ran down to the jetty. As it came to a halt he led the way out of the car and at a run to the waiting motor-boat.

In the boat two figures were seated. One was a middle-aged man—obviously a sailor. The other was a boy—a very fat boy in a straw hat.

He grinned up at the juniors as they pelted up, eager to view the craft.

And as they recognised the fat youth seated in the stern they one and all gave vent to an amazed, horrified howl.

"Trimble!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble!"

"What the—the—Great Scott! It's Trimble!"

"Well—well—well—"

Words failed Bernard Glyn.

The nine St. Jim's juniors stared and stared at the fat, satisfied, and grinning countenance of Baggy Trimble. For it was Baggy right enough. He sat back and he grinned up at the fellows on the jetty.

"Hullo, here you are at last!" he said cheerily. "Come aboard, you fellows. I've had some tea rather early, but I bet you chaps will be hungry. Come aboard. She's a ripping boat!"

The fellows glared and glared at Baggy Trimble as if they could scarcely believe their eyes. Glyn looked upon the point of fainting. He stroked his head as if in a dream.

"Trimble!" he gasped. "Trimble, you fat worm!"

"Come aboard, old fellow! Don't stand there staring like a boiled owl!" remarked Trimble cheerily. "I've been all over the old craft already. She's a ripping boat, I'll admit. But the dashed bunks are rather small. I've chosen mine already, though. I say, have you fellows brought any grub? There isn't much on the boat—especially now I've had my tea. I must say your pater doesn't look after his guests very well as regards grub, Glyn!"

(Continued overleaf.)



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.

SEPTEMBER 1st.

IT may seem a bit premature that I should speak of September 1st when we are not yet half-way through August, but when you know the reason you will understand. In case it has slipped your memory, let me remind you that September 1st is the day when the "Greyfriars Holiday Annual" makes its appearance. And what an "Annual" you chaps have had prepared for you this year! It beats all its predecessors, which is saying something, and will constitute the best value for money proposition on the "Annual" market this year. Long complete stories of your old favourites, Tom Merry & Co., Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, abound in it, to say nothing of the scores of other brilliant features that must be included in an A1 annual—and the "Greyfriars Holiday Annual" is A1, take it from me. But at this stage I would like to impress upon you the wisdom of giving an order for this world-famous volume now. There'll be a gigantic rush to secure it, it being the nature of us all to jump with outstretched hands, as it were, at a good thing. And I don't want any of you fellows to get left in the "waiting" queue. Do it now. Give an order for the "Annual" to-day, although we are living in the early weeks of August. In other words, be on the safe side, chums.

A YOUNG BROTHER!

That, I think, aptly expresses the new "Every Boy's Hobby Annual" you will find alongside the "H. A." this year. It is a young brother, and a bright young brother, too. This new annual will make its debut in grand style, I have not the slightest doubt, for it deals in simple yet fascinating style with every known hobby that is worth

while. Amateur mechanics, photography, wireless, model railways, etc., all are dealt with in this wonder annual in language comprehensive to all. Printed on art paper, lavishly illustrated, the new "Every Boy's Hobby Annual" will fill a much-needed want. The handymen amongst you will never be at a loss to know "what to do" and "how to do it" with the "Hobby Annual" by your elbow; it will be of use to every one of you not once, but hundreds of times. Just you keep your peepers open for it on September 1st, or, better still, give your newsagent an order right away.

C. G. MACARTNEY!

There's a topping cut-out stand-up photo of C. G. Macartney, the famous Australian all-rounder, the live wire, in this week's bumper Free Gift issue of the "Magnet," and in the "Popular" readers will find a splendid likeness of W. R. Hammond, the clever Gloucestershire bowler. These cut-out stand-up photos are the goods, chums, you will agree, therefore it behoves all of you to add these two ripping likenesses to your set. Ask for this week's "Magnet" and "Popular."

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY.

"CHUMS AFLOAT!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's story of Tom Merry & Co. is a winner all the way. It deals with the further adventures of the St. Jim's chums during the vacation aboard their motor-boat, the Silver Spray. Don't miss it, whatever you do.

"THE PHANTOM THRONE!"

By Sidney Drew!

Look out for another breezy instalment of this fine adventure serial, and do me the favour of telling your non-reader pals about it. Thanks!

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE!

The St. Jim's Rhymester again piles in with a jolly little poem. This time he has something to say—in verse—on "A Public Flogging." Cheerio, chums, till next week!

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"You—you—you—"

Not being able to finish his remarks, apparently, Bernard Glyn leaped down into the motor-boat and went at Trimble with a rush. Trimble howled.

"Here, keep off! I tell you it's all right. I've got a letter from your pater, Glyn. I tell you—yaroooooh!"

Bump!

Trimble descended to the grating with a bump and a howl. Bernard Glyn fairly jumped on him.

"You fat rotter!" he roared. "I'll teach you to come shoving yourself here after all. You—you cheeky fat worm!"

"Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble. "Yow-wow! Oh, crumbs! I say, I tell you it's all right."

"I'll smash you—"

"It's all right!" shrieked Trimble frantically. "I saved your pater's life—I mean his wallet—and he says I can come. He's sent me here! Yoooooh!"

Glyn suddenly seemed to grasp Baggy's words, and he released him, and let him get up. Glyn was breathing hard.

"What's that you say, you fat fraud!" he panted. "You say my pater told you to come?"

"Yow! Yes, of course he did. Didn't I tell you I'd got a letter?" groaned Baggy, fumbling in his pocket.

"Here—ow—wow—it is."

He handed over a crumpled, soiled envelope. Glyn tore it open, and read the contents. Then he gave a snort of dismayed wrath.

"Great pip!" he groaned. "The fat rotter's right! The pater says I'm to allow Baggy to come, and we're to make him happy during the cruise. Oh, great pip!"

"Great Scott!"

"Bai Jove!"

Trimble almost grinned at the dismayed looks and ejaculations of Tom Merry & Co.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking blank. "How on earth has the fat rotter wangled it?"

"I haven't wangled it," snorted Baggy. "I saved Glyn's father from being robbed—robbed of a heap of money. That's why he urged me to accept his invitation."

"You fat fibber!"

"It's the truth," roared Baggy indignantly. "He was attacked by a rotten footpad—a great hulking brute—and I saved him. I knocked the brute down—"

"What?"

"Knocked him down clean as a whistle," said Baggy proudly. "I fought like a tiger, I can tell you. I knocked him down, got the wallet he'd stolen, and handed it back to Mr. Glyn. He was jolly grateful, I can tell you."

"Well, what a feahful whoppah, bai Jove!"

"It isn't," said Trimble warmly. "It's the truth, Glyn's father will tell you, and so will Kildare and Darrell."

"Kildare and Darrell?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yes. They came up afterwards—too late to be of use, of course; but they did come," explained Baggy. "The silly asses let the brute go, though. Then Mr. Glyn, out of gratitude, took me to Glyn House, and, after attending to my injuries—I got knocked about, of course—he sent me down in the two-seater. I got here just before you fellows—just had time to have a snack before you turned up."

"So that's how you got here?" gasped Manners. "But how did you pass us—"

"We came another way—a short cut," grinned Trimble. "We were here in no time, I can tell you. Well, isn't that letter enough? Glyn's father fairly begged me to come—he was simply overcome with gratitude. He said I was the pluckiest lad he'd—"

"You—you fat fibber!" roared Glyn, finding words at last. "I don't believe a word of it. The pater says nothing about it here—he says he'll send a letter of explanation in the morning. You've wangled this somehow, you rotten spoofer!"

"A rotten funk like you going for a footpad!" snorted Blake. "Rot! Bosh! Bunkum!"

"Boot the fat worm out of it!" advised Herries.

Glyn stared towards Trimble, and then he halted, and looked at the letter again, frowning. But it was his pater's handwriting, right enough, and the notepaper was headed Glyn House in print. It was genuine enough without a doubt.

There was no going against that. His father's wishes would have to be obeyed—for the present, at all events.

"It's no good," he groaned, glowering at the grinning fat youth. "We'll have to let the fat worm stay until that letter comes in the morning."

"I'm afraid so, too," said Tom Merry, smiling. "Better not go against your pater's wishes, Glyn. But—but it beats the band!"

And that was the opinion of them all. That Baggy had shown pluck in any sort of way they simply could not

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believe. It was a wangle of Baggy's—though just how he had worked it they could not imagine.

But there was no getting behind the letter. The story of the footpad—or pickpocket—was a product of Baggy's vivid imagination, of course, but the letter was not. The letter briefly stated that Baggy had rendered Glyn's father a great service, and that it was his wish that Trimble should accompany the party. There was no getting behind that. In some mysterious and weird manner Baggy Trimble had obviously "got round" Mr. Glyn and "wangled" an invite.

It was extremely dismaying and annoying—but there it was; and for the time being Tom Merry & Co. decided to make the best of it. And Baggy Trimble grinned a fat grin, and made up his mind to make the best of it, too.

"It can't be helped," said Glyn, still glowering at Baggy. Had it been any other fellow—even an unwelcome one—Glyn would certainly not have shown that he was annoyed. But Baggy Trimble was a fellow apart from ordinary fellows—a special case in which the ordinary rules of polite society were useless and superfluous. In any case, Tom Merry & Co. knew that it was useless to hide their dismay. From Trimble's fat, triumphant grin, they knew he was fully aware how exceedingly unwelcome he was.

"You're here, Trimble," Glyn went on grimly, "and I don't propose to disobey the pater and boot you out."

"Oh, really, Bernard, old fellow—"

"If you call me Bernard again, you fat frog!" said Glyn in deadly tones. "I'll bust you! Anyway, you're here, and you've got to understand that it's not going to be all slacking about, and grumbling, and eating, my fat pippin. Now you're here, you've got to work your giddy passage."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Yaas, wathah! Make Twimble work!"

"Oh, really, Glyn—" said Trimble warmly. "I shall do nothing of the kind."

"We'll see," grinned Glyn. "In the first place, you'll attend to the crockery, and do all the washing up."

"Oh crumbs! I tell you—"

"For every piece of crockery you break you'll be ducked over the side," went on Glyn calmly. "So it's no good trying to get out of the job that way, old top! You'll also be at the beck and call of every member of the party. Got that?"

Trimble fairly glowed with indignation as he glared at the grinning juniors.

"I jolly well won't," he roared. "I tell you I'm not doing any work at all—and I'm not doing any rotten washing up. Yah! You daren't make me. Your pater says you've got to make me happy. Yah!"

"Well, that's how we're going to make you happy!" grinned Bernard Glyn cheerfully. "You'll be much happier working than slacking around grousing as you usually do. We're going to make you work and be happy. Everybody agrees that there's nothing like honest work for making a fellow happy. That's how we're going to make you happy, Trimble, on this trip."

"Oh, you—you rotter!" gasped Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not doing any rotten work!" howled Trimble.

"Yes, you are!"

Glyn turned to the man in seafaring clothes whom his father had placed in charge of the motor-boat for the cruise.

He was a very lanky individual, with a long, lean face that seemed to wear a mask of perpetual gloom. He also wore a long, drooping moustache that went well with his weary expression, rather red nose, and rather soiled yachting clothes. He was smoking a big pipe, the smoke from which made the juniors cough exceedingly.

All through the little scene with Baggy Trimble he had looked on without a smile, his eyes fixed upon Baggy Trimble. The fat junior seemed to fascinate him.

He stood up now and touched his cap as Bernard addressed him.

"You're Mr. Cragg, I suppose? My father—"

"Yessir! Captain Cragg," corrected the thin man with a sigh. "Your father, Mr. Glyn, 'as bin kind enough to put me in charge of you, Master Glyn—I s'pose you're Master Glyn, sir?"

"Yes. You heard what I said just now? This podgy merchant—this apology for a lard-barrel—is to be head-cook and bottle-washer on this cruise. I want him to start his duties at once. Is there any washing-up, or cleaning-up to be done?"

Captain Cragg sighed again.

"This 'ere craft was tidy as tidy afore this fat young gent came aboard, sir," he said dolefully. "He comes aboard and he says he was a member of the party and asked me where the grub was kept. I told 'im, and he said he'd 'ave a little snack. He's nearly cleared the larder, and left the saloon in a tidy old mess. It fair beats me 'ow he—"

"Good!" said Bernard Glyn. "Trimble shall start his

duties at once by cleaning up the saloon, washing up all dirty dishes, and after that he can get our tea ready."

"I jolly well won't!" shouted Trimble wrathfully.

"Won't you?" said Glyn.

He picked up a short length of rope, and, watched by the now apprehensive Trimble, he tied a knot in the end of it.

"Now, old fat man," he remarked. "This is what is called a rope's end. I'm going to give you one minute to make a start. If you haven't started your duties at the end of the minute I'm going to give you a licking until you do."

"Oh, crumbs. I say, you chaps—"

"Buck up, Trimble!"

"I jolly well won't!" shrieked Trimble. "I say, you fellows—Gussy, old fellow—back me up and I'll see you right for my Venice trip. Don't let that beast—Yaroo!"

Trimble yelled and jumped round Tom Merry as Glyn made a rush at him, waving the rope-end aloft.

"Yoooop! Keep the awful beast off! Oh, crumbs! I say—it's all right, I'll work, Glyn, you beast!"

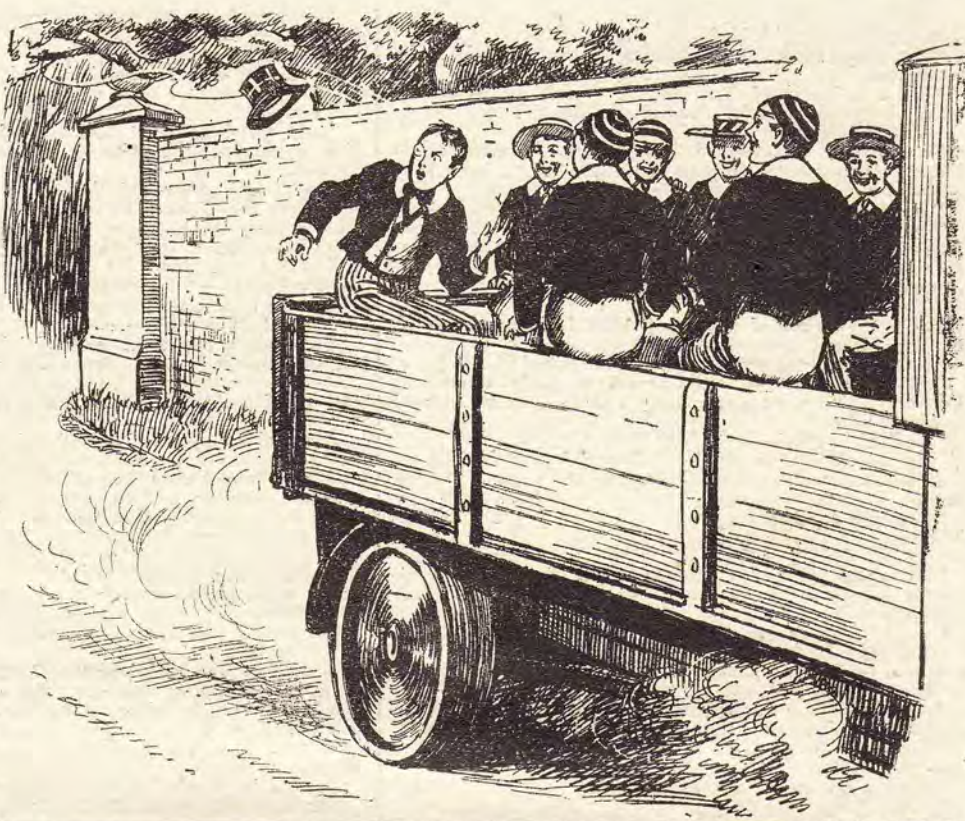
"That's good enough, then," grinned Bernard Glyn.

"Mind you do work, Baggy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

And Baggy did work. The next moment the rattle of crockery sounded from the dim regions forward.



"Thwee cheeahs, deah boys!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, excitedly. "Now we're off! Bai Jove! What—what—Gweat Scott!" The swell of St. Jim's jubulations ended in a sudden shriek of alarm, for as the lorry started to move, his silk hat rose from behind his head like a bird, and swung in the air behind, as if on nothing. (See Chapter 6.)

CHAPTER 10. Trouble!

"H I!" Tom Merry & Co. looked round lazily. They were sunning themselves on deck, and admiring the scenery shorewards. It was very pretty scenery—the smooth, sandy beach, the red-roofed fishermen's cottages, with the cliffs and rolling downs rising behind, and the blue sky, dappled with fleecy white clouds, rising behind. From the sandy beach came the happy chatter and laughter of children paddling, and from the dim regions of the roomy motor-boat came the sound of smashing crockery, telling the cheery motor-boat boys that Baggy Trimble was busy washing-up.

Tea was long ago over on the Silver Spray—a jolly tea enjoyed to the full by the hungry juniors. Certainly Baggy Trimble had made deep inroads into the ship's stores, but there was a fair amount to spare for all that. There would not have been had the juniors given in to Baggy's pleading to join in the tea. They considered Baggy had already had more than his share of tea, and they flatly refused to let him have another tea.

It was a very cheery scene and the only thing that spoiled it, as Lowther remarked, was Captain Cragg's face.

Captain Cragg was sitting smoking on the deck forward. He seemed to spend his time smoking, and did not seem very fond of work. He had stated that before the arrival of Baggy Trimble the craft had been "tidy as tidy," but the juniors did not quite believe him. Certainly the Silver Spray was not quite so clean and tidy as such a fine craft should have been. And it was clear that, excepting for

crumbs and the dirty crockery he had left in the saloon after his "snack," Baggy Trimble was not responsible for that state of affairs.

Tom Merry himself did not take to Captain Cragg over much. He did not like his red nose for one thing, nor the strong tobacco he smoked for another. He also did not like his dismal nature. Yet "Captain" Cragg was polite—especially to Bernard Glyn. In fact, he was just a bit too "soapy" and polite for Bernard Glyn's own liking.

Monty Lowther had already dubbed him "Weary Willie," and the name certainly seemed to suit him.

After tea the juniors had spent some time looking over the boat, and everything delighted them. The boat was roomy and comfortable, and was obviously a good sea-going craft, while the powerful engine alone fascinated them. And as they expected, Bernard Glyn was very soon tinkering with it, and he insisted upon taking it cut into the bay for a short trial run himself. The inventive genius of St. Jim's loved machinery of all kinds, and he soon showed that he could handle the craft almost as well as did Captain Cragg—if not as well.

And now, while Weary Willie smoked, and Baggy Trimble washed-up—it had taken the rope-end to persuade him again—and while Bernard Glyn wiped over the powerful motor with an oily rag, Tom Merry & Co. lounged on deck sunning themselves.

Then had come that hail.

"Hi!"

It was a loud hail, and it sounded both pompous and irritable. Apparently the owner of the voice was either in an irritable mood, or in a hurry, or both.

Tom Merry & Co. looked round lazily.

Then they smiled.

A small, white-painted motor-launch was chug-chugging towards the jetty. Until then the ceaseless splash of the waves on the beach had drowned the sound of its approach.

Now, as the juniors looked round they both saw and heard it.

In the launch, half-standing up in the stern, was a tall, imposing figure, with a rather florid face, and wearing smart yachting-clothes and a yachting-cap. He it was who apparently shouted. In the boat with him were two sailors, one in a peaked cap at the wheel of the launch.

"Hi!"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"His giddy High and Mightiness, Sir Jonas Racke!" he murmured.

"So it is," grinned Tom Merry. "He'll be wondering what's happened to delay dear little Aubrey, I bet."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus, peering across the intervening water through his monocle. "I believe he is addressin' us, deah boys!"

"Hi, there! You in that confounded boat. Hi!"

"Bai Jove! He is addressin' us," remarked Arthur Augustus rather warmly. "Wathah wude, I must say. Pway ignore the wottah until he addresses us in a pwopper mannah, bai Jove!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors chuckled and ignored the florid gentleman in the approaching motor-launch.

"Hi, hi, hi! Are you deaf, you confounded idiots?"

"He's still addressing someone on this boat," murmured Lowther. "He must mean Gussy and Trimble as he used the term idiots."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Let the old blighter rip!" said Bernard Glyn, looking up from his self-imposed task of cleaning the engine. "Blow him!"

"Better see what he wants, old chap," grinned Tom Merry.

"Oh, all right!"

Glyn stood up, and at that moment the motor-launch slowed down a few yards away. Sir Jonas Racke's features were red with wrath.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" called Glyn.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Glyn, you ought to address your eldabs a twifle more politely than that, deah boy!"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

Apparently, Sir Jonas Racke agreed with Arthur Augustus on that point. He fairly glared at Bernard Glyn.

"You—you young rascal!" he bawled. "Did you not hear me calling?"

"We thought it was a steamer's syren, sir."

"What?"

"Was it you calling, sir?" asked Glyn innocently.

"Yes, you impudent young rascal!" bellowed the irate Sir Jonas. "Take that wretched boat out of the way!"

"He wants us to take our boat off his sea," explained Lowther. "We really ought to have asked his permission before coming near the sea, you chaps."

"Cheeky old hunks!" snorted Bernard Glyn. "Take our boat out of the way, eh? Not much!"

"Do you hear me?" bellowed Sir Jonas Racke. "Take that confounded boat away from the jetty! I want to bring my launch in!"

"Nothing doing, old chap!"

"What?"

"Nothing doing," said Glyn coolly. "Plenty of room on the other side of the jetty if you want to land, sir. We're staying where we are."

"Good gad!" roared Sir Jonas. "Do you know who I am?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Glyn cheerfully. "That's why we're not going to move, Sir Jonas!"

"Ah! You do know me, then!" snorted the irate Sir Jonas. "Very well; if you do not remove that motor-boat at once I will call upon my men to board you and see that it is removed! I am not the man to be insulted and defied by a set of insolent young jackanapes! Ah, I see you are wearing school colours! I should like to know what school for young hooligans you come from!"

"We come from St. Jim's," returned Lowther sweetly.

"Where your son Aubrey comes from, Sir Jonas!"

"Good gad!"

The juniors could not help chuckling at the expression on Sir Jonas Racke's features. He fairly spluttered with wrath and outraged dignity.

"Ah! So you come from St. Jim's, my fine fellows!" he spluttered. "Very well; I shall make it my business to acquaint Dr. Holmes with your insolent behaviour while on holiday! Are you going to take that wretched boat away or not?"

"Not!"

"You refuse?"

"Yes, sir," answered Tom Merry calmly. "We have a perfect right to refuse your request, Sir Jonas. If you had asked us in a decent manner we would have done so willingly. But if you want to land now, you must land on the other side of the jetty. There's plenty of room there, and there's no reason why you shouldn't, in any case, instead of wanting us to move."

Sir Jonas almost danced with rage.

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"You won't move?" he bellowed. "Very well; I shall have to use force! Jones!"

"Yessir!"

"You will cross to that boat and let loose the mooring ropes! Jackson!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You will board that boat and take it round to the far side of the jetty! You must use force if necessary!"

"Ahem!"

The yacht's officer and the sailor looked at each other, and then they looked at the motor-boat and the juniors. They plainly did not care for the job at all. It was clear, from their looks, that they found Sir Jonas Racke very trying at times. They did not move.

"Sir Jonas—" began the officer.

"Do as I command, Jackson!"

"Ahem! You see, sir—"

Mr. Jackson rose to his feet, plainly startled by the look on his employer's face. Jones also rose. They stood and looked at the grinning boys in the big motor-boat. Tom Merry & Co. did not look the sort of fellows to be "shifted" easily.

They did not like the job—either from a moral or practical point of view. The juniors were undoubtedly in the right, and they looked very determined and steady.

Messrs. Jackson and Jones made no move.

Sir Jonas almost danced with rage.

"You hear me, Jackson?" he bellowed. "Good gad! Are you afraid of a set of young hooligans? Here, I will deal with them myself!"

The small motor-launch was almost up alongside the big motor-boat now, barely a yard or so separating them. Sir Jonas set his lips, and stepped to the edge of the gunwale of his small craft.

"Stand by to repel boarders!" murmured Lowther.

He caught up a boathook. His intention was to keep Sir Jonas from boarding by a display of arms. He certainly had no intention of touching Sir Jonas with the boathook. Even the mischievous Lowther drew the line at that.

Yet the boathook did touch Sir Jonas.

For as he shoved out the boathook, Sir Jonas started to jump across the intervening space, and he jumped right into the end of the boathook.

"Oh, my hat! Lowther, you ass!"

"Look out!"

It was over in a flash. Sir Jonas seemed to stand in mid-air for a brief instant, and then he fell clean between the two boats with a startled yell.

Splash!

At that moment a car drew up gently at the end of the jetty, and three juniors jumped out; and one of them, an elegantly clad youth, ran along the jetty, his pale face startled and furious. It was Aubrey Racke, and he was just in time to see and hear that splash!

CHAPTER 11.

White Paint!

SPLASH!

Sir Jonas Racke vanished from sight under the green waves, spluttering wildly, and the next moment he came up again, spluttering still more wildly.

Luckily, the water was not deep, nor was it cold; but it was very wet, as Sir Jonas soon found. His yachting-cap floated away, and his head and moustaches streamed with water as he came up, puffing and panting like a grampus.

"Man the lifeboat!" called Monty Lowther.

But the juniors were too startled to laugh. They just stared at Sir Jonas, struggling and bellowing in the water. Racke stood on the jetty, almost livid with rage and apprehension.

But Messrs. Jackson and Jones were more practical. They reached over the side of their boat and grabbed at Sir Jonas. After a mighty struggle they managed to haul his dripping form into their launch.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry. "Now for it! The boulder asked for it, but— Oh, you ass, Lowther!"

"Quite an accident!" said Lowther, unperturbed.

"Oh, you—you cads!" hissed Aubrey Racke. "Father—"

But Sir Jonas was not yet in a fit state to greet his son. He flopped down on the grating of the launch, and he blew and panted and gasped, streams of water flowing from him the while. Mr. Jackson did not wait for further orders; he just started the motor, and the launch shot away from the jetty and went speeding back to the yacht.

Apparently, Mr. Jackson considered it his duty to get his employer back to the yacht—either before he caught cold, or before he got himself into further trouble.

Racke stood and shouted after it in vain. The launch touched the distant yacht, and they saw Sir Jonas being helped up the ladder to the deck.

"Oh, you—you cads!" hissed Aubrey Racke. He had no idea what had started the trouble, but the sight of Tom Merry & Co. was enough for him. "Oh, you cads! You did that to spite me! I—I'll make you sit up for this, you see if I don't! And my father will—"

"It was your father's own doing," said Tom Merry warmly. "He ordered us to clear from here, and we refused. Then he tried to board us. What followed was an accident. I'm certain Lowther did not intend to send him in."

"I didn't," said Lowther, though he did not seem much upset over the sad occurrence. "Your pater just walked into the boathook."

"Liar!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Wacke—"

"Oh, let him rip!" growled Tom Merry.

The car had driven off now, and Crooke and Scrope had joined Racke on the jetty. All three glared down at the grinning Tom Merry & Co. All three looked very muddy and dishevelled, and it was plain that their tempers had also suffered from their ride in the lorry.

"You'll pay for this!" snarled Crooke. "You thought you'd done us, but we managed to get a car for all that, you rotters!"

"Very glad you did," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You'd have missed the entertainment if you hadn't come just then. Shall we run you over to the yacht, Aubrey?"

"Hang you!" snarled Racke, staring across to the distant yacht. "I tell you I'll make you cads— Oh, good!"

Racke sighted something just then. It was the little launch just leaving the side of the yacht. It came shooting towards the jetty.

Messrs. Jackson and Jones were in the boat, and this time the boat kept clear of the big motor-boat and ran gently alongside the jetty beyond them.

Racke, Crooke, and Scrope hurried across the jetty, and a minute later the launch was speeding back to the yacht with them aboard.

The cheery Tom Merry & Co. gave them a parting cheer as they went, and Racke shook his fist at them.

"Wonder if we've seen the last of them for the vac?" said Manners.

"Racke will try to get his own back if he can," said Blake. "Better keep a good look-out, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wacke is a cad, and he will not stop at any rotten tricks!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head.

Tom Merry & Co. resumed their interrupted rest, but they kept a very close eye on the steam-yacht out in the bay. But half an hour had passed before anything happened, and then the launch was seen to leave the side of the yacht. In it three forms were seen.

"Racke, Crooke, and Scrope," grinned Bernard Glyn. "Look out, Baggy, here comes the enemy!"

"Blow them!" said Baggy Trimble. "Think I care for that rotter Racke or his blessed stuck-up pater! Blow them!"

Baggy was feeling much better now and quite happy again. His work was finished for the time being, and while Tom Merry & Co. had been lounging on deck, and Weary Willie had been smoking, Baggy had been busy in the larder—quite unknown to anyone else. He was now feeling well-fed and satisfied.

"No need to worry about them," remarked Blake. "I was fearing Racke's pater would come along with a boat's crew to wipe us up. Let those three cads rip!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

But the juniors watched the approaching launch, for all that. It sped towards the jetty, and ran round the far side. They heard it scrape against the piles.

"All serene!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Racke knows better than to come near us!"

But Tom Merry was wrong, as it happened. From where the juniors lounged below the jetty they could see nothing of Racke or the motor-launch. But suddenly Tom Merry sat up as two figures appeared on the jetty above their heads. They were Racke and Crooke, and even as Tom glimpsed them he leaped to his feet with a yell.

"Look out!"

Swoosh, swoooooosh!

Racke and Crooke had buckets in their hands, and even as Tom Merry yelled the warning they let fly. From Racke's bucket swept a stream of red paint, and from Crooke's came a stream of white paint.

It was lucky that Tom did yell—for all but Trimble. The red paint—or most of it—had been flung with all Racke's force and it had just missed Tom and swished clean over the boat, splashing into the sea beyond.

But the white paint was not wasted so recklessly. The stream took Baggy Trimble clean under the chin.

"Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

Trimble sat down with white paint streaming from his face and clothes. He fairly wallowed in white paint.

"Bai Jove!"

"Mum-mum-mum-m-m-mum!" gurgled Baggy Trimble frantically. "Gug-gug-gug-gug! Grooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Roaring with laughter, Racke and Crooke vanished from sight.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Great pip!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" wailed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am splashed feahfully! My clobber is ruined!"

All the juniors, more or less, had been spattered with the white paint as it splashed on the deck, and they yelled with wrath after the first startling shock of the attack.

"After the cads!" roared Bernard Glyn.

He was the first to move, and in a flash he was on the jetty, letting go the ropes. Then he leaped aboard and rushed to the motor. At the same time, grasping his idea, Tom Merry jumped to the wheel.

The next moment the powerful motor fired, and the boat throbbed from stem to stern.

"All clear!" sang Bernard Glyn.

Tom had already shown he could handle the craft, and next moment the boat was moving. It swept round in a wide semicircle, and then Glyn opened out the throttle.

But the loud chug-chugging of the launch had been going some seconds, and suddenly the little launch flashed from beyond the jetty and went speeding towards the yacht out in the bay.

"Let her rip!" grinned Lowther. "Tally-ho!"

And Bernard Glyn let the Silver Spray "rip" with a vengeance.

Her prow lifted, and huge waves foamed up on either side as the Silver Spray leaped in pursuit.

"We'll catch 'em easily," grinned Glyn. "You see!"

Racke, apparently, also saw that. At some time or other the black sheep of the Shell had learned something about driving, but it was obviously very little—likewise steering. He glanced behind, and they saw him jump forward to open out the throttle more.

The speed of the launch increased, but it was useless. The big motor-boat overhauled it rapidly.

With half the distance to the yacht covered, Glyn gave a chuckle.

"Got 'em!" he said. "Here goes!"

Baggy Trimble was still yelling and wailing, but nobody took any notice of the hapless junior; even Arthur Augustus had forgotten his bespattered "clobber" in the excitement of the chase.

As Bernard Glyn spoke, he shot ahead of the launch, and then Racke realised the game was up, and he slowed down, with a snarl of fury.

At the same time, Bernard Glyn slowed down, Tom Merry swung round the wheel, and with a neat swerve brought both the boats alongside.

"Got you, my pippins!" said Tom Merry. "No good kicking, Racke, old top!"

"Hang you!" hissed the discomfited Aubrey. "If you dare to set foot in this boat—"

Tom Merry & Co. did dare. Glyn remained at the engine and Tom Merry at the wheel, while Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy boarded the launch, Lowther and Manners keeping the boats together.

Blake grasped Racke as he jumped up, and before Racke knew what was happening he was pitched neck and crop into the big motor-boat.

"Now the others!" sang out Blake.

Crooke and Scrope jumped up, but they were helpless in the hands of the chums of the School House. Scrope gave in without a struggle, and Crooke put up a very feeble fight.

Before a minute was up, all three were aboard the Silver Spray, while Manners and Lowther made the launch fast alongside.

"Now, my pippins!" grinned Tom Merry cheerfully. "You seem jolly handy with paint, so we'll see you have plenty. Roll 'em in that mess, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

Racke struggled furiously as he realised the juniors' intention, yelling at the top of his voice for aid, in the hope that those on the distant yacht would hear and help.

"Look lively," yelled Tom; "or we shall have a boat-load of sailors to deal with. Sharp's the word."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Help!" roared Racke. "Oh, you rotten cads! Leggo! Oh, gad! Help!"

"Roll 'em in it, chaps!"

Racke's turn came first. There was a fearful mess of

paint on the deck, and into this Racke, despite his frantic struggles, was rolled and rolled, until a great deal of the paint had left the deck and was on Racke.

Aubrey Racke looked a most fearful sight when they had finished.

"Oh, you—you—you—"

Words failed Racke.

"Young gentlemen—?" appealed Captain Cragg, apprehensively.

But the juniors did not heed the apprehensive Captain Cragg, who seemed quite overcome by the exciting incidents of the day. They pitched the yelling Racke back into his boat, and then they treated Crooke and Scrope likewise.

"We ought really to make the cads clean up properly," remarked Glyn, eyeing the little paint still left on the deck. "But I see there's a boat leaving the yacht. Better clear!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

It was certainly time to clear. On the deck of the steam yacht, a tall figure was seen dancing and gesticulating—apparently it was Sir Jonas Racke—whilst a boat, manned by four sailors, was just leaving the side of it.

The juniors spent no more time on Crooke and Scrope. Like their leader, they were both smothered in white paint, almost from head to foot, and thrown into the motor-launch. Then the engine throbbed and Manners and Lowther shoved off, leaving the pursuing boat far behind.

Twenty minutes later the Silver Spray slid to rest alongside a jetty in a little cove round the headland. It was only a tiny jetty, used by local fishermen, but it suited Tom Merry & Co's. purpose all right.

CHAPTER 12.

Getting Rid of Undesirables!

"SOMEONE'S got to go to Calmhaven for more grub!" Bernard Glyn passed the remark cheerfully, and loudly.

The Silver Spray was still moored alongside the jetty, and the chums of St. Jim's were lounging on deck, having just dressed after a belated bathe in the briny.

"More grub?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Why bother about it to-night, Glyn?"

"Trimble's nearly cleared us out of most things."

"I know that," grinned Tom. "But there'll be plenty of time before we start out in the morning, old chap."

Bernard Glyn chuckled.

"It must be got to-night," he said. "That little general shop in Calmhaven won't be closed yet, and it's only a ten minutes' walk over the cliff. Hi! Baggy!"

Glyn called to Baggy Trimble who was sprawling in the saloon, taking his ease. Baggy came waddling out, grumbling.

"What d'you want?" he grunted. "I'm not jolly well doing any more work to-night, Glyn, you rotter!"

"I don't want you to work, old top. But someone's got to run over to the village for some grub. As you've scoffed most of the stuff we'd got in I think you ought to go, Baggy."

Baggy Trimble grinned.

"I'll go," he said. "I'll go like a shot, old chap. I shall want some money, of course."

"Of course," assented Glyn. "Here you are, then—here's a ter bob note."

"Are you potty, Glyn?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "You know the fat rotter will scoff all the grub and come back with a yarn that he's been robbed or something."

"My dear man, how can you be so suspicious of a guest of mine?" said Glyn. "I can trust Baggy, if you can't. I am quite sure that I can trust Baggy to look after the grub, all right."

"Certainly, Bernard."

Trimble pocketed the ten-shilling note, and a moment later he was on the jetty and rolling quickly across the beach as if afraid of Glyn changing his mind.

"Well, you are a duffer, Glyn," said Tom Merry. "The fat ass will only—"

"My dear man, isn't it worth ten bob to get rid of Trimble?" asked Glyn blandly. "Leave it to me. Hallo, oh, good! Here's dear old Weary Willie. He's been eyeing me for the past hour, and wondering if he dare ask to go ashore. I think he knows someone at the Red Bull in Calmhaven. Shush!"

Captain Cragg—otherwise "Weary Willie"—ambled along from the fore-deck. He touched his cap to Bernard Glyn.

"Starting off in the morning at eight, you said, Master Glyn?" he asked.

"I said we would start off at eight," said Glyn.

"Plenty of time to do any little job as wants doing in the morning, then," said Weary Willie. "I s'pose you've no objections to me running over to the village for an hour or so, Master Glyn? I want to see a friend o' mine

there and get some tobacco."

"Certainly not, Cragg," said Glyn genially. "No objection at all."

"Thank you, Master Glyn! I'll not be more'n an hour."

Captain Cragg climbed ashore, and hurriedly crossed the beach as Trimble had done.

Glyn chuckled as he watched him go. Then he rose to his feet.

"We'll let 'em both get well out of sight," he remarked, "and then we'll get off!"

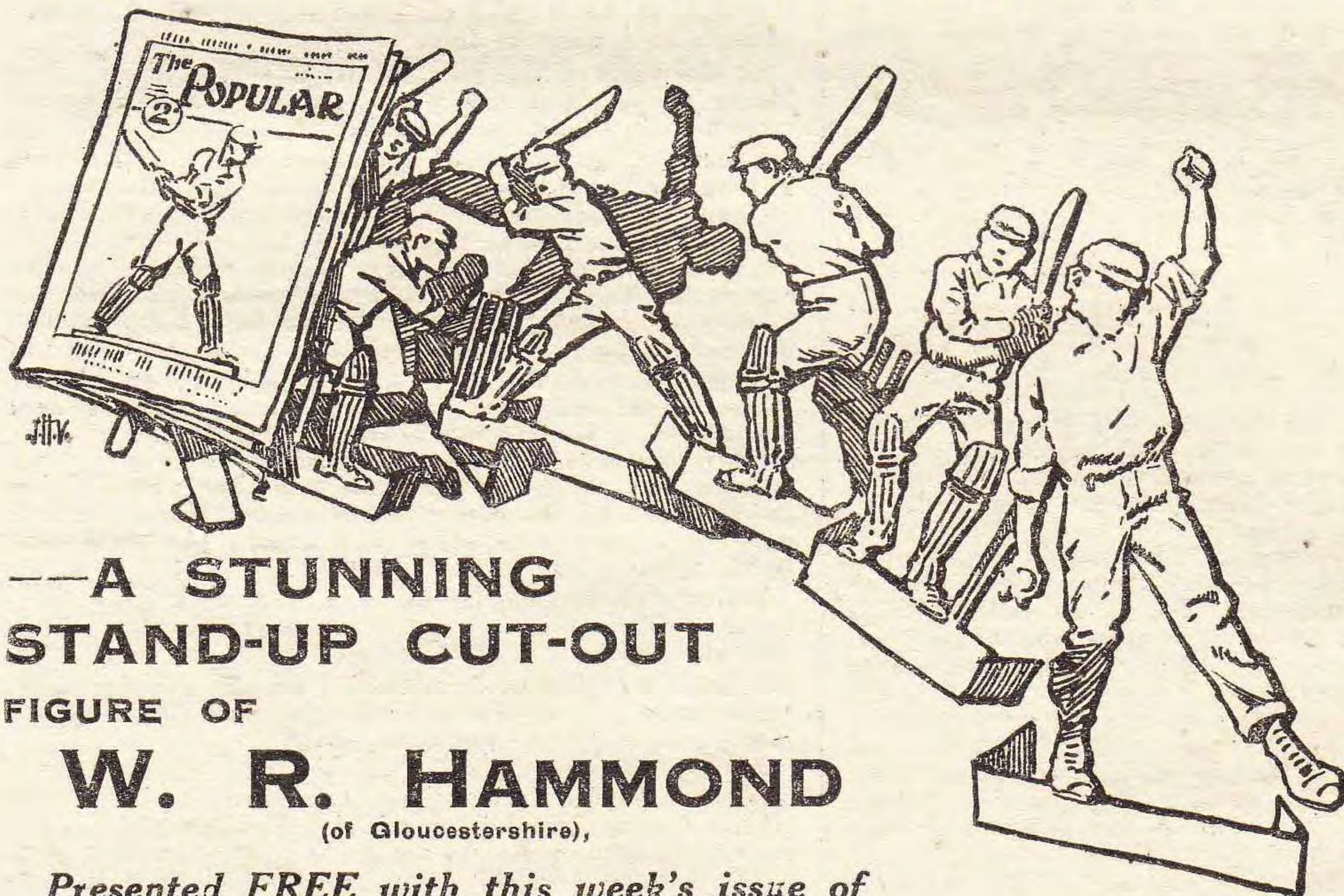
"Glyn—" began Noble.

"You chaps won't mind being at sea after dark," said Glyn. "Though I don't expect it will be necessary; there's a nice little place—Sandbeach—a little farther along the coast, and we'll stop there for the night, I think. We have navigation lights aboard in any case."

"But—but—"

"Good!" said Glyn, staring ashore. "They're out of

FOR YOUR COLLECTION, CHUMS—



—A STUNNING
STAND-UP CUT-OUT
FIGURE OF

W. R. HAMMOND

(of Gloucestershire),

Presented FREE with this week's issue of

THE POPULAR, NOW ON SALE.

sight already. Now, chaps—get a move on. You take the wheel, Merry."

"Pai Jove!"

"But what about those chaps?" almost yelled Tom Merry. "You said you were not starting out until eight in the morning, you ass!"

"Not at all—quite a mistake," grinned Glyn. "I said we'd make a start at eight. If Weary Willie and Baggy mistook me, and thought I meant morning, that's their look out."

Tom Merry & Co. stared blankly at the inventive genius of St. Jim's. They understood now. Tom Merry himself had wondered why Glyn had taken Trimble's inclusion in the party so calmly. True, he had kicked up a fuss at the start, and he had insisted upon Baggy working. But since then he had been most genial to Trimble, and had even given him a suit of clothes—a thing he would never have dreamt of doing at St. Jim's.

He had also been astonished at the calm way in which Glyn had taken the presence on board of Captain Cragg—as he styled himself. All the way from St. Jim's—and long before starting out—Glyn had grumbled at his father's "thoughtlessness" in insisting upon an "elder person" accompanying the party. Yet Glyn had scarcely mentioned it, or grumbled since boarding the Silver Spray.

But Tom understood now. Glyn had only been biding his time—he had intended all along to get rid of them at the first opportunity.

"But—but you can't do it, Glyn, you ass!" gasped Tom Merry. "Your pater—"

"Why not?" inquired Glyn. "I said I was starting at eight, and I'm going to start at eight. If Weary Willie and Trimble don't turn up in time and lose the boat, that is their look out. It almost amounts to desertion, you know. If they are under the impression that I meant eight o'clock in the morning, then I can't help that, can I?"

"You awful ass! But your pater said Trimble was to—"

"My dear man, do you believe Trimble earned the invite—do you believe his silly yarn? I don't, anyway. I know the fat fraud has spoofed dad, and I feel perfectly justified in spoofing him. Besides, if Trimble fails to turn up in time that's his own look out as I say."

"But it's eight o'clock now—he can't," yelled Tom.

"I know that. But we're starting now, all the same," said Glyn coolly. "Loose those mooring ropes, Herries."

"What ho!" grinned Herries. "Anything to get rid of Trimble, old chap?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Now they fully understood, the chums of St. Jim's fairly howled with laughter, though more than one of them did not quite approve of Glyn's way of looking at things. They certainly were glad—thankful—at the thought of losing Trimble, and they felt no sympathy for Trimble. The fat youth undoubtedly deserved to be "left."

But Tom Merry still murmured.

"Glyn, old chap," he said, "chuck it—chuck the idea for goodness' sake! Your pater said—"

"I know what the pater said, and I know Trimble."

"But—but you can't leave the fat ass stranded—"

"We're not leaving him stranded. He'll spend that ten bob on a jolly good feed, and I know he has some money in his pocket—I put it there myself. He'll find it when the time comes. And there are plenty of trains from Calnhaven in the morning, if not to-night. Blow Trimble!"

"But Captain Cragg—"



"Hold him! Hold him, Kildars!" yelled Baggy Trimble frantically. "He's got Mr. Glyn's wallet—I spotted him take it!" Mr. Glyn's hand flew to his breast pocket. "The boy is right, I believe," he said grimly. Trimble jumped forward, and plunging a fat hand into the pocket of the rascal's dingy coat, he withdrew the wallet. (See Chapter 7.)

"Blow Captain Cragg! I'm not responsible for any little mistake Captain Cragg makes. We want to be on our own on this trip. Those ropes loose, Herries?"

"Yes, Capting!"

"All aboard, then. You right at the wheel, Tommy? Buck up!"

And Bernard Glyn started the engine of the motor-boat. The boat throbbed from stem to stern. Tom Merry laughed and grabbed the wheel. After all, it was Glyn's look out, and personally he felt just as relieved at the loss of Trimble and Weary Willie as did his chums.

A moment later the boat was moving, and heading out to sea.

It was lifting to the waves at last, and Tom turned her up channel, keeping fairly close to shore. The engine suddenly stopped.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom Merry.

"Nothing, old chap," said Bernard Glyn cheerfully, as the big boat slid slowly to a stop, and lay heaving gently. "I only want to try my little reversing gadget."

"Oh dear!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't do it, Glyn, old chap," groaned Lowther. "Think of our parents when they hear we've been found drowned! It's too far to swim ashore."

"You silly asses!" said Glyn warmly. "Nothing can possibly go wrong!"

"We know that—they never do with your silly inventions, do they?"

"If you call my invention silly—"

"Don't do it, old chap—leave it till morning."

"I'm trying it now," said Bernard Glyn with enthusiasm. "I've been longing to try it ever since we boarded the old boat. It won't take more than five minutes to fix. You'll see!"

And Bernard Glyn ran forward eagerly to where the luggage was stored. He came back quickly with a queer contrivance of wheels, and wires, and batteries. For the next ten minutes Glyn was busy—very busy. He first of all turned back his sleeves, and then he got to work with spanners and hammer.

He jumped up at last, his face flushed, and his eyes dancing.

"I've fixed it!" he said. "Now you chaps will see what I can do. This little gadget is going to make me famous. You ready at the wheel, Tommy?"

"Yes," groaned Tom Merry. He knew it was useless to argue with the schoolboy-inventor when he was on the war-path. "Get ready to swim for it, you fellows."

"Yaas, wathah. Bai Jove, weally, Glyn, I do wish you

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

The roar of the engine sounded and Arthur Augustus did not try again.

"Ready, Merry?"

"Yes, fathead!"

Glyn opened the throttle, and the boat leaped ahead. Then he stopped the engine again.

"All serene!" grinned Glyn delightedly. "I feared it might interfere with going ahead; but it doesn't. Now for trying it. Ready?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Here goes! I'll just let her go gently, as you'll find it rather difficult to steer, not being used to it, Tommy."

And Glyn, after turning a little lever on his invention, started the engine again.

As the engine roared into motion, the boat started backwards—at full speed almost. Glyn had either blundered, or else he had changed his mind suddenly about going "gently."

"Oh, my hat!" yelled Tom Merry. "Stop, Glyn, you ass! We'll be swamped in a sec., and I can't steer the blessed thing. Stop her!"

Glyn, who was working frantically with his spanner, yelled back in alarm.

"I can't, blow it!"

Nor could he. Something had undoubtedly gone wrong—either with his invention, or with the motor. Glyn couldn't stop it or lessen speed.

By this time the after cockpit was all but flooded with water as the waves came sweeping over the low, unprotected stern.

But that was not all. Tom Merry was not an expert at steering whilst going ahead; he was far less expert at steering whilst going at a good speed astern.

He struggled with the wheel, and the boat swayed and rocked as it twisted and turned with Tom Merry bellowing to Glyn to "stop her, you fool!"

They were close to the shore now, and there seemed nothing between the motor-boat and a serious disaster.

The disaster came quickly enough.

There came suddenly a grinding crash from the motor, and pieces of steel and wire flew skywards. One chunk of metal caught Glyn, who was stooping over the engine, full in the chest and sent him with a fiendish howl and a crash full against the after coaming.

Then the engine suddenly stopped and silence reigned.

"Oh, thank goodness!" gasped Tom Merry. "Glyn, are you—"

Tom Merry got no further than that, for just then the boat shook from end to end, slid back over grating sand, and then came to a standstill with a shock that threw all the startled juniors off their feet, sending them in a heap over the grating.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

There was a chorus of gasps and yells, and as the shaken motor-boat boys staggered to their feet they discovered that the Silver Spray was hard and fast on a sandbank.

Glyn staggered to his feet, groaning—greatly to the relief of his chums.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he gasped. "Fancy that happening, you fellows! I must watch that next time. It must have been just the—"

"You raving ass!" snorted Tom Merry. "How the thump are we to get back? We'll just drift on the dashed rocks!"

"Rubbish! All we need to do is to wait for the tide to float us off. It's nearly high tide now, though."

Bernard Glyn looked at the engine. He groaned as he saw the havoc to his precious invention. There was scarcely anything but a mass of twisted wires left.

"Luckily the motor isn't damaged much," he grunted. "It was my reversing gear that went, blow it—smashed to atoms!"

"Thank Heaven!"

"Oh, rats!"

The juniors examined the damage with glum faces. Luckily, as Glyn had stated, the motor was scarcely damaged at all—it was Glyn's invention that had gone, being of flimsy material. As Glyn grasped the starting-handle and "turned her over," the motor fired instantly, and the boat throbbed from stem to stern, the motor running as sweetly as ever.

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But though the propeller thrashed the water furiously, the boat did not move. It was hard and fast yet.

Glyn shut off the engine and wiped his brow which was wet with perspiration. Then the juniors sat down to wait for the tide to do what the motor refused to accomplish.

They waited nearly an hour, and then the boat floated. And even as it did there sounded the click of oars, and a boat came in sight round the rocky shoulder of cliff. In it were three persons. One was a burly fisherman, and the other two—

A deep groan came from all the juniors as they recognised the two.

One was Baggy Trimble and the other was Captain Cragg.

Captain Cragg was doleful as ever, but Baggy looked very happy and cheery. He also looked fat and satisfied, and there were crumbs and jam on his fat cheeks.

"Hallo, here you are, you fellows," he called cheerily. "We spotted you from the top of the cliff, you know. I say, you are a set of asses, aren't you? He, he, he! I knew your rotten game the moment I saw you. Trying to give us the slip, what? He, he, he!"

"Master Glyn," began Captain Cragg, shaking his head. "What would your father think, you going off like that there?"

"I—I was just trying a little invention of mine," grunted Glyn dispiritedly. "That—"

"Oh! This young gent says as you were trying to give us the slip, Master Glyn."

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble. "I'm not done so easily as that, you fellows. I must say I'm surprised at you all—shocked in fact."

The boat ran alongside, and Baggy Trimble stepped aboard cheerily. Captain Cragg—after paying the boatman—followed dolefully. Baggy Trimble looked a trifle nervously at the juniors.

"I say, you fellows," he said. "I've got rather rotten news for you. You know that ten bob you gave me, Glyn?"

"You—you—you—"

"Well, I must have lost it somewhere—I found a hole in my pocket," explained Trimble. "Wasn't it rotten luck? I couldn't get the grub, of course. But it's all right, isn't it?" ended Trimble cheerily. "We can get the grub in the morning. I say, let's get back now. I'm jolly tired."

"Let's get back," said Glyn, groaning.

And he started the engine again. Tom Merry allowed Captain Cragg to take the wheel—he was only too glad to do so. And they started back—far too dispirited even to bump Baggy Trimble. The ten-shilling note had gone, but Baggy Trimble was still here, and Captain Cragg was still here, and there was nothing else to do but get back.

That night the motor-boat boys slept on the Silver Spray, lulled to sleep by the wash and splash of the waves against the side of the swaying motor-boat as she lay alongside the little jetty. It had been an exciting day altogether, and they were too tired to be kept awake even by Baggy Trimble's familiar snore.

The Silver Spray slid gently into Calmhaven Bay early the next morning to get fresh stores—Sir Jonas Racke's yacht having departed. Evidently Sir Jonas was not keen on revenge on the motor-boat boys, whether Aubrey Racke, and Crooke, and Scrope were or not. And whether they would see the palatial steam-yacht again during the holidays the juniors did not know or care.

A letter was waiting for Bernard Glyn—a letter from his father. It explained all about Baggy's heroism, and it repeated Mr. Glyn's kindly wish that the brave Baggy be made happy, and that he should accompany the motor-boat cruise.

The story brought amazement and dismay to Tom Merry & Co. But after that, whether they believed Baggy's story or not, they could not doubt that Trimble really had earned his inclusion in the party. How he had done it they did not know, and why he had done it they could only guess. But he had done it, and, unpleasant as the prospect was, they had to accept the position and make the best of it—just as they had to make the best of Weary Willie's inclusion in the party.

And when the Silver Spray forged out to sea that sunny morning, both Weary Willie and Baggy Trimble were aboard her. But Tom Merry & Co. were merry and bright for all that, eagerly looking forward as they were to "pastures new," and the adventures that lay ahead of them.

THE END.

(Look out for the next magnificent yarn in this splendid holiday series, entitled: "CHUMS AFLOAT!" by Martin Clifford, which will appear in next week's "GEM." It's a corker, chums!)

BRITISH PLUCK! Stranded on a sandbank, with their commandeered aeroplane useless for want of petrol, Val Hilton's little band of Britishers are not beaten yet!



Stranded!

A PHANTOM THRONE

By Sidney Drew

An Amazing Story of Breathless Adventure and International Intrigue.

"YOU mustn't offer advice to the commander-in-chief," said Ching Lung, shrugging his shoulders.

They were in the saloon, and a very handsome saloon it was, with seats for eight passengers. Ching Lung guessed that a machine of her size and power would consume quite thirty gallons of petrol every flying hour. Val had taken the pilot's seat, leaving it to Maddock and O'Rooney to investigate and report. And Val's face was not a cheerful one when he appeared in the saloon.

"Whacked again," he said. "There's not enough juice to get away with it and make merry England, and I don't want to drown the lot of you. What would happen, Ching, if we pushed along and dropped in Holland?" Maddock says we could do that."

"Well, if you ask me, son," answered the prince, "it wouldn't be all jam. There are rules and regulations about aeroplanes, and the Dutch police would be very inquisitive. They'd want to know who you were, where you came from, and what you were doing with this particular German bus."

"Then we'll cut Holland out," said Val. "There's only one other way, and that is to play the cat-and-mouse trick. She's got wireless, anyhow, if we can only tinker it up to the right wave-lengths. We'll save our juice, and play hide-and-seek with those Huns until something happens."

"Sensible youth," said Ching Lung. "Personally, I don't want to go to Holland, for it's jolly boring to be asked a lot of questions you don't know how to answer. In my early youth I may have been guilty of robbing an orchard; but I've tried hard ever since to keep honest, and you've forced me to break out in a fresh place, and help you to steal an aeroplane. No, let's dodge the Dutch police!"

Val made his way back to Barry O'Rooney, and the bo'sun joined them. Wigland, who rarely ventured a remark unless he was spoken to, had found a box of cigars in a cupboard and was smoking one. Thanks to the electric radiators, it was warm in the saloon, for their wet clothes made them feel uncomfortably chilly. Maddock and the prince exchanged glances.

"Right!" said Ching Lung, and went out.

Dave had been exploring the cupboard.

"Wine and beer and cigars," he said, "but precious little else, except a tin of biscuits. Hallo! That's better. My mouth feels as if I'd been swigging a mixture of petrol, sand, and salt-water. This looks like a siphon of lemonade, though I can't read the German name on it. Anyway, I'll try it!"

It did happen to be lemonade; and to Dave, who was as thirsty as an eel in a sack of lime, it tasted like nectar. He could have emptied the whole siphon; but, remembering that Val disliked wine and beer, he contented himself with half a glass.

"What's the game now, Ben?" he asked, as Barry O'Rooney shut off the engine.

"I suppose they've picked out another of these charming islands, sir," said the bo'sun. "Sort of grasshopper stunt, souse me. If we get chased, Mr. Val means to hop from one sand-heap to another!"

"It sounds easy if they only chivvy us by boat, but how will it go if they bring another plane along?"

"We'll have to wait and see, sir," said Maddock. "It will all come out in the wash, souse me! It was quite thoughtful of them to leave these cigars, Jimmy," he added, "for my baccy is wet pulp!"

There was a slight bump, and the plane swayed a little and then came to a standstill. Dave slid the window back and looked out. They had alighted on another dreary, treeless sandbank.

"Val does find 'em," he said. "It's too dark to see a lot, but I'm sure the scenery is absolutely beautiful. Br-r-r! It blows jolly cold, too, and my togs are sticking to my back like half-frozen putty, and altogether I'm about fed-up with everything! I'm going down to stretch my knees before they go stiff."

"Seems safe enough, anyhow, souse me," said the bo'sun. "I don't think you'll be trodden on in the crush, sir. Wake up, Jimmy Wigland, and have a squint round. You know something about these rotten dustheaps, so perhaps you can tell us where we are."

It was too dark for that. Val surveyed the prospect through his glasses from the top of one of the wings. They were certainly safe from any surprise except by aeroplane, for the nearest island was quite two miles away, and that was as bleak and bare as the one on which they had alighted.

Presently numberless wireless operators were puzzled by a mysterious message they could not translate. It was evidently a coded message, but their code books did not help them to translate it.

"To the Chief.—Have had to abandon Klarspargen. Lost plane and wireless, and were burnt out of submarine base by Germans. Have seized their plane, but have little petrol and no food. Am on a sandbank about seven miles south of Klarspargen, and can evade capture, except by plane, for some time.—V. H."

Barry O'Rooney despatched the message three times at intervals, and Val wondered what it would bring. Unluckily, the stolen machine was only fitted with a transmitter. There had been a wireless telephone, but that seemed to have been removed for repairs. As Ching Lung said, when you steal an aeroplane you can't expect it to be perfect.

"Well, turn in, and keep as warm as you can," said Val. "I don't think there's much danger of a surprise; but I'll mount guard until daylight, so leave me to it."

Barry O'Rooney opened his mouth to protest, but caught Ching Lung's eye, and closed his mouth again.

"Bedad, Ben bhoy," said Barry, as he settled himself down in one of the comfortable chairs with a cigar and a glass of wine, "he's a foine lad, and Oi only wish he'd let me take on that could job. Oi don't understand ut, and, loike the soldiers in the poem, 'Our's not to rayson whoy, our's but to do and doie,' but I do say, af we've busted, Midshipman Val isn't to blame. A grand bhoy, good luck to him!"

"Abso-bally-lutely, souse me," agreed the bo'sun; "that's facts. It's not easy to feed me up, but I'm getting fed-up with this. I'd give more than fourpence to be aboard the Lord of the Deep in our cubby, with old Swobber bellowing a sea-chanty through his whiskers. But you can take it from me, my lad, that even if we've come badly unstuck, we've done a bit of good. How, when, why, and

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where I can't tell you, souse me, but them's my sentiments."

Dave went up to join Val, and keep him company in his vigil, but was promptly ordered down again.

"He's got a temper like a tiger with a bad ache in every tooth, Ching," grinned Dave, when he came back. "Threatened to punch my head in sixteen different places if I didn't beat it. I'd have altered the shape of the cheery guy's nose, only you mustn't bat your superior officer over the bean!"

"That's the nuisance of it," said the prince. "He's not exactly my superior officer; but if I went up he'd give me the boot, and if I jibbed he'd make no bones about telling Maddock and O'Rooney to put me under arrest. I say, Mr. Maddock, if Mr. Hilton told you to put me under arrest, would you do it?"

"Quick as lightning, sir; but it wouldn't be a job I'd relish, souse me," answered the bo'sun.

"And, bedad, ordthers being ordthers, sor, Oi'd help just as quick, if not quicker," added Barry O'Rooney. "As Oi remarked to friend Benjamin a little toime ago, 'Our's not to reason why, our's but to do and doie.' So if the chafe cries 'Nab him!' smartly we'll up and grab him and shove him in limbo. Not being able to find a rhyme for 'limbo,' Oi'll cut the poem short at that!"

"Thank goodness!" said Dave. "But don't try putting me in limbo, my lad, though I'd sooner have that than your rotten poetry! Gee! Aren't wet togs just beastly? And I'm full of sand, too, all down my back and in my hair and ears! Poor old Val! It's a ghastly job, and that's why he's doing it himself."

Barry O'Rooney put down his stump of a cigar and drained his glass.

"As wan who's suffered, Oi'll give you a word of advice, Master Dave," he said. "Niver leave your happy childhood's home to go to say as Oi left swate Ballybunion, for ut's a dog's loife! But if you must, make the best of ut, and watch me. O'm salted and sanded and wet, but in wan minute you'll see how a sailor can slape the swate slape of a babe in ut's cot, in spite of sand, salt-water, and the horrid memory of Ben Maddock's face, which would fill the dhrames of anybody but an old sailor with awful noightmares!"

Barry O'Rooney lay back in the chair and slumbered, and up above, Val Hilton paced the wing of the plane. The wind dried his clothes, but it was bitterly cold. The dawn came at last, red and angry, with a breeze from the east and low scudding grey clouds.

"Don't you hear a plane, sir?" asked Wigland's voice from below.

"I don't," said Val; "but perhaps the wind has made me a trifle deaf. Do you?"

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR!

FERRERS LORD, millionaire and world traveller, entertains the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary aboard his yacht, the *Lord of the Deep*. In the privacy of Ferrers Lord's cabin these Ministers of H.M. Government discuss informally with the millionaire and Rupert Thurston the activities of the Royalist party in Germany. Lord declares that the plot to restore the Kaiser to the throne is likely to be put into operation at any moment, and adds that should Germany be plunged into civil war, the whole of Europe would be involved in consequences too horrible to contemplate. Ferrers Lord then suggests a way out of the trouble, and although it is fraught with much risk to those who throw in their lot with him, the millionaire answers for the loyalty of all aboard the *Lord of the Deep*, and offers to take that risk.

Under the command of Midshipman Val Hilton, Prince Ching Lung, David ap Rees, Benjamin Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and a member of ordinary seamen, proceed to an island named Klarspargen, where, in accordance with the orders of Ferrers Lord, they meet James Wigland, an interpreter and ex-spy, who leads them to a rectangular underground chamber—a one-time German submarine base—built below an old mill.

They are investigating its inner secrets when the mill is blown sky-high by Baron von Stolzenburg, who, it transpires, owns the island. The baron is made prisoner and taken into the underground chamber.

Later, Val and his companions are discovered by a party of Royalists who have foregathered on the island to meet the ex-Kaiser, and in consequence are forced to beat a hurried retreat to their stronghold. The baron pleads neutrality and Val releases him. The Germans, however, bring pressure to bear, and the Britishers are forced to leave their refuge. Clad in invisible clothing—a clever invention of Ferrers Lord's—they make their "getaway" down a secret channel. Then, commandeering a German plane they vacate Klarspargen, Val piloting the machine. "Give Val the tip what to do now," says David ap Rees, addressing the prince.

(Now read on.)

"Yes, sir, I think so. The sound's coming up from the east against the breeze."

Val did not expect any danger from that direction, but it was as well to be prepared. As he told Wigland to waken the others, he caught sight of the plane. It seemed to be dropping out of the sky like a bullet, as if the pilot had lost control or suddenly gone mad. Unless the little machine intended to drop a bomb, or rake them with bullets from a quick-firing gun, there was nothing to be feared, for she was far too small to carry many men.

Before the others were well awake, Val began to shout and wave his cap, for just as the little plane seemed to be about to take a nose-dive into the sea, she flattened out, swung to the left of the sandbank, turned, and took ground almost level with the big saloon plane and not ten yards away from her. The pilot stood up and pulled off a leather flying helmet and goggles.

"Hallo, Val, old dear!" he shouted. "How wasses yo' all this long timeness, my merry old beans? Ho, ho, ho, ho! Yp' gladfuls to see me, hunk? Hi, hi, hi! Where the restness of yo'? Where my butterfuls Chingy?"

The pilot was Gan Waga, the Eskimo, as Val might have guessed at first, for no other airman would have attempted such a reckless plunge. Gan Waga was not always popular, but he was extremely popular at that moment and was greeted with rousing cheers.

"Phwat a loife!" said Barry O'Rooney, as the grinning Eskimo placed his hand on his heart and bowed. "Fancy being glad to see that freak! Well, well, ut's a quare, quare world as Oi've often said, but Oi never expected Oi'd live to see the day when Oi'd be glad to see Gan Waga instead of wanting to hit him across the head wid a crowbar!"

"Neither did I, souse me," said the bo'sun, "but if he hasn't brought something decent for breakfast I'll crowbar the weevil quick enough. What have you brought for breakfast, Gan?"

"Sossitches, old dear," said Gan Waga.

A Perilous Venture!

THE jovial Eskimo had not only brought sausages, but he had brought eggs and bacon, bread and coffee. The rest of his cargo was petrol. To Val's surprise there was no message from Ferrers Lord.

"I nots knows nothings, Val," said Gan Waga, "only old Tommy Prouts tells me to finds yo'. He just points straight aheads and tell me yo' gotted an aeroplanes on a little sands islands where there are lots of other sands islands! Ho, ho, hoo! I spotted yo' quicknesses, hunk. I see the white tops of the plane miles away. If yo' plane can fly yo' gotted to follows me back, old pets, and if shes not fly, I gotted to go backs!"

"Is that all Prout told you?"

"Every scrapness, Val," answered Gan Waga.

"Isn't the chief aboard the yacht?"

"I not knows, Val, I not sees him nohows," said the Eskimo.

"It seems to me, skipper, that in this particular stunt the more you ask the less you get," said Dave. "I asked to get a lovely cold last night, but I was so chilly that I kept dreaming those Huns had nabbed me and put me to bed in a refrigerator! And if you don't mind, Val, as soon as we've had a square meal you can push me off this wretched sand-heap just as fast as ever you like!"

"Come and give me a hand with the petrol first," said Val.

He looked very pale and tired, but Dave could not persuade him to go and take a rest.

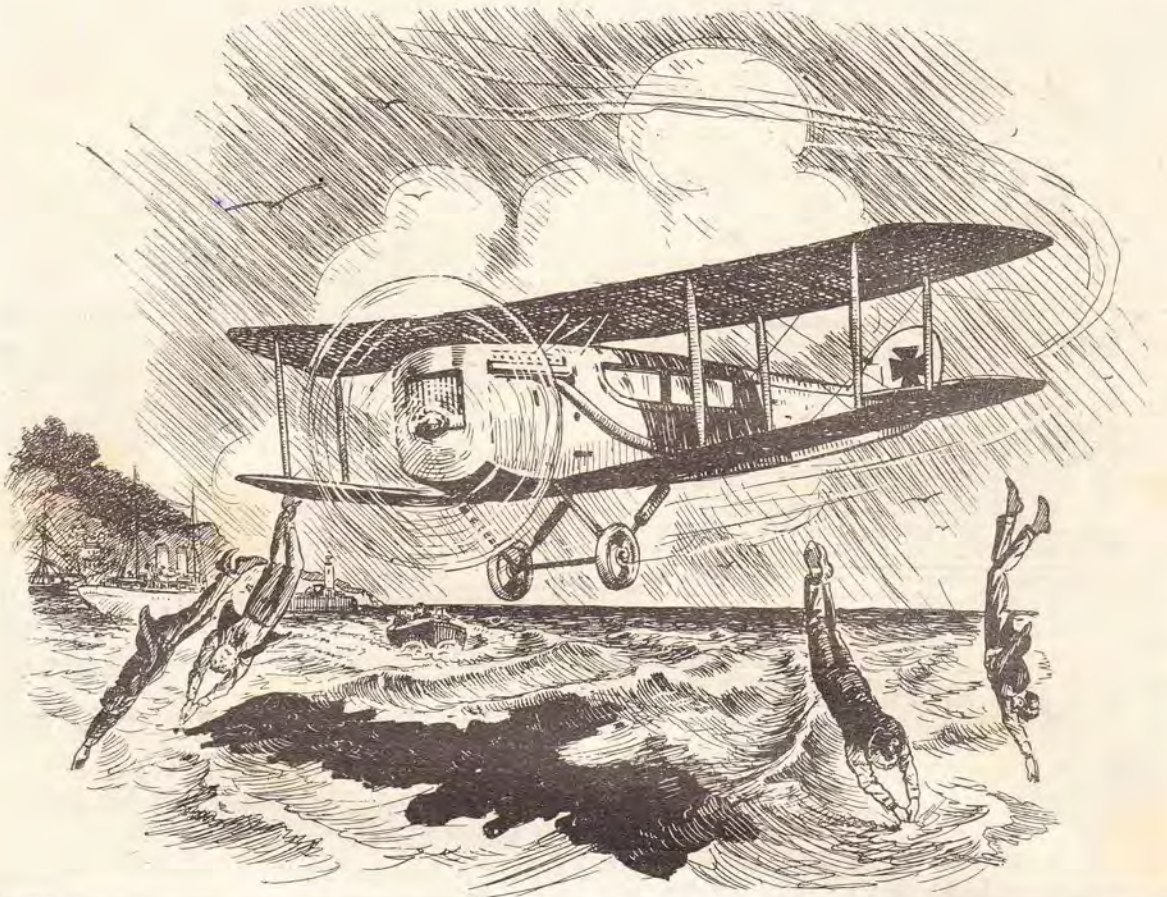
"That will do later," he said. "Had any luck, Mr. Maddock?"

Maddock, who had been searching the plane for parachutes, shook his head.

"There's a locker for them, sir, but it's full of emptiness except for a can of engine-oil. Even if they rigged the yacht deck for us, which they're sure to for Gan Waga, of course, this bus is too big for it!"

"Well, it would mean another wetting, 'chutes or no 'chutes, so it doesn't make much difference," said Dave. "Fill the tank and we'll get away!"

The big plane rose first, and Val & Co. cheered, for they had grown to hate those sand-banks with an intense hatred. Dave, who was taking lessons in plain cookery, presided at the electric stove with the frying-pan, and sizzled rashers and sausages, while Barry cut the bread and made the coffee. The stolen plane had a good supply of cups and



Before the plane touched the water Val Hilton gave the signal. Then as one man, Barry O'Rooney, David ap Rees, Benjamin Maddock and Prince Ching Lung took the plunge! (See page 28.)

plates and knives and forks. Barry O'Rooney discovered a clean tablecloth and some bunches of artificial flowers, and made the table look quite smart.

Ching Lung acted as pilot while the others took breakfast. Gan Waga had taken Wigland with him in the smaller plane, for, though he had not complained, his legs were stiff with rheumatism after his wetting, and by going with the Eskimo he could avoid another soaking.

The smaller plane, designed by Harold Honour, was very fast, and it had run towards the North at Val's orders to see what was happening on Klarspfargen.

At last Gan Waga was shooting above the German plane seven or eight hundred feet higher up, and her skilled and fearless pilot made an amazing loop.

"I hope he's strapped Wigland in, or the poor beggar will be hanging on by the skin of his teeth and the lobes of his ears," thought the prince.

"Well, that big nought that Gan Waga made in the air means that the Huns have cleared out of Klarspfargen in their boat, I suppose. I wonder if they're pleased about it?"

It was broad daylight now, and any attempt at pursuit on the part of the Germans would be quite hopeless. Barry O'Rooney, almost as clever an airman as the Eskimo himself, relieved Ching Lung. Unlike the Eskimo O'Rooney was never reckless, for as he said himself, he had a neck to break, and was fond of it, while the fat Gan Waga had no neck at all.

"Come on, Ching, I've kept your little lot piping hot," cried Dave, "and if you can cook a sausage or a rasher better than that, get a move on and show us how. The coffee's vile, nastier than cheap black ink, but that blundering idiot Prout brewed it, not me. Try another cup of poison, Val?"

But Val did not hear, for he was fast asleep with his head on the table among the artificial flowers.

"Down and out and dead beat, souse me, and not surprising, either," said the bo'sun. "He's done his bit and some extra, has the young skipper. I'd give a bit to know if we're on the winning side or out-and-out losers, but that's

a bit of information that's not likely to come my humble way."

"They've beaten it from the island," said the prince. "Gan made a big O in the air to inform me that there was nothing visible on or near Klarspfargen in the shape of Huns or a boat."

"If they cleared, they're good judges," said Dave. "It's nice and quiet and all that for anybody who wants to live a retired life, but I give you my solemn word that if you want to take me there again, you'll have to dope me with chloroform first, for I didn't like it. And how about when we hit the merry old Lord of the Deep, which I'm hankering after more than a starving monkey hankers after nuts? How do we get off this bus, anyhow? I'm not expecting a gangway with a crimson carpet and brass bands, but how do we do it?"

"This old plane isn't built of cork, and she won't swim, so you'll have to, my bonnie lad, or Davy Jones will claim you," said Ching Lung. "As the sea is pretty quiet, I expect Prout will have a boat standing by. There's one little bit of joy about it that if we're arrested for stealing the plane, they won't be able to produce the stolen property in court as evidence against us unless they fish her up from the bottom of the deep blue briny. I'm sorry to think you have sunk so low as to become a mean sneak-thief!"

"And what about you? I don't mind sinking low enough to become a thief, but I'll watch it that I don't sink as low as this plane's going to sink," said Dave. "Lucky it was for us that it was there to sneak, and to call it theft is the purest rot after the way they treated us. It was just a shemozzle and we beat 'em!"

Three-quarters of an hour later the prince awakened Val. The yacht was below them, and Barry O'Rooney had seen Gan Waga glide down and make a successful landing on her deck. When Val had blinked and yawned himself awake, the big plane was circling over the Lord of the Deep and descending gradually. A motor launch had been lowered.

"This is going to be tricky work," said Val. "Off with

your boots and coat, Dave, and out on the wings. Where's your pistol, prince? Out of it, Mr. O'Rooney, and out on the wings with the others. Dive clear when I fire, for she's likely to turn over the instant she hits the water. If she doesn't, she'll float long enough for me to get clear, and if she does turn turtle, then I must wriggle out the best I can. Dive well out and dodge the chance of a crack on the head!"

Barry O'Rooney heaved a sigh as he left the most dangerous position to Val. Sitting on the edge of the left plane with Dave, he removed his boots and hurled them into the sea. The boat and the prince were on the other wing as Val came round and straightened out with the wheels only six feet above the water.

"Dive forward as woide as you can, sorr," said Barry. Val fired, and as the report rang out, the hands of O'Rooney, Dave, Maddock, and the prince went up, and they took the plunge. Val had already removed his boots, and as the plane struck the water, she came up with a jar as if she had hit something solid instead of liquid.

As the water came gushing knee-deep into the cockpit, Val scrambled up and went into the saloon. Before he could reach the door, the plane sank, not slowly, but with a sudden jerk, and torrents of salt water surged in through the open door and window. With another jerk and the roaring of inpouring water, she dropped to the level of her planes. The water was up to Val's chin, now it completely covered him.

(Make sure you read next week's instalment, chums.)



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