

'THE MYSTERY OF THE SILVER SPRAY!' THE KIND OF HOLIDAY YARN
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR—INSIDE!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^d

LIBRARY

No. 967.
Vol. XXX.
August 28th,
1926.



GUSSY GETS LEFT!

(A Humorous Incident in the Extra-Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. on Holiday—inside.)



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

WORTH HAVING!

THE fine cut-out photos of H. L. Collins, the famous skipper of the Australian Test team, and "Pat" Hendren, of Middlesex and England fame, given away free in this week's "Magnet" and "Popular" respectively, will wind up in fine style the excellent series of Free Gifts our companion papers have been presenting to readers. As souvenirs of this year's Test matches these wonderful stand-up photos are hard to beat, and will of a certainty be prized by those of you who have taken the trouble to collect them. But don't spoil the set by missing the last two Free Gifts. 'Nuff said!

IN THREE WEEKS' TIME!

Now I want to touch on something of especial interest to GEM readers, for I have received a number of letters asking why the "good old GEM" hasn't had a Free Gift number all to itself. Well, everything in good time. But you Gemites have not been forgotten. Not by a long chalk! In three weeks' time you can look forward to something extra special in the way of a Free Gift that will beat anything you have ever had given you before. What is it? Ah, that would be letting the cat out of the bag too early in the day. Still, you can be patient, I know. The three weeks will soon flit by, and then a special Free Gift between the pages of your favourite paper will fully compensate for the long wait you have had to endure. Don't forget—in three weeks' time!

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"

Next Wednesday will stand out as a great day amongst the girls and boys who are fond of school stories by famous Martin Clifford, Frank Richards, and Owen Conquest, for the popular "Holiday Annual" will make its appearance on the market. It's an extra good volume of value this year, chums, take it from me, and will delight the hearts of all of you. There's not a dull line in all its three hundred and sixty pages. The illustrations and coloured plates are better than ever, and the reading matter—Well, who ever knew Messrs. Clifford, Richards, and Conquest to be dull? Don't forget to place your order early for this year's "H. A." Better be on the safe side, you know; it pays in the long run.

"EVERY BOY'S HOBBY ANNUAL."

This is something new in the way of annuals, but its success is a foregone conclusion. In this new annual, which, by the way, will also be on sale Wednesday of next week, every hobby worth while is discussed by experts. No longer will you handymen be wondering "what to do" and "how am I going to do it?" This "Hobby Annual" completely fills the bill, no matter what your particular hobby may be. The contributors, too, have made it their business to talk about their various subjects in non-technical language—a point that a good many clever craftsmen overlook. The result is that the average boy can tackle any subject with the aid of this handy volume and master it without looking up a dictionary every five minutes or so. Don't forget—"Every Boy's Hobby Annual" will be on sale September 1st, price six shillings.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"THE SECRET OF LONELY ISLAND!"

By Martin Clifford.

This is the fourth story in the excellent holiday series Martin Clifford has written specially for us. You'll enjoy every word of it, chums.

"A PHANTOM THRONE!"

There will be another long instalment of this thrilling serial story in next week's bumper issue. Mind you read it. And the St. Jim's Rhymester has piled in with a witty poem entitled "The Fight in the Gym." A good programme this, chums, you will agree. Cheerio till next week, then.

YOUR EDITOR

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TUCK HAMPER AND MONEY PRIZES AWARDED FOR WIT.

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

SCOTLAND SCORES! THE HUNGRY CUCKOO!

Pat had looked at nearly every clock in the place, but so far had seen nothing suitable. In despair, the weary shopman brought forward, as a last resource, a cuckoo clock. "I'll show you what it does," said the salesman. And he set the hands at twelve o'clock, when the door flew open and the cuckoo thrust its head out and cuckooed. Pat was impressed. "Well, how do you like that?" asked the salesman. "That's a staggerer for you, isn't it?" "Faith, and I should think it is!" replied Pat. "It's trouble enough to remember to wind it, without having to think of feedin' the bird!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Edward Rhind, Farine Lea, Huntly, N.B., Aberdeenshire.

CARELESS!

Waiter: "Mr. Grey has left his umbrella again. I do believe he would leave his head behind if it were loose." Judkins: "I dare say you're right. I heard him say yesterday he was going to Switzerland for his lungs!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Denis Adams, "Atherstone," Atkins Road, Clapham Park, London, S.W.

MORE IMPORTANT!

"Now, Timothy," said the headmistress of the infants' academy, "which is correct: 'A hen is sitting' or 'A hen is setting'?" "Well, miss," came the prompt reply, "I asked father once, and he said he didn't trouble much about the setting or sitting. What he wanted to know was whether the hen was laying or lying when she cackled!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. K. Maley, 72, Subiaco Road, Subiaco, Western Australia.

CHEERING!

Boatman: "Yus, I reckon you're with the luckiest boatman on this yere coast. I've had thirteen accidents to date, an' bin the sole survivor in every one of 'em!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Alfred Coombs, 74, Kimberley Road, Southsea, Hants.

ROUGH ON THE RAILWAY!

Chief Clerk of the Go-Slow Railway: "Another farmer is suing us on account of his cow." Manager: "One of our trains killed it, I suppose?" Clerk: "Not this time, sir. He complains that the passengers lean out of the window and milk his cow as the train goes by!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. H. Bell, 187, Bay Lane, Atherton, Lancs.

HARD ON PA!

Tommy: "Papa, why is it that you have no hair on your head?" Father: "Grass never grows on a busy street, my boy." Tommy: "Oh, I see. It can't get up through concrete!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to William Sweetnam, Mornington, North Road, Clayton, Manchester.

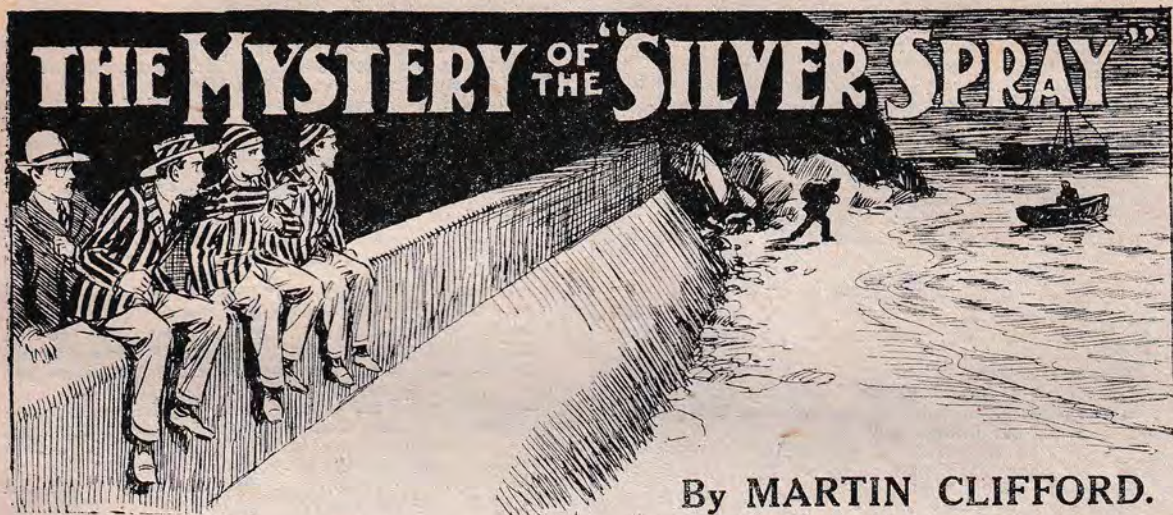
HELPING DAD!

Small Boy (to Lady): "Please could you spare a copper for an old soldier?" Lady: "But you haven't been in the War, surely?" Small Boy: "No, but my father has. He's doing the next turning, so as we can be done early to-night!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Francis Fallis, 100, Sussex Street, Poplar, E. 14.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON. THE GEM LIBRARY.

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

"WEARY WILLY AND TIRED TIM!" Not without cause do Tom Merry & Co. give these nicknames to Captain Cragg and his friend, for both of them shun work like the plague. "Easy money" is their motto, and Tom Merry & Co. begin to tumble to the shady methods these rascals employ to accumulate it!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., the Cheery Chums of St. Jim's, dealing with their holiday adventures aboard a motor-cruiser.

CHAPTER 1.

Unfortunate!

"SOMETHING's got to be done!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
"Hear, hear!"

Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor of St. Jim's, made that emphatic declaration, and Tom Merry & Co. gave an equally emphatic rejoinder that they fully agreed with him there.

To use an ancient and unclassical phrase, Tom Merry & Co. were "fed-up" with the existing state of affairs.

The Silver Spray was lying at her moorings in Newhaven Harbour, and the motor-boat boys were taking it easy at the moment in the aft cockpit of the motor-cruiser—the fine boat that had been placed at the disposal of the St. Jim's juniors for the summer vacation by Bernard Glyn's father.

On such a bright, sunny August morning, with heaps of time before them, and with such a fine roomy boat at their disposal, Tom Merry & Co. ought to have been very cheery and satisfied.

Yet, from their glum faces and disgusted remarks it was only too plain that they were not.

They were, in fact, fed-up—not with the weather, or the boat, or with Father Time, or with the view, but Weary Willy, otherwise Captain Cragg, the "elder person" who had been placed in charge of the juniors for the cruise.

To begin with, the juniors did not like being placed in charge of anyone actually; they felt quite capable of looking after themselves. And they certainly did not like the self-styled "Captain" Cragg.

Captain Cragg was lazy, and dirty, and doleful, and—they had good reason to suspect—dishonest. They did not like his manners, or his habits, or his temperament, or his face. And they certainly did not like the tobacco he smoked.

There was plenty of work for all on board the Silver Spray, and the juniors felt that Weary Willy—as Lowther had dubbed him—ought to take his share in it. Yet, save for an occasional trick at the wheel, and occasional advice—which the juniors rarely took—Weary Willy seemed to be under the impression that his sole duties lay in sprawling over the fo'c'sle deck, smoking "shag" in a villainous pipe with a metal top to it.

But that unfortunately, was not all!

Since the beginning of the cruise various articles—deck-buckets, ropes, and loose tackle and such like—had taken unto themselves wings, and had mysteriously vanished, while Glyn was constantly replenishing the supplies of petrol—supplies that had certainly not been burned by the Silver Spray's engine.

The mysterious disappearances were getting just a little too frequent for the liking of Tom Merry & Co., and despite the fact that Captain Cragg waxed wroth regarding harbour thieves, Tom Merry & Co. still looked with growing sus-

picion upon Captain Cragg. It was pretty apparent that that doleful gentleman was taking the stuff ashore and selling it to purchase liquid refreshment, to which Weary Willy seemed more than partial.

It was all very annoying, and that same morning the climax had come.

Just as the Silver Spray was about to start out on a cross-Channel trip to France, the discovery had been made that there wasn't a drop of petrol aboard! Bernard Glyn having, only the previous day, added four fresh tins to their existing stock, the juniors were, naturally enough, very annoyed about it.

Something certainly had to be done in the matter.

"But what is to be done?" asked Tom Merry. "We've already wasted an hour nearly, and we should have been well on our way to Dieppe by this—blow it! I suppose it must be that rotter who is taking the stuff ashore and selling it!"

"Of course it's Cragg," snorted Glyn. "He took the tins ashore last night when we were over at Seaford! I wish we were well rid of the lazy sweep. Look at him now!"

The juniors glanced across at Captain Cragg. That lanky gentleman was sprawling on the fo'c'sle deck, staring dreamily and reflectively at the wharf buildings and smoking. Even as Glyn spoke a strong whiff of tobacco-smoke was wafted to the juniors by the sea breeze.

It made the juniors cough.

"Poof!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! What howlid stuff! If only the wottah would smoke decent tobacco it would be somethin'. Yaas, wathah."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hallo, he'll be asleep in a minute," grinned Manners. "What a giddy picture he makes!"

"Wouldn't be a bad idea to roll the lazy slacker overboard," suggested Lowther. "That would wake him up a bit."

"Spoil the harbour for bathing, though!" grinned Blake. "Hallo, he's off!"

Weary Willy was obviously "off." His head nodded, and then his metal-topped pipe fell from his mouth and rattled on the deck. A snore reached the ears of the juniors.

Bernard Glyn chuckled and rose to his feet.

"Good!" he said. "We'll try to persuade him to change his tobacco, anyway. You fellows wait a bit."

And with that the schoolboy inventor vanished into the cabin. He was absent four or five minutes, and when he returned he had a tiny paper packet in his hand.

Winking at the juniors he climbed up on to the cabin top and went forward. Reaching the fo'c'sle deck he stepped softly towards the sleeping Weary Willy and picked up his pipe.

With one eye on Weary Willy, Glyn opened the paper packet and tipped a whitish powder into the bowl of the pipe. Then he placed the pipe on the deck again and slipped back to his chums.

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Bernard Glyn was wearing rubber-soled shoes, but quiet as he was his movement had aroused the sleeper. Weary Willy moved uneasily, and then he opened his eyes and sat up, yawning.

"Only just in time," murmured Lowther as Glyn reached them. "What was it, Glyn?"

"A little preparation of my own," smiled Glyn. "I meant to try it on Weary Willy before this. Hallo, he's spotted us!"

Weary Willy evidently caught the juniors' glances fixed upon him, for he stood up slowly. Then, jamming his pipe into his mouth, he came over the cabin top and looked down at Bernard Glyn.

He eyed the juniors rather uneasily.

"Well, Master Glyn," he said huskily, "what's to be done now? I suppose you've dropped the idea of crossin' to-day, now?"

"Not at all!" said Glyn coolly.

"If you asks me, I should say—put it off till to-morrow," said Weary Willy, shaking his head. "It ain't lucky to sail on Fridays for one thing. And then there's this here petrol question?"

"There is," assented Glyn.

"It beats me just how it goes," said Cragg, with one eye on the juniors. "And them buckets and things, too! These here harbour thieves—"

"Let's stick to facts and not fancies," suggested Glyn. "Never mind the harbour thieves, Cragg. We're not worrying about them at all."

"It fair beats me—"

"Just so! But it doesn't, us, you see," said Glyn. "The point is, Cragg, that we've got to get some more petrol from somewhere. If you'd care to go ashore—"

"I was jest goin' to suggest as I would go into Newhaven and try to get some," said Cragg, with rather suspicious eagerness. "Though it may be a 'ard job to get as much as we wants there. However, I'll go ashore at once, Master Glyn."

"Good! And be as quick as you can," said Glyn, winking at his chums. "There's a chance we shall get off in time yet."

But Weary Willy hesitated, eyeing Glyn narrowly.

"They're not likely to let me have the petrol without the money, Master Glyn," he suggested. "If you wouldn't mind 'anding over—"

"We'll risk that, I think," said Glyn coolly. "Tell them we'll hand over the money the moment the petrol's delivered on board here, Cragg."

"But, Master Glyn—"

"That's good enough, isn't it?" said Glyn, raising his eye-brows. "Cash on delivery, you know! I hope you'll not be long, Cragg!"

Captain Cragg grunted, and he eyed Bernard Glyn rather quickly. But he did not press the matter further.

"Oh, all right, Master Glyn," he said. "I'll go ashore at once then."

He turned away, and striking a match, applied the light to his pipe.

What happened next was swift and rather unexpected—even to Bernard Glyn.

As the flame of the match reached the white powder in Weary Willy's pipe there was a sudden explosion, followed instantly by a fiendish howl from Weary Willy.

It was followed by a still louder howl as Weary Willy staggered backwards, tripped over the low rail behind him, and vanished overboard, his pipe flying from his hands.

Splash!

The waters of Newhaven Harbour closed over the head of Weary Willy.

CHAPTER 2. Done Again!

"OH, my hat!"

"You ass, Glyn!"

"Bai Jove! Listen to him, deah boys!"

The juniors rushed to the side and looked over.

Weary Willy was splashing and plunging about in the water like an enraged walrus.

"Man overboard!" bawled Lowther. "Man the lifebelt, my hearties!"

"Chuck it, Lowther!" grinned Tom Merry. "Let's get the rotter out."

"No need to hurry," said Glyn. "He can swim all right, and a wash will do him good."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors did not hurry with the rescue operations. From the noise he was making Weary Willy might have been drowning. But a glance showed that he could swim all right.

"Help me out, you young raskils!" he gasped, glaring up

at the grinning juniors and spluttering. "I'll report this here to your father, Master Glyn."

"My hat! He's blaming me," remarked Bernard Glyn.

"Why, aren't you taking a bathe, Cragg?"

"You knows as I ain't, you young raskil!" roared Captain Cragg, floundering about in a rage. "This is one of your monkey tricks, and not the first, neither. Help me out!"

"Better help him," grinned Tom Merry.

He reached over, and hooked a boathook in the collar of Captain Cragg's collar, and as the irate sailorman grabbed at the boat, Blake reached over and grasped him.

Between them they managed to help Captain Cragg over into the aft cockpit, where he collapsed, gasping and spluttering.

"Saved!" said Lowther dramatically. "Saved from a watery grave! We shall get a medal for this, chaps."

There was a chuckle, and Captain Cragg glared at the grinning juniors.

"You can grin, Master Glyn!" he spluttered. "I'll report this here to your father, you see if I don't."

"Good! I'm making a report to him myself to-day, Cragg," said Glyn calmly. "It's about the missing tackle and petrol. You might mention it yourself, too, when you write."

Weary Willy did not answer that. But he gave Glyn a rather hard scowl, and then he tottered forwards, leaving a trail of water across the cabin roof behind him.

"Well, I hardly expected it to come off like that," chuckled Bernard Glyn. "Isn't he a pleasant chap when his monkey's up, though, chaps?"

"Blow it!" grunted Blake. "This looks like delaying matters still more. Let's go ashore, and try to get some petrol ourselves, Glyn. Why trust that rotter?"

"Because I want him to go ashore," smiled Bernard Glyn. "It was rather unfortunate he went overboard just now. Still, even if we have to postpone the trip for a day, it'll be worth it to get rid of Weary Willy."

"Bai Jove! But how can we, deah boy?"

"We're going to, anyway," said Glyn grimly. "I'm fed-up to the chin with the lazy, thieving rotter. I'm blessed if I know how the pater came to get hold of such a merchant!"

"Does your pater know him?" asked Manners.

"No. He was recommended by a friend, or something," grunted Glyn. "He must have been an enemy in disguise, though."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"But Weary Willy's got to go," snapped Glyn, his eyes gleaming. "His giddy pource is run, I fancy. I couldn't do it before, as I had to consider the pater. He'd be waxy if we kicked the rotter out without good cause. We'll soon have that good cause. I'm going to prove that he's a rascal."

"But how?" demanded Tom, frowning. "He's too jolly crafty to be caught out, my dear man."

"I hope to get it very soon," smiled Glyn. "You see, I wrote my name on the bottom of each of those tins of petrol we bought last night."

"Bai Jove!"

"You fellows thought I was potty to let that chap go ashore for the petrol," grinned Glyn. "But I know just what I'm doing. He's either hidden the cans ashore, or sold them to that foreign-looking brute he was hanging about with last night. Well, he'll either find the cans, or buy them back to sell to us again. He's done that before, I'm certain. But this time, if my name is on the cans when he brings them, he'll be bowled out, and we'll kick him out for good and all."

"Bai Jove!"

"Good wheeze, Glyn!"

"But—but that means dropping the cross-Channel trip," said Tom Merry, looking disappointed. "We got our people's permission, and fixed up everything before we started the cruise, Glyn. It'll be rotten to have to drop the idea."

"Eh? Why should we drop the idea just because we've kicked that rotter out?"

"We can't go without him," said Tom, staring.

"What thumping rot!" snorted Glyn. "And why not, fathead? Think I can't set a course?"

"You might, old chap; but would it be the right one?"

"You—you silly ass!" said Glyn. "I could take this boat over to Dieppe as easily as that rotter can."

"Um!"

Ahem!

Tom Merry & Co. seemed doubtful—very doubtful.

"We don't want to start out for Dieppe, and find ourselves at Grimsby," murmured Tom Merry.

"Or the Channel Isles," added Blake.

"Or Australia," grinned Lowther. "We might not get back in time for next term, Glyn."

Bernard Glyn glared.

"What utter piffle!" he snorted. "You'll jolly well see, anyway. We're doing it, chaps. If we get the proof I

want I shall sling Cragg overboard, and we'll start at once."

"It looks as if we sha'n't get the chance of going to-day, at all events," growled Herries. "We don't want to be getting to Dieppe late, and Weary Willy doesn't mean to hurry himself with the petrol."

"That's just what I'm worrying about," said Glyn, frowning. "The rotter doesn't want to go to-day—goodness knows why! But, after all, a day doesn't matter to us. We can run along to Brighton for the day, and have a good time there. You can get a bus from here. What about doing that, chaps?"

"That's rather a good idea," said Tom Merry, brightening up. "A day in Brighton would be top-hole, chaps."

"Yaas, wathah! That is a wippin' ideah, Glyn," said Arthur Augustus, with great enthusiasm. "I weally need a fwesh supply of silk socks, and some new neckties, bai Jove!"

"And we'll have a look at Rottingdean," chimed in Manners, with equal enthusiasm. "I want to take a few snaps there. There's a ripping old windmill I want to photograph."

"Well, we'll do it," laughed Tom Merry. "That is, if the petrol doesn't turn up in time."

"I'm afraid it won't," grinned Glyn. "It's just struck me that if Weary Willy does go ashore, we sha'n't see him again until to-night."

"I thought that," said Tom Merry, nodding. "Well, let him rip! We'll have a day out at Brighton. I vote we give the rotter an hour to get the petrol, and if he hasn't turned up by then we'll get off. No good wasting a day."

"No fear," agreed Glyn. "We'll do it, chaps. It's quite early yet, and we can afford an hour, though. If he hasn't turned up, we'll go off for the giddy day, and when we come back we'll see Mister Cragg. And if those dashed tins are the same ones, we'll kick the rotter overboard for good!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And so it was settled. Captain Cragg came up on deck a few minutes later, dressed in his best suit—a dingy yachting suit—and Glyn and Blake rowed him ashore, smiling cheerily at his sullen scowling, and then they brought the dinghy back to the motor-cruiser.

"We sha'n't see that merchant again for an hour or so," remarked Glyn. "I could see he meant to do us down from the look in his giddy optics!"

"We'll see," grinned Blake.

And the juniors did see. As Glyn had remarked, and as the rest of the juniors had expected, Captain Cragg did not turn up with the petrol inside the hour. The juniors waited, and then at the end of the hour they gave him up, realising there was to be no Channel trip for them that day.

But the prospect of a day spent in and around Brighton was inviting, none the less, and Tom Merry & Co. started cheerfully to get ready for the day's outing.

CHAPTER 3.

Eggs-traordinary!

"ANY of you fellows seen my toppah?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question in no little alarm and anxiety.

The swell of the Fourth at St. Jim's was busy dressing for the day's outing into Brighton. The rest of the fellows were already dressed and waiting for him.



Weary Willy struck a match and applied the light to his pipe. As the flame reached the white powder, there was a sudden explosion, followed instantly by a fiendish howl from Weary Willy. It was followed by a still louder howl, however, as Weary Willy staggered backwards and vanished overboard. (See Chapter 1.)

Arthur Augustus took a great deal of care over his personal appearance.

When, therefore, he could not find his best silk hat he was very much perturbed.

The Silver Spray was a very roomy boat, but in even a roomy boat like the Silver Spray things were apt to get mislaid, or sat on, or trodden on.

Hence Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's anxiety for the safety of his best "toppah!"

"Are you fellows deaf?" called out Arthur Augustus again, raising his voice. "Have any of you fellows seen my best toppah?"

"Which one do you mean?" asked Lowther, with great interest. "The one that was your best yesterday, or the day before?"

"Pway do not wot ovah such a sewious mattah, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I know how careless you fellows are ovah othah people's clobber, and I am vewy anxious wegardin' my toppah. I cannot find it anywhere."

"Oh, where, and, oh, where, is Gussy's topper gone?" sang Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What the thump do you want your best topper for?" asked Blake.

"To visit Bwighton in, of course," said Arthur Augustus. "You do not expect me to visit a vewy fashionable place like Bwighton dressed like you wagged and untidy fellows. One of us must be suitably dressed to keep up the credit of the party, bai Jove!"

"Will it keep up the credit of the party for one of us to be dressed like a tailor's dummy?" inquired Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let's get off," suggested Herries. "Gussy will have found his topper—by the time we get back perhaps. I saw Glyn pouring some engine oil into something. Was it Gussy's topper, old chap?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Lemme see," said Lowther reflectively. "Wasn't it Gussy's best topper we bailed the dinghy out with yesterday?"

"Oh, wats!" Arthur Augustus turned away from his chuckling chums. "Twimble, have you seen my best toppah anywhere?"

Baggy Trimble, who was reclining in his bunk, munching chocolate, gave a fat chuckle.

"He, he, he! I say, Gussy, I know where it is," he grinned.

"Bai Jove! You do?"

"Yes, old chap! I say, gimme that other packet of choos and I'll tell you."

"You are a gweedy little wottah, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus with some asperity. "I have already given you one packet—"

"Well, gimme the other and I'll tell you where your giddy best toppler is," grinned Trimble. "One good turn deserves another, what?"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. But his anxiety for his best silk hat outweighed his reluctance to hand Trimble more chocolate. Silently he handed the second packet over into Trimble's fat paws.

"Thanks, old fellow!" said Trimble, tearing off the paper. "It's on the top shelf in the larder, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! My—my best toppah in the lardah? Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus fairly wrenched the larder door open, and as he saw his silk hat reposing on the top shelf he gave a wail of mingled dismay and wrath.

"Twimble, you fat wottah!" he shouted. "Bai Jove! If you have—"

"Blake put it there—not me," chuckled Trimble. "I saw him do it last night."

"Great pip!" said Blake. "So I did; I'd forgotten all about it, Gussy. I couldn't find anything to put the— Look out! Mind—"

But the warning came too late.

Arthur Augustus did not wait for his chum to finish. He just gave a growl of wrath and reached up for his silk hat which reposed brim upwards on the shelf.

He grasped it, jerked it off, and jammed it on his head. Unfortunately he did not look inside the hat first.

It was very unfortunate, for there were six fresh eggs in the hat.

The eggs reached Gussy's person before the hat did.

Smash, smash, smash!

Flop! Splosh! Squelch!

"Yawoooooogh!"

One egg smashed on the noble nose of Arthur Augustus, fairly smothering his aristocratic features with white and yellow. A second smashed on his head, and being followed instantly by the silk hat, it remained there. The other four eggs bounced off various parts of Gussy's person, and smashed on the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Baggy Trimble. "I say, Gussy, you do look an awful sight!"

Gussy did undoubtedly. For once Baggy Trimble had told the truth, and nothing but the truth.

"Oh deah!" wailed Arthur Augustus, dancing about helplessly among a mess of eggs and egg-shells. "Oh deah! Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cacklin' dummies!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "It is nothin' to laugh at! Gweat Scott! I am in a most fearful mess!"

"You scarcely eggspected that, did you, Gussy?" grinned Lowther.

"You—you—you—"

"It was quite an eggshattering eggssperience, wasn't it?" continued the humorous Monty.

"Bai Jove! You gwinin'—"

"You're too eggstravagant with the eggs, Gussy," continued Lowther. "Now don't get eggssited. I can eggscuse to some eggstent the eggsserious eggssubterent eggssitement, but the eggssisting eggsshibition of—"

"Chuck it, Lowther," laughed Tom Merry, "or we'll rub your chivvy in the eggs, too! You'd better go and get a wash and a change, Gussy."

"Accidents will happen!" murmured Blake.

"You—you feahful wottah, Blake!" gasped Arthur Augustus, almost choking with wrath. "This is all your fault, you weckless wuffian! If you put those w'etched eggs there—"

"Well, we had to put them somewhere," said Blake. "I couldn't find a dish or anything else."

"You'd no right to touch my clobbah at all!" raved Arthur Augustus. "Look at me—my clobbah wuined almost, and I am in a—a—a—"

Words failed the unlucky Gussy. He spluttered and gasped, and finally went for a much needed wash and a change.

"Poor old Gussy!" panted Blake. "He seems to have no luck at all! Shall we wait for him, or clear off?"

"Better wait," grinned Tom Merry.

"Let's get off, chaps," urged Trimble, rolling out of his bunk. "I'm ready if you chaps are."

Blake looked at him.

"Oh, are you?" he ejaculated. "But you're not coming with us, old fat man."

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"Eh? I jolly well am!" snorted Trimble.

"You're jolly well not!" said Glyn emphatically. "We had enough of you last night, you fat rotter! You disgraced us in that restaurant at Seaford, and we're not taking you out again for a bit."

"No fear!"

"No Trimble for us!"

It was an emphatic chorus, and Trimble glared.

"Look here, I'm jolly well coming!" he roared. "Think I'm going to stick here while you chaps enjoy yourselves. I'm coming!"

"You're not," smiled Bernard Glyn. "You've got to stay on board to look after the boat, Trimble."

"Hear, hear! Trimble stays!"

"Oh dear! I say, you fellows," said Trimble, changing his tune, "you might let a fellow come? I'll be as good as gold!"

"Nothing doing, old chap!"

And Tom Merry & Co. left Trimble and walked out of the cabin.

"Beasts!" groaned Trimble.

He glared after the juniors, and then a sudden gleam came into his eyes, and he slipped into the forward cockpit through the sliding door.

Alongside the motor-boat, the dinghy was tied up, and Trimble, after a glance at the juniors aft, dropped over the low rail down into it. Then he grabbed the oars, after untying the ropes, and pushed off.

The dinghy danced out into the harbour, and there came an alarmed shout from Tom Merry & Co. as they sighted it.

"Great pip! It's Trimble!"

"He's got the dashed dinghy!"

The startled juniors lined the rail and stared in alarm at Trimble, who was standing up in the boat now with a fat grin on his features.

"Trimble, you fat idiot!" roared Bernard Glyn. "Bring that boat back! What's this game?"

A fat chuckle floated across the water.

"It's like this, you fellows," called Trimble cheerily, "I'm just trying to persuade you chaps to let me come with you to Brighton."

"You—you you fat worm! Bring that boat back! We'll slaughter you if you don't!"

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, I'll bring the boat back if you'll promise to lemme come with you. Is it a go?"

"Bring that boat back!" roared Glyn. "We want to go ashore in it, you fat fool!"

"I know that," chuckled Trimble. "You can't get ashore without this boat because there's no petrol. I'm sticking to the dinghy until you chaps promise to lemme come. Well, is it a go?"

"You—you—you—" Glyn fairly spluttered.

"Let him rip!" snorted Blake. "There's enough petrol in the tank to run us alongside the wharf, surely?"

"That's the trouble—there isn't!" snapped Glyn. "I believe that rotter Cragg's drained the tank as well as pinched the tins. My hat! The fat worm's got us fairly!"

"Buck up and decide!" called Trimble cheerfully. "And mind, you've got to promise, also, not to take it out of me for this! Remember that!"

"Yes, we'll remember it!" breathed Glyn. "Oh, the podgy, crafty rotter! We'll jolly well flay him alive!"

"Hold on!" murmured Lowther. "Stand clear, chaps!"

As he spoke Monty Lowther grabbed a coil of rope from the grating and ran it skilfully through his hands. Then, swift and sure he sent the track-line snaking out towards Baggy Trimble.

Since the beginning of the cruise the juniors had had plenty of practice at lassoing "mushrooms," and Lowther's aim was true and sure.

The line snaked out, and the noose dropped clean over Trimble's head.

"Good man!" yelled Bernard Glyn.

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry. "Hold on, Lowther! Don't pull, or— Oh, my hat!"

Lowther had pulled. It would not have been Monty Lowther to have resisted the temptation to pull.

At all events, he did pull.

Splash!

Baggy Trimble was dragged clean overboard. His grin vanished, and he gave vent to a piercing yell of terror as he felt himself going.

As in the case of Captain Cragg earlier on that morning, the waters of Newhaven Harbour closed over his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter, but Tom Merry looked rather anxious. Weary Willy could swim, but Baggy Trimble could not.

"Great Scott! Oh, you ass, Lowther!" he gasped. "Quick! The awful dummy can't swim!"

Tom was on the point of jumping into the harbour to the rescue, when he saw Trimble's head appear, and then

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he saw Trimble make a desperate grab at the dinghy's gunwale.

He missed it, but luckily the painter was trailing overside and Trimble's fat hands closed upon it.

"Help!" he shrieked. "Groooogh! Help! Help! Murder! I'm drowning! Groooogh! Help!"

"He's all right, Tommy, you ass!" grinned Lowther. "Now we'll haul him in! All together, chaps!"

Trimble seemed safe enough now, and the grinning juniors jumped to aid Lowther as he pulled at the rope. Baggy Trimble's yells for help were earsplitting.

The line was round his fat waist now, and he was hanging on desperately to the painter of the dinghy. Tom Merry & Co. pulled at the line with a will.

Baggy Trimble moved, and the dinghy moved with him. It was a painful proceeding for Baggy, and he fairly yelled as the line cut into him. But he hung on to the painter, nevertheless.

"Pull, me hearties!" bawled Lowther.

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

With the line towing Baggy, and Baggy towing the dinghy, both were gradually drawn alongside the motor-cruiser.

"Hurrah! Done it!" yelled Lowther.

They had done it. The dinghy was alongside now, and Tom and Glyn and Blake jumped down into it, and helped the dripping and yelling Trimble on board the Silver Spray.

He promptly collapsed on the grating like a newly-landed porpoise.

"Ow-ow! Gug-gug-groooogh! Oh, dear!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" gasped Trimble, panting and gasping helplessly. "Oh, you awful beasts! You jolly nearly drowned me then! Ow! Gug-groooogh! Oh, dear!"

"Your own fault, Baggy," grinned Tom Merry. "You nearly landed us, but we've landed you."

"Ow! Ow-wow! Groooogh! I'm half-drowned and nearly cut in two!" wailed Baggy Trimble. "And I haven't a suit to change into, you beasts! You'll have to lend me one!"

"Will we thump!" grinned Glyn. "This settles it, chaps. Baggy will have to stay now. He can lie in his pyjamas in his bunk until his clobber dries."

"That's the ticket!" remarked Tom Merry. "Now what about Gussy? My hat! We sha'n't get to Brighton before noon at this rate! Better wait for him, though."

"Better had," grinned Blake. "He's got a fiver on him, and we shall need some of it."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

And the juniors waited for Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 4.

A Hanging Matter!

TOM MERRY & CO. had not to wait long, as it happened. Usually Arthur Augustus took a very long while to change, but on this occasion he did not.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus suspected that his chums might go without him, and he had no intention of being left behind. A day in "Splendid Brighton" was infinitely to be preferred to staying alone on the boat with Baggy Trimble all day—even at the expense of lost dignity.

So Arthur Augustus hurried over his changing, and just as Baggy Trimble vanished into the cabin Arthur Augustus emerged. He was elegant as ever, but he wore his panama now.

Some of his wrath had evaporated during the process of changing, but he still looked indignant and lofty.

But the juniors had expected that, and after Blake had made a very humble apology regarding the silk hat incident he unbent somewhat. Arthur Augustus was an exceedingly good-natured youth, and he very quickly forgot and forgave—providing the necessary apology was forthcoming.

It was forthcoming on this occasion. With much of his good-humour restored, Arthur Augustus joined his chums in the waiting dinghy, and all might have been merry and bright but for an unfortunate misjudgment on the part of Tom Merry.

Tom was rowing the party ashore, and when nearing the landing-place he pulled a trifle too hard, misjudging the distance.

Glyn, who was at the tiller, saw at a glance that the boat would overshoot the mark, and he yelled:

"Back water, Tommy, you ass!"

But it was too late even for that, and, pulling the tiller round, Glyn sang out to Arthur Augustus:

"Hook on with that boathook, Gussy! Hold her!"

"Wight-ho!"

Always ready at the call of duty, Arthur Augustus grabbed the boathook and jabbed at the wharf-edge above his head.

It was a successful jab—a trifle too successful, in fact!

As Glyn brought the boat sliding alongside the wharf the boathook took grip, and Arthur Augustus hung on grimly.

It would have been better for him had he hung on grimly to the boat instead. For there was plenty of way on the dinghy still, and before Arthur Augustus knew it the dinghy slid from beneath him.

He felt it going, and clawed wildly for a firm foothold, but to no avail!

The next moment the dinghy had sailed on, leaving
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Arthur Augustus clinging desperately to the boathook handle, with wildly thrashing feet, scarcely a foot from the waters of Newhaven Harbour.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The dinghy slowed down some yards beyond, and the chums of the School House at St. Jim's roared at their companion's predicament.

Arthur Augustus also roared—in a different manner.

"Help! Wescue, deah boys!" he shouted. "Oh, gweat Scott! Oh cwumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors howled as Arthur Augustus hung on desperately, vainly clawing for a foothold on the weed-covered, slimy baulks of the wharf.

"Hold on, Gussy!" called Tom Merry, almost choking with laughter.

"Yes, hold on!" yelled Manners anxiously. "My hat! What a ripping picture!"

Manners' anxiety—as was soon seen—was not on Gussy's own account, but in case he let go before he could get his camera into action.

But he need not have had any fear on that score!

Arthur Augustus was clinging on like grim death, and Manners swiftly unslung his precious camera, and as swiftly focused.

"Hold the boat steady, Tommy!" he gasped.

Click!

"Oh, good!" said Manners, with satisfaction. "I've got him, chaps. Now you can rescue the ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry sent the dinghy gently back, and Blake and Herries grabbed Arthur Augustus, and dragged him into the boat.

It had all happened in the space of a very few moments, but Arthur Augustus collapsed into the dinghy quite exhausted.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped. "Gweat Scott! My arms are vewy nearly wrenched out of their sockets. Ow-ow!"

Not until all were safely ashore, and the dinghy was tied up safely, did Arthur Augustus speak again, and then he adjusted his clothes and hat, jammed his monocle into place, and glowered at Manners.

"Mannahs, you wottah—you unspeakable wottah!" he gasped. "You took advantage of my pwedicament to take a snapshot of me with your camewa, bai Jove!"

"True O King!" said Manners, chuckling. "It'll about be the best snap of the holidays, old chap. You wait until we get back to St. Jim's, Gussy! I'm going to print dozens of them, and pass them round."

And Manners patted his camera and chuckled again.

Arthur Augustus turned back his cuffs.

"You are goin' to do nothin' of the kind, you wottah!" he shouted. "I ordah you to destwoy that woll of films at once, Mannahs!"

"Not likely, old chap!"

"Then I feel bound to destwoy them myself!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

And he rushed at Manners. Manners dodged his outstretched arms, and took to his heels, with his camera tucked under his arm.

"Go it, Gussy" bawled Blake.

Gussy went it full tilt, and the pair vanished round a corner of the wharf buildings. A couple of moments passed, and then Manners came running back again, alone, to his grinning chums.

"Where's Gussy?" demanded Blake. "Given him the slip?"

"Yes!" Manners chuckled, and rapidly unfastened his camera. "I dodged into a doorway just round the corner, and Gussy fairly flew past me. I expect he's still running, like Charlie's Aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Having unfastened the camera, Manners opened it swiftly, and took out the roll of films inside. He hurriedly shoved the adhesive paper round it, and placed it carefully in his pocket. Then from another pocket he took an empty film-reel, and he placed this into the camera in place of the full one.

"What's this game?" grinned Tom Merry. "Why don't you let the ass destroy 'em for peace sake?"

"No fear!" panted Manners. "It's too good a snap, old chap! Hallo! Here he comes!"

Arthur Augustus appeared round the far end of the buildings, and a moment later he came charging up, his noble eye fairly glinting at Manners.

"Now, you wottah!" he panted, making a rush at Manners and grasping him fast. "Hand ovah those films, you unspeakable wuffian, or I will give you a feabful thwashin', bai Jove!"

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"Which films?" asked Manners.

"Those in the camewa, of course!" shouted Gussy.

"Oh, all right!" said Manners. "If you really mean to have them—"

"Yaas, I do mean to have them, bai Jove!"

"Yes, let him have them, Manners," said Tom, shaking his head. "We don't want any more trouble, old chap."

"Right-ho, then!"

Manners opened the camera, and took out the empty reel, carefully covering all but the metal end with his hand.

"Here goes, then," he said.

And he threw the empty reel far out from him. It whizzed through the air and dropped with a soft plop into the harbour and vanished.

Arthur Augustus fairly gasped with relief.

"Satisfied now?" inquired Manners.

"Yaas, I am quite satisfied, Mannahs!" said Arthur Augustus coldly. "You took a wotten advantage of my wiculous position, and I considah you are a cheeky wottah, Mannahs! However, it is all wight now. I am vewy sowwy you have had to waste a woll of films, but it is your own fault entiah! I will, howevah, buy you a new woll when we weach Bwighton, Mannahs."

"Good man!" said Manners, winking at the rest. "Then let's get on!"

And the motor-boat boys started off for the Brighton bus. All but Arthur Augustus were grinning and chuckling, and only Arthur Augustus was ignorant of the reason for their grins and chuckles. He would have been very much surprised had he known the reason, and that day's outing into Brighton would certainly not have been so peaceful and enjoyable had he discovered it!

CHAPTER 5.

Trouble!

"HALLO! Weary Willy!" grunted Tom Merry.

"And Tired Tim!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Dusk was falling as Tom Merry & Co., tired but happy, jumped from the Brighton bus at Newhaven that evening. It had been a most enjoyable day in every way, and the chums had had their fill of sight-seeing and jollity, having finished up with a visit to the Hippodrome. Manners was also happy and satisfied, having taken his fill of photographs—including the one he wanted of the picturesque old mill at Rottingdean.

It was just as the juniors were starting for the harbour wharf that Tom Merry made that exclamation. He had just caught sight of Captain Cragg, who was ambling along rather unsteadily with a short, fat individual, who also appeared to be rather unsteady on his legs.

The latter was not a very inviting-looking individual at all. Besides being short and fat, he had a very red nose, a pointed black moustache, bleary black eyes, and a scowl. He was dressed in dirty blue overalls, and was obviously a sea-faring man.

The two of them made a curious couple, and it was not surprising that Tom and Lowther referred to them as Weary Willy and Tired Tim.

"It's the same chap he was with last night," said Tom Merry, eyeing the two keenly. "They seem to be jolly thick!"

"They do," agreed Glyn, staring hard at the couple. "I think I'll ask about the petrol—we don't want to be landed without juice again in the morning."

He called to Captain Cragg as they were passing.

"Did you get that petrol, Cragg?"

Weary Willy started and looked round. He seemed rather startled and uneasy as he recognised the juniors.

"Yes, Master Glyn!" he replied, his voice rather thick and none too respectful. "It's on the boat—took it there more'n an hour ago!"

"Good! That's all right, then. We'll expect you aboard very soon, Cragg."

"All right, young sir!"

The juniors passed on, and made for their dinghy. It was tied up just as they had left it.

"Now we shall soon know," said Glyn eagerly, as they tumbled into the boat and pushed off. "And if these tins are the ones I marked—well—"

Glyn did not finish, but his face was grim.

They were soon aboard the Silver Spray, and Baggy Trimble met them with a sulky scowl.

"Cheerio, Baggy!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "How goes it?"

"Beasts!" grunted Trimble. "I say, you fellows, it was a good thing I was aboard! That rotter Cragg came here with a pal."

"He's brought the petrol, then?" said Glyn, finishing tying up the dinghy. "Where is it, Trimble?"

"Here it is," Trimble pointed to a row of petrol-tins on the cockpit grating. "They brought them over an hour ago, and, I say, you fellows, I believe the brutes were up to something."

"Why?"

"After they'd shoved the petrol here they both came aboard, and then Cragg was just going to get back alone into the dinghy when he spotted me," said Trimble. "Fancy that! The beast nearly fell overboard when I came out of the cabin. He must have thought nobody was on board. It's my belief that foreign-looking chap was going to loot the boat, and—"

But Glyn was scarcely listening to Baggy. He snatched up one of the tins, and looked underneath it. Then his eyes gleamed.

"Got him!" he snapped triumphantly. "Got the brute! Look here!"

He pointed to the bottom of one of the tins. On it was scribbled in blacklead the name of Bernard Glyn.

"You recognise my writing, chaps?"

"Phew! Yes, rather!"

"I wrote my name on each of these tins last night," said Glyn quietly. "Cragg took them without a doubt, and now he's brought them back to sell to us again. He's done it before, too. He's a rotten thief as well as a lazy good-for-nothing!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

In turn Bernard Glyn examined the bottom of each of the six tins of petrol. All of them bore his name.

"He's a crafty rotter!" smiled Glyn. "But we've beaten him this time! He leaves the boat this very night!"

"Oh, good!"

"Now we'll have a bit of supper, chaps," said Glyn, with satisfaction, "and then we'll wait for his giddy laziness to turn up. He'll get a surprise, I fancy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors went in to supper, and after supper they came on deck again and lounged in the cockpit, waiting for the return of Weary Willy. Dusk had deepened into darkness by this time, and the lights of the harbour glimmered on the waters. From the doorway and portholes of the Silver Spray's cabin gleamed lights in a cheering radiance. From the far interior of the kitchen sounded the rattle of crockery, showing that Baggy Trimble was at work. Manners had gone down into the fo'c'sle to develop some films, and the rest of the juniors spent the time discussing footer for the coming winter term.

After an hour or more Manners came along, a satisfied grin on his features.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "how are the snaps going?"

"Splendidly!" said Manners. "They've all come out a treat—one of them especially! I'm going to have that particular one framed for our study, and if you like, Tommy, you can have a print to shove in the 'St. Jim's News.'"

"Oh, good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, looking very suspiciously at Manners. "I fail to see the joke, dear boys." "You'll see it when we get back to St. Jim's, old chap!" said Manners.

Arthur Augustus rose slowly to his feet. He jammed his eyeglass more firmly into his eye, and then he subjected Manners to a steady stare.

"You've been developing films, Manners?" he asked.

"Yes!" assented Manners cheerily.

"Snapshots you've taken to-day?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"No, old chap—at least, I only took one of them to-day. That one happened to finish the reel. The rest I took yesterday."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus eyed Manners very suspiciously indeed now, and he appeared to be cogitating. The mighty brain of Arthur Augustus never did work very quickly.

"Bai Jove!" he repeated, eyeing Manners fixedly. "I do not like to be suspicious, Mannahs, but weally I do not quite understand this. You took those snaps of Wottingdean Church and Wottingdean pond and the old mill with a new woll of films."

"Yes, Lucky I had a new roll with me, wasn't it?"

"Bai Jove, this is vewy stwange!" said Arthur Augustus, looking hard at the grinning faces of his chums. "I myself saw you throw that weel into the harbour head. Am I wight in sayin' you did thwow away a weel, Mannahs?"

"Quite right, old fellow!"

"Then I fail to undahstand your wemarks, Mannahs. I also cannot undahstand what you fellows have been gwinin' about all the aftahnoon and evenin' whenevah snapshots have been mentioned!" said Arthur Augustus, frowning. "It almost makes me suspect that you did not thwow away that woll of films, aftah all, bai Jove!"

"Go hon!"

"It is no laughin' mattah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, with some heat. "If you have spoofed me, Mannahs—"

Arthur Augustus was interrupted. From the harbour came the splash of oars and the sound of husky voices, one of which appeared to be raised in a song.

The juniors made out the forms of two men in a boat which seemed to be approaching the Silver Spray.

"Hallo! Visitors!" grinned Lowther. "My hat! It looks like Weary Willy and Tired Tim!"

"And it sounds as if the blighters are half-squiffy!" said Glyn grimly.

A husky hail came over the still harbour waters:

"Silver Spray ahoy!"

"It is Cragg," said Tom Merry. "By Jove! Don't allow the outsider to come aboard in that state, Glyn!"

"Let him come!" said Glyn firmly. "We may as well get this business settled once and for all, chaps!"

Tom said nothing more, and the next moment the boat thudded against the side of the Silver Spray. The little fat man held on with a boathook, and Weary Willy clambered aboard with obvious difficulty. Tired Tim hitched the painter of the boat to the rail and followed Cragg clumsily.

Glyn watched the pair grimly.

"So here you are, Cragg!" he said. "What does this other chap want here?"

Captain Cragg swayed rather unsteadily, and blinked in the light that streamed from the open cabin doorway.

"It's like this, shipmates," he began, eyeing Glyn with ludicrous gravity. "This 'ere is an old shipmate of mine what lives at Dieppe—him being a Frenchman. His—his wife's ill, and he wants to get back home quick. Him and me was wondering if you young gents would object to him coming across with us in the morning?"

"Oh, that's it!" said Glyn.

"Yes, I know you young gents won't mind, being good-hearted lads," said Captain Cragg huskily, holding on to the rail. "He's willin' to work his passage, of course, and he can stay for'ard."

Glyn stared hard at Weary Willy, who was eyeing him shiftyly. It was only too obvious to the juniors that he was lying, and they could not help wondering what was behind it. Weary Willy, for some reason of his own, had not wanted to sail that day; but now he was ready for the morning, and he wanted to take a passenger across—a foreigner, who looked a bigger rotter than he was.

"So that's it!" said Glyn. "Well, there's nothing doing, Cragg! We're sailing for France in the morning, but neither this chap nor you are coming with us! We part company to-night, Cragg!"

"Oh, do we?" ejaculated Captain Cragg, quite taken aback.

"Yes," said Glyn steadily. "We've had quite enough of your games, Cragg! You're sacked!"

Weary Willy's eyes glinted.

"Oh, am I?" he exclaimed. "And who says I am, Master Glyn?"

"I do!"

"Well, I ain't being thrown off like this 'ere!" said Captain Cragg, looking ugly. "Your father gave me this job, lad, and I ain't taking the sack from anybody but him! An' what about me wages?"

"You've been paid up for this week," said Glyn.

"An' what about notice?" gritted the man savagely.

"You aren't entitled to any notice in the circumstances," said Glyn quietly. "You can think yourself lucky we don't hand you over to the police, Cragg!"

"By hokey!"

Weary Willy staggered a little, and looked at Glyn a little scared now.

"Wha' d'you mean?" he stammered.

"I'll tell you!" said Glyn. "Where did you get this petrol from, Cragg?"

"I—I couldn't get enough in the village," he muttered. "An' my mate here went over to Seaford and got me this. He wants paying for it, too."

"Then perhaps you can explain this?" said Glyn, and he picked up one of the cans and turned it over, showing the pencilled name on the bottom. "I put my name on each of the tins I bought last night, and also those in stock. Here it is on this, and on all of these tins. They're the same tins, my pippin! You pinched 'em and brought them back to sell them to me again, you rotter! It's not the first time you've done it, either!"

"By hokey!"

Captain Cragg staggered. Glyn's charge seemed to have sobered him for the moment, but now he flushed red and his eyes glittered.

"So that's it, is it?" he snarled. "You reckons as I pinched your bloomin' petrol, my lads?"

"Just that. It's not the only thing you've pinched, either, since we started this cruise."

"Oh, isn't it?" said Captain Cragg, raising his voice.

in husky excitement. "You calls me a thief—me as is an honest man!"

"Yes, I do!"

"Me a thief, eh?" roared Captain Cragg. "And you're going to sack me, hey?"

"Yes. This very night!"

"Then I ain't standin' it!" bellowed Weary Willy furiously. "Not likely I ain't! Call me a thief, hey? Why, you impudent young rips, I'll—I'll knock your block off!"

With that Weary Willy—not very weary now—let go of the rail and made a blind sweep with his fist at Bernard Glyn.

It was a heavy blow, and quite unexpected, and it caught Glyn a nasty smack, sending him staggering backwards with a gasp.

But it was enough for the motor-boat boys.

"Collar the sweeps!" yelled Blake.

"Chuck 'em overboard!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was an immediate rush at Weary Willy and Tired Tim.

Tom Merry & Co. were disgusted and "fed-up," to put it very mildly, and that blow at Glyn had proved the last straw.

Weary Willy went crashing down on the grating with a wild, savage howl, and the next moment Tired Tim followed him with an equally savage imprecation, which fortunately the juniors did not understand.

Then the motor-boat boys swarmed over them.

"Over with them!" gasped Glyn. "Into the harbour with both of the brutes!"

"Hear, hear!"

Both of the brutes went over.

Splash!

Splash!

Tired Tim followed Weary Willy.

The waters of Newhaven Harbour seemed to boil just alongside the Silver Spray. The juniors lined the rails and looked over. Two figures—sobered now in earnest—wallowed below, splashing and yelling.

But the shock of the immersion had undoubtedly sobered them, and any fears the juniors had entertained regarding their safety were soon at rest.

Both could swim, and both swam towards their boat, lying alongside, and they clambered with difficulty over the side and dropped in.

"Now clear!" called Glyn. "You hear, Cragg? Come back here, my pippin, and you'll get the same again!"

A torrent of mingled English and French, in gasping howls, reached the juniors.

But Captain Cragg and his friend did not come back. They had had enough. The next moment the boat was moving, and the savage voices of Weary Willy and Tired Tim died away as darkness swallowed up their boat.

"Well, that's that!" remarked Bernard Glyn in deep relief. "I'm jolly glad to get rid of that merchant, anyway. No more Weary Willy!"

"And no more Tired Tim!" added Lowther with a chuckle.

"Now what about bed?" said Tom Merry. "I'm jolly tired."

"Same here!"

And the juniors went to bed, tired and very satisfied. They had got rid of the unsavoury Captain Cragg at last. Tom Merry was thankful enough that he had gone, but he couldn't help feeling somehow that they had not finished with Weary Willy yet.

CHAPTER 6.

Startling!

"BAI JOVE! I wondah, now!"

It was Arthur Augustus who wondered, and he was wondering in the still hours of the night, when he ought to have been fast asleep.

All the rest of the motor-boat boys were fast asleep, either in hammocks or bunks. As Arthur Augustus lay tossing and wondering he heard gentle breathing all about him, and above all the resounding snore of Baggy Trimble.

For the last hour or more Arthur Augustus had been envying Baggy Trimble. Trimble slept as he ate—very heartily. Even at the expense of taking over Trimble's snore, Arthur Augustus would have been glad enough to have been Trimble for that night.

For Arthur Augustus could not sleep, try as he would.

Whether it was due to the excitement of the day, or to the lobster salad for supper, or to the deep problem of whether Manners had, or had not, destroyed the right film, he did not know. At all events, he could not sleep.

Since their arrival back on board from the outing Arthur

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Augustus had been thinking a great deal regarding that roll of films. He realised only too well that he had cut a ludicrous figure hanging on with "tooth and nail" to that wretched boathook at the wharfside. And he knew that if Manners was in a position to develop the photograph, and broadcast prints over St. Jim's when term commenced, he would be "chipped" unmercifully. Life would be scarcely worth living.

It was really very disturbing, and certainly very odd. He had seen Manners throw something into the harbour without a doubt, and it had certainly been a film reel.

Had Manners spoofed him, after all? Arthur Augustus wondered now as he lay sleepless, and as he wondered the suspicion grew and grew that he had.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured to himself again. "I weally do wondah! The feahful wottah is not above spoofin' even me. It must be that vevy photogwaph he was wewefwin' to to-night. He said he would have some pwints weady in the mornin'. Howevah, I shall soon know the worst in that case, and— Bai Jove!"

The thought brought another to the troubled mind of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Why wait until the morning? If Manners once developed the luckless photo there was no knowing whether he would ever be able to destroy the film and prints also. It would lead to endless trouble for all concerned. And the fo'c'sle where Manners developed his films was rarely kept locked.

"Bai Jove!" breathed the swell of the Fourth.

He made up his mind in a moment. He was tired, and very disinclined to get up, but the thought of that wretched photo being printed and broadcasted made him shudder. Really, the situation was very serious. Something drastic had to be done.

Arthur Augustus slipped out of his bunk, and tip-toed in bare feet and pyjamas between the bunks of the cabin. The sliding door into the forward cockpit was open, and he passed through quietly.

All was quiet here, and above his head stars twinkled in the velvety sky. In the ordinary way Weary Willy would have been sleeping in the forward cockpit, in his hammock, slung under a canvas awning stretched from rail to rail.

But Weary Willy was gone, and the cockpit was open to the sky now. Arthur Augustus passed across it and tried the sliding door of the fo'c'sle.

It was closed, but not locked. Arthur Augustus gently slid the door open and stepped inside. It was rather stuffy and black as ink in the fo'c'sle, and as he stepped down the two steps into it Arthur Augustus suddenly caught his breath.

He had heard something—something suspiciously like the sound of someone breathing!

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, thrilled from head to foot, and not a little startled. "This is vevy swange!"

Fumbling with the matchbox he carried, Arthur Augustus stepped farther into the fo'c'sle, and what happened after that the swell of the Fourth never could remember clearly.

He remembered stumbling over something bulky, and the next moment he went crashing down, falling on to something soft and yielding, from which came a sudden husky yelp.

"Ow! Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy.

He lay for a moment half-winded, and far too startled to move, and in that moment the something beneath him moved, and a savage hand clutched him.

That was enough for Arthur Augustus. With a wild howl, he struck out with all his force.

His fist struck home, and there followed another howl. And what happened after that seemed more like a horrid nightmare than anything else to Arthur Augustus.

Hands clutched him, and fists struck him until his head reeled. But he was a stout-hearted youth, and the next moment he was hitting out right and left and yelling for aid.

"Help, help! Oh, bai Jove! Gweat Scott! Help! Wescue—wescue, you fellows! Yawwoooogh! Wescue!"

In the dark fo'c'sle it was like Bedlam now, as Arthur Augustus fought desperately with his unknown assailants amid an uproar of yells and thumps, and rattling of buckets and tackle upset in the struggle.

Quite suddenly, however, a hefty fist took Arthur Augustus full in the mouth, and the junior reeled backwards and flopped down heavily.

He heard a sudden husky mutter, and the next moment he felt himself released, and as he lay half-stunned he glimpsed a dark form, and then another, vanish through the doorway of the fo'c'sle.

"Help!" yelled the junior. "Quick, deah boys! Wescue!"

This time there came an answering cry, and the next moment the pyjama-clad forms of Tom Merry & Co. came rushing through from the cabin, one after the other.

"What the thump! Where are you, Gussy?" cried Tom Merry.

"Here! Quick, deah boys!" roared Arthur Augustus.

A light flashed into the dark fo'c'sle. Tom Merry jumped as he sighted the prostrate form of Arthur Augustus. That luckless junior gasped and sat up. His face was white save for dark bruises on it, and a thin stream of crimson trickled from his lips.

"Great pip!"

"Gussy!" exclaimed Blake.

Tom Merry, with the rest of the startled juniors behind him, swarmed down into the fo'c'sle. They stooped over their chum in great alarm.

"What on earth's happened, Gussy?" ejaculated Blake. "What the thump are you doing down here like this?"

"Ow! Oh deah!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Have they gone, deah boys?"

"Eh? Who's gone?"

"Those wuffians!" panted the swell of the Fourth. "Aftah them quickly!"

He jumped up. Blake grabbed him.

"Hold on, you silly ass!" he gasped. "What on earth are you jabbering about, Gussy? Ruffians? What rot!"

"It isn't rot!" almost shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"They washed away just befoah you came!"

"My hat!"

Tom Merry ran out into the cockpit, and looked quickly about him. A few lights glimmered on the harbour, but there was no boat to be seen, or swimming figures either. After a swift glance overside to right and left, Tom returned.

"There isn't a soul about, Gussy," he said. "You must have had a giddy nightmare!"

"I didn't!" almost raved Gussy, and he told his chums what had happened.

They blinked unbelievably at him. Blake followed Tom Merry's example, and had a look round. But he saw nothing.

"It's queer!" said Tom Merry, eyeing Gussy doubtfully. "It can't have been Cragg and his pal again, can it? There's no boat to be seen, and they can't have got clear in that short time."

"I think it's pretty clear what's happened," said Blake. "Gussy—the awful ass!—must have been half asleep when he went, and the fathead tripped up and fell here. That's how his chivvy got damaged."

"Bai Jove! Well, well—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus. It was only too clear to him that his chums did not believe anyone had attacked him at all.

"We'll make sure, anyway," said Glyn. "Let's hunt round, chaps!"

The juniors hunted round, searching the motor-cruiser from end to end. But they discovered nothing. Arthur Augustus almost became hysterical in his frantic efforts to persuade his chums that he had not had a nightmare, and that the bruises had not been caused by the fall.

"Well, it's queer," grinned Tom Merry at last. "Anyway, we can do no more now, Gussy. Better get to bed, chaps. Feeling better now, Gussy?"

"I am feelin' better now, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling with indignation. "But I stwongly object to you fellows doubtin' my word in this mattah. I have had a w'etched experience, and—"

"We're not doubting your word, old chap," said Blake soothingly. "Only we think you must be mistaken—"

"Wubbish!" shouted Arthur Augustus frantically. "I was not mistaken, you fwihtful asses!"

"Oh, all right! Then you were not mistaken," said Tom



Grabbing his silk hat, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jerked it off the shelf and jammed it on his head. Unfortunately for the swell of St. Jim's, six fresh eggs reposed in the hat, and they reached Gussy's person before the hat did. Flop! Splosh! Squeech! "Yawoooooh!" One egg smashed on his noble nose, while the others bounced off various parts of his person and smashed on the floor. (See Chapter 3.)

Merry, anxious for peace. "We'll let it go at that, old fellow."

"Only don't do it again," grinned Manners. "Let this be a lesson to you, Gussy. D'you think if I had that film I should be ass enough to leave it lying about in the fo'c'sle?"

"I demand to know if that weel you thwew away was the weel containin' that snapshot, Mannahs?" said Arthur Augustus heatedly.

"Sorry, old chap, but I'm far too tired to answer conundrums to-night," answered Manners, and he went to bed.

Tom Merry and the others followed him, chuckling. Arthur Augustus followed, seething with righteous wrath and indignation. But he did not "do it again" that night. He had had quite enough of film-hunting for one night. He went to bed, and this time he slept. Five minutes later the Silver Spray was rocking gently at her moorings, silent under the stars.

CHAPTER 7.

Gussy Scores!

"TUMBLE up, my hearties! Show a leg!"

It was not a rugged old seadog who bawled out that, but Tom Merry of the School House at St. Jim's.

He slipped from his hammock, slung in the aft cockpit of the Silver Spray, and looked out through the canvas awning slung across from rail to rail.

It was early—very early—but the sun was sparkling on the waters of the harbour, and Tom Merry looked out on a glorious August morning.

For a moment he stood drawing in deep breaths of the fresh, salt-laden air, and then he turned to rouse his chums, his cheery face ruddy and bright with health.

"Tumble up!" he bawled. "No slacking! It's la belle France for us to-day! Tumble up!"

"Oh, good!"

Bernard Glyn was out of his hammock in a flash, and Noble and Lowther followed his example quickly enough. Manners was inclined to linger in the comfortable hammock, but Lowther grabbed a leg and brought him out with a thump on the grating among the tumbled blankets.

Leaving Lowther and Manners struggling together, Tom

chuckled, and went into the cabin. Blake was already out of his bunk, and Tom Merry lent his aid in bringing the rest from their bunks—using the same brisk methods Lowther had used upon Manners.

Only Baggy Trimble was stubborn, however. He clung to the sides of his bunk and fairly yelled.

"Heave the fat slacker out!" said Tom Merry. "No slacking on this trip, Trimble! Just a swift bathe and breakfast, and then we're off!"

"Look here!" howled Trimble, struggling furiously as Blake and Digby collared a leg each. "I'm not getting up yet, you beasts! Don't I tell you I feel ill—awful! Yarooooogh! Leggo!"

"Out with him!"

"What ho!"

"Yooooogh!" roared Trimble. "Leggo! I tell you I'm ill! I'm not jolly well getting up yet! Leggo! Oh, crikey! Yooooogh!"

Bump!

"Yarooooogh!" howled Baggy.

He sprawled on the floor, roaring with anguish.

"He's awake now all right," said Tom. "Now, Trimble, look lively with breakfast. We'll be back in two tics, and if you haven't got a move on—"

Tom Merry left his threat unfinished, and, followed by the others, he ran out and got his towel and swimming costume. In a couple of minutes there was a series of splashes as the motor-boat boys dived into Newhaven Harbour.

They were too eager to be off to stay in the water long, however, and soon they were swarming aboard again boisterously.

By the time they had dressed, Baggy Trimble had prepared breakfast, and healthy appetites soon made short work of the good things the fat junior had cooked. Then the anchor was hauled up, and the Silver Spray got under way for France.

"Bai Jove! The vewy thing!"

Arthur Augustus fairly trembled with triumph.

It was some hours since the Silver Spray had cleared Newhaven Harbour, and the white cliffs of Old England had long ago vanished in the hazy distance behind them. Around the motor-boat boys was nothing but the tumbling waters of the Channel, dotted here and there with a sail or two, and with the trailing smoke of steamers. The hot midday sun blazed down on the warm decks of the Silver Spray and on the dancing, tossing waves, turning them into shimmering silver.

It was certainly hot, but under the awning over the aft cockpit of the motor-boat it was cool enough, and Tom Merry & Co. were grateful for the shade it afforded.

All had gone well since the start, and the juniors were cheery and bright, looking forward eagerly to their short trip to France. Despite their "chipping" of Bernard Glyn, the juniors knew there was really little to worry about at undertaking such a trip. Bernard Glyn himself could handle the boat better, possibly, than could Captain Cragg, and in his many trips with his father on board the Silver Spray, Glyn had learned a great deal of seamanship and navigation. Moreover, Tom Merry & Co. were by no means "land-lubbers," and the mysteries of the compass were by no means a sealed book to them.

So far, the voyage had been without incident—at least, without striking incident. Baggy Trimble had given a little trouble after lunch, having refused point-blank to wash up, though there was obviously nothing wrong with him, the sea, up to then, having been calm enough.

But the juniors had very quickly dealt with the fat mutineer. They had adopted a suggestion of Glyn's, and

"clapped" Baggy in "irons," which consisted of the galley fireirons, an old kettle, a couple of saucepans, a bucket, and some paint-cans. These were tied round Baggy's fat neck; and, with a saucepan jammed on his head, the fat junior was tied to the foremast, and obliged to remain in irons for an hour. At the end of the hour Baggy was cured, and glad enough to "carry on" with his duties.

It was some little time after that that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave that triumphant exclamation, and announced—to himself—that it was "the vewy thing."

And what caused him to make the announcement was the sight of Manners' camera lying on a locker in the forward cockpit.

For, though many, many hours had passed since the incident of the night, Arthur Augustus had by no means forgotten about the film. All the morning the juniors had been too busy making things "shipshape," and cleaning the decks and brasswork, to bother about much else. And then had come lunch.

But all the time Gussy's mind had been engaged upon the problem of how to get hold of that dreadful photograph, or, at least, the film.

He felt certain now that his suspicions that Manners had not destroyed it were correct. And more than once that morning Arthur Augustus had made surreptitious visits to the fo'c'sle in the hope of making a search by daylight.

But each time he had found the fo'c'sle door and hatch fastened, and this fact alone made him feel certain that Manners had really spoofed him in the matter.

He was still hopeful, however, of catching Manners "napping." Manners had undoubtedly, he felt, fastened the fo'c'sle doors to prevent him making the search he wanted to make.

And now he actually had caught Manners napping. Before him, lying unattended on the locker, was Manners' camera.

Gussy knew how it had got there. Baggy Trimble had looked such a ridiculous figure in "irons" that Manners had rushed off to get his camera, and had snapped him. After that, Manners had helped to cut Baggy free, and had rushed him to the cabin, and since then had, very obviously, forgotten all about his camera.

Manners was usually very careful indeed concerning his precious camera, but he had undoubtedly been careless this time.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle. "It is weally the vewy thing, bai Jove! There is no need now to search in that wotten fo'c'sle! I will twy another way. Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus carefully hid the camera in a locker, and went in search of some string. He soon found some. Manners and the rest were lounging in the cockpit at the moment, busy studying charts. Arthur Augustus chuckled; and, after getting the camera out again, he went forward with it through the sliding door.

Then he paused. Trimble was there. He was lying full length across the lockers, and his head was over the side. Arthur Augustus caught a glimpse of his face, and he smiled. It was a queer, whitish-green hue.

During the last hour the wind had risen a trifle, and the Silver Spray was "rolling" a little—not much, certainly, but a little too much for Baggy Trimble.

Evidently the fat youth was feeling very wobbly in his interior. He did not even look round as Arthur Augustus appeared on the scene—he seemed fascinated by the green, tumbling waters, and was staring at them with glassy eyes.

Arthur Augustus stepped to the opposite side, and, tying the string to the camera, he lowered it gently over the side, just out of sight below the rail. Then he tied the other end of the string to the rail, and softly withdrew. Only anyone looking for that string could have seen it.

Arthur Augustus joined Tom Merry & Co. in the aft cockpit. He was looking quite serene and calm.

"Mannahs," he exclaimed, "I wish to ask you a question. Did you destroy that film of the snap you took of me, or not?"

There was a general chuckle. That ill-fated snapshot was causing a great deal of innocent entertainment to Tom Merry & Co.

Manners grinned cheerfully.

"Great pip!" he exclaimed. "Are you still worrying your little head about that, Gussy?"

"Yaas, I am, Mannahs! I have twied on several occasions to get into the fo'c'sle, but to no avail. The fact that you have fastened up the fo'c'sle seems cleah pwoof to me that you still possess that beastly snapshot, you wottah!"

Manners looked rather surprised.

"My dear man, what an idea!" he said. "I haven't fastened up the blessed fo'c'sle at all. I haven't been near the place to-day."

"Then one of you wottahs must have fastened it up."

There was a general shaking of heads and chuckles.



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"Nor do I."

"The fat ass is mad!"

"Come on!" snapped Tom.

The juniors swarmed on to the cabin roof, and rushed at Trimble. Tom Merry grabbed him by a fat shoulder.

"What is it? What's the matter, you ass?"

"Fire!" shrieked Baggy. "In the fo'c'sle there! Help! Man the boats! Get the dinghy along, you fellows—quick! Fire, fire, fire!"

And Baggy Trimble wrenched himself free madly and rushed across the cabin roof. He vanished from sight below.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Glyn. "The ass must have gone potty!"

"It's seasickness!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "The poor chap looked awfully wocky just now. It's dwiven him off his wockah, bai Jove! Gweat Scott! How tewwible, deah boys!"

"Let's look into it, anyway," said Tom Merry. "Something must be wrong," he added, glancing sharply round. "There's no fire, but Trimble wasn't spoofing."

"Rather not!"

Greatly puzzled, the juniors searched about. They tried the fo'c'sle hatchway, and they tried the sliding door, finding, as Gussy and Manners had already found, that both were securely fastened—apparently from inside.

"That's queer!" repeated Glyn. "Who the thump can have fastened the show up, anyway?"

"And how could they get out themselves afterwards?" said Herries, grinning.

"There's Trimble yelling still," said Glyn. "Let's see the fat idiot!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am vewy concerned about Twimble."

The juniors hurried back across the cabin-top, and jumped down into the cockpit. As they did so Baggy Trimble, still yelling, came rushing out from the cabin.

The juniors nearly fell down at sight of him.

Apparently Baggy imagined the boat was sinking, or about to sink. And he had been busy making preparations.

He had fastened lifebelts about his fat person—lifebelts galore! He had them fastened round his fat chest and his fat waist one on top of another, and he had one round his neck, and one tied round each arm, and another he was just fastening frantically round his legs as he emerged from the cabin.

Baggy had collared every lifebelt on the boat, and how he had got them on was a mystery. He looked like a great round ball, and was a sight. As Lowther said afterwards, he looked for all the world like a walking advertisement for Dunlop tyres.

The juniors blinked at him.

"What—what—what—"

"Is—is it Trimble?"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors doubled up and fairly howled with laughter. "You mad fools!" shrieked Trimble. "Is this a time for laughing? Quick! The boat will be a blazing mass in a minute! Fire! You awful asses! Fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help it. The sight of Baggy almost buried in lifebelts and dancing about in wild terror was too much for them—even with the dread cry of "Fire!" ringing in their ears.

"Where is the fire, you fat ass?" laughed Tom Merry.

"In the fo'c'sle, I tell you!" howled Trimble, almost beside himself in his dire terror. "I saw the flames—I mean, the smoke—coming through a crack in the door! Fire, fire, fire! Fire—Yoooop!"

Crash!

Baggy was down—Lowther having carelessly, or purposely, placed a leg in the way, and Baggy went over it with a wild howl, and went rolling across the grating. He came up against the aft combing with a soft thud, and there he lay, struggling vainly to get up.

But the lifebelts were too many for him.

Between them Tom Merry and Glyn managed to get him upright, though it was rather hard to tell which side or end to stand Baggy up on.

"Better look into it again," said Tom Merry, trying to appear serious. "That fo'c'sle being fastened is queer, anyway."

"Yes, rather!" said Glyn. "Stay at the wheel, Digby!"

Leaving the terror-stricken Baggy to his own devices, the juniors hurried across the cabin roof again. They reached the fo'c'sle doorway, and Tom Merry examined the cracks. Then he sniffed at them.

As he did so his eyes suddenly gleamed.

"There's smoke in there somewhere!" he snapped. "Get me a hammer, or something—quick!"

"Wight-ho!"

Arthur Augustus rushed away and returned next moment.

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with a crow-bar, and, as Glyn nodded his approval, Tom Merry set to work swiftly.

He managed to get the end in a slit between the door and the jamb, and after working a bit the door slid aside a few inches, and something fell away on the other side.

But the door seemed to jam again then.

"Back up!" snapped Tom. "Smartly, now!"

Three of them put their shoulders to it, and suddenly the door slid aside with a rush.

As it did so there sounded a sudden startled gasp, and then the light flooded into the fo'c'sle.

The juniors yelled aloud at what they saw.

Inside the little apartment two men were crouching with sudden, startled alarm on their faces.

The juniors recognised them both at a glance.

"Weary Willy!" yelled Lowther.

"And Tired Tim!" howled Tom Merry.

The juniors were simply flabbergasted.



"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry. "Hold on, Lowther, the temptation, and he pulled. Splash! Baggy Trimble was in the water, and he yelled of terror as he felt the waters of New York Bay."

They could scarcely believe the evidence of their own eyes.

"M-mum-my hat!" gasped Bernard Glyn.

The juniors stared and stared. They understood now where the smoke had come from. Baggy Trimble had seen smoke right enough. But it was tobacco smoke!

On the floor in front of Weary Willy lay a pipe, with a metal top to it. A thin trail of smoke curled up from it. Between the lips of the Frenchman half a lighted cigarette hung as he gaped in great alarm at the juniors.

"The—the rotters!" panted Glyn.

"Stowaways!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, my hat! So—so this explains why the fo'c'sle was fastened."

"And—and last night!" yelled Blake. "Gussy was right, then. It must have been these chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove! How vewy extwaordinary! But I told you fellows so!"

"Great pip!"

The juniors and the two stowaways blinked at each other. Then Weary Willy spoke.

"Young—young gents!" he gasped. "Just you hark to me a minute—"

"Have them out of this!" snapped Bernard Glyn. "We'll soon see what this means! Out with the rascals!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold 'ard, you gents!"

The juniors did hold hard—in another way. They grabbed the scared Weary Willy and Tired Tim, and hauled them out of the stuffy fo'c'sle on to the grating outside.

Neither of the two made any resistance—there would have been little chance for them if they had attempted to do so against so many.

"Now, my pippins!" snapped Glyn, his face hard. "What the dickens does this mean?"

"We—we weren't doing any harm, Master Glyn!" stammered Captain Cragg. "My mate here was desperate to get home. His poor wife—"

"Cut that out!" snapped Glyn. "I don't believe a word of that. How the thump did you get in there, anyway?"

"We crept in last night," said Weary Willy. "We knowed it was no good asking you arter last night to take us across."



ull, or— Oh, my hat!" Monty Lowther could not resist overboard. His grin vanished, and he gave vent to a pierce- harbour closing over his head. (See Chapter 3.)

"Then it was you who knocked D'Arcy about in here last night?" demanded Tom Merry.

"That was most unfortunate, Master Merry," said Weary Willy earnestly. "The young gent started us, bursting in on us in the middle of the night like he did. I did nothing—I was too startled, and I admits I was a little dazed like. But Gaston Courret, 'ere, lost 'is temper, being hurt like he was. We didn't mean the young gent to be hurt."

"You hurt him, anyway!" snapped Glyn. "But we want to know how you got away, you rotters! We searched afterwards, and saw nobody."

"We was hiding under the stern in our boat," muttered the man. "We jumped over into our boat, and pulled it round this craft, and drew in under the stern. If you'd looked a bit more you must 'ave seen us."

"I see," said Glyn grimly. "And then when we went back to bed you sneaked aboard and into the fo'c'sle again?"

"Yes," said Weary Willy. "The pal as rowed us out to the Silver Spray took 'is boat back, and we got in here and fastened ourselves in."

"I see you've got food and drink in there," said Tom Merry, nodding his head towards the fo'c'sle doorway.

"You arranged it well, my pippins! But we want to know why you've done it. I can understand your pal there wanting a free passage home, but what's your game, Cragg?"

Cragg gave a sigh and shook his head.

"It was duty as made me do it, young gents," he said. "I was afraid of you young gents getting yourselves into a mess, and p'aps getting the Silver Spray wrecked. It ain't safe for you young fellers to be taking a boat like this across Channel. What would your father say, Master Glyn?"

"Goodness knows!" grinned Glyn. "But go on, dear man; you've got a high sense of duty, we know!"

"I know you young gents won't believe me," said Weary Willy, shaking his head sadly. "But I felt it my duty to come and see you young fellers didn't get into trouble. I got my duty to consider and my duty to your father, Master Glyn. I know you sacked me, but I promised your father, to look arter you, and I've got to do it. Your father ain't sacked me yet, and I can't take it from you!"

"What a yarn! What about that petrol?"

"It was a mistake—you gents was mistaken," said Cragg earnestly. "That petrol we bought might have been the same petrol—I'm not saying as it wasn't. But I reckon it was sold us by the same fellers as pinched it, and we took it from 'em innocently enough."

"Bai Jove, that is quite possible, Glyn, deah boy?"

"It is possible," said Glyn, with a sniff; "but not very probable, old chap! Anyway, what about coming back squiffy last night?"

"Ah, now there you got me!" said Captain Cragg humbly. "I reckon as I can't deny that, and I hopes as you young gents will overlook it and forgive me, like. It were meeting old Gaston, here, what I haven't seen for years. We both had a little drop too much—I owns up to that!"

"Well, perhaps you are telling the truth there," said Glyn grimly. "But there's nothing doing, Cragg. You're sacked, and we've finished with you!"

"You're rather 'ard on a man, Master Glyn," said Weary Willy, almost shedding tears. "This will do me a lot of 'arm, me havin' good references and a good name, like! I knows as I ain't done as I might 'ave done on this cruise, but I did hope you young gents would give me another chance."

"No fear!"

"I'm only askin' you to let me do my job and take this 'ere boat across and back," said Captain Cragg. "I owes that to your father, Master Glyn. You young fellers ain't in Dieppe Harbour yet, and it ain't safe for you to take her there alone. Courret, here, ain't doin' no harm, and he'll think it kind of you young gents to give him a passage, and he'll stay in the fo'c'sle until he goes ashore at Dieppe."

"Oui! Oui! Monsieur Cragg, he speak ze—ze c'est vrai—zat ees so, messieurs!" exclaimed the fat Frenchman, his beady eyes shining. "Je ne vous derangerai point!"

"Eh? What the—?"

"He means Cragg is speaking the truth, and he says he won't disturb us," grinned Tom Merry. "Well, what's to be done, chaps? We don't want to turn back with these merchants now!"

"We'll talk it over!" snapped Glyn. "You stay here, and, mind, no tricks! Come on, chaps!"

The juniors left the grovelling pair, and went aft to talk the matter over. They were already more than half-way across, and none of them wanted to return with the stow-aways.

"It's the only thing to do, Glyn," grunted Tom, at last. "We'll clear out that French Johnny when we land, of course. But about Cragg—"

"Kick him out, too!" snorted Herries. "Take no notice of his blessed crocodile tears. The sweep's got some game on, you may bet."

"We can't strand the beggar on French soil, though," said Tom Merry, smiling. "After all, he may feel he ought to accompany us, even if we don't want him to. I expect he's got some sort of reputation to keep up."

"Bai Jove! I agree with you there, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, who was a very good-hearted youth. "Aftah all, we know the wottah now, and we can keep a close eye on him. I weally think we ought to allow the chap to return with us to English soil. We can kick the bwute out then, bai Jove!"

"And he'll be useful on this trip—there's no denying that," grinned Blake. "I shall feel safer, anyway."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Glyn. "We'll let the rotter come, and we'll kick him out when we reach England again. But the blighter's got to work this time, and we'll see he gets up to no more tricks. After all, the pater's bound to be waxy about me going without a giddy elder person," he added, with a chuckle, "so I shall be saved a jolly stiff wiggling."

Thus it was settled, and Glyn went back to Cragg, and told him the decision. He also told him what to expect if he tried any more games, or refused to do his share of work. And Captain Cragg shed crocodile tears, and said he would remember. He also took charge of the wheel there and then—a fact that brought some relief to Tom Merry & Co., and rest to Bernard Glyn.

CHAPTER 9. Quite English!

LAND in sight!" bawled Monty Lowther. "Land off the port bow, my hearties!"

"Oh, good!"
"Hip-pip!"

Lowther wasn't at all sure which was the port or the starboard side of the ship, but he risked it, and he proved to be correct.

It was land off the port bow—France was in sight at last. And the news brought the juniors crowding to the port rails of the Silver Spray.

It was not the first sight of La Belle France for most of the juniors; but only Glyn had visited Dieppe before, and the rest of the juniors were keen to get their first glimpse of the old sea-port.

As yet the distant land was only a hazy blur on the skyline, but very soon the rugged, white chalk cliffs were visible with the afternoon sunlight shining full on them.

"We'll just be in time to get some tea ashore," remarked Glyn, with satisfaction. "Thought we'd better pay our respects to the giddy French Government first."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"You're forgetting that you can't trot across to a foreign country like trotting across from the School House to the New House at St. Jim's," grinned Glyn.

"Oh, you mean passports and all that rot?" grunted Blake.

"Exactly! But we'll soon do that. We'll just visit the Gendarmerie, and leave our giddy visiting-cards, so to speak, and then we'll be free to run round. I vote we have tea at a cafe, and then do the sights."

"Good egg!"

"It's not a big place," said Glyn. "But there's the old chateau, and the casino, and the harbour, and lots of interesting things to see. Hallo! There's Pourville," he added, pointing towards a break in the cliffs, showing houses with a green vale beyond, "and there's Dieppe farther on. We'll be there in less than fifteen minutes."

"Pourville's a nice little place, Master Glyn," observed Captain Cragg, who was at the wheel. "You might do worse than run the boat in there, and anchor off-shore instead of Dieppe. There's a casino there, and bathing, and—"

"So there is at Dieppe," said Glyn, with rather a hard look at Weary Willy. "We can easily walk over to Pourville from Dieppe if we want to. We'll tie up in Dieppe Harbour, thanks, Cragg."

"Just as you likes, Master Glyn," was the rather surly answer. "I just thought that it might suit you better being quieter, like."

Weary Willy subsided, and the juniors turned their attention to the view of the French sea-port, now opening out before them. But Glyn's brow was wrinkled, and he glanced several times at Weary Willy. It was not the first time Captain Cragg had suggested vaguely Pourville as a more suitable place to stop at, and he wondered vaguely why that crafty gentleman had suggested it at all.

It was the height of the season at Dieppe, and the bathing beach was crowded and alive with colour. But the juniors had little time to view it then, for the Silver Spray was soon speeding between the outer piers of the harbour. The juniors looked about them with great interest, first at the quaint church of Bon Secours, high on the Pollet cliffs and overlooking the harbour, and then at the busy Gare and the shipping in the harbour.

"Quite a busy little place," remarked Tom Merry. "Hallo, there's the Newhaven boat. Well, here we are."

In a very few minutes the Silver Spray was rocking gently at her moorings and the dinghy drawn alongside.

"We'll see Tired Tim safe ashore before we leave the boat," said Glyn grimly. "Cragg, you can tell your French pal to 'Allez-vous-en!' You know what that means, I suppose?" added Glyn, proud of his French. "It means 'Get out!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll take 'im ashore in the dinghy, Master Glyn," said Captain Cragg. "I suppose you'll be ready to go ashore then?"

"Yes; come straight back for us," said Glyn.

Weary Willy nodded, and made his way forward. He

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was very respectful, and he seemed very eager to make amends for the past and to show his regrets.

"I weally think the chap's sorry for his wotten conduct," remarked Arthur Augustus. "He seems quite eagah to turn ovah a new leaf, deah boys."

"Tosh!" grunted Glyn, his eyes following Weary Willy keenly. "The blighter has some game on with that French chap—I'm certain of that. Look at them now!"

Gaston Couret had just emerged from the fo'c'sle hatchway, and Weary Willy stood with him for some moments in whispered conversation. Then both glanced across at the juniors and dropped into the dinghy alongside.

Weary Willy pulled the fat Frenchman to the steps of the quay and came back for the juniors. A few minutes later Tom Merry & Co. had landed, and the dinghy went back to the Silver Spray.

"Now for the giddy Gendarmerie!" grinned Glyn. "We've got to find that first chaps. Hallo! What about asking this merchant the way?"

"Leave it to me, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I've been polishin' up my Fwench lately, and I wathah fancy I had bettah do the talkin', deah boys."

"Go ahead, then!" grinned Glyn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus approached a bronzed individual, wearing a seaman's jersey, and raised his hat politely.

"Bong jour, monsieur!" said Arthur Augustus genially.

The fisherman blinked rather at the elegantly-clad junior.

"Bon jour!" he said.

"Voulez vous avez—avoir la—la gwande bonte de nous dewigeah ou moi—je—nous—I mean, two-ver-wons le Gendarmawee?" said Arthur Augustus, getting his tenses and genders slightly mixed up.

The man stared at him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's French was very much of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and perhaps Gussy's accent puzzled him also.

"Je ne comprends pas, monsieur," he said.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I say, you fellows, this chap doesn't undahstand Fwench. Perhaps he is an Italian. Shall I twy him with Italian, deah boys?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, let me try, Gussy," laughed Tom Merry.

He turned to the fisherman.

"Bon jour, monsieur! Qu est la Gendarmerie, s'il vous plait?" he asked.

The man grinned and nodded.

"Mais oui, oui," he said. "Allez par la Rue en face, et tournez a droite. Vous y trouverez la Place National et voila La Gendarmerie a droite, tout pres."

And he pointed across the quay.

"Merci bien, monsieur!"

"All serene!" grinned Tom, rejoining his chums. "It's in the Place National along this street opposite."

"He, he, he!" cackled Baggy Trimble, who seemed highly entertained. "What a blessed scream! Fancy these silly froggies not understanding plain English, you know. What awful asses!"

"And fancy you not understanding plain French!" smiled Lowther. "You awful ass!"

"What rot!" grinned Trimble. "I say, what a lark! Fancy being able to slang these froggies no end without 'em knowing it!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble!"

"You could tell 'em off no end," chuckled Trimble, "and they'd just stare at you. He, he, he!"

The thought of being able to "slang" a chap without ill results to oneself seemed to amuse the fatuous Baggy Trimble.

"It is a lark, ain't it?" agreed Lowther. "Well, why not do it, Baggy? Go and slang that chap over there, old chap!"

"It wouldn't take me long to do it," grinned Trimble.

"Well, do it. It will be no end of a lark, old chap. I bet you daren't go and tell him to boil his chivvy," said Lowther, shaking his head. "You daren't!"

"Daren't I?" grinned Trimble valiantly. "I jolly well dare! You chaps watch me! He, he, he!"

And Trimble marched over to the chap Lowther pointed out, and planted himself in front of him.

He was a very big fellow, wearing seaman's boots, blue overall trousers, a blue knitted jersey, and a peaked cap. He had a very weather-beaten face, and rather a red nose.

He stared down gloomily at Baggy, puffing at his pipe as he did so.

"I say, old chap," grinned Baggy, looking up at him, "is that a face you've got stuck on the front of your head, or a danger signal, or a boiled lobster?"

The sailor slowly removed his pipe from his mouth and fairly gaped at Baggy.

"And is that a nose stuck on it or a tomato?" asked Baggy, grinning round triumphantly at the juniors. "It wants boiling, you know! Boil it or fry it, old chap!"

"Trimble, you ass!"
 "You dry up, Tom Merry!" grinned Trimble. "Now, you chaps, watch me tell him off! You big lump of misery!" he said to the sailor cheerfully. "You ugly, red-nosed froggy! If I had a nose like that I'd drown myself. Yah! I'll punch your head off! I'll knock you into the middle of next week! Put your fists up, you great, fat froggy, and I'll show you—"

Trimble was interrupted by the sailor
 "My heye!" he said.

"Oh crumbs!"

Trimble jumped.

"My heye!" reiterated the sailor, raising his voice. "Well, I'm blowed! You cheeky young rip! Call me a hugly, red-nosed froggy, would yer?"

"Ow! Oh crikey!"

"Call me a bloomin' froggy, would yer?" roared the sailor, raising his voice still more. "Well, you cheeky, impudent young imp. Why, I'll—I'll tan the 'ide off yer! Call Bill Blunt, o' Grimsby, a red-nosed froggy, hey? Tell me to boil me bloomin' face, hey? I'll larn yer!"

Smack, smack!

"Yoooooouoooooop!"

A huge, brown hand smacked home on Trimble's fat left ear and another smacked home on his right.

Trimble howled fiendishly, and as he did so the big sailor-man grabbed him, and lifting him up, dropped him across his bent knees.

"I'll larn yer!" gasped Bill Blunt, of Grimsby. "I'll larn yer to call me a bloomin' froggy! Take that, and that, and that!"

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

There was the sound as of a carpet being beaten as a horny hand came down again and again across Trimble's tightly stretched trousers.

"Yarroooooogh!" roared Trimble in anguish. "Yooooop! Oh, crikey! Rescue, chaps! Help! Murder! Police! Yarroooooogh!"

Spank, spank, spank, spank!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co fairly howled with laughter.

But they did not go to the rescue. They felt that Trimble had fairly asked for it, and that he deserved to get it.

He was undoubtedly "getting it!"

It was clear even to Baggy now that he had made a little mistake. Bill Blunt, of Grimsby, was obviously not a Frenchman; he was quite, quite English! And he apparently objected strongly—and quite naturally—to being called an "ugly, red-nosed froggy!" Baggy had blundered badly, and he was now paying for his blunder.

He roared and roared with anguish, and he wriggled and struggled in vain.

"There!" roared Bill Blunt, at length, dropping the luckless Baggy. "That'll perhaps larn you not ter hinsult a bloke for nothing! Me a bloomin' red-nosed froggy, hey? 'Ere, jest you hop it afore I start on you agen!"

And with that Bill Blunt planted his heavy sea-boot behind the howling Trimble, and Trimble yelped and flew for his life.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Roaring almost hysterically with laughter, Tom Merry & Co. went after the fat junior. They soon caught him up. Having discovered Billy Blunt was not following, Baggy had halted, and was rubbing himself and groaning dismally.

"Ow! Groooooogh! Oh crikey!" he groaned, blinking tearfully at the grinning juniors. "It's nothing to laugh at, you awful rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why didn't you rescue me?" hooted Trimble. "What an awful beast! Oh, dear! I'm hurt, you know! Ow-wow! I say, you fellows, that chap mustn't have been a froggy at all; he must have been English, the rotter!"

"Go hon!"

"You grinning beasts!" groaned Trimble, glaring. "How was I to know he wasn't a froggy?"

"You got what you asked for, you born idiot!" laughed Tom Merry. "Couldn't you see he was from that giddy English coaster tied up at the quay?"

"Groooooogh! Oh, crumbs!"

"Bai Jove!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "I feel vewy sowwy for you, Trimble, but you weally did ask for it, you know! I twust this will be a lesson to you, bai Jove!"

"Beasts!" roared Trimble.

But it was a lesson. Baggy Trimble did not make any further attempts at "telling-off Frenchmen"! The first had certainly been entertaining—but not to Baggy!

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CHAPTER 10.

A Little Soup!

"HALLO! Trimble!"
 Tom Merry & Co. had spent a jolly evening in Dieppe, and now, in the deepening dusk of the summer's evening, they were strolling along the Plage homewards to the motor-boat in the harbour.

It was a pleasant walk along the Plage. The last rays of a red, summer sun had vanished from the Channel, and it was pleasant walking in the cool evening. And though they were tired, and also very hungry, the juniors did not hurry.

They had "done" the sights, having seen over the fine old Chateau, round the ancient ramparts of which many an English Tommy had done sentry during the War; and they had seen over the fine old church of St. Jacques, and had visited Le Gobe du Pollet—the great cave in the Pollet cliffs where whole families of fisher-folk live, eking out a scanty existence by gathering shell-fish and the like. They had also strolled round the town, and into the casino gardens, and had had tea, and had watched the tennis there, and the bathing on the beach.

And now they were strolling homewards to supper along the Parade, when Blake had suddenly made that ejaculation.

"Hallo! Trimble!"

It was Trimble. He was seated, almost doubled up, on one of the seats, and he was groaning, with his hands clasped over his podgy waistcoat.

The juniors had not seen Trimble for over an hour. After visiting the Chateau, Trimble had refused to do any more sight-seeing, saying he was tired and hungry. And leaving Tom Merry & Co. to wander on along the Grande Rue, Trimble had dived into a cake shop.

Trimble had already discovered that a little English money changed into a lot of French money, so as he had now plenty of francs in his pocket, he was not likely to remain hungry long—though he had eaten enough for a dozen fellows at tea.

As the juniors gazed at the groaning fat youth now, they guessed at once what was the matter.

"Gorging again!" growled Blake. "My hat! What are you doing here, Trimble?"

"Oh! It's you chaps," gasped Trimble, looking up with lack-lustre eyes. "Ow! I've been looking for you fellows. I went back to the blessed harbour, and shouted for the boat; but that beast Cragg took no notice. I—I say, you fellows, I feel awful! I believe I'm dying!"

"Good! Buck up and get it over, then," said Lowther. "Would you like to be buried at sea, Trimble, or in the cemetery here? There's an English part—"

"Oh, you heartless beast, Lowther!" groaned Trimble. "Oh, dear! I don't know how I'm going to get back to the boat. I believe I'm poisoned."

"Rats! It's over-eating, you fat grubber!"

"I only had some orangeade—about six glasses," groaned Trimble, "and I only had a few cakes, and some chocolate, and some sweets and biscuits. It couldn't have been the

cakes, because I only had about a dozen. It must have been either the chocolate or those Rum-babbars!"

"Those whatter?"

"Rum-babbars!" said Trimble, groaning. "That's what the blessed girl called 'em, I think. They were jolly good, and I had fourteen of them! Groooough! My blessed head's swimming, and my tummy feels awful. Grough!"

"Great pip!" exclaimed Glyn, with a chuckle. "I know what's the matter with the fat ass! He's squiffy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, really, Glyn——"

"It was the rum-babas," grinned Glyn, winking at the others. "They're a kind of sponge-cake soaked in rum, you know. If Trimble scoffed fourteen, then it's no wonder he's squiffy!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Trimble looked aghast.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm not squiffy," he stammered. "It—it's all rot."

"We must keep this dark," said Glyn solemnly. "What on earth will the fellows think at St. Jim's when they hear about it. Trimble getting intoxicated! My hat!"

"The awful disgrace!" said Lowther, shaking his head.

"Oh, Trimble, Trimble!"

"Shocking!" said Blake seriously. "I knew Trimble would come to something like this! What's to be done, you fellows?"

"Better get him to the boat, and sober him down," suggested Glyn. "A dip in the harbour ought to do it."

"Ha, ha! Ahem, yes!"

"That's it," said Blake. "And we'd better carry him back to the boat. We don't want him to be collared by the giddy gendarmerie for being drunk and disorderly."

"I tell you I'm not drunk!" almost shrieked Trimble in sudden alarm. "I'm not jolly well going to be ducked, and I'm not jolly well going to be carried! Yah!"

"He's started," said Glyn. "He'll be getting violent soon, chaps! No time to waste—collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah! chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Collah the fat wottah, deah boys! I wathah—bai Jove. He's gone!"

Trimble had gone and a roar of laughter went after him. Considering he was dying, Baggy Trimble was running very well, too. The juniors strolled on after him, chuckling. They felt that a bit of exercise would do Trimble good and cure his attack of acute indigestion.

Apparently, it did. When the juniors reached the quay they found Trimble waiting there.

"Better?" asked Blake affably. "If not——"

"Yes, I'm better, you beasts!" grunted Trimble. "I say, I know you were only rotting about me being squiffy."

"Go hon!"

"It was the chocolate—I know it was," said Trimble.

"Look here, you won't say anything at St. Jim's about this?" he asked anxiously.

"All depends how you behave yourself for the rest of the trip," said Glyn grimly. "So mind your eye! No more rum babas!"

"Groooough! No fear!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Cragg's spotted us!"

Captain Cragg was seen on the deck of the Silver Spray, and very soon the dinghy was taking the juniors across the dusky harbour to the motor-croiser.

"Now for some supper and bed," said Tom Merry, with satisfaction, as they boarded the boat. "Your giddy turn at getting supper, Lowther."

"I know that," smiled Lowther. "I'm looking forward to doing it, chaps. I've got some stuff to make a soup, and I'm going to give you chaps a treat. Soup first, and then fried chips and fish!"

"Oh, good!"

"Good man, Lowther!"

Considering the fact that Lowther was, like themselves, tired, they felt it was no end generous of him to do any cooking at all.

But Lowther seemed eager and anxious to cook, and the juniors were only too eager and anxious to let him cook. The juniors washed themselves in buckets on deck, and then they lounged at their ease on the cushions in the cockpit, making plans for the morrow, whilst Lowther cooked, and very soon a delicious smell of cooking reached their nostrils from within the lighted cabin.

"Good old Lowther!" said Tom Merry. "I saw the beggar buying some stuff in a shop, and I wondered what it was. He won't say though—wanted it to be a surprise for us."

"Bai Jove! I considah it vewy decent of Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm feahfully tired, and vewy, vewy hungwy!"

"Same here," said Glyn, with a yawn. "Well, we'll get straight to bed after supper. It's a day's walking for us."

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to-morrow. We'll go to Pourville and Varenville and Hautot, and then back through Petite Appeville—that'll just be a nice day's tramping, and we'll see a good lot of the country. There's a lighthouse at Varenville, and I believe you can see over it."

"Oh, good!"

For some time the juniors sat discussing their plans and watching the lights and bustle of Dieppe around them, and then Lowther's voice called them in to supper.

"Ripping!" said Blake, sniffing appreciatively. "That smells jolly good, anyway, Lowther!"

"It's the soup," explained Lowther. "Trimble's already eaten three platefuls; but luckily I made a lot. Pile in, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Aren't you having any soup, Lowther?" asked Tom Merry, noticing Lowther hadn't a soup-plate. "Or have you had——"

"I don't feel like any," said Lowther. "I'll just have some chips and fish, I think!"

And Lowther helped himself to some chips and fish.

"Jolly good soup!" said Blake, finishing his plate.

"Have some more, old chap?"

"Right-ho!"

Blake had some more, and most of the others had more. It really was delicious soup—nice and thick, with tender morsels of juicy meat floating in it.

"I'll have some more, I think, Lowther," said Trimble.

"I'm feeling A! now, chaps! This soup's done me no end of good!"

"Blessed if I know why Lowther himself doesn't want any!" said Herries.

"Oh, that's all right!" smiled Lowther. "There's plenty left, though. Anybody want more? I'm glad you fellows like it. I was just a bit doubtful how it would turn out, as I've never cooked snails and frogs before."

There was a sudden, dreadful silence.

Then came the sound of spoons falling heavily on soup-plates.

Then nine pairs of horrified eyes fixed themselves on the smiling features of Monty Lowther—staring out of nine white and drawn faces.

"S-sus-snails?" faltered Blake.

"F-fuf-frogs?" stammered Tom Merry.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Yes," said Lowther cheerily. "I'm so glad you fellows have enjoyed them. I asked the girl in the shop if they'd make good soup, and she said something; but I couldn't understand what it was. I thought I'd risk it, though. Anybody like any more?"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"There's plenty in the saucepan yet—nice and juicy," smiled Lowther genially. "I didn't fancy them, myself, you know, because I thought they looked rather slimy. Still, as you fellows like them— Here, what— Oh, my hat!"

Crash!

"Yarrooooooooooogh!"

Lowther went down with a crash, and over him piled nine infuriated motor-boat boys. They were white, and they looked quite ill, and they felt quite ill; but they were not too ill to deal with the humorous, practical joker.

Lowther vanished from sight beneath a swarm of arms and bodies. But his voice was heard, raised in dire anguish.

"Yoooooop! Leggo, you cads! Yarroooooooooogh! I tell you it was only a—Yoooooop!—joke! Oh, crikey! Ow-wow! Yarroooooh!"

"Snails!" yelled Blake furiously. "Beastly snails!"

"Fwogs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh, gweat Scott, beastly fwogs! Oh deah, I shall nevah be able to eat anythin' for weeks aftah this! Gwoooogh! Smash the wottah!"

"Yes, rather! We'll teach him!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Too many cooks, it is said, spoil the broth; but it did not apply in this case. The bumping the nine gave Lowther was a very efficient bumping. And Lowther fairly roared and howled in dire anguish.

"There!" panted Tom Merry, at last. "Now we'll give him some of his own medicine. Hand me that saucepan and that ladle!"

"Good egg! Here you are, Tommy!"

Eight pairs of hands grasped for the ladle and saucepan with remarkable eagerness. Lowther shrieked with apprehension.

"Yarroooooooooogh! Don't—for goodness' sake don't!" he shrieked. "I tell you it was only a—Groooough!—joke! What harm is there in frogs and snails? Don't the French people eat 'em? Yooooop! Oh crumbs! Lemme off this once, chaps!"

But there was no "letting off" for the hapless practical joker. Lowther had gone just a bit too far this time, and

the victims to his humour were determined to have no mercy.

"You've admitted there's no harm in frogs and snails," said Tom Merry grimly. "So you won't object to some, I know. Hold his giddy mouth open, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"Yarooooooogh!"

As Lowther opened his mouth to yell Tom Merry emptied a ladleful of his "delicious" soup down it. It was the soup from the saucepan, and there were plenty of tender morsels in it.

Lowther gasped and spluttered and gasped and choked.

But there was no help for him. Against the nine his frantic struggles were of no avail, and ladleful after ladleful was emptied down his mouth. Much of it went down his face and down his front, but a great deal—far too much for Lowther's liking—went down his throat.

Not until the saucepan was emptied and Lowther was in a state bordering on hysterics, did the juniors stop feeding him, and then each junior emptied his half-emptied plate over Lowther's hapless head.

Lowther sat on the floor and spluttered and roared, with soup dripping from his hapless head. He looked a most awful sight.

"Groooooogh!" he gasped. "Mum-mum-m-m-m! Groooooogh! Ughh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter as Lowther suddenly jumped up, with his hands to his mouth, and rushed out of the cabin. He reached the rails of the boat, and for the next few, terrible minutes he remained thus, weird sounds of woe coming from him.

Lowther had had his little joke, but he had paid dearly for it.

There was no more supper for anyone on board the Silver Spray that night. Lowther certainly had none. And the rest of the juniors did not feel like any, either. That delicious soup of Lowther's had been quite enough for all. It had more than satisfied them; but it was very unlikely Monty Lowther would make any more soup like it.

CHAPTER 11.

Baggy's Queer Adventure!

"BEASTS!"

That was Baggy Trimble's well-considered opinion of Tom Merry & Co.

Many times and oft had Baggy Trimble given that opinion during the day, and he now made it as the shades of night were falling over Normandy.

Early that morning the motor-boat boys had been up, eager to start out on their day's tramp around Dieppe. And they had had an early breakfast and had started out, leaving Baggy Trimble behind!

The juniors were not at all keen to take Trimble with them. Trimble usually wanted to stop and rest every five minutes, and he usually wanted to stop for a feed at every cafe or wayside inn on such trips. They knew Trimble of old. And he grouched all the time, and, in short, he was a perfect nuisance to all.

Moreover, for Trimble's own sake they had declined to



"Call me a bloomin' red-nosed froggy, would yer?" roared the sailor, raising his voice. "Well, you cheeky, impudent young himp! Why, I'll—I'll tan the 'ide off yer!" "Smack, smack!" "Yooooooh!" A huge, brown hand smacked home on Trimble's fat left ear, and another smacked home on his right. The fat Fourth-Former howled fiendishly. (See Chapter 9.)

take him. The fat and flabby and lazy slacker would not have lasted long on a tramp such as the juniors contemplated.

And, as a matter of fact, Baggy Trimble did not want to go. He did not like walking. He grumbled because it was his nature to grumble, and because he knew the juniors did not yearn for his company.

"Beasts!" he repeated. "Fancy leaving a fellow all day like this, with scarcely enough to feed a blessed sparrow, too! And fancy 'em locking the ladder up—as if they suspected I'd touch the blessed grub!"

And Trimble glowered over the rail of the Silver Spray at the twinkling lights ashore.

Any other fellow more romantic than Trimble might have seen beauty in the scene before him. It was a star-light night, and the gently-lapping waters of the harbour reflected their radiance, and the lights of craft in the harbour. Ashore, along the Gare Maritime, lights blazed where the Newhaven boat lay, and lights blazed gaily from shops and cafes along the quay and down the Grande Rue. A glow in the sky showed where the lights of the gay casino blazed, and from the hill behind the town dozens of lights twinkled.

"Beasts!" repeated Trimble once again. "Fancy staying ashore all this time. I've a jolly good mind to go ashore myself. I'm jolly hungry. Hallo! Here's that rotter Cragg!"

Weary Willy, who had been lounging on the fo'c'sle head, smoking, came rolling across the cabin top, his pipe glowing. He dropped down into the stream of light from the cabin behind Trimble.

"Well, Master Trimble!" he exclaimed quite genially. "I reckon you'm tired of waiting 'ere all alone like this?"

Trimble grunted. Usually, Captain Cragg did not treat Trimble with the respect that Trimble felt was his due. But his tone left nothing to be desired now.

"Yes, I am!" he grunted.

"It's 'ard lines on you, Master Trimble," proceeded Weary Willy. "It's a wonder to me as you don't go ashore and enjoy yourself, young sir."

"I would, only I've got no money," growled Trimble.

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Weary Willy took from his pocket a slip of paper and showed it to Trimble.

"It's a ten-franc note," he explained, shaking his head. "Now I suppose as you ain't lost one, Master Trimble? I found it along for'ard some time ago."

Trimble grinned.

"Well, as it happens, I have, Cragg," he said a trifle loftily. "Thanks very much! I thought one of those beasts must have picked it up."

He took the note and pocketed it. It wasn't Trimble's note, but he felt he might as well have it as anyone else.

"If you'd like to go ashore, Master Trimble—"

"I think I will," grinned Baggy. "Just pull me over, Cragg."

"You might as well go, Master Trimble," said Cragg. "It's early yet, and Master Glyn said as we weren't to expect 'em back until late like."

Trimble chuckled, and dropped down into the dinghy alongside. Cragg followed him, and pulled him to the steps of the quay. Trimble ambled out and went up the steps.

He was just starting across towards one of the lighted cafes when he halted suddenly.

"My hat!" he gasped. "I—I wonder if that rotter's up to some game? He seemed jolly anxious for me to go ashore, and I don't believe he found that blessed ten-franc note at all. Looks jolly fishy to me, anyway."

Trimble hesitated, and the more he hesitated the more sure he became that Weary Willy had some "game on." He had certainly never shown any sympathy or interest in Baggy's affairs before.

And Glyn had expressly forbidden him to leave the boat at all, in case Weary Willy did get up to his "games."

"Oh dear!" gasped Trimble. "I wish I'd never taken his rotten note and come. I—I'd better just get some biscuits and rush back again. If anything happens, that beast Glyn will make me sit up!"

With that Trimble hurried to the nearest cafe. He bought some biscuits and some chocolate, and hurried back.

The dinghy was there, but Captain Cragg had vanished.

"My hat!" murmured Trimble, blinking about him. "He hasn't gone back to the boat, then. And the rotter said I was to whistle for him. I wonder—"

Trimble's eyes gleamed with suspicion now. He guessed that Cragg did not expect him back for some time, and he had cleared off on some business of his own.

Then a possible explanation dawned on Trimble, and he sniffed.

"My hat!" he grunted. "That's it! The rotter's gone for a drink, I bet! I suppose I've got to wait until he comes back, and he may be hours! Oh, crumbs!"

It was a dismaying thought, and the thought of being caught ashore by Glyn was more dismaying.

At that moment, however, another dinghy bumped against the steps, and in it was a fisherman. Trimble hurried down to him.

He pointed to himself, and then he pointed to the motor-boat.

The man grinned and nodded. He had seen the fat junior on board the Silver Spray earlier that day, and he understood.

"Venez, monsieur!" he said. "Oui, oui, oui!"

Trimble jumped in, and the man pulled towards the motor-boat. The dinghy touched, and, handing the fisherman a five-franc note with a grunt, Trimble clambered aboard, and the dinghy pulled away again. Trimble not troubling to return the fisherman's "Au revoir, monsieur!"

Trimble rolled into the lighted cabin, and, getting into his bunk, he started on his biscuits and chocolate. He finished the lot off very quickly and then he lay back reflecting on his grievances against the motor-boat boys.

But he did not reflect for long. Trimble was tired, and the gentle rocking of the boat and the murmur of the lapping water soon had their lulling effect upon him.

He dropped asleep.

How long he slept he did not know, but when he did wake he got a surprise.

He had dropped off to sleep with the gentle lapping of water in his ears, and he woke up to hear the splash of waves against the sides of the motor-boat.

But that was not all. To his ears also came the gentle throb of the Silver Spray's engine.

The motor-boat was moving—there was no possible doubt about that.

"M-my hat!" gasped Trimble, recollection coming to him. He pulled aside the curtains of his bunk, and then he jumped.

The cabin was in darkness, and it had been ablaze with light when he had "dropped off!"

Trimble, startled indeed now, blinked around the gloom of the cabin. He soon realised that the bunks opposite were unoccupied, and that he was in the cabin alone.

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This fact made him more startled still. Was he dreaming? The Silver Spray had been rocking at her moorings in Dieppe Harbour, and now—

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Trimble.

Leaning out of his bunk, Trimble glanced out through the cabin door, which was open. He could not see much, for it was dark outside, but what he did see made him catch his breath.

The Silver Spray was undoubtedly moving, and he could see a glimpse of the starry sky through the doorway. In between he glimpsed a vague figure seated at the wheel of the cruiser.

It was Weary Willy. The compass bowl of the Silver Spray was illuminated by an electric lamp at the side of the binnacle, and Trimble saw the man's features clearly in the light from this.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Trimble again. "M-my hat! What's happened, I wonder?"

Cautiously Trimble slipped from his bunk. Then he trod softly out of the cabin—not towards Weary Willy, but through the sliding door into the forward cockpit.

Then Trimble blinked about him in great alarm.

Above him was the starry sky, and around him was the tossing waves.

The Silver Spray was at sea!

But it was obviously not far out. A glance behind showed Trimble the lights at the mouth of Dieppe Harbour, and looking ashore, Trimble saw the white cliffs sliding past. Ahead he could see the brilliant lights of the Pourville Casino, and the lesser lights of houses against the hills.

What did it mean? Was Weary Willy stealing the Silver Spray? It certainly began to look like it, for Tom Merry & Co. were not aboard!

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble.

His fat knees began to knock together. It was clear to him that Weary Willy did not dream that he was aboard—that he had never thought of looking in his bunk.

But even as the thought struck Baggy the engine ceased to throb, and the Silver Spray slowed down and rocked gently on the tide with only her navigation lights showing.

They were opposite Pourville now, and the cliffs had ended, giving place to the concrete wall of the promenade. As Trimble glanced in that direction he saw the dim shape of a boat just leaving the beach near the spot where the cliffs ended.

Trimble watched it dancing over the water, and he soon realised it was approaching the Silver Spray.

"My hat!"

Trimble was intensely curious now. There was some mystery here without a doubt. He felt he could guess who was in the small boat approaching the Silver Spray.

"Tired Tim, for a blessed pension!" breathed Trimble, his nerves thrilling. "M-my hat!"

Crouching down in the forward cockpit, he watched, ears and eyes open. He soon knew that his guess was correct. Weary Willy gave a soft hail.

"That you, Couret?"

"Oui, oui, oui!"

The small boat thudded against the side of the Silver Spray. Weary Willy went to the rail. He heard him ask something, and then he heard another voice answering in French and broken English. Evidently there were two in the small boat—Tired Tim and another Frenchman!

Trimble had forgotten his terror now in his eager curiosity to learn what the mysterious business meant.

He crouched, his heart thumping madly against his fat ribs, his eyes fixed on Weary Willy at the rail.

A short, fat form suddenly appeared over the rail, and dropped down by the side of Cragg. Then a big package, and what seemed like a bulky sack, were dragged aboard.

A few muttered words followed, and then sounded the splash of oars. The small boat was departing.

But Tired Tim was still aboard. Trimble was very soon made to realise that!

"Better get for'ard, Couret!" he heard Weary Willy grunt. "You knows what to do, and mind you don't get collared this time! Them young 'ounds is sharper than we thought!"

"Mon Dieu! Mais oui!"

Trimble heard the thud of nailed boots on the cabin top, and only just in time he slipped back into the cabin. The next moment the engine throbbed, and the Silver Spray began to turn.

Baggy Trimble hesitated, and then he slipped into his bunk again, and lay down, pulling the blankets well over him. He felt that that was the safest thing to do in the circumstances.

The boat was moving now at full speed, and Trimble guessed they were racing back for Dieppe. And very soon he knew he was right, as the boat slowed down, and from the gentler motion of the motor-boat, Trimble knew they were entering the harbour.

Presently the engine ceased to throb, and silence fell, save for the swish of water against the side of the boat as she slowed down at her former moorings.

Then Trimble heard Weary Willy moving about, and then came the click of an electric-light switch, and the cabin was flooded with light.

Baggy Trimble fairly shook with nervous tension then, and he pulled the clothes further round his head.

But Cragg did not enter the cabin, and, peering round his bunk a moment later, Trimble saw his vague form seated in the aft cockpit, and saw the red glow from his pipe-bowl. "Oh, good!" breathed Trimble. "My hat! Sha'n't I just have something to tell those fellows?"

And Trimble lay quiet in his bunk, waiting for the return of Tom Merry & Co. He fancied they would be interested in what he had to relate.

CHAPTER 12.

All Serene!

"JOLLY nice here!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. were seated in a row on the sea-wall at Pourville, gazing out to sea, when Tom Merry passed that remark, and his chums had answered, agreeing with him that it was "jolly nice!"

And it was, certainly.

Immediately below the juniors the out-going tide splashed on the beach, washing the myriads of stones and pebbles backwards and forwards with a queer, musical murmur. Long ago the summer sun had sunk like a great ball of fire over the Channel to the west, and now only the stars were to be seen in the velvety sky. But out over the shining Channel twinkled the riding-lights of fishing-craft and steamers. To the right were the twinkling lights of Dieppe Harbour, and to the left the broad beam of light from the Varenville Lighthouse swept the Channel at intervals of a few seconds.

At the far end of the promenade the lights of the Grand Hotel and Casino blazed, but it was dark and quiet where the juniors sat near the frowning cliffs.

The juniors were resting, and they felt they deserved and needed a rest. They had been tramping since early morning through the beautiful Normandy countryside, and now they were taking it easy at Pourville before starting on the last two miles to Dieppe.

It was getting rather late, but the juniors did not feel like hurrying, and they were in no hurry to get back. It was their last night in France for a time, and they meant to make the most of it.

"Well, we've had a ripping week-end altogether, chaps," said Tom Merry. "After all, we owe old Weary Willy a vote of thanks for having brought us here safely."

"But for him," said Lowther solemnly, "who knows where we should be now—the Canary Islands, or Timbuctoo, or New Zealand, or—"

"Oh, chuck it!" grunted Glyn. "We've had enough of that! Well, what about getting on now? We start back for Newhaven before breakfast, and it means we've got to be up early."

"I'm blest if I feel like moving!" yawned Blake. "Hallo, those merchants going out rather late for a row—what?"

He pointed along the beach below the cliffs. There was a smooth stretch of sand there, and at the edge of the sand a boat rocked, kept just off-shore by the man seated at the oars. Round the end of the concrete sea-wall another man had emerged. He had a bulky sack on his back, and he seemed to be making for the boat.

"Jove!" said Tom Merry. "I've seen that merchant before!"

"He seems familiar to me!" said Herries, staring after the man. "It's too dark to see his chivvy, though. Blest if I don't think it's that blighter Tired Tim!"

The juniors stared after the man. He certainly did resemble the fat, short Frenchman who had stowed aboard the Silver Spray.

"What rot!" grinned Lowther. "These French johnnies are all more or less alike, I think. Hallo, here he comes again!"

The man had splashed up to the thighs in the sea, and dropped his burden into the waiting boat. Then he came back up the beach again, but it was too dark for them to see his features.

He vanished from sight a moment or so, and when he came round the sea-wall again he was carrying another bulky package on his back. He took it down to the boat, and then he jumped aboard, and the other man pushed off, and began to pull out to sea.

"That's rather queer!" remarked Tom, wrinkling his

brows. "They look like fishermen, but what the thump do fishermen want carting sacks and packages out to sea?"

"Yaas, wathah! It is wathah queeah, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I fancy I saw that boat comin' along frowm the diviseion of Dieppe when we awwived heah! And— Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus paused as a faint sound came from over the water. It was the unmistakable throb of a powerful motor-boat engine.

"There she is!" said Tom Merry.

He pointed in the direction of Dieppe, and the juniors saw it then—a long, low shape that would have been all but invisible but for her riding-lights.

"It's a big craft, too!" exclaimed Glyn, giving a sudden jump. "Great pip! It—it can't be the Silver Spray, you fellows?"

"What rot!" said Tom Merry, though he was not a little startled himself. "It—it can't be?"

"Our boat was the only blessed big motor-boat in the harbour!" snapped Glyn. "And that craft came from the direction of Dieppe. But Cragg wouldn't dare—"

"And Trimble's on board her," said Tom, smiling. "Cragg would scarcely dare to try any tricks with him aboard. It must be a boat that's come along from somewhere beyond Dieppe, Glyn."

Glyn said nothing, but he watched keenly, and his eyes gleamed as he saw the motor-boat stop, and the small rowing-boat meet it.

What passed between the two craft the juniors could not see, but presently they saw the boats part again. The motor-boat raced away towards Dieppe, and the throbbing of her engine died away. The smaller boat put a sail up, and went heeling before the breeze after her, being almost instantly swallowed up in the darkness.

But the motor-boat's lights were still visible, and Bernard Glyn would not move until they vanished abruptly just by the western pier-light of Dieppe Harbour.

"That settles it!" snapped Bernard Glyn, his eyes gleaming.

"You—you think it was the Silver Spray?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, I do!" said Glyn. "But let's get back!"

"But—"

"Never mind it now, chaps," said Glyn quietly. "I fancy I've tumbled to the game. But I'm saying nothing until the morning."

"Morning?" gasped Blake. "But—but dash it all, if you suspect Cragg of playing any tricks why not tackle him to-night?"

"I'm going to give him enough rope to hang himself," said Glyn. "We'll say nothing to-night, and let him see we suspect nothing. But to-morrow, when we're homeward bound, we'll deal with friend Cragg!"

And Glyn refused to discuss the matter further during the rest of that tramp back to Dieppe. But the juniors had plenty of other things to talk about.

It was a stiffish climb up the big hill from Pourville after their long tramp, but along the fine golf-links it was pleasant walking in the starlight, and the juniors were almost sorry when they found themselves descending into Dieppe.

Even then Glyn was in no hurry to go aboard, and finding some of the cafes still open, they had cafe-au-lait and sandwiches at tables out in the open, and then they strolled on to the quay.

The cabin lights were still on, and a whistle soon brought the dinghy to the quay.

"Well, you got back, then, young gents!" said Captain Cragg affably. "I hope you've had a good time, Master Glyn?"

"Jolly good!" said Glyn. "We've seen some very interesting sights. I'll tell you about some of them in the morning, Cragg."

"We've had it very quiet here—me and Master Trimble," said Cragg. "I haven't even set foot ashore. Jest lounged about, like."

"Has Trimble been ashore?" asked Tom Merry.

"I did take him ashore to-night," said Weary Willy, seeming to hesitate a moment. "And I didn't know as he'd come back until I looked inter the cabin a couple of minutes ago. Then I was surprised to see 'im lying asleep in 'is bunk. He must 'ave got a boatman to row him across when I was snoozin' for-ard."

"Oh!" said Glyn.

He said nothing more, for the boat touched the side of the Silver Spray just then. But Glyn was very keen to speak to Baggy Trimble.

He soon got his chance to do that. Captain Cragg, after a glance at the lights, went to his hammock forward, and the juniors crowded into the cabin. As they did so the fat, white face of Baggy Trimble peered round his bunk at them.

"Oh!" he fairly gasped in deep relief. "You've come back, then! I've been waiting hours and hours, you beasts! I say," he went on, lowering his voice, "is that rotter Cragg near?"

"Gone to his little cot for'ard," said Glyn.

"Well, I've got news about him," said Trimble. "Oh, dear! I've had an awful time! What do you think? That rotter took the boat out to Pourville!"

"I know he did," smiled Glyn. "But go on, Baggy!"

And Baggy, a trifle disappointed to hear that Glyn knew, went on. He confessed to his short visit ashore, and then he related his adventures afterwards.

"I was nearly terrified out of my wits," groaned Baggy. "I thought the beasts were going to steal the boat, you know. I say, what d'you think the rotters were up to, Glyn?"

"Don't you worry your fat head about that, Trimble," said Glyn, with a chuckle. "You get off to sleep now."

"Well, I like that!" snorted Baggy. "After me taking care of the boat, and guarding it like I've done at the risk of my life! Yah! And what about my supper? Have you brought me anything back?"

"Yes, here you are, Baggy," grinned Tom Merry, and he flung some sandwiches and chocolate into Trimble's bunk. Thereafter the fat junior was too busy to ask any further questions.

"Well, that about settles it," said Glyn, looking at his chums, who were eyeing him queerly. "To-morrow, my pippins, I fancy we shall see the final act in the giddy mystery."

"Bai Jove! But aren't you goin' to do anythin' to-night?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Yes," said Glyn cheerfully. "I'm going to bed, old chap. Night-night!"

And Glyn went to bed.

CHAPTER 13.

Baggy Shines!

"The anchor's weighed,
The anchor's weighed!
Farewell!
Fare thee well!
Remember me!"

THUS warbled Monty Lowther as the Silver Spray cleared the pier-heads of Dieppe Harbour the following morning.

It was a glorious morning, and the bright sunlight turned the frothy wake behind the surging motor-boat into a path of flashing, tossing silver.

"Ripping view and a ripping morning!" commented Jack Blake. "There's only one thing that spoils it, chaps."

"What's that?" asked Herries.

"Weary Willy's face," said Blake. "His chivvy spoils the view, and his tobacco-smoke spoils the giddy atmosphere!"

"Well, they won't spoil either for much longer," said Glyn grimly, with a glance towards Captain Cragg, who was at the wheel. "We'll leave him to it for a bit, though I fancy he suspects there's something on. Anyway, what about breakfast? Hallo, there goes the breakfast-gong! Good!"

From within the cabin sounded the banging of a poker on a saucepan-lid. It announced that breakfast was ready, and the juniors jumped down from the cabin-top and swarmed inside. A delicious odour of frying bacon and sausages assailed their nostrils.

Having healthy appetites—and in the case of Baggy Trimble an unhealthy appetite—the juniors soon made short work of the goodly fare, finishing up the sausages and bacon with marmalade and bread-and-butter, and washing it down with steaming coffee. Then the juniors strolled out, Tom Merry taking the wheel to allow Captain Cragg to get his breakfast.

"Well, what's the programme, Glyn?" asked Tom Merry, with a glance towards Cragg. "When are you going to tackle the rotter? The sooner the better, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "Pway get the wretched business ovah, Glyn!"

"Let Weary Willy finish his breakfast," said Glyn quietly. "We'll go into it all then, chaps! He's had a good run, but his run's ended now, I fancy. He's played us dirty tricks from the very beginning, and this last is beyond the limit. We're just tools for his dishonest rascality; but we'll not be much longer."

"There'll be a rumpus!" grinned Blake.

"I know that. We must be ready for it," said Glyn. "You fellows leave it to me, though."

The juniors had not long to wait. Very soon Captain

Cragg came along, lighting his pipe as he came, and he eyed the juniors very uneasily and very suspiciously.

"Had your breakfast, Cragg?" asked Glyn.

"Yes, Master Glyn," grunted Weary Willy.

"Taken your pal any?" asked Glyn affably.

"Eh?"

Weary Willy dropped the match and blinked at the junior.

"You'd better take him some," observed Glyn blandly. "We like to feed our guests, you know—even uninvited guests. Take him some along. I've noticed the fo'c'sle doors are fastened, but when he smells those sosses he may open them. Try it."

Weary Willy's face was a sight. He blinked at Glyn, and his jaw dropped.

"Wha-wha! d'you mean, Master Glyn?" he gasped. "There ain't nobody in the fo'c'sle—I swear there ain't!"

"You've forgotten," said Glyn. "What about that merchant you took aboard off Pourville last night, Cragg?"

"By hokey!"

"And the stuff he brought aboard," went on Glyn coolly. "I'm keener to see that stuff than I am to see your pal. I've seen him before, I fancy."

"By hokey!"

Weary Willy staggered back, his long face the picture of alarm.

"Ow— How— What d'you mean?" he snarled thickly. "I knows nothin' about no stuff, and I ain't never been off Pourville last night."

"Going to bluff it out, then?"

"Of course I'm going to, you little liars!" roared Cragg, in sudden fury and fear. "Why, I'll thundering well—"

"Collar him!" snapped Tom Merry.

The time had certainly come for action, and several pairs of hands closed on Captain Cragg. He gave a bellow of fury and started to struggle savagely.

But he went crashing down at last, and Blake, Herries, and Tom Merry sat on him whilst Glyn rapidly tied his wrists behind him. Then the chums of St. Jim's went through Captain Cragg's pockets, and they found watches and purses—practically every fellow on board made the astonishing discovery that he had been relieved of some object of value.

"Well, this beats the band," said Tom Merry, when the juniors had taken charge of their belongings. "What's to be done, Glyn? This is rotten!"

"We won't bother about this," said Glyn. "The other job will bring them trouble enough, I fancy. Bring him along to the fo'c'sle, chaps. If he kicks, shove a pin in his leg."

Captain Cragg did not attempt to kick. All the fight had gone out of him now. The juniors took him along to the fo'c'sle, while Glyn ran into the cabin. He came out very soon afterwards and joined the juniors forward. In his hand he held a long tube, something like a garden syringe.

"What the thump—"

"It's a sort of gas I've been experimenting with," grinned Glyn. "Stand aside, chaps. I'll soon have Tired Tim out of that!"

He inserted the end of the nozzle in a crack of the door, and pressed the handle of the syringe again and again.

There was a few seconds' silence, and nothing happened, and then quite abruptly from within the fo'c'sle came a sudden sound of terrific sneezing and coughing and gasping.

It went on for some moments, and then suddenly, amid a muffled yelling, there came a fumbling at the fo'c'sle door and it flew aside.

Then Gaston Couret came into view.

"Collar him!" snapped Glyn, with a chuckle.

Before the fellow had recovered from the effects of Glyn's remarkable gas, the juniors had closed round him and grasped him.

But the effects of the gas seemed to work off quickly; for, after glaring savagely at the juniors for some moments, he gave a roar, and reeled off a perfect torrent of French, which—fortunately, perhaps—the juniors could not follow.

"Hold him!" snapped Glyn. "I think that stuff will have cleared now."

As he spoke Glyn rushed into the fo'c'sle, and in a moment he had the top hatch opened up, and a current of air flowing through the small apartment.

Then he looked about him eagerly, and he very soon found what he looked for. Under a heap of sail-cloth he found the package and the bulky sack.

He carried both in turn out on to the cockpit grating, and in a moment or two they were open and the contents revealed.

The package contained a pile of silk—beautiful silk.

"Silk dresses!" remarked Glyn. "I thought it would be something like that. Now the other one!"

The sack was emptied on the floor, and, to the juniors' great astonishment, it contained a pile of boots and shoes!

"Great pip!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What on earth—"

"Well this beats the band!" said Glyn. "I can understand the beauties smuggling silk goods, but boots and shoes—great pip!"

It certainly was amazing. The juniors blinked aghast at the pile of boots and shoes. And as they blinked Gaston Courret acted.

He kicked viciously at Blake's shins, and, with a strong wrench, he dragged his hands free, and hit out right and left.

The juniors staggered back with yells, and as they did so Tired Tim—far from tired now—jumped with his back to the fo'c'sle wall, pulling something from his pocket as he did so.

"En arriere!" he snarled viciously. Mon Dieu! En arriere!"

The juniors staggered back. The Frenchman's beady eyes were glinting over the polished blue barrel of an automatic!

"Allez! Ne venez pas plus proche!" he snarled.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry. "Don't move, chaps! He's got us—"

Tom Merry paused just then. He was standing with his back to the rail, and he had suddenly caught a glimpse of something.

It was the white face of Baggy Trimble. The fat junior was peering over the cabin top from the aft cockpit, and even as Tom looked he saw Trimble's hand swing up and round.

Then something whizzed through the air, describing a sort of jerky circle.

It was a large frying-pan, and for once Baggy's aim was as sure as it was deadly.

The edge of the frying-pan caught the Frenchman full on the forehead, and he went down like a pole-axed ox.

Crash!

The weapon in his hand flew through the air, and dropped, with a little splash, into the sea overside.

"Well done, Trimble!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Twimble—"

"It was Trimble!" yelled Tom Merry. "Oh, good man! Quick, chaps!"

But quickness was not necessary. The terrible ship's frying-pan had made Gaston Courret no longer a force to be reckoned with.

He lay groaning on the grating, his hand to his forehead, and in a flash the juniors had him tied up, helpless to do further harm.

As the juniors crowded round him, Baggy Trimble, his fat face flushed with triumph, crushed his way through them.

"He, he, he!" he cackled. "What d'you think about that, you fellows? Saved the situation—what? Here, let's make sure of him!"

And, grabbing one of the shoes from the heap, Trimble made a blind swipe at the gasping Frenchman, who was already beginning to struggle again.

But fortunately Trimble's aim was not so true this time, and the heel of the shoe crashed on the grating.

As it did so there came a yell.

"Bai Jove! Look!"

"What the thump—"

It was no wonder the juniors yelled. For the heel of the shoe had come off, and with it there dropped a watch!

Tom Merry gave a gasp and picked up the heel. It was a mere shell, and the watch—a well-made Swiss watch—had been concealed in the hollow.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry, whistling. "Phew! So that's it! Try some more, chaps!"

The juniors tried some more, both boots and shoes. And in the heel of every boot and every shoe was a watch!

"Well," laughed Bernard Glyn. "So that's that, chaps!"



Even as Tom Merry looked, Baggy Trimble's hand swung up and round. Then something whizzed through the air, describing a sort of jerky circle. It was a large frying-pan, and for once, Baggy's aim was as sure as it was deadly. The edge of the frying-pan caught the Frenchman full on the forehead, and he went down like a pole-axed ox! Crash. (See Chapter 13.)

Smuggled silk and smuggled watches! A nice little haul—eh? And we were to have been the innocent dupes."

"And, bai Jove," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, looking horrified, "we might vewy easily have been involved in vewy sewious twouble by these feahful wascals!"

"Very easily," agreed Bernard Glyn. "But it didn't quite come off. They didn't dare to ship the stuff in Dieppe harbour, of course; and that's why they chose a quiet place like Pourville. They over-reached themselves there, though!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Tie 'em up and shove 'em in the fo'c'sle again," said Glyn, his face grim. "We'll see they don't get out. And when we get to Newhaven—well, we'll hand 'em over to the Customs!"

"Master Glyn!" wailed Weary Willy.

But Glyn did not heed.

The two rascals were tumbled into the fo'c'sle, and the hatch and door were closed upon them and locked securely. And then Tom Merry looked at Baggy Trimble, who was strutting about with his well-earned honours thick upon him, so to speak.

"Trimble," he said, "you shall have the key of the larder, and you can gorge yourself until you bust!"

With the good things at his mercy, the fat Fourth-Former fed right royally.

When the Silver Spray glided into Newhaven Harbour with her sullen prisoners aboard, Baggy Trimble was on deck, looking fat and satisfied and cheery. Luckily, it had been a very calm crossing, though, even so, it was a marvel Trimble was alive, considering the "grub" he had shifted in that—to him—heavenly trip from Dieppe. And when, after the Customs people had given the Silver Spray "clearance," and the motor-cruiser forged out of the harbour to seek adventures new, Baggy Trimble was still a member of her crew, but Weary Willy was not. He was with his French friend, Tired Tim, and it was very unlikely that the motor-boat boys would ever see them again!

THE END.

(Look out for another magnificent yarn dealing with the further adventures of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "THE SECRET OF LONELY ISLAND!" By Martin Clifford. It's a top-notch!)

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"PILOT MY SHIP, OR I'LL SHOOT YOUR PAL!" That's the kind of threat Val and Dave's German captors hand out, behind a loaded pistol. But it doesn't put the wind up our two young Britishers—not a bit of it!



Shanghaied!

A PHANTOM THRONE

By Sidney Drew

An Amazing Story of Breathless Adventure and International Intrigue.

VAL, Dave, and O'Rooney dragged the boat up the slipway, where a curious crowd had gathered.

"Awfully jolly, this!" said Dave, trying to stamp some of the water out of his boots. "I haven't got a stitch of clothes except those I stand up nearer than home, sweet home, and only three-and-fourpence in my pocket!"

"Most of us are in the same boat, bedad, sor!" said Barry O'Rooney. "But the credit's good."

"Then get busy, Mr. O'Rooney," said Val. "I don't see any of our men about. But they must be ashore, so round them up and take them to the Ship Hotel. Come along, Dave. But I say, where's Gan Waga? I'd clean forgotten him."

"I think he dived off Scobber's sea-coffin," said the bo'sun. "But he's not worth worrying about, for you could just as easy drown a cork as drown him, the blubberbiter, souse me! See you later, then, sir?"

Val and Dave made for Porthampton's most fashionable hotel and restaurant.

"Were there any explosives stored right forward, Val?" asked Dave after a long silence.

"Not even a penny squib, that I know of," said Val. "You can bet that whole three-and-fourpence of yours that it wasn't an accident. You remember what Von Stolzenburg said about their spies! They've caught us napping here, just as the baron caught us at the mill. I'm not to blame this time, and that's a bit of joy! I hope nobody got hurt, but it isn't very likely, for the explosion was well out of the way."

"What a staggering loss, though, kid!" said Dave. "I suppose the chief couldn't insure her against this sort of risk?"

"I don't suppose he could—not against foul play; but she's not a total loss. Honour will raise her right enough, and without a lot of trouble, but it will be a pretty expensive job. Now we'll try our luck here."

As they entered the restaurant the head waiter, who knew them both, advanced, bowing and smiling.

"Ah, yes!" he said, in response to Val's question. "His Highness dines in ze private room, and with him is milord. I shall announce you, zen, to milord and his Highness, is eet, m'sieu?"

"If you please!" said Val. "Dining!" muttered Dave. "Well, they're cool ones! I'm so sick about it, I don't think I shall want to taste grub for a week!"

On board the ill-fated yacht the steward had just announced dinner when the explosion occurred, and now the prince and the yacht's owner were dining as calmly as if she floated safely at her moorings in the harbour. Both were in evening-dress, and showed no signs of a hurried escape from a sinking ship.

"Lay another table," said Ferrers Lord to the waiter, "for I presume these two young gentlemen have not dined."

"We were about to start when it happened, sir," said Dave.

It was such a good dinner that Dave, who had imagined he could not eat or feel hungry for at least a week did ample justice to it. When coffee appeared, and Ferrers Lord and Ching Lung had lighted their cigarettes, Gan Waga, clad in a macintosh and rubber knee-boots, waddled in, followed by the burly engineer, Hal Honour.

"You have made good time, Honour," said Ferrers Lord, glancing at his watch. "Another wineglass here, waiter!"

Hal Honour drank the champagne, put down the glass, and waited to know why he had been summoned.

"The Lord of the Deep has founded at her moorings, Honour, and I want you to raise her," said Ferrers Lord.

"Good!" said the engineer, putting on his hat.

Without another word, he walked out. Ferrers Lord gave a quiet laugh, and then, producing a fountain-pen, he wrote and signed a cheque.

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"Now, Mr. Hilton," he said, "here are some banknotes to tide you over until you can cash this cheque in the morning. Have you done anything about the men?"

"I instructed Mr. Maddock and Mr. O'Rooney to find as many as they could and take them to the Ship Hotel."

"Yes, that will do. Pay them a month's pay in the morning and their travelling expenses, please, and take a list of their names and addresses. No doubt Mr. Honour will secure the yacht's books as soon as he can, and, if they are in a very bad state, have them recopied. You had better remain here, Mr. Hilton, and help with the salving of the yacht. You, David, being an enviable young person of leisure and liberty, have only to please yourself."

"I'd like to stop with Val, sir, if I may," said Dave.

"And I suppose you'll take charge of Gan Waga, prince?" said the millionaire, rising. "I'll borrow him to drive me up to the aerodrome and let him bring back the car. The bill, waiter, and my coat! Good-night to you, prince! And good-night to you, young gentlemen!"

Followed by Gan Waga, the millionaire passed from the room, and the bowing waiter closed the door after him.

"Was anybody damaged, Ching?" asked Val.

"I don't think so, son."

"I'm jolly glad of that! But what was it, and who did it?"

"Honour will be able to tell you that when he's been down if you can persuade him to talk," said Ching Lung, "but it won't be quite so easy to say who did it. Somebody seems to have managed to sneak aboard and put a time-bomb there. Jolly lucky it wasn't the sort of explosive Von Stolzenburg used when he put paid to the mill, or the yacht wouldn't be worth raising. She'll be in an awful mess when Hal does fish her up, for there's some mud down there."

"And what are you going to do?"

"Trickle back to London in the car, I suppose," answered Ching Lung, "and trickle back here again if I'm wanted. You never know, son, for the chief does the most unexpected things. Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney are sure to be left here with Honour, so you two needn't bore each other to death. If I could help I'd stay, but this is an engineer's job, and engineering isn't in my line."

"Then we may as well beat it, Dave," said Val. "I've got a notion we shall have you with us again jolly soon, Ching. Give our chiksies to Gan, and don't let him eat more than enough for ten people! So-long, old chap!"

It was quite natural for the yachtless crew to make for the Ship Hotel, for most of them had been billeted there when the Lord of the Deep was refitting. They were having supper, and before the meal was ended a few more stragglers came in, and Dave and Val had a busy half-hour taking down names and addresses and paying wages and railway-fares.

"You fellows who are too late for a train will stay here to-night at the yacht's expense," said Val. "In a day or two you'll get cash to replace your lost kit; and don't omit to replace it at once, for, though you've received a month's pay, you may be needed sooner. And don't do too much talking."

When time-tables had been searched, only about half a dozen men were compelled to remain in the hotel for the night. Barry O'Rooney paraded the others, and marched them up to the railway-station, where they entrained for their homes.

Barry O'Rooney then hailed a taxicab, and was driven back to the Ship Hotel, where he discovered Mr. Thomas Prout discussing affairs with the bo'sun. The steersman had been out to Dimpool about some special oil fuel, and had not heard about the loss of the yacht until his return to Porthampton.

Prout seemed more puzzled than angry about the mysterious disaster.

"The riddle is how the murdering thief got aboard," he said. "For I gave strict orders to keep a sharp eye on every boat that came too close after dark and challenge her. A swimmer might have slipped aboard and played doggo, but a swimmer couldn't have brought along a bomb big enough to hole her. It's bad enough, by honey, but, like most bad things, it might have been worse! Not like going down outside in the Ranker Deeps, for instance. If that firework had pipped her when she was crossing them and she'd dipped it, it would have puzzled Hal Honour to have got down to her, much less lift her. Did she go quick, Ben?"

"In seven or eight minutes, or perhaps ten," answered the bo'sun. "We were too busy trying to get Scobber's boat afloat to clock the time, and when we got her into the water she leaked like a birdcage. She went down cheering, so to speak; for just before she dipped somebody—the chief, I expect—hoisted the flag and switched on all the lights. They'd run the steam off, and her boilers were pretty cool, so nothing could have bust!"

"Old loike to have the job of busting the blackguard of a Hun who did it," said Barry O'Rooney, "for you can bet it was wan of those rogues, Tom! O! suppose you know Hal's arrived; but we'll have precious little of his company till he's fished up the yacht and got her in dry dock. And phwat's become of our middy and Masther David from the land of leeks?"

"Gone to chase dry boots and socks and pyjamas if they're lucky enough to find any shops open," said the bo'sun. "After that they are off to see that the wreck buoy and light are in the proper place, for there's not a sight of water there on the ebb, and if some big craft came up the harbour and took it a little short, she might scrape the yacht hard enough to hole herself and settle down atop of the Lord of the Deep. So, being shipwrecked mariners, and out of work for at least a few hours, I vote we go and look at the pictures, and then turn in!"

Val had learnt from one of the men that had come ashore in her that the yacht's petrol-launch was lying at Hindworth's Wharf. It was too late to purchase boots, socks, and pyjamas, but that was a mere bagatelle. Val knew the wharf, and guided Dave to it through several dark and winding streets. When they reached the wharf the tide had ebbed, and the launch was lying in the mud. She was heavy and so high up that the Hindworth's night watchman shook his head.

"The shed's locked, and I ain't got my rubber boots," he said. "Even if I'd got 'em, she's too much of a lump to 'aul down. You see, if I'd been told you would want her, I'd have 'looked her on a buoy, which I intended to do first thing in the morning. What about a row-boat if you're only going as far as the wreck?"

It meant a nasty pull back against the ebbing tide, for the water ran out swiftly; but when Dave and Val looked at the mud that gleamed like greasy ebony in the light of the solitary gas-lamp, they decided that even a ten-mile row would be preferable to walking into that abominable black mess to haul down the launch.

"Keep an eye on her, watchman," said Dave. "She's got some stuff on her worth stealing, and some of the Portsmouth larrikins don't mind a bit of mudlarking if there's loot to be got, I'm told. Get her off, and buoy her farther off when there's enough water to float her, for it's an insult to have her lying in that dirty sludge!"

It was easy enough to row with the out-running tide. The harbour authorities had been quickly at work, and a wreck-buoy with a warning lamp had been moored above the foundered yacht.

"It seems to be in the right place, judging by our moorings," said Val. "She was lying dead east and west when she went down, so I suppose she's lying that way now. I rather expected to find Mr. Honour out here; he's such a hustler. All safe now if there's no fog and no big liner comes along and makes a bloomer! We'll get back now."

Val and Dave tugged at the oars. Harbour and shore were studded with twinkling lights; but though they pulled hard, the lights did not appear to come much nearer.

"This rotten old barrel can't have been scraped for years, kid!" said Val. "She must have enough barnacles and seaweed on her to stop a steam-roller! If I'd known what we were up against, my lad, I'd have tucked up my trousers and gone into the mud!"

"Same here. But stick to it!" said Dave. "I think it's getting a bit easier. Stiffen your back, and make the old tub bounce!"

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR!

FERRERS LORD, millionaire and world-traveller, and owner of a magnificent yacht, the Lord of the Deep, sets out to frustrate the plotting of a powerful Royalist party in Germany, whose object is to restore the ex-Kaiser to the throne. Ferrers Lord is firmly convinced that the peace of Europe is at stake, and, ably assisted by the loyal crew of the Lord of the Deep, the millionaire starts on his dangerous mission.

Under the command of his nephew, Midshipman Val Hilton, he dispatches Prince Ching Lung, David ap Rees, Benjamin Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and a number of ordinary seamen to land certain goods and assemble an aeroplane on the lonely island of Klarsfargen.

With great difficulty Val carries out the first part of his instructions, but afterwards everything goes against him, for he runs foul of Baron von Stolzenburg, a German Royalist spy, and Val's party is forced to flee from the island. He rejoins his ship, the Lord of the Deep, and is reprimanded by Ferrers Lord for his failure. Later in the evening, when Val and the major portion of the crew are on "shore leave," an explosion is heard in the vicinity of the millionaire's yacht. Val, who is on board an old friend's boat, rushes on deck in time to see the Lord of the Deep founder. Realising it is his duty to investigate matters, he and his companions pull out to the wreck in an old dinghy. But the boat becomes waterlogged, and Val & Co. are only saved from a ducking by the timely arrival of a naval pinnace, which tows them to the slipway.

(Now read on.)

They quickened their stroke, and Dave's oar snapped off just below the leech.

"What the thump have you done now?" asked Val.

"Only broken the rotten oar! Grab the ruins if you can, man alive, or we're whacked! Have you got it?"

"I haven't, and I can't see the thing, either," said Val. "Now we are properly in the soup, for we can't get back against the tide with one oar any more than we can fly! What a jolly chap you are to come out with!"

"Perhaps we can borrow an oar or buy one," said Dave. "It must have been dead rotten, or it wouldn't have smashed like that. If you can't push her, you can steer her. There's another boat lying just below here, so waggle her down to that. If the worst happens, we can tie up to somebody till morning, or the patrol-boat may happen along and haul us out of it."

"You cheerful beauty!" said Val. "And it looks like raining pitchforks! Get forrard and grab her chain!"

The tide was running its fastest, and they rapidly reared the craft for which they were making. She was a small timber-boat with her funnel right forward, and she had evidently discharged her cargo, for she was riding high and light. Dave caught her chain and hung on. The barking of a dog answered their shouts, and then a sleepy watchman came along, shook his head at them, and then his fist, and, after muttering something that sounded angry in his native Swedish, he went away.

"Well, I must say there are some very nice people about!" said Val, with a grin. "We can't tie up here, for when she swings with the tide she might spill it. I can only see two things for it now, kid—either to tie up to the wreck-buoy or punt lower down and dig in with old Scobber for the night."

"Have a cut at the wreck-buoy for a start, old scout," said Dave. "I like old Scobber, and his whiskers fascinate me; but whenever you mention his menagerie boat, I think of fleas and begin to tickle all over!"

They made the buoy without any difficulty and made fast to it. The rain held off, but the breeze for the time of year was unpleasantly chilly. A liner, all ablaze with lights, came up on the eastern side of the harbour, and a couple of tugs left in a great hurry on urgent business, but for a long, dreary hour nothing else stirred.

The two youngsters turned up their collars, and whistled dismally.

"I don't think I ever enjoyed anything so much for ages and ages," said Val at last. "Merry and bright, isn't it?"

"Absolutely glorious!" said Dave. "It's our lucky day! When does the tide start to run again?"

"Not for ages, for it's only about at half-ebb. I'm getting fed-up! Let's unhitch and chance the fleas!"

"Gosh! Here's music!" said Dave. "Unless it's some silly old mermaid singing, here's somebody alive at last!"

Somebody was trying to sing "Annie Laurie" in a very cracked voice, and the strains were blown to them on the breeze to the accompaniment of the creaking rowlocks and a splashing of oars, and they saw a boat coming their way.

"Ahoy!" shouted Val. "Shove your nose this way, skipper, for we want you!"

The song stopped, and the oarsman leaned forward to peer at them.

"There's naethin' doin'!" he shouted. "Ah've got guid bawbees in ma pocket, and Ah'm no fule enough to pull alongside a couple of harbour pirates and be sandbagged and robbit! Keep awa', ye black villains, or Ah'll be makin' yer hides acquainted with the beesiness end o' ma boathook!"

"Why, it's McSnort!" said Dave, with a chuckle. "Hi, McSnort, we're not harbour bandits and thugs! We're Hilton and Ap Rees, of the Lord of the Deep, and we've travelled through losing an oar! Come and lend a hand!"

"Weel, Ah'm jiggert!" said Captain Scobber's red-headed engineer. "Fancy that! Ah'll lend ye an oar, for Ah can mak' the ship wi' aye; but he gey carefu' o' it, for it's a guid oar, and return it safe, for oars cost siller. But did you see Scobber the dee, and what's the temper o' the hairy old rogue?"

"Oh, he was quite nice to me!" said Dave. "But he's a bit rattled with you for not turning up as promised to help with the cookery. Sling over that oar!"

The oar was handed over, and McSnort departed.

"So that's that!" said Val. "And for the love of Mike, don't smash that precious oar, kid!"

The tide seemed easier now, and they quickly drew away from the buoy that marked the position of the sunken yacht. Suddenly and unexpectedly, as they pulled abreast of a steamer, a boat that had been hidden under her port side shot out sheer across their bows.

"Look out, you idiots!" shouted Val. "Can't you see where you are going?"

There were eight men in the boat—big, rough-looking, bearded rascals—while the man who steered was almost a giant. Grimy hands clutched the gunwale of Val's boat, and the boys were menaced with brandished oars. The giant leaned forward, bent an arm round Dave's waist and lifted him bodily into the other boat just as a prod from an oar-blade knocked all the wind and fight out of Val.

Val was dragged after Dave, and a few crashing blows from a firebar knocked the bottom out of the smaller boat, and she sank. The steamer's anchor chain was clanking through the hawser-hole by the time her perspiring crew had raised the boat to the davits and bundled Vale and Dave out of her. With the donkey-engine rattling and the noise of the chain it was hopeless to shout, and, as two men were holding each of them, it was equally hopeless to struggle.

"We meet again, then, so soon, Herr Hilton and Herr Ap Rees!" said a deep, familiar voice. "Ach, for me this is great goot luck, and so unexpected! But for yourselves not so much, I think, though you are greatly welcome!"

Their captor was their late prisoner, Baron von Stolzenburg, of Klarsfargen!



"Herr Midshipman," said the Hun captain, "I count one, two, three, and if you do not navigate my ship, I kill first your friend and then it is, perhaps, you find some common-sense. One, I count! Two, I count—" (See page 25.)

At The Pistol's Point!

AS the lower fort had an inquisitive habit of turning on a searchlight on vessels entering or leaving the harbour during the darker hours, and as the men behind the light used powerful glasses, the prisoners were taken below almost at once. Behind the barred doors of a little cabin, with one porthole guarded by a grating, they looked at one another.

"The end of another perfect day!" said David ap Rees. Val, who had recovered his breath, uttered a dismal whistle. "Stolzenburg!" he said. "You could have knocked me down with a crowbar when I heard his voice!"

"Same here," said Dave. "Neat work and quick work, and too jolly good for us; but it must have been a fluke. Oh, gee! How I jolly well wish we'd gone to Scobber's menagerie boat and chanced the fleas! Why have they bagged us, though? What use can we be to them?"

"I don't know about you! But I've an idea they've nailed us as hostages. I'm no earthly good to them at all," said Val. "The chief wouldn't alter his plans to save me from being hanged, drawn, and quartered!"

"If you don't count, then I don't stand much earthly!" said Dave. "But, luckily, those merry little stunts are a bit out of fashion, and the guys won't do anything so nasty as that to us. Old Stolz wouldn't have it, for though I'm not particularly fond of the baron, he's almost decent for a Hun. Kid, this is what we get for staying out all night! To say the least of it, we're considerably in the soup! We look like having a free trip to Germany, all expenses paid, and all on account of a broken car!"

Val glanced up at the electric light, which, like the porthole, had steel bars over it. The cabin was absolutely bare of furniture. Suddenly the key was turned in the lock, and a sailor brought in a couple of chairs and a table, while a companion, armed with an ugly-looking hatchet, kept guard. Two mattresses and some blankets were dumped in, and then the door was shut and relocked.

Presently the quickening throb of the engines and the swish of the water outside the porthole told the prisoners that the vessel had cleared the harbour.

Then the door of their prison was unlocked to admit Baron von Stolzenburg. The man who followed him brought a tray with a jug of hot coffee and a plate of sandwiches on it.

"Ach, the fortunes of war!" said Von Stolzenburg, sitting down and puffing at a cigar. "Yesterday it was the turn of you, to-day it is the turn of me! I surprise you, I think—I surprise you very much. I am surprise, too; for I am asleep when they waken me to tell me that two young gentlemen are adrift in a boat, and one of them wears the uniform of the great Ferrers Lord. And so fortune smile on me, and brought me two guests!"

"Yes, your luck's in," said Val, "or you think so. But, in my opinion, you've taken a lot of trouble for nothing at all. Kidnapping us will do you no good!"

"Come, come, Herr Midshipman, let us be friends!" said the baron. "When I am your brisoner you treat me like one gentleman treat another gentleman, and I haf not forgotten. It is understood you feel angry, for you haf lost your yacht, but that is not my fault. People who do not mind their own business find very often much trouble. We make a little war between us, and you take me brisoner. I complain a little, but not too much. Now I haf taken you brisoner, so why not?"

Dave stood up and helped himself to coffee, and found it very good.

"I'm not actually complaining, baron," said Val, "but you can scarcely expect me to be cheerful about it. You may have done yourselves some good by blowing a hole in the yacht and sinking her; but for all the good you'll get by kidnapping me, you might have kidnapped a lamp-post out of the street! Well, as it's done, it's done, so I'll take a tip from my chum and make the best of it."

After apologising for being unable to make them more comfortable, the baron left them.

"I'm not so much rattled because we have got into this mess," said Val; "but there's sure to be a big stunt ahead, and now we're out of it. You can bet the chief won't take that yacht business lying down. That settles us, for we're washed right off the slate and clean out of any fun!"

"Did you make any arrangements with Prout and the others about to-morrow?" asked Dave.

"I told them we'd be along between nine and ten to see if Hal Honour was making any move and if we could be of help."

"That means they won't get suspicious for hours," said Dave. "But what about that night-watchman? He'll be wondering why we haven't turned up, or ought to be. He'll be wanting the cash for the hire of that old tub!"

Val shook his head. "Our luck's too dead out for that, I'm afraid," he said. "It's a million to one he got into his box and went to sleep as soon as we got afloat. If he didn't, he'd think we found the tide too strong and landed somewhere else. He knows he's sure of his money, so that wouldn't keep him awake."

"And it's not going to keep me awake, either, dear pal in misfortune!" said Dave, yawning.

The two chums were soon fast asleep, and in the morning awoke to find the sunshine streaming in through the grated porthole, and a little red-headed sailor bringing in a basin, towels, and a jug of hot water.

The two prisoners washed, and then came a breakfast of eggs and bacon and coffee.

At last Von Stolzenburg came striding heavily down the alleyway, and the man with the hatchet opened the door for him.

"Good-day, Herr Midshipman! Good-day, Herr Ap Rees!" he said, smiling. "I hope you have slept well and had all attention. Now, here is a strange thing. Do you think, Herr Midshipman, you could do us a great favour?"

"A rummy sort of thing to ask a prisoner, isn't it?" said Dave.

"I do not the word 'rummy' understand, unless it should mean strange," said Von Stolzenburg; "and perhaps it is very strange. Now I have wireless, I am so happy as to have you for my guests, and I receive a reply that puzzle me for it is an order. I am told my honoured guests to take to my island of Klarsfargen."

"Help!" groaned Dave. "That beats it! Not Klarsfargen, for the love of Mike, baron! Give us a hope! Any old rat-infested dungeon you like, but not that rotten sand-heap! We've had enough of that rotten hole!"

"Ach, but that is most unfortunate! Here comes the order that you are to be taken there; and perhaps you are lucky, for our captain says it is too dangerous, and he does not know the waters. It came into my mind that the Herr Midshipman, being so remarkable a navigator, he can reach the island in a thick fog, he can navigate us there?"

"Well, that's the limit!" said Val. "After having the cheek to kidnap us, you want us to pilot your old ship for you! Some sauce, baron! I'm just about as fond of that dustheap as Dave is, and I'm not sure that I could make it in a ship this size, even if it were covered with diamonds instead of sand which were ours for the picking. I've studied the chart so hard that if I shut my eyes I can almost see it, but you're asking something!"

"It's like taking a couple of chaps out to be shot and making them dig their own graves!" said Dave. "Sooner than go to Klarsfargen, trot out the spades and the firing-party!"

Von Stolzenburg shook his big head and looked quite distressed.

"But you could, then, if you wished, pilot us there?" he said, lowering his voice. "Herr Midshipman, I hope you will answer you cannot, for it is of extreme importance. Here is an order that, if possible to be obeyed, must be obeyed. You cannot do this, then? On your word as a gentleman, which I accept, Herr Midshipman, you do not know the channels, and so cannot pilot the ship to the island?"

"But I could if I wanted to," said Val. "I'm jolly sure I could, but there's nothing doing, baron!"

"Oh, fool-fool!" said Vol Stolzenburg. "I put the very words in your mouth, and you will not speak them!"

"But why should I tell a lie about it?" said Val. "I'm not going to do it, though I know I could do it, so that's final! What do you mean by saying that you put the words in my mouth, and I would not speak them?"

"Nothing at all—nothing at all. But I am very sorry, Herr Midshipman," said the big German. "I have the best I can do for you. If anything unpleasant happens, I beg of you not on me to put the blame. If you had only answered as I wish you to answer, it would have much pleased me. I am sorry, gentlemen!"

The baron left, and the door was closed and fastened behind him. Their captors had no intention of starving them, for soon after midday they were supplied with a lunch of boiled ham, potatoes, and cabbage, and a fruit-tart, and a couple of hours before sunset there was another jug of coffee and more sandwiches. Ten minutes later the red-haired sailor, accompanied by the man who still carried the hatchet, paid another visit.

"Oop!" said the red-haired man, jerking his thumb upwards towards the electric light.

"Thank goodness for that!" said Dave. "German carrots is

inviting us to stretch our legs on deck—and about time, too! I wish they'd sack that ugly brigand with the chopper, Val, for his beauty is beginning to worry me!"

The man with the hatchet kept very close to their heels. When they reached the deck the sinking sun was astern of them, and when Val looked ahead he could make out a few yellow patches away to the east.

"This old junk has a good engine in her, and she can get along pretty fast," he said to Dave. "Those are some of the old dust-heaps on this side of Klarsfargen, if I'm not clean off the bearings. Perhaps the skipper is going to try to take her in, and he's sure to ground her if he does!"

"Or they've wirelessed, and are expecting a pilot," said Dave. "I jolly well hope they do ground her good and tight!"

The vessel had slowed down, and was going cautiously, for a few miles away there was a tinge of light grey in the blue water that marked the shoals. The skipper—a bearded man, with a big, square head, who wore a billycock hat several sizes too small for him—was on the bridge. He shouted something, and the engines were stopped.

"Herr Midshipman Hilton, if you please!" said Von Stolzenburg's voice.

Dave and Val turned. The baron had a slip of paper in his hand.

"Will you come up on the bridge, Herr Midshipman, and also your friend?"

"Why do you want us on the bridge?" asked Val.

"It is an invitation, and, as I told you before, I am sorry!" said the baron, shrugging his broad shoulders. "To use force would cause me regret. I have here an order which I dare not disobey. I am a soldier, Herr Midshipman. An order from my superior officer, and then all courtesy, kindness, and friendship are forgotten. You will please go on the bridge!"

The man who had been following Val and Dave about like a very ugly shadow felt the edge of the hatchet with his thumb, and gave a malicious grin.

"We may as well walk up there as be hauled or kicked up, I suppose!" grunted Val.

They went forward and climbed to the bridge.

"Herr Midshipman," said Vol Stolzenburg. "You said foolishly what I did not wish you to say, and I was compelled to report what you said. The captain can understand English, and the bridge is yours, and you are now in command, so you will be good enough to pilot us to Klarsfargen!"

Val laughed as he folded his arms.

"I understand enough to know that it sounds very much like a threat," he said. "You've got me on the bridge, and you want me to take your ship through this network of shoals and channels to your sandheap?"

"That is so, Herr Midshipman. Why, I cannot tell you, for I do not know. Here is the message I have received in answer to mine, and for you I have translated it from our secret code and put it into English. On my word as a gentleman to you, the message is exact as it came, and, as you see, it is a command. And on my word as a soldier, it is a command I shall obey, much as I hate it and sorry as I am!"

He handed Val the sheet of paper, and Val read:

"Absolutely essential vessel reaches island this evening. Note H. admits he can navigate, as captain unable. If refuses, your prisoners not only unnecessary, but dangerous. Deal with them firmly. Issues too enormous to hesitate. This order final, and to be carried out. SUPREME COMMAND."

Val lifted a pair of clear eyes, and looked straight into Von Stolzenburg's face.

"What's the exact meaning of the words, 'deal with them firmly'?" he asked quietly. "Does it mean murder us?"

"If we are at war, Herr Midshipman, there is no such word as murder!"

"No, perhaps not, but it may amount to the same thing," said Val. "This screed says, Dave, old chum, that if I refuse to make a shot to take this junk boat up to Klarsfargen, we've got to be disposed of finally, which is only another way of saying that we're to be knocked on the head and pitched overboard! What about it?"

(Continued overleaf.)

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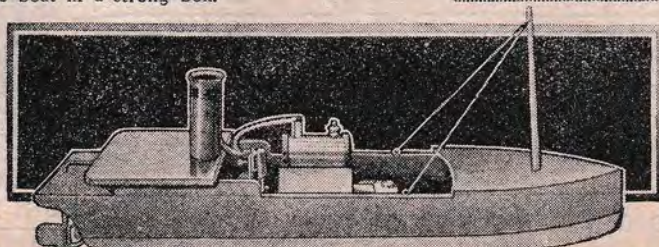
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"A PHANTOM THRONE!"

(Continued from previous page.)

"It's up to you," said Dave. "I can't pilot their boat, so I'm out of it!"

"But if you could?"

"I'd tell the rats to get on with their final dispositions!" said Dave. "I wouldn't be dictated to by a bunch of Huns!"

"You have your answer, Herr Baron!" said Val. "There's nothing!"

Von Stolzenburg gave his shoulders another shrug, and went slowly down the bridge ladder, and as he descended the man with the hatchet ascended a few steps. The captain was looking astern through a pair of binoculars, but if he could see anything it was invisible to Dave and Hal.

"Herr Midshipman," he said gruffly, "you will take the wheel, and I will attend at your orders the engine-room telegraph! You had knowledge of these channels, Herr Midshipman, which I had not. If you go not, I shoot you; if you play traitor, I shoot you!"

"And I suppose if I got you there safely you'd shoot me afterwards," said Val, "so you'll thank me for nothing!"

From one pocket the Hun captain took a revolver, and from the other a packet of cartridges. He loaded the weapon, and then unexpectedly levelled it at Dave's head.

"As you are the most useful, Herr Midshipman," he said, with the ghost of a chuckle, "I will shoot first your friend just to make encourage you! And, mind you, I much this way prefer, for I wish not to go to Klarspargen, but back to my home in Hamburg. The message I have read, and know the order of the Supreme Command. Therefore I make for you kindness, and for myself big trouble and delay by to give you this chance. I count one, two, three, and if you not obey, I kill first your friend, and then it is perhaps you find some common-sense! One, I count! Two, I count—"

"Don't do it, Val!" cried Dave, though he was ashy white. "Shoot, you beast! Shoot, then!"

"Three!"

The German skipper retreated a pace or two, and pulled the trigger of the revolver. There was a flash and a report, and Val, half-mad with horror and rage, saw Dave go sprawling down the bridge-ladder to the deck, where the man with the hatchet stood over him as if to strike him down if he attempted to rise.

"Dunder!" said the German, as a shout made him look forward. "Why did I not wait? Here comes a pilot!"

A motor-boat was racing out from the sandbanks.

(Val and Dave have proved to their rascally German captors that no threat will move them from their purpose. It now remains to be seen what the baron and his friends' next move will be. Mind you read next week's thrilling instalment, chums.)



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