

"HIDDEN GOLD!" Super Story of Treasure Seeking in the South Seas! **Starring the Chums of St. Jim's!**



The GEM

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A GRIPPING INCIDENT FROM THE GREAT YARN INSIDE.



HIDDEN GOLD!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

Many are the adventures—both thrilling and humorous—the Chums of St. Jim's experience on the trail of hidden gold—with the sinister Pablo Lopez, the Spanish dwarf, ever awaiting his chance to defeat them and snatch the treasure for himself!

CHAPTER 1. Luggage Limited!

"TAGGLES!"
"Yes, Master D'Arcy?"
"Pwaj be careful with the hatbox!"
"Yes, sir."

"And be careful with the twunk."
"Yes, sir."
"And vewy careful with the suitcase."
"Suttlingly, sir!"
"And with the—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was interrupted. Tom Merry of the Shell came out of the doorway of the School House, with a heavy bag in each hand. D'Arcy was standing on the top step as he gave his instructions to Taggles, the school porter.

Tom Merry did not see him, or, perhaps, did see him.

Biff, biff!

"Oh!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Ow! Weally—ah! Help!"

The two heavy bags biffed upon the slim, elegant form of the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy was biffed off the top step.

He made a wild spring to save himself, and his eyeglass fluttered to the end of its cord, and his silk hat rolled off, and his cane went flying in one direction and his gloves in another.

"Ow!"

Crash!

D'Arcy whirled down the steps of the School House, made a vain effort to save his balance at the bottom, and sat down on his silk hat!

"Ow! Ah! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake, who was sitting in a charabanc outside the School House. "Let's see you do that again, Gussy!"

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

"Dear me!" said Tom Merry, from the top of the steps. "What did you do that for, Gussy? You've ruined that topper."

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet. He had certainly ruined the topper. It bore some distance resemblance to an opera hat, but was more like a concertina. There was dust

on D'Arcy—on his beautifully fitting Eton jacket, on his elegant trousers, on his gorgeous waistcoat.

He groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and glared up the steps at the hero of the Shell.

"Tom Mewwy! You ass!"

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry. "You see, you were in the way of these blessed bags, and something had to go."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard this mewwiment as beastlay bad form," said D'Arcy. "I shall have to get out a new toppah now, and change my jacket. It's a howwid bore. You may lose the twain while you're waitin' for me, too!"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Herries. "We shan't wait long enough for that."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"We start in exactly five minutes," said Blake, looking up at the old clock tower of St. Jim's. "We can't lose the train; Lord Conway is waiting for us at Southampton."

"Weally—"

"Buck up with the changing, Gussy, or you'll get left behind!"

"I should uttably wefuse to be left behind."

"Clear the way!" shouted Monty Lowther, coming down the steps with a heavy bag in one hand and rugs rolled round umbrellas and sticks under the other arm. "Blessed if I know what you want to get in the way for, Gussy!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a clumsy ass, Lowthah. Blake, will you kindly see that Taggles puts all my pwops in the charabanc, while I go and change my things?"

"All there's room for," said Blake cheerily. "We're taking a bag or a box each, and that's the full allowance."

"I have three boxes, a twunk, a hatbox, and a suitcase, with my dwessin'-case, and—"

"Out of the way!" shouted Manners, coming out with Kangaroo, the two carrying a trunk between them.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Only four minutes to go, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "Better buck up. We've got to get over to the New House for Figgins & Co., and start in five minutes."

D'Arcy gave him one indignant look, and then dashed into the School House. He knew that Blake wouldn't wait,

CRUISE TO THE SOUTH SEAS IN SEARCH OF PIRATES' TREASURE!

and he was in danger of starting on his journey in a dusty jacket, dusty trousers, and without his hat.

The charabanc was filling up. Tom Merry & Co. were starting on a journey, and even with only one box each there was plenty of luggage.

Lord Conway was to meet them at Southampton, to take them upon his yacht, in which they were to sail for the South Seas. The juniors were looking forward to the cruise with the keenest enjoyment, and in their dreams they were already among palm-trees, and coral reefs, and cannibals.

Arthur Augustus never started on a journey without supplying himself with all the things he might need, and a great many he certainly never would need. But it was quite useless to argue with him. The swell of St. Jim's had an unflinching politeness, and an invincible determination. It was useless to point out that silk hats would not be wanted in tropic seas, and that a trousers-press would be nothing but an encumbrance on a coral island.

D'Arcy packed his trunks, regardless.

Blake was in the charabanc already, with Digby and Herries. Kangaroo, the Australian junior, climbed in, with Manners and Lowther. Tom Merry followed them in. The party from the School House was now complete, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and his brother Wally of the Third Form. They had to call at the New House, across the quad, for Figgins & Co., and then drive to the station.

Taggles, the school porter, came out groaning under a heavy trunk. Taggles always groaned under any trunk; he had found out by long experience that a groan or two had a perceptible effect upon the tips. But he had reason to groan this time. In that gigantic trunk was D'Arcy's trousers-press, and several suits of clothes, additional trousers, and overcoats galore.

Taggles bumped the trunk on the ground, and gasped for breath.

"Which it's 'eavy!" he gasped.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Yes, it looks heavy," he remarked. "It would make a difference to the yacht, I should think, if it ever got aboard."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Luckily, it's never coming aboard," Kangaroo remarked. "Leave it there, Taggy; there's no room for it in the charabanc."

"Master D'Arcy said—"

"Never mind what Master D'Arcy said," said Blake cheerfully. "Leave it there."

"Wot about the other boxes?"

"Oh, fetch them out, if D'Arcy told you to. Nothing like obeying orders. You can pile them up on the steps."

Taggles grinned, and went into the House again. Blake stood up in the charabanc and shouted:

"Gussy! Gussy! Gus!"

A bag with a bag under his arm came out of the School House, and jumped into the charabanc. It was Wally—D'Arcy minor of the Third—with his cap on the back of his head, and a cheeky grin on his face.

"Ready, my sons!" said Wally. "Tell the driver to start!"

"You cheeky young boulder—"

"Oh, cheese it! What are you waiting for?"

"Gussy!"

"Oh, never mind Gussy!"

"Hallo, here's some more of Gussy's luggage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Taggles came out of the House, carrying another huge box, Toby, the page, lending him a hand. A crowd of juniors had gathered round to see Tom Merry & Co. off, and they burst into a roar.

"Faith, and Gussy's taking enough!" Reilly exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's all right," said Tom Merry; "he's not taking it. Leave it there, Taggy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wery well, sir."

Taggles tramped, gasping, into the House again. He had

had a liberal tip from Gussy, and he meant to bring all the luggage out, whatever became of it.

Blake looked over the heap.

"Gussy is entitled to take one bag," he said. "Just pick out the smallest one, will you, Gore, and hand it up to me."

Gore grinned, and picked up Gussy's hatbox. It was the smallest of them all, but it was a good size, for it was constructed to hold three silk hats. It was the lightest of the luggage, at all events, and Gore handed it up easily. Blake stowed it away in the charabanc.

"My word!" said Digby. "Is Gussy going to take nothing but toppers?"

"He's entitled to one bag," said Blake stolidly. "That's the one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy! Gussy! Gussy!"

The fellows all stood up in the charabanc and roared.

D'Arcy put his head out of the window above.

"It's all wight, deah boys!"

"We're starting."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come down!"

"I shan't keep you waitin' more than five minutes."

"That you jolly well won't!" agreed Blake. "Drive on, Johnny!"

The charabanc moved off.

"Stop for me!" shouted D'Arcy from the window.

"Rats!"

The vehicle rolled away towards the New House. Blake kissing his hand affectionately to the excited junior at the window.

CHAPTER 2.

A Run for Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came breathlessly out of the School House.

For once, the swell of St. Jim's had lost the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. He stood on the lowest step and waved a glove and a cane, and shouted:

"Stop, you boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crowd of juniors.

"I guess you'll have to sprint, Gussy," grinned Gore.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"After them!"

"Faith, and it's left behind ye'll be entoirely."

"Stop, you uttah wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You've left all my luggage behind. I insist upon your returnin' for my twaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The charabanc rolled serenely on.

It halted outside the New House. Figgins & Co. were waiting there, with their boxes all ready—neat little cabin-trunks in a row, and Figgins & Co. sitting on them. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were smiling beaming smiles. Fatty Wynn had a luncheon-basket in his hand; Fatty did not mean to risk getting hungry on the train.

"We're ready."

"Here you are, Figgy!" sang out Blake.

"Tumble in, or we shall have Gussy piling boxes on us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn lifted their trunks in, aided by the School House fellows, and came in after them.

Blake looked back across the quad.

Arthur Augustus, holding cane and gloves in one hand, a light coat over his arm, and keeping his hat on with a firm grasp, was sprinting across the quad. But the charabanc was in motion again now, and rolling down to the gates.

"Buck up!" called out Tom Merry to the driver.

The charabanc increased in speed. D'Arcy put on a spurt, and overtook the vehicle as it reached the gates.

"Stop, you wascally wottahs!" he gasped.

Tom Merry shook his head.

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"Can't stop, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Jump in as we're going," said Monty Lowther. "I'll lend you a hand."

"So will I," said Kangaroo.

"You—you uttah boundahs—what about my baggage?"

"We've got it here," said Digby cheerfully.

"Wats! It's left behind, piled outside the House!"

"We've got all you're going to take," Jack Blake exclaimed. "One box each is the allowance, and we've got one of your boxes!"

"The hatbox!" grinned Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wufuse to twavel to the South Seas with nothin' but a hatbox!" shouted D'Arcy, keeping pace with the charabanc, which was now outside the school gates, and travelling slowly down the dusty lane.

"Jump in, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to jump in! It is imposs for me to twavel without my clothes—"

"You won't need them in the South Seas," said Monty Lowther. "I believe it's a universal custom there to save the whole expense of tailor's bills."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Jump in!" said Manners.

"I decline to jump in, Mannahs."

"Fancy a chap preferring to run," Figgins remarked.

"You must be feeling awfully fit, Gussy."

"Keep it up, old man!"

"Hoof it!"

D'Arcy gasped with rage and breathlessness. He was keeping pace with the charabanc, and it was now a good way on the road to Rylcombe.

"I uttably wufuse to leave my baggage behind," he panted. "I insist upon your turnin' the chawabanc wound and goin' back for my twaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, driver!"

"Yessir!"

D'Arcy dropped a pace or two behind.

"Better jump in, or we shall lose the train, and we can't lose the train and let Lord Conway wait for us in Southampton. Suppose he sailed without us—what about finding the giddy treasure, then?"

"I insist—"

"Think of the respect due to your elder brother," urged Kerr. "You can't possibly keep Lord Conway waiting."

"Weally, Kerr—"

D'Arcy was perspiring and dusty. The dust churned up by the wheels of the charabanc was settling over him in thicker and thicker clouds.

"Vewy well," he gasped at last. "Slacken down, and I will jump in, you feahful wottahs. I weward you as uttah outsidahs."

"Easy, driver!" said Tom Merry.

The vehicle slackened down, and Arthur Augustus was assisted into it. He sank down into a seat, gasping for breath.

"Feel better for your exercise?" asked Kerr sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy panted.

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have nothin' but silk hats to take to the South Seas with me—"

"We'll have another whip round for you," said Blake. "Or you can raffle your silk hats against a set of pyjamas, or something of that sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Words failed the swell of St. Jim's. He sat gasping for breath, and mopping his perspiring face with a cambrio handkerchief, till the charabanc rolled up to the station. Then the porters carried the boxes in, and Arthur Augustus reluctantly followed the crowd of juniors upon the platform. The train rolled in. Boys and boxes were soon aboard. The swell of St. Jim's stepped into the train with his nose very high in the air. He had given up hope of the baggage.

CHAPTER 3.

Pablo Lopez!

WALLY D'ARCY, leaning out of the carriage window as the train steamed into Southampton Station, was the first to recognise the tall form of Lord Conway, his eldest brother, standing on the platform at the terminus.

Lord Conway was waiting for the train that was bearing the juniors of St. Jim's.

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He smiled and waved his hand as he saw the cheeky face of Wally looking out of the window.

The train drew into the platform, and the juniors crowded out.

Lord Conway shook hands with them in his genial way.

"Jolly glad to see all of you!" he said. "Dear me! Have you been having an accident, Gussy?"

"I have been tweeked with the gwossett diswespect, deah boy."

"Too bad," said Lord Conway cheerfully. "You will come and dine with me, and then we will go aboard."

"I have some shoppin' to do—"

"Shopping!" echoed the viscount.

"Yaas, wathah! Owin' to a wotten twick, my baggage was left behind at St. Jim's," D'Arcy exclaimed. "I shall have to do some shoppin' in Southampton."

Lord Conway smiled.

"Very well; you shall shop while the others dine."

"As a mattah of fact, I am wathah hungwy."

"We have exactly an hour."

"Pewwaps we could put off startin' till to-morrow?"

Arthur Augustus suggested.

The viscount laughed.

"I fear that would not do, even for the sake of providing you with a complete new outfit in the latest fashion," he said. "Come on, boys—this way!"

In a few minutes more the juniors were seated round a well-spread board in a private dining-room in a palatial hotel. Fatty Wynn's plump visage shone like a full moon over the table. The fat Fourth Former was fairly in his element now. However cruel the sea might be afterwards, Fatty Wynn was sure of a good innings now, at all events.

Lord Conway presided at the meal with a cheery manner, and an unfailing flow of pleasant talk. He was very popular with the boys. When the meal had progressed as far as dessert, Tom Merry's chart was produced, to be conned over once more, and handed from one to another.

The chart was of never-ending interest to the juniors.

It was tattooed upon a fragment of leather, which was supposed to have been tanned from human skin. It had been given to Tom Merry by Peter Raff, the sailor, the man whose cap had been found by the stream in Rylcombe Wood, but whose body was never found, and whose ultimate fate was unknown.

The chart was Tom Merry's, to do as he liked with, if the sailorman did not claim it—and he had never claimed it.

But Tom Merry had determined that if the treasure were discovered, a full share should be kept for the sailorman—for the hero of St. Jim's still hoped that Peter Raff was in the land of the living. He had now a lingering hope that the cap by the stream in Rylcombe Wood was a blind to deceive the sailorman's inveterate foe—Pablo Lopez, the dwarf Spaniard.

At all events, both Peter Raff and Lopez had vanished from Tom Merry's knowledge, and he was left to seek the treasure island if he chose so to do.

And, naturally enough, he did choose—as D'Arcy's eldest brother, Lord Conway, was about to sail on a cruise in the South Seas, and had obtained permission from the Head of St. Jim's to take the juniors with him.

Nothing could really have happened more opportunely.

The rivals of St. Jim's—Blake and his chums of Study No. 6, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, and Figgins & Co. of the New House—had joined cordially together for the treasure-hunt, and with them went Wally and Kangaroo, the Australian junior—more properly named Harry Noble.

The juniors were very keen on the scent, and, of course, they fully believed in the existence of the treasure.

Lord Conway perhaps was a little sceptical on that point; but he did not say so, to damp the eager spirits of the juniors.

Heads were bent over the map now, and the strange names of the places indicated upon it were read out aloud.

The dining-room was on the ground floor of the hotel, and wide open french windows gave upon the garden—a long, wide garden, planted with old trees and rhododendrons. It was a pleasant afternoon, and the sun shone in at the open window, and a trace of the sea breeze found its way into the dining-room.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked as he adjusted his monocle and surveyed the map. "Bai Jove, it looks the weal thing, you know! The Piwates' Gwawe is good!"

In his interest in the chart D'Arcy had, for the time, forgotten his intended shopping expedition in Southampton—and others did not remind him. The luggage of the party had already been sent aboard the Silver Seid, Lord Conway's steam-yacht, and it only remained for the juniors to follow it.

"And Shark Bay," Monty Lowther remarked, looking



"Fancy a chap preferring to run," exclaimed Figgins as Arthur Augustus, perspiring and dusty, chased after the charabano. "You must be awfully fit, Gussy!" "Keep it up, old man!" yelled Lowther. "I uttally wefuse to leave my baggage behind," panted Gussy. "I insist upon the chawabano turnin' wound and goin' back for my twaps!"

at the chart over Tom Merry's shoulder. "That sounds promising for bathing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the caves, too!" said Wally, rubbing his hands. "It will be ripping exploring the caves!"

"And here's the reefs," said Manners. "Jolly ticklish work, I expect, getting through the reefs into safe anchorage, I should say."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Monkey River," went on Tom Merry. "We may be able to get along there in boats. Then there's the Mount, and Gold Buried Here."

"Bai Jove, it will be wippin'! I shouldn't wondah if there was a million pounds, you know," Arthur Augustus remarked.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not much!" he said. "Not likely. But there may be a big sum, unless—"

"Unless what, deah boy?"

"Unless the gold's already been lifted," said Tom Merry gravely. "This chart is very old—certainly more than a hundred years, perhaps a hundred and fifty. In all that time lots of people may have landed on the island, and the gold may have been found."

Blake snorted.

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "If the chart's a hundred and fifty years old, look at that!"

He pointed to the words, "Latitude of Sydney," scrawled in the left-hand corner of the fragment of leather, some distance from the chart.

"My hat, yes!" said Kangaroo. "That must mean Sydney in Australia."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And Sydney wasn't in existence then."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry smiled.

"Those words have been added later," he said. "If you look at them you'll see that they're written on the leather, and not tattooed like the rest. My opinion is that Peter Raff wrote them, or else somebody whose hands the chart had fallen into. Whoever it was had found out that the island was in the same latitude as Sydney, he wrote it down instead of giving the degrees of latitude."

"True!"

"It's different with the 'W. L.' in the corner of the map," went on Tom Merry. "That's tattooed, and it certainly must mean west longitude."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I think—"

Tom Merry broke off suddenly, and started to his feet. His startled glance was fixed upon the open window.

In the open window stood a strange form—a man with a massive head and immensely powerful shoulders, and a dwindling form that dwarfed away towards the ground. The dark, Spanish face, and the singular form, told the juniors at once who it was, even those who had not seen him before.

"Lopez!" panted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"The Spaniard!"

Lopez, the dwarf Spaniard, stood for a single second staring in at the window. Then he disappeared from view.

Tom Merry rushed to the window.

He caught a glimpse of the Spaniard disappearing among the rhododendrons, and that was all. The juniors rushed into the garden in a crowd, and searched from end to end. But the dwarf Spaniard was gone without leaving a trace behind.

CHAPTER 4.

Aboard the Silver Scud!

TOM MERRY & CO. returned to the dining-room, disappointed and angry.

The Spaniard was gone. How long had he been there at the window before Tom Merry had seen him? It was an important question, for from where he was standing the Spaniard could have heard every word that was spoken in the room.

If he had heard the discussion of the chart, he had learned all that was to be learned of the position of the island—that it was in west longitude, and in the latitude of Sydney.

That knowledge was sufficient to enable him to reach the island, if he had the means of chartering a vessel. True, of the exact location of the treasure he had no knowledge; that could only be gained by looking at the map.

But if he followed the party to the treasure island he would be an awkward enemy to encounter there.

"The villain must have learned our plans, somehow, and watched us come to Southampton!" Tom Merry said, frowning.



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"It's a pity," said Lord Conway, "but it cannot be helped now. We will lose no time in getting to the island, at all events. And it is time now to go on board the Silver Scud."

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter with you, Gussy?" asked Blake,

"I haven't done my shopping yet!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, come on!"

"Yes, come, Arthur!" said Lord Conway, laughing. "There is really no time. The others will share out some of their things with you. And you are well provided with silk hats, at all events."

"As your guest, my deah fellow, I am bound to yield the point," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Exactly! Come on!"

So D'Arcy yielded the point, and ten minutes later they were on board the Silver Scud, which was already getting steam up. From that moment Lord Conway was busy. He was his own skipper, and his mate was an old college chum, whom the juniors had not yet seen.

Tom Merry caught a glimpse of him as they went below, and noted an athletic, broad-shouldered fellow, about whom there seemed something familiar. But he saw him only for a moment. The juniors went into the saloon.

Black smoke rolled from the funnels of the yacht as she glided out.

The motion was as yet barely perceptible; but Fatty Wynn sat upon a cushioned divan, and changed colour several times.

The fat Fourth Former had done more than justice to the dinner at the hotel, and he had already done more than justice to the lunch-basket in the train. The slightest motion of the yacht was enough to make him wish he had been a little more cautious in laying in supplies.

Blake grinned at the fat Fourth Former.

"Feeling qualmy, kid?" he asked.

"N-no!" gasped Fatty. "It—it was the last meringue, that's all. I shall be all right in a minute."

"Bai Jove! I wathah think you will be worse before you are bettab, deah boy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think we might go on deck now," Tom Merry remarked. "I want to see the mate again, too. I believe I've seen him before somewhere."

The juniors ascended the steps from the saloon. The yacht, with half-steam on, was heading for the Channel. The sunset was reddening away in the west. The bright steam-yacht glided on like a thing of life, the trim crew looking very sailorlike at their posts. The mate was standing talking to his companion, and his broad back was turned towards the juniors.

"I'll swear I've seen those shoulders before somewhere! Behind a wicket, I believe!" said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "They're associated somehow with your old place, Tom—Huckleberry Heath."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

What he could see of the mate of the Silver Scud certainly reminded him, too, of Laurel Villa, and Huckleberry Heath, and the associations of his early home with Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

Who was the man?

"By George!" Tom Merry exclaimed suddenly.

"You know him?"

"I think so."

Tom Merry ran forward.

The broad-shouldered mate turned round.

His handsome clear-cut face was turned towards the juniors, who had grown to like and esteem it very much.

"Mr. Dodds!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Mr. Dodds laughed and smiled.

"You are surprised to see me here!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with Tom Merry.

"By George, yes!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Dodds laughed again. He had a very pleasant laugh. Mr. Dodds, the curate of Huckleberry Heath, was an old friend of Tom Merry's. He had begun his acquaintance with the St. Jim's juniors by astonishing them with his power as a cricketer—the juniors having been under the impression that a curate couldn't play. Mr. Dodds had amazingly undeceived them on that point, and since then the juniors had grown to like him very much.

"I was very glad when Lord Conway told me that my young friends were coming on this cruise," said Mr. Dodds. "It was a pleasant surprise to me."

"Bai Jove, and this is a pleasant surprise for us, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "We're awfully glad to see you—ain't we, deah boys?"

"Yes, rather!" said the juniors heartily.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Dodds.

"But aren't you curate at Huckleberry Heath any longer, sir?" asked Figgins.

Mr. Dodds nodded.

"Certainly! I had to have a change for my health, and Lord Conway heard of it. As I could not afford to go abroad on my own he very kindly offered me the post of mate on his yacht for the trip to the South Seas. I shall take up my work again when I return to England. Lord Conway's kindness—"

"Oh, go easy with the kindness," said the viscount. "You know I'm jolly glad to have you, Doddy. It's like old times to have you along— Dear me! Is anything the matter with you, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn lurched a little.

"N-no, sir!" he gasped.

"Don't you think you had better sit down?"

"Groogh!"

Lord Conway led the almost helpless Fatty to a seat. Fatty Wynn sat with his face like chalk, gradually changing to quite an artistic shade of green.

"Poor old Fatty!" said Figgins. "It was the dinner, you know. I warned you to go easy."

"Groooogh!"

"Bai Jove! I feel a little— Gwooo!"

And the subsequent proceedings interested D'Arcy no more. And Fatty Wynn sat the picture of mental anguish.

CHAPTER 5.

Poor Old Fatty!

SUNNY seas and bright skies!

Day after day the steam-yacht had ploughed her way to the southward.

English skies and English waters had long been left behind.

After the first couple of days the juniors had got their sea-legs, with the single exception of Fatty Wynn.

The fat Fourth Former seemed almost a helpless case.

Either it was the gigantic feed he had indulged in before leaving Southampton, or else he was peculiarly liable to seasickness.

At all events, he passed the first night in anguish, the second day in misery, and another night in despair.

And all the time he ate nothing. He couldn't.

A bright morning dawned again, finding the yacht gliding on the bright waters of the Atlantic, and Figgins and Kerr looked in at the bunk of their fat chum before they went to breakfast.

Fatty Wynn blinked at them hollow-eyed.

"Feel better?" asked Figgins sympathetically.

"How are you, Fatty, old man?" asked Kerr.

Fatty groaned.

"Still seedy?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Suppose you get up?" Figgins suggested. "You may feel better getting the fresh air on deck, you know. It's a lovely morning."

Fatty Wynn shook his head.

"I—I can't."

"Make an effort."

"I haven't one left."

"Cheer up, Fatty!"

"Groogh!"

Fatty Wynn sat gasping and groaning. Figgins and Kerr went along to breakfast.

After breakfast, Mr. Dodds came to see Fatty Wynn. The mate of the Silver Scud was very sympathetic, but he was very practical, too.

"Feeling bad, Wynn?" he asked.

"Groo-oo! Yes."

"Better get up."

"Grooo-oo!"

"You'll feel better on deck, and get your appetite back," Mr. Dodds said.

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"Ow! I shall never get my appetite back! I shall never eat anything any more! I—I think I'm about done for, sir."

"You are not dead yet, Wynn. Make an effort and tumble up."

"Groan!"

"Come, Wynn, I'll help you!"

"Ow!"

"This way!" said Mr. Dodds, taking the fat Fourth Former in his powerful arms, and lifting him out of the bunk, in spite of his weight, which was very considerable.

"Now, get into your clothes."

"Ow! I haven't the strength."

"I'll help you. Are these your trousers?"

"Groo-oo! Yes."

"Jump in!"

"Groo-oo! Ow! Oh!"

In spite of Fatty Wynn's groans and protests, he was dressed bit by bit, till he was in a state to go on deck.

He leaned heavily on Mr. Dodds' arm.

"I—I think I'm going to die," he said feebly.

"Nonsense!"

"I—I feel it, sir! I—"

"You'll feel better on deck," said Mr. Dodds encouragingly. "The worst thing possible is to lie in a bunk and get into low spirits. Come on, my boy!"

"Gerrooh!"

Mr. Dodds piloted Fatty Wynn on deck. Lord Conway greeted him with a genial nod and a smile, to which Fatty Wynn responded with a sepulchral groan.

"Feeling it still?" asked the viscount.

"Groo-oh! Yes! Groogh!"

"Take in a deep breath," said Mr. Dodds. "Face the wind. Buck up!"

Fatty Wynn groaned, but he did as he was told. Somewhat to his surprise, the keen, fresh air of the sea had a wonderfully revivifying effect upon him.

He breathed it in more deeply, and his head grew more erect, and his cheeks glowed with a trace of colour.

"Better already?" exclaimed Mr. Dodds.

"Ye-es, I think so, sir!"

"Famous!"

Fatty Wynn stood and breathed in the keen salt air. As

SYMPATHY!



Wishing to attract the sympathy of an old lady, a tramp knelt down in front of her house and started eating the grass on the lawn.

"My poor man," said the old lady, "are you so hungry that you can eat grass?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the tramp.

"Then go round the back—the grass is longer there!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Morris, 1, Binnie Street, Brighton, Victoria, Australia.

a matter of fact, his attack had very nearly run its course, and this was all he wanted to set him right again.

He had a dreadfully hollow feeling inside, as if he had had nothing to eat for weeks and weeks.

There was a scent of breakfast from below, and it tickled Fatty Wynn's nostrils very much.

"I—I think I could tackle some brokker," he remarked, about half an hour later.

Mr. Dodds laughed.

"And you shall!" he said. "Shall I help you down?"

"I can manage it, I think, sir."

And Fatty Wynn managed it. He made his way to the breakfast saloon, and a shout from the juniors greeted him. They had finished, but Fatty Wynn was very welcome. The stewards brought fresh supplies in haste.

Fatty Wynn sat down.

"Go it, Fatty!" said Figgins. "Heaps of grub, and the best. We've still got good stuff from England, you know. We shall have harder tack when we get farther south."

"I'll have some bacon," said Fatty Wynn. "I think I could manage some ham, too. And half a dozen eggs. And cold beef, certainly. And you can shove over the pork-pies. That will do for a start."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got a lot of leeway to make up for, you know," said Fatty Wynn pathetically.

"Yaas, wathah! Pile in, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors watched Fatty Wynn with great interest. His performance was really wonderful. He had, as he had said, a great deal of leeway to make up, and he did his level best to make it up. Perhaps he overdid it.

The yacht rolled a little on a wave. Fatty Wynn started in his chair.

"Sit tight, Fatty!" said Figgins encouragingly.

"Oh!"

"Buck up! Have some more sausages?"

"Groogh!"

"Try the jam sponge!"

"Yaroooh! Gerrooh!"

Fatty Wynn leaped from his chair, and made a rush for a porthole, and history repeated itself.

CHAPTER 6. Crossing the Line!

SUNNY skies daily growing sunnier—blue skies that grew bluer every day. Swiftly the Silver Scud glided on her way.

The Bay of Biscay had left unpleasant recollections, especially with Fatty Wynn, but daily the juniors enjoyed their trip more and more.

Swiftly the yacht was drawing nearer to the "summer isles of Eden, glowing in dark purple spheres of sea."

Past the Azores, past the Canaries, past the Cape Verde Islands.

They were names that teemed with interest to the juniors of St. Jim's—names that had been only names to them—portions of geographical lessons—now realities.

There was music in the very words, a strange subtle attraction in the mere sound of the names.

And now the Silver Scud was drawing near the line.

Many of the St. Jim's juniors had travelled before. To Tom Merry, the Continent was not unknown, or the United States. But he had never crossed the Equator. Earth's central line was strange territory to him.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy remarked, as he stood and watched the white foam curling away in the wake of the yacht. "This is weally twavellin', you know."

"We're crossing the line this afternoon," said Kangaroo.

The Cornstalk spoke with authority. He had crossed the line, of course, coming from Australia to go to school in England. As a fellow who had crossed the line, he was looked upon with certain respect.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I've nevah seen the Equator, you know."

And he jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked round upon the blue waters, as if he expected to see it chalked there.

"Well, you won't see it, ass!" said Monty Lowther. "Do you think it's like a giddy telegraph-wire stretched round the earth?"

"The Equator," said Wally, quoting Third Form knowledge, "is an imaginary line running round the earth—"

"Or, as a cheerful youth put it once, an imaginary lion running round the earth!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, we shall have to celebrate crossing the line," said Monty Lowther, with a wink at Tom Merry.

D'Arcy nodded at once.

"Yaas, wathah! I have heard that sailahs always celebrate crossoin' the line."

"And chaps who haven't crossed it before have to go through things," Kangaroo remarked.

There was no doubt as to the accuracy of Kangaroo's statement. But the juniors, with singular unanimity, replied:

"Rats!"

Kangaroo had crossed it. They hadn't. And it was not likely that one fellow would be allowed to put eleven others through it.

The Cornstalk laughed.

"Must stick to the rules," he said. "However, I won't be hard on you."

"Bai Jove!"

"Cheeky ass!"

"Gweat Scott!" D'Arcy exclaimed suddenly. "I've got a wippin' ideah! Look here! Suppose we alter the usual wules, and wag the chap who has crossoed the line, instead of the chaps who haven't?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ripping!"

Kangaroo backed away.

"Oh, don't play the giddy ox!" he exclaimed. "You can't bust up the rules like that! Play the game, you know!"

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"We're not at the Equator yet," said Tom Merry, laughing; "but we get there this evening, Mr. Dodds says. Then there will be fun for somebody!"

It was pretty certain that there would be fun for somebody, though who that somebody would prove to be was not yet certain.

The juniors were all very much on the watch.

As a matter of fact, the Terrible Three were already laying plans. Neptune's costume was being prepared in the secrecy of a cabin. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther started it, and Kangaroo joined in with the other Shell fellows. Then Figgins & Co. joined in.

It was clear that if there was to be a rag, there would have to be ragers and ragged, and Tom Merry & Co. had decided to be the ragers. Blake and his chums were to be the ragged.

During the evening the chums hung round the chart-room for information. As the dusk developed D'Arcy turned his

eyeglass upon the wide sea, several times, as if to see whether the Equator was yet in sight.

To all requests for information as to whether they were near the line, Mr. Dodds returned an answer of "Not yet!"

The hour grew late, and D'Arcy grew sleepy, and determined to wait no longer for the Equator. He turned in.

He was in a deep sleep, when he was suddenly awakened.

"Rise!" said a deep, stern voice.

D'Arcy sat up in bed in amazement.

Two figures were in his cabin—two persons draped in long

canvas cloaks, with canvas masks over their faces.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Rise!"

"I wefuse to wise! I uttably decline to do anythin' of the sort! Who are you, you ass?"

"I am one of King Neptune's guards."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Rise! Our lord awaits you!"

"You feafuhl chump—"

King Neptune's guards waited for no more argument.

They seized D'Arcy and yanked him out of bed.

The swell of St. Jim's came upon the floor with a loud bump and a louder yell.

"Ow! Yow! Yawwooh!"

"Come with us!" said a deep voice.

"You ass! I wefuse to come! I know it's you, Kangawoo, you silly ass! Yow!"

"Bring the prisoner along!"

"I wefuse to be bwung—I mean, bwought!"

"March!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a powerful grasp upon either arm, was marched on deck. He found a crowd there. The crew had assembled to witness the performance, and Lord Conway and Mr. Dodds could be seen in the chart-room.

There were seven fellows in canvas cloaks and masks, and they held four prisoners in all—the prisoners being Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy.

It was not difficult to guess who King Neptune's guards were.

But they maintained a solemnity of demeanour that befitted the occasion.

The Fourth Formers of St. Jim's were struggling a little, but they were quite at the mercy of King Neptune's guards, for they had been taken one at a time in their bunks, and their hands were tied down to their sides.

"Look here!" roared Blake. "You stop this rot! You hear me?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I insist upon your stoppin' this wot at once, deah boys!"

"Silence!" said a deep voice. "King Neptune is about to come on board!"

"Wats!"

"Silence!"

"More wats!"

"Here comes King Neptune!"

King Neptune came into view from behind a boat. He was clad in flowing garments, upon which seaweed had been pinned for effect; but he looked strangely dry for a monarch who had just arrived from the depths of the sea. He was not very tall, but he was very plump in form—indeed, his ample curves seemed to suggest the well-known figure of Fatty Wynn of the Fourth.

"Hail, King Neptune!" exclaimed the masked figures.

King Neptune came forward with a majestic stride. Unfortunately, his foot caught in his flowing garments just as he reached the spot, and he stumbled, and rolled over, and landed on his hands and knees before the group in a most undignified attitude, considering that he shared with Britannia the empire of the seas.

"Ow!" gasped King Neptune.

And that ejaculation was unmistakably in the tones of Fatty Wynn. Jack Blake put his foot out, and pushed the gasping monarch, and Neptune rolled over like a cask.

"Ow, ow!"

CHAPTER 7. Rough on Neptune!

ORDER!"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wats, deah boys, and many of 'em!"

King Neptune sat up, gasping. It took him a minute or more to get his wind back, and then he was assisted to his feet by one of his faithful subjects—a very long-legged subject, remarkably like Figgins of the Fourth in contour.

"Ow!" said King Neptune.

"Get on, Fatty—I mean, your Majesty!"

King Neptune snorted.

"Keep those kids in order, then, Figgy! I'll jolly well—"

"Get on!"

"Oh, all right!"

And King Neptune lifted up his voice and chanted:

"My name it is Neptune, I am King of the Deep,
In the caves of the ocean my empire I keep.
My wife, Amphitrite, holds sway with me there,
And we're always together—a most loving pair.
But she's not with me now to extend you her greeting,
As the mermaids are holding a temperance meeting!
But I—I—I—"

King Neptune paused, his memory evidently at fault.
There was a chuckle along the deck.

"That's enough!" said Jack Blake. "If that's Tom

flung into a large tank of water that was standing ready.
Blake gave a terrific yell as he splashed in.

"Oh! Ow! Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Next man in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Next prisoner, I mean!" said King Neptune, correct-
ing himself. "What is your name?"

"My name's Arthur Digby, you howling ass!"

"Have you crossed the line?"

"You know I haven't, you chump!"

"Duck him!"

Splash!

"Ow!"



"Duck him!" ordered King Neptune. Strong hands seized Blake promptly, and he was flung into a large tank of water standing ready. Blake gave a terrific yell as he splashed in. "Oh! Ow! Grooh!" "Ha, ha ha!" laughed the ragers. "Next man in!"

Merry's poetry, the sooner it goes back to the bottom of
the sea the better!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I'm here alone on this tropical night,
To help carry out the old time-honoured rite.
I'm King Neptune, obey me—this kingdom is mine—
So bring out all the bounders who've not crossed the
line!"

And Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were marched
forward.

King Neptune surveyed them sternly. His eyes were
twinkling through the holes in his mask.

"Are these all?" he exclaimed.

"All at present, your Majesty!"

"Bai Jove! The othah chaps haven't c'rossed the line,
eithah, and you haven't c'rossed yourself, Fatty Wynn, you
howwid boundah!"

"Silence!"

"I wefuse to silence—I mean—"

"Order before his Majesty! Sire, what is the sentence
passed upon the bounders who have not crossed the line?"

"One at a time!" said King Neptune, hitching up his
voluminous garments. "Youth, what is your name?"

"You know my name well enough, you fat bounder!"
roared Blake.

"Duck him!"

Strong hands seized Jack Blake promptly, and he was

Blake was rolled down the cabin stairs after his duck-
ing, and Digby after him. They lay gasping at the
bottom, trying to get their hands loose, and breathing
vengeance. Herries was brought before King Neptune in
his turn.

"Your name, slave?" said King Neptune.

"Rats!"

"Singular or plural?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass!" roared Herries. "Look here—"

"Have you crossed the line?"

"You silly chump—"

"Duck him!"

Splash!

Bump—bump!

Herries joined the soaking, furious juniors at the bottom
of the cabin stairs. Their voices floated up to the calm
sky—not calmly.

D'Arcy took his turn before the King of the Deep.
D'Arcy's hands were not secured—a point that the captors
had overlooked.

"Hallo!" said King Neptune. "What's this?"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's a human being, your Majesty!"

"H'm!" said King Neptune. "It doesn't look like it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is your name?"

"My name is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, you uttah ass, and you know it perfectly well! I will give you a foahful thwashin'!"

"Have you crossed the line?"

"No, you ass! I—"

"Duck him!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus, as the guards would have seized him again, dodged them and rushed straight at King Neptune.

In a moment, he had Neptune's head in chancery, and was pommelling away for all he was worth, while Neptune, hardly able to struggle in his garments, roared like a muffled bull.

"There, you feahful ass!" panted D'Arcy, as Neptune's cardboard mask crumpled up under his pommelling.

"There, you silly boundah! I'll teach you somethin' in the way of mannahs, you know. Take that!"

"Ow! Yaroo!"

"And that!"

"Yah! Help!"

The other fellows were piling on D'Arcy to drag him off. But they were laughing so much that they could afford Fatty Wynn little help. The unfortunate monarch of the deep rolled on the planks, with D'Arcy rolling over him, still punching.

"Wescue, deah boys!" D'Arcy roared.

Blake & Co., at the bottom of the cabin steps, redoubled their efforts. Blake had his hands loose now, and he tore the cords off Herries and Digby. Together they charged up the steps.

All attention was given to D'Arcy and Neptune, and Blake and his comrades were not opposed. They rushed out on deck, and threw themselves into the fray with startling suddenness.

"Sock it to them!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kick them out!"

"Go it!"

Cardboard masks crumpled up on all hands before punching fists. There were falls and yells and roars. Fellows looked in deadly embraces reeled about. Lord Conway came quickly upon the scene. The matter was going a little too far, and was in danger of becoming a rough fight.

"Stop!" the young skipper exclaimed. "Stop at once!"

"Wats!"

"Go it!"

"Sock it to them!"

"Hurrah!"

"Pile in!"

Lord Conway smiled grimly. He was a strict disciplinarian. A hose had been prepared for a part of the celebration—which had not come off. Lord Conway made a sign to Mr. Dodds, who picked up the hose.

Whiz!

Slosh!

"Yaroo! Oh! Yah!"

The jet of water smote the combatants indiscriminately, and swept them away. They separated fast enough now, staggering away under the drenching water, and were glad enough to escape below.

Drenched and dripping and gasping, King Neptune and his faithful subjects, and the victims of the ragging, escaped below in much the same state; and they towelled themselves down and turned in, quite content to have no further celebrations of "crossing the line."

CHAPTER 8.

The Dwarf Again!

"LAND ahead!"

The cry from the deck made the juniors tumble up in hot haste. Since crossing the line they had seen little land. A glimpse of Ascension, and another glimpse of St. Helena—the lonely isle where the great Napoleon had been held a prisoner after the last throw of the dice at Waterloo—had been all.

The next land they expected to see was the solitary island of Tristan d'Achuna or da Cunha, to give it the Portuguese spelling. And it was Tristan da Cunha that loomed into view now. The tropic of Capricorn was behind the yacht now, and this was the last land that lay between them and the Antarctic Ocean.

D'Arcy was first on deck, and he turned his eyeglass upon the island.

"Bai Jove!" he said. "Land!"

"Land-ho!" said Figgins gleefully. "But what land?"

"The tweasuah island, pewwaps. I say, Con, old boy, is that the tweasuah island?"

Lord Conway laughed.

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"That is Tristan da Cunha," he said.

"Tristan dah Coonyer?" repeated Figgins. "Oh!"

"Our search begins here," said the skipper.

"Bai Jove!"

Lord Conway brought a large chart out of the chart-room, and spread it on a table on deck. The juniors gathered round. The man showed the whole of the southern ocean from east to west.

Lord Conway followed a line with his finger.

The chart was drawn upon Mercator's projection, and each degree of latitude was marked. Through the latitude of Sydney in New South Wales a line was drawn, extending across the map from side to side.

"On your chart, Tom, the latitude of Sydney is given," Lord Conway remarked. "You see that the latitude of Sydney is, roughly speaking, thirty degrees south of the Equator. A line drawn across the map passes through Cape Colony in Africa and the Argentine in South America. We have, therefore, two oceans to search for the island, as the exact longitude is not known—the Atlantic from the African coast to the South American, and if the island is not there—the Pacific, from the other side of South America to Sydney in New South Wales."

Tom Merry whistled.

"That's a big order, sir."

"Quite so. If the man who tattooed your chart had known the exact longitude, or had cared to write it down, we could have steamed directly to the spot. The only clue to the longitude, however, is contained in the words west longitude—taking that W. L. to mean west longitude. That gives us exactly half the globe to choose from. The only way to make a thorough search is to follow the thirtieth of south latitude right round half the globe—west of Greenwich—excepting where land intervenes."

"Bai Jove!"

"But I do not think we need try that heroic method," the viscount went on. "There are other clues. For instance, that chart of yours was tattooed, certainly, in the Pacific, and that indicates a location in the Pacific, not in the Atlantic."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite so; in my opinion," said Mr. Dodds.

"We shall, therefore, pass through the Atlantic here under full steam," said Lord Conway, "and search the Pacific first. It is the greater task of the two; but there is no reasonable doubt that the island is in the Pacific. An island here would be known and charted, but in the South Pacific there are many that have not been given attention by navigators. We head, therefore, for the Pacific."

"I agree, sir. I think you are quite right."

"Bai Jove! We shall have to wound the Horn, then, sir," D'Arcy exclaimed.

"Quite so."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Well, there is no alternative, unless we steam east, and take a much longer route," said Lord Conway. "We shall round Cape Horn, and take up the search on the western coast of South America. We shall stop at Valparaiso for fresh coal, and then begin."

"Good!"

The yacht steamed on.

Tristan da Cunha vanished astern, and the Silver Scud drew farther and farther into the illimitable spaces of the southern ocean.

The juniors were naturally excited at the prospect of rounding the Horn.

In the trim steam-yacht it was a very different task from that of the old sailmen who rounded the Horn in the sailing craft at the mercy of wind and wave. But even for the Silver Scud it was not easy work.

Bad weather, for the first time in the voyage, came upon them, and the yacht glided on to the south through foaming waves, and under black, threatening skies.

Warm weather and sunny skies were behind the voyagers now. They buttoned on thick coats, and put on scarfs and mufflers, every time they came on deck.

But the Silver Scud made good time.

In the midst of lashing waves and rising billows the juniors caught a glimpse of the Horn, black and threatening. But calmer weather waited for them in the Pacific.

That ocean justified its name when the yacht glided into its wide waters, leaving the Horn behind.

Northward-ho! was the word now, and the Silver Scud steamed on to Valparaiso, with the soaring peaks of the Andes looming upon the starboard.

At Valparaiso the stop was short.

There was no time to waste, and, after taking in the necessary supplies, the Silver Scud put to sea again. The juniors had no time to explore the place, but as they steamed out of the harbour they inwardly vowed to return

some day and see more of the wild and romantic land at the foot of the Cordilleras.

It was upon a bright crisp morning that the Silver Scud steamed out of the harbour, in the midst of many craft putting out from the busy port.

Tom Merry & Co. watched with special interest a handsome felucca that ran out to sea with her great sails bellying out in the breeze.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy remarked. "That is a handsome cwaft, if you like!"

"How she sails, too!" said Kerr. "She's keeping pace with us—just now."

"We shall soon leave her behind," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry suddenly fixed a keen stare upon the felucca. The handsome vessel had passed so close that the figures on the deck could easily be distinguished.

"Your glasses, Gussy—quick!" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"Certainly, deah boy!"

D'Arcy unslung his binoculars, and handed them to Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell put the glasses to his eyes and scanned the felucca.

His face was pale with excitement.

The others watched him in amazement. What could be the cause of the junior's strange excitement, they had no idea.

"It's Lopez!" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Lopez!" exclaimed Manners. "Are you sure?"

"Look, then!"

Manners snatched the binoculars. Several other pairs of glasses were turned eagerly upon the felucca.

Then the figure of the dwarf Spaniard seemed to rush into view.

He was standing at the wheel, steering the felucca. His face was turned towards the steam-yacht, and Tom Merry & Co. could see the grin upon it. It was Pablo Lopez!

Had the Spaniard been following them, or had he heard, in the garden at Southampton, as much as they knew of the location of the island, and was he bound there?

The latter was doubtless the correct theory.

That he had recognised the yacht was certain from the look upon his face.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "It's a race, then! The Spanish villain is coming there, too!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lord Conway turned his glasses upon the felucca.

"You are right," he said. "It is the Spaniard. But that felucca, well as she sails, would have no chance with the Silver Scud."

And he signalled full steam ahead to the engine-room.

Swiftly as the felucca sailed, the yacht seemed to walk away from her, and ere a quarter of an hour had passed the Spaniard's vessel was out of sight astern.

But the sight of Pablo Lopez had given the juniors a thrill.

They realised now that it would be not only a race to the treasure island, but in all probability a struggle for the treasure when they reached it. The dwarf Spaniard remained to be reckoned with.

CHAPTER 9.

Treasure Island!

FROM Valparaiso westward the steam-yacht swept on over seas again sunny, under skies of deepest blue. Round the Silver Scud rolled the wide waters of the Pacific Ocean gleaming under the tropical sun.

Every day now the juniors watched from the deck with eager eyes. At the sight of a flying fish or a dolphin glasses were raised to scan the sea.

When would the island be sighted?

In hundreds of miles, or thousands, from the coast of South America? They did not know. They knew that it was on or near the thirtieth degree of south latitude, but the longitude was a secret.

But if the yacht followed that parallel far enough, she must come upon the treasure island, unless the hand that had written those words upon the tattooed chart had written a mistake or a lie.

That was what the voyagers had to discover.

Morning after morning the juniors scanned the sea.

Day after day nothing met their gaze but the wide rolling waters, and sometimes a glancing sail, or the rolling smoke of a steamer. Whalers and sealers bound for the south passed them and exchanged greetings as the yacht sailed on.

"We shall get to New Zealand if we keep on far enough," Kangaroo remarked. "We shall pass within sight of the

(Continued on next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received and a half-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

HARDLY TACTFUL.

Smith was waiting for Bailey as the latter came out of his house on the way to the station.

"Look here, Bailey," he said fiercely. "I'll lose my temper with your boy one of these days. Haven't you spoken to him about mimicking me yet?"

Bailey looked hurt.

"Why, of course I have," he returned. "I told him yesterday not to act like a fool!"

A football has been awarded to V. Rust, 6, Ruby Street, Hoe Street, Walthamstow, E.17.

NOT BUCKED.

Freddy: "Dad, what is the feminine of buck?"

Dad: "Doe."

Freddy: "Goodness—I've put buckshee on my exam paper!"

A football has been awarded to E. Foster, 101, Glenlea Road, Eltham, London, S.E.9.

WELL PREPARED.

Bill: "A pal of mine found a bag containing three pounds worth of coppers in a phone box the other day."

Bob: "Gosh! I should think someone had made up his mind to get the right number!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss M. Hall, Hillcrest, Clingan Road, Southbourne, Bournemouth.

HE SAID IT.

Teacher: "What did you say, Brown?"

Brown: "Nothing, sir."

Teacher: "Don't tell untruths; I saw your lips move."

Brown: "Jones said: 'What have you got in your pocket?'"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Johnson, 35, Kings Wood Avenue, Aintree, Liverpool 9.

REVENGE.

Boss: "Why are you limping, Rastus?"

Rastus: "I've got corns, I has, baas."

Boss: "Well, why don't you do something for them?"

Rastus: "Dey ain't eber done nuffin' for me, baas—let 'em suffer!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Smithson, 11, Clay Hill, Knowle Green, Preston.

THE CURE.

Judge (to prisoner): "Seven years."

Prisoner: "What, sir, seven days?"

Judge: "Yes, seven Christmas Days!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Randles, 68, Morningside Road, West Derby, Liverpool 11.

NO HOMEWORK.

Tom: "What shall we do this evening, Ted?"

Ted: "I know—we'll toss up for it. If it's heads we'll go to the pictures, if it's tails we'll play footer, and if it stands on edge we'll do our homework!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. King, 23, High Street, Southall, Warwickshire.

THE GIFT OF "GAS."

Fortunes-Teller: "You have the gift of oratory. When you speak I should imagine people listen to you open-mouthed."

Client: "That's right—I'm a dentist!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Painter, Yellow Woods, P.O. Kroomie, Cape Province, South Africa.

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North Cape of the North Island, unless we find our destination this side of Maoriland."

"I don't think we shall go as far as that," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "I'm expecting the giddy island every day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a shout from the look-out.

"Land-ho!"

And there was a rush of the juniors to see.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "It's weally land, you know."

"Land! Land!"

Lord Conway consulted his chart of the Pacific. No land was marked upon the spot where the yacht was now cutting the blue waters with its keen prow.

The land ahead was evidently one of those innumerable islets dotted upon the wide surface of the Pacific which no one had taken the trouble to chart.

Lord Conway's eyes were shining as he came out of the chart-room.

"It is undoubtedly land, sir," said Mr. Dodds.

"Indeed it is!"

The yacht changed her course slightly in obedience to Lord Conway's signal, and headed directly for the land.

The juniors watched eagerly.

The land rose more clearly into view, emerging from the blue of the seas, and the feathery fronds of palm-trees could be seen waving in the breeze.

Closer and closer till the palm-trees stood out clear against the sky, and the high mountain within the isle was black against the clouds.

Between the island and the yacht ran a line of white foam, showing the position of the barrier reef—the reef piled up by the untiring industry of tiny workers under the sea—a reef of coral that reached just to the surface of the waters.

"We shall have to be careful here," said Lord Conway. "Those reefs would go through our hull like a knife through cheese. Send a man forward to sound, Mr. Dodds."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The yacht seemed to crawl now.

Keen and impatient as the juniors were, they would not have had their skipper hurry. A false step now meant destruction to the ship and its crew. And there was no help for the shipwrecked in that lonely sea. The yacht was all that stood between them and the doom of Robinson Crusoe.

"Anyway, it's weal land," said Arthur Augustus. "We shall be able to stretch our legs again, deah boys."

"And there are coconut-palms," said Fatty Wynn, with a smack of the lips. "We shall be able to gather coconuts for nothing."

"Good old Fatty!"

"Well, it will be jolly ripping!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "Coconuts are jolly good prog, and it's something to get 'em without playing for 'em. Hallo! We're past the reefs!"

Lord Conway had followed the indications on Tom Merry's chart. Where the chart showed an opening in the reefs the yacht moved carefully all the way. She glided through the lines of foam, and stopped in a wide bay, marked on the chart, "Safe anchorage."

The anchor glimmered down.

Then the juniors gave a shout.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The hill hung back the sound with a thousand echoes.

"Hurrah!"

It was the treasure island at last! There was no doubt of it. The hill and the slim curl of smoke to the northward, marking the existence of a volcano, and the configuration of the coast as the yacht approached it, all proved that it was the island of which the outlines were tattooed on Peter Raff's chart. It was the island—the island of treasure!

No wonder the juniors cheered!

The sun was sinking behind the hill and glimmering on the thick woods round the base of it. The island was silent and still; there was no trace of life upon it. How long was it since that lonely isle had been trodden by human feet?

Years—centuries! It looked like it.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy's eye blazed with excitement behind his monocle. "Bai Jove! This is wippin', you know! I feel perfectly convinced that the tweasuah is here all wight."

"Oh, of course!"

"Not a doubt about that."

"I suppose we're going ashore now?"

Lord Conway shook his head.

"Not in too great a hurry," he said.

"Why not, deah boy?"

"There may be danger."

"But the giddy island is uninhabited, sir," said Figgins.

"It looks like it, but it may be inhabited, all the same, and if it is seldom or never visited by ships the natives may be in a primitive state of barbarity," said the viscount.

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quietly. "We shall go ashore in parties, and well armed. It may not be pleasant to fall into the hands of cannibals."

"Cannibals!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And you must not forget the Spaniard."

"Lopez," said Tom Merry. "But he has been left far behind. Could he have come all this distance in that felucca?"

"He could."

"But he would be far behind us."

"I am not so sure of that. That craft of his sailed well, and he may have come on a direct line, you see, while we have been exploring north and south of the thirtieth parallel. We covered more ground—or, rather, more sea—than we need, strictly speaking, have taken in, in order not to let a chance slip. That has taken time. If Lopez chanced it, and came straight on, it is quite conceivable that he may have arrived here first."

"Bai Jove! Then he may have woped in the tweasuah!"

Lord Conway shook his head with a smile.

"You forget—he knows the location of the treasure island, but not of the treasure," he replied.

"Bai Jove, yaas! I nevah thought of that."

"If he's here he is waiting for our arrival," said Lord Conway, "hoping to get a clue of the treasure from us."

"We'll jolly well take care he doesn't," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And when the treasure-hunters landed, it was in a party of a dozen juniors and five seamen, all of them armed. If the dwarf Spaniard was on the island he was likely to find them a formidable party to tackle.

The boat grated on the beach, and the explorers jumped ashore. Soft sand, shelving down to the sea, crackled and crisped under their feet.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy exclaimed suddenly.

"Hallo! What is it?"

"Look there, deah boys!"

D'Arcy pointed to the sand.

In the clear, soft sand was a deep impression—the impression of a human foot. That needed no further proof that the island was not uninhabited.

The juniors gathered eagerly round the spot. Most of them had been Boy Scouts at home, and they had learned to study tracks and footprints.

Tom Merry dropped on his knees to examine the track.

"It's not a bare foot that made this," he remarked. "It was a boot."

"Then it was not a savage," Figgins remarked.

"No fear!"

"And it's a small size in boots," said Tom Merry.

"Lopez is a dwarf, and his feet are naturally very small."

"Bai Jove, it's Lopez!"

"I believe so."

Tom Merry rose to his feet. The juniors scanned the shore with anxious eyes, but only the cries of wild birds came from the trees, and a solitary flamingo moved in the distance. If the Spaniard was there, there was no sign of him. But that single footprint in the sand was enough to put the voyagers upon their guard.

CHAPTER 10.

An Alarm in the Night!

WITH the suddenness of the tropics, the sun descended behind the hill and light was blotted out upon Skeleton Island.

But at the same time the full, round moon was sailing up over the Eastern sea.

The juniors stood in the dim half light, still looking at the footprints.

"We shall camp on the shore to-night," Lord Conway said. "In the morning we shall start for the treasure. According to the chart, we have to follow this river that empties into the bay, and the course should be clear."

With much zest the juniors helped to camp. It reminded them of their old days of playing Redskins in Rylcombe Wood.

Supplies were brought ashore from the yacht, and only four men were left on board to watch.

The rest of the crew—which was numerous for the size of the vessel—came ashore with the treasure-hunters.

The juniors gathered fuel on the borders of the wood to build up a huge camp-fire. They looked into the gloomy depths of the forest with strange feelings. In those black thickets, what foes might lurk?

They did not venture out of sight of the beach.

A huge fire was soon blazing and roaring away, casting ruddy light far along the beach, and the juniors and the sailors gathered round it, cooking their evening rations and making coffee.

(Continued on page 14.)

MORE NEWS ABOUT OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL!



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS! What a great treat will be presented to you in our next star programme! For our stupendous new serial story of the Wild West and the final thrill-packed yarn in the St. Jim's treasure-seeking series appear in this number. And both are yarns that you will remember for many a day.

Mr. E. S. Brooks has scored another grand triumph with his ripping new serial of mystery and adventure in the Wild West, featuring Nipper & Co., the ever-popular Chums of St. Frank's. The title of this story is

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!"

In next week's grand opening instalment, the boys of St. Frank's, who have but recently returned from the airship cruise, are settling down again at school when a bigger and more thrilling adventure crops up. Justin B. Farman has inherited a ranch from a relation, and he gets news that many mysterious things are happening on it. Cattle are being rustled and men are disappearing, and no one can discover what's happened to them. Farman's father is all for selling out, but Justin is against it. So Farman senior gets the Head's permission for his son to come out to Arizona to see what's happening for himself. Six other fellows are also granted leave to go with him, and the lucky ones are Nipper, Handforth & Co., Willy, and Archie Glenholme. Their exciting adventures on this "hoodoo" ranch, and their thrilling experiences against a mysterious gang known as the Black Riders, makes as thrilling reading as you'll get in a lifetime. Make sure you start for the Wild West with the seven adventurers next Wednesday.

"THE ST. JIM'S CASTAWAYS!"

In the final all-thrilling yarn of the treasure-seeking series, the Chums of St. Jim's are homeward bound with the pirates' treasure aboard the Silver Scud when the yacht strikes a reef and quickly sinks. Fortunately everyone aboard gets away in the two lifeboats, but they are miles from any land—lost in the Pacific! The great story of Tom Merry & Co.'s fight for life under the blazing sun of the South Seas, and their thrilling adventures on a Pacific island inhabited by cannibals, will compel your keenest interest throughout.

Together with our other popular features, this magnificent story programme is one that you mustn't miss at any cost—so order your GEM early.

SOME CATCH!

Here's a fishing story—but not a "fishy" one—which may strain your credulity, but which is nevertheless true. A hopeful angler was fishing in the Mullamutta River, near Bombay, when he had a "bite" which, judging by the wrenching on his line and the tightness of it, he thought was an outside in fish. But you can imagine the angler's amazement when he saw emerging from the water, on the end of the line, not a fish but a six-foot crocodile! He was still more amazed when his catch was followed out of the water by several more crocodiles, and it was evident that they were coming to the rescue of their companion in distress. But was the angler alarmed? Not he! He landed and killed his catch and successfully resisted the attempts of the would-be rescuers to drag their fellow crocodile back into the water. The truth of the angler's story is substantiated by the fact that he

has the crocodile to prove it—for you can't buy crocs at a fishmonger's!

HE KNOWS HIS KNOTS!

How many knots can you tie—different ones, I mean? Three hundred seems a lot to most of us, yet that is the number in the collection of the United States Naval Academy. But, would you believe it, the record—it must be a record—stands at well over double that number. For it is the boast of a retired American naval officer that he can tie, with all sorts and thicknesses of rope and string, no less than 772 different knots! Can you beat it?

HEARD THIS ONE?

Our office-boy came in to me the other morning chuckling, and I knew from experience that he had a funny story to tell me.

"I say, sir," he said, "have you heard this joke? On the way to the station Smith met his friend Brown. 'How do you find your new lawn-mower?' he asked. 'Oh,' replied Brown, 'usually by looking for it in my next door neighbour's garden!'"

"That's a good one," I said. "I'll have to try it on the GEM Jester. I bet it will put a smile on his face."

A MAN OF MUSCLE.

"Is it true," writes Jack Ridley, of Manchester, "that a strong man by the name of Siegmund Breitbart has formed horseshoes from cold iron with his fingers?"

It is, Jack, but this is not the only feat of this man of muscle. Among his many accomplishments he has torn thick iron chains apart as you would tear paper, and even bitten through them with his teeth! Breitbart has also permitted people to throw slabs of stone, one after the other, at his head—and he never even had so much as a headache after it. The slabs were broken—not his head! Finally, this amazing man has been run over by a car containing six heavy passengers, and yet he rose up afterwards unhurt! Some strength!

TWENTY MILES A PENNY!

How many miles can a person travel on a railway train in England for the fare of one shilling and sixpence? I don't think any of you will ever guess—unless you know the answer—for it is 360 miles! Impossible, you say. No, sir! This record was put up by a man the other day. You see, he travelled backwards and forwards between two stations all day long, using his season ticket. He did it purposely to discover how many miles one can cover by train for the cheapest fare.

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Miss Mollie Evans, Trinity Grammar, Prospect Road, Summer Hill, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants girl correspondents, ages 12-15; Canada, France, England.

J. Epstein, St. Andrew's School, Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, South Africa, wants correspondents; stamps and sports; ages 15-16.

Douglas Marmont, Olde Cot, Pinfarthings, near Minchinhampton, Glos, wants to hear from stamp collectors in Sierra Leone, India and America.

E. Taylor, 18, Smith Street, Chelsea, London, S.W., wants correspondents in France, Holland, Spain, America, and Switzerland.

E. Hall, 51, Harleyford Road, Kennington, London, S.E., wants correspondents in America and Japan.

Miss Irene Dewar, 158, Whoberley Avenue, Coventry, wants girl correspondents, ages 13-15; all kinds of sports.

James Harber, 315, Waverley Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, wants pen pals interested in stamps, model aeroplanes, magazines, and dogs; ages 13-17.

E. J. Lewis, School House, Mansel Lucy, Herefordshire, wants a schoolboy pen pal in U.S.A.; ages 14-15.

Donald Whyte, 31, Woodland Crescent, Hilton Park, Prestwich, Manchester, wants members for the Universal Film and Correspondence Club; ages 12-25.

Thomas Shannon Garvey, 665, Yardley Wood Road, King's Heath, Birmingham 14, wants correspondents in France and London; ages 12-14.

Miss Dorothy Reid, 41, Heaton Road, Withington, Manchester, wants to hear from a Girl Guide in the South of England; lacrosse, hockey, cricket; ages 12-14.

Edgar H. Perrin, 217, Eastern Avenue, Ilford, Essex, wants members for the Sporting Youth Correspondence Club.

Miss F. Cant, 45, Rogers Road, Dagenham, Essex, wants girl correspondents overseas; pets, stamps, postcards, books.

Miss Violet Remaekel, 116, Sixth Avenue, North-West Calgary, Alberta, Canada, wants girl correspondents, ages 13-15; music, sports.

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Hidden Gold!

(Continued from page 12.)

Fatty Wynn was in his element now. Given a frying-pan and a fire, and something to cook, Fatty Wynn was a fellow who was sure to make his mark, and he made it now.

Couches of fresh leaves, gathered from under the trees, and camp-stools brought from the yacht served for seats as the campers had their supper.

It was a merry supper, and the explorers were in the highest of spirits.

Yet, in the midst of the eager talk and chatter, and the keen discussion of the morrow's explorations, they cast sometimes a glance towards the dark, circling wood.

Two sentries had been posted between the camp and the wood with loaded rifles in their hands.

Their steady tramping to and fro could be heard through the stillness of the shadowed night.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy said, as he finished his coffee, and lay back lazily on his couch of thick, dry leaves. "This is wippin'! It beats picnickin' in Wylcombe Wood, deah boys!"

"Yes, rather!"

"What are you lookin' wound like that for, Kerr?"

"I was just thinking," said the Scots junior. "If Lopez or any other chap of his kidney was in the wood yonder with a rifle, we should make splendid targets sitting here by the fire."

"Bai Jove!"

"Great," Scott, Kerr! You don't mean—"

"Lopez is an unscrupulous hound, and he's suspected of having murdered Peter Raff," said Kerr. "And if it's Lopez against us lot, I should think that the more he picked off of us the easier he would find his job."

"There is something in what the lad says, Lord Conway," Mr. Dodds remarked very gravely. "It is hard to think that the man could be scoundrel enough to fire upon us here, but it is certainly quite possible."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Crack!

The campers sprang to their feet electrified.

Crack-ack!

The echo of the shot died away in the deep wood.

The campers exchanged quick, anxious glances. No one was hit, and it occurred to them in a moment or two that the shot had not been fired at the camp.

It echoed from the depths of the wood, and the sound was flung back from the hill. But there was no whizz of a bullet.

Faces were pale now in the flare of the camp-fire.

"Who is it, I wonder?" Tom Merry muttered.

"It must be Lopez."

"But who is he firing at?"

"Us, I should think."

"I am sure the bullet did not come this way."

"Quite right, Tom; it did not," said Mr. Dodds.

"Somebody's firing at somebody else in the wood, or else a firearm has gone off by accident," said Lord Conway. "In any case, I think it would be safer to stamp the fire out. It is no use posing as targets, in case a marksman should take a fancy to pot us."

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

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No. 9. Vol. 1 (New Series).

Flying Squad Reports

SQUAD'S BARRING-OUT

Mr. Rateliff received insulting note signed "George Figgins, George Kerr, David Wynn." Demanded their expulsion instantly. Tom Merry and School House Flying Squad, feeling certain Figgins & Co. innocent, suggested barring-out. Night raid on tuck-shop for supplies realised big haul. Cash in settlement left on counter. Flying Squad barricaded Junior Common-room with chairs, tables, etc. First day of siege successful. Raids from prefects repulsed from windows, using melon-shot (very effective!) In spite of success, situation serious. At meeting of Executive Council, Figgins remembered having punched Crooke on nose for bullying a lag. Night party left Common-room and seized Crooke in Shell dorm. Under pressure from cricket stump, Crooke admitted having forged note to Rateliff. Dr. Holmes astonished to receive Crooke's confession in writing. Figgins & Co. exonerated. Chief Air Marshal Merry congratulated on defence of chums. Crooke flogged—Flying Squad jubilant at successful campaign!

MR. SELBY TAKEN FOR A RIDE

Mr. Selby, master of the Third, bought second-hand car. Detained Wally D'Arcy for offering to start it. Wally appealed to Flying Squad. Said he was playing for Third in important match. Through representations of A. A. D'Arcy, Squad took the air and followed Selby in his car. Engine "conked out" after a few hundred yards. Flying Squad swooped, offered aid. Selby, choleric but in need of aid, accepted. Squad got car going, drove miles through lanes. Selby protested. Chief Air Marshal Merry said necessary to give engine a good warm-up for a start. Flying Squad delivered Selby safely back at St. Jim's for call-over. D'Arcy minor's match long over—and won! Third passed vote of thanks to Flying Squad for services!



Cut out the Flying Squad badge and mount it on cardboard. This makes you a full member of Tom Merry's Flying Squad, and entitles you to carry out flights and organise a squadron.

When you have got three of your chums to become members of the Flying Squad, you rank as a Squadron-Commander, and to signify it you are entitled to colour the centre of the badge yellow.

When you have got four chums to join, you rank as an Air Commodore, and you are entitled to wear the badge with the centre coloured green.

When you have got five of your chums to join, you rank as an Air Vice-Marshal, wearing the badge with the centre coloured blue.

When you have got six chums to join, you rank as a full-fledged Air Marshal, and you

SCHOOL HOUSE v. NEW HOUSE — THRILLING GAME FOR CUP

The annual match between School House and New House for the coveted House Cup took place on Wednesday. The weather was bleak and windy, but an ideal day for a fast game!

On paper, the School House had the stronger eleven, but Figgins had been working like a Trojan to lick his men into shape, and reports suggested that they would give Tom Merry & Co. a hard fight.

Figgins won the toss, and from the kick-off it was evident that the reports of his men's prowess had not been exaggerated. New House swept down the field, passing and re-passing like clockwork, till the ball going to Pratt, the New House man shot hard and low. Herries in goal dived, got his fingers to the leather, but just failed to hold it—and New House were one up in the first minute!

It was a shock to the pride of the School House, and they went all out to even matters. In defence, however, Figgins & Co. were steady enough, and Fatty Wynn put paid to a smart shot from Tom Merry and another from D'Arcy. New House returned to the attack, and French was unlucky to head just past the upright with Herries unsighted. Half-time 1—0.

In the second half goals came quickly. Tom Merry threaded his way through from the restart and outwitted Fatty Wynn to slam home the leather for the equaliser. A few moments later French dribbled through and beat Herries with a regular pile-driver which no goalkeeper could have stopped. In the lead again, New House battled doggedly to hold it, and for a period they looked value for a win. The crack-up came swiftly and unexpectedly when D'Arcy topped off a brilliant run down the wing with a smashing cross-drive which Fatty Wynn never saw! This reverse shook the New House, and they faltered. School House swarmed round their goal, and Blake headed through a crowd over Fatty Wynn's outstretched fist.

Figgins rallied his men for a last-minute raid, but too late—the final whistle shrilled, acclaiming Tom Merry & Co. deservedly winners of the House Cup! But as Figgins remarked—there will be another meeting!

(Continued from previous column.)

are entitled to colour the centre of the badge red.

All members of the Flying Squad greet each other with this salute: Raise the right arm, bent, so that the hand comes level with the head. The hand should be presented edgewise to your fellow member, parallel with the side of your head, and should be brought into position smartly. Try it!

The unbreakable rule of the Flying Squad is:

Be ever ready to fly to the assistance of your friends.

(Signed) TOM MERRY
(Air Marshal in Chief.)

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Merry's Weekly



Week Ending April 14th, 1934.

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

JACK BLAKE SPEAKING



What-ho, everybody! Speaking as head keeper of Study No. 6, I'm very pleased to see you all.

Why do I style myself head keeper? Because that's the office I fill towards my erring study-mates, bless their little hearts! Supposing you inhabited a study with a tailor's dummy who littered the place up with socks and ties and fancy waistcoats, while on the other side of you there was a fellow who could talk of nothing but dogs, and what they ought to eat, or ought not to eat, and who was always looking for a chance to smuggle a bulldog into the best armchair, just to give it a treat—wouldn't you feel justified in regarding yourself as a sort of keeper to them both? I haven't mentioned Digby, because old "Dig" is a quiet sort, and has very few foibles.

Not that, when it comes to it, I am without foibles myself! Very probably Gussy and Herries are right when they say I'm always chipping mud off my footer boots on the study table, or oiling a cricket bat all over the nice new cloth, or upsetting Gussy's carefully laid-out clothes, or stepping in the food Herries has prepared for old Towser. Probably I'm a careless idiot, as they sometimes remark—we all have our point of view!

But there's just one thing I'd like to emphasise on my first appearance in person before you—and that is that though we're as unlike as foreigners, Gussy and Herries and I "pull" together like the real good pals we are whenever there's anything serious in the wind! Over minor matters we rag and jape—but underneath, we all have a very deep and sincere regard for each other.

I'm plain Yorkshire myself, though I don't go about ejaculating "Ba goom!" for remarking that I'm feeling "gradely." Yorkshiremen are really human beings just like Southrons, though sometimes the Southrons are apt to think of them as a race apart. Personally, I judge a fellow by the way he puts up on the sports field, or in the serious matters of life. It doesn't matter much where he was born. I think old Gussy is "cracked" about clothes, and how a fellow can think and breathe bulldogs like Herries I don't know; but I do know that I'd never wish to have two finer fellows at your back in a scrap—or three, with old "Dig"—and that's what I call the acid test! If you're passing Study No. 6 at any time, drop in and see us. Gussy, at any rate, will never fail to "do the honours"! Cheerio!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is starting a campaign for wearing dinner-jackets in the Common Room after prep. So far Gussy is the only fellow who has risked it, and he caused quite a sensation!

MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

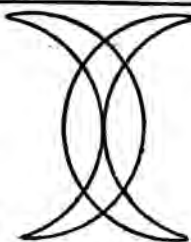
Hallo, everybody! Would you like me to do another loop? as the airman said to the empty seat behind him. Kerr has dared me to make another joke about his countrymen. All right! A Scotsman is so mean that he solves jig-saw puzzles in his head to save wear and tear on the pieces! Another: A Scotsman on board ship dropped a "sax-pence" over the rail. He reached the water first! A little of that goes a long way, though—as the keeper said when he gave the giraffe a handful of hay! Melish complains that his pater hasn't sent him a remittance for weeks. Evidently a man of rare gifts! Kerr was speaking to the local grocer. "Why, I've known old Crump, the village policeman, ever since he was a baby!" said the grocer. "Oh!" answered Kerr. "I've never seen a baby policeman!" Which reminds me of old Smith, who drives the Wayland Corporation steam roller. He says he's afraid to leave his steam roller for a moment with so many car thieves around nowadays! Skimpole is always kind to animals. He surprised a street vendor in Wayland by offering the donkey a bunch of carrots. "It's very kind of you, sir!" said the vendor, touching his cap. "Oh, not at all," answered Skimpole benignly. "I got them off the back of your barrow!" A Rylecombe landlord called on a tenant for back rent. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he offered. "I'll forget half of what's owing!" "Fine!" returned the tenant. "I'll meet you. I'll forget the other half!"

Cheerio till next week!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Mr. Linton caught Manners of the Shell scribbling with his pencil on his blotting pad instead of getting on with his work. He was about to punish the junior when Manners, who has a brain for problems, explained that he had drawn the figure, shown here, without lifting his pencil from the paper. After trying it himself once or twice, Mr. Linton agreed that it was an interesting problem, though Manners should not have devoted his time to it in class.

Can you draw the figure without taking your pencil from the paper, or going over the same line twice?



Solution of Last Week's Puzzle

VICTIM

The juniors willingly stamped the fire out.

Darkness reigned where the red glare had been—darkness, save for the glimmer of the moon in the dark blue sky, and the glimmer of the wide ocean beyond the bay.

The campers waited and listened.

But the shot was not repeated.

They resumed their seats and their talk, but there was a tone of anxiety in their voices now, and they frequently glanced over their shoulders.

For the first time they realised the danger of the quest they had undertaken; they realised to the full, in penetrating the mysteries of the treasure island, they carried their lives in their hands.

The moon rose higher in the sky, and the explorers prepared to sleep. Lord Conway suggested that the juniors should return to the yacht to sleep, but so vigorous an objection was raised that he did not insist.

"Very well," he said, "remain here. After all, there is little danger if we keep a good look-out."

The campers rolled themselves in their blankets on the soft sand, round the still warm embers of the fire, and slept.

The juniors had wished to take their turns on sentry-go; but Lord Conway would not agree to that. The watch was kept by the seamen of the Silver Scud, two at a time.

It was past midnight when Tom Merry awoke. He had been dreaming of treasure and sharks and Pablo Lopez, and he awoke with a strange feeling of uneasiness thrilling him through. He sat up. The moon had passed behind a bank of clouds, and all was dark. From the forest came strange whispers of the night wind.

Tom Merry sat and listened. The night was warm, and he allowed his blanket to fall. He listened for the steady tramping of the sentries, but it was inaudible.

Had they slept at their posts?

The mere thought, and the knowledge that the savage Spaniard might be lurking in the wood, sufficed to bring Tom Merry with a bound to his feet.

He stood with beating heart peering into the gloom.

Ah, there was the sound! Tramp, tramp, tramp on the soft sand, to and fro. The sentries were awake and at their posts.

But what was that softer sound nearer at hand?

Tom Merry strained his ears to listen. It was a soft and swishing sound, and for the moment he could not make it out.

But suddenly it came home to him what it was. It was the sound of a man dragging himself softly along the sand towards the camp. Tom Merry shivered.

The creeping man, whoever he was, was within the distance of the sentries. He had succeeded in passing them unseen in the darkness.

He was close upon the camp now. Who was it?

Lopez?

Tom Merry groped for his rifle, which lay beside him in the sand. Quietly, with beating heart but steady nerves, he put it to his shoulder.

The moon was about to emerge from the clouds.

As the edge of silver glimmered in the sky, and a faint light fell upon the beach, Tom Merry scanned the shelving sand in the direction of the sound he had heard. He levelled the rifle at the creeping figure of a man.

"Halt!" he shouted.

The creeping man leaped to his feet

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with an inarticulate cry. The rifle in Tom Merry's hand was levelled at his breast, steady as a rock.

The moonlight glimmered on the man's face.

Tom Merry saw it, and uttered a cry of astonishment. He lowered the barrel of the rifle.

"Peter Raff!"

CHAPTER 11.

The Enemy!

PETER RAFF stared at Tom Merry blankly, blinking in the moonlight.

He was shaking in every limb, and there was no colour in his sunburnt cheeks. He had a rifle in his hand, but it was of little danger to anyone but himself.

It was evident that the man's nerve was gone.

"Master Merry!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry allowed the butt of his rifle to fall into the sand.

"So it's you!" he exclaimed. "You—you alive! You weren't drowned in the stream in Rylcombe Wood, after all!"

Peter Raff grinned faintly.

"No, Master Merry; that was a trick. It put the Spaniard off my track."

"I'm glad to see you alive, my man," said Tom Merry. "Come on; there's nothing to be scared about. We're all friends here."

"Who is that, Tom?"

Half the camp was awake. It was Mr. Dodds who asked the question.

"Peter Raff, sir," said Tom Merry. "The sailorman I told you about, sir, who gave me the chart of the island."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, sitting up. "I'm jolly glad to see you alive and kickin', Petah, my boy! You fellows will wemembah that I said all along that Petah wasn't dead."

"I don't remember," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And I don't," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Well, he is alive and kicking, whether you said so all along or not, Gussy," Figgins remarked, "and I'm sure

we're all jolly glad. Sit down, Peter, my son. Was it you shooting in the wood a while back?"

The sailorman shuddered.

"No, sir; it wasn't me. I was shot at."

"Who by?" asked Lord Conway quietly.

"Pablo Lopez, sir."

"Then he is here?"

"As large as life, sir, and armed to the teeth and ready for any devilish work," said the sailorman, with a shiver.

"You'd better tell us all about it," said Tom Merry. "How did you get here? You never asked me to let you have the chart again."

The sailorman shook his head.

"I meant you to have it, Master Merry, for your kindness to me," he said. "I never thought I should get away from the Spaniard. But the trick I played took him in, or else he found out that you had the chart and not me. Anyway, I saw no more of him. And when I found that I was clear of him, I thought to myself that I would have a shot at the treasure. For I remember every line of that chart in my mind, sir, as if I had it under my eyes still."

"I suppose so."

"So I came out this way on the fastest boat I could," said Peter Raff, "and I got a passage to Kermadec on a fast whaler, and some Kanakas brought me over here on their schooner. I filled them up with a yarn of having left some papers on the island. And I should have got the gold safe enough, I dessay, but—"

"But Lopez arrived?"

"Ay, ay, sir! The day after I was here I saw a felucca in Shark Bay, and then I guessed that he had come. The Kanakas fled in their schooner at the first shot from that demon of a Spaniard, and they left me marooned here, and ever since then I've been skulking to save my life from Pablo Lopez. He's been hunting me to make me show him where the treasure is hidden, but I swore to myself that I'd jump off the bluff into the sea before I'd do it. But I've kept off his course till now, knowing the island so well—for I've been here before, sirs—and you could have knocked me down, sir, with a captain's biscuit when I saw a steamer coming round the reefs this day."

"I hoped it might be Master Merry and his friends, and yet I thought it couldn't be, and then I hoped it might be a stranger; but all the time I had a fear that it was friends of the Spaniard who had come to help him carry off the treasure. That's why I didn't show myself, sir, and that's why I came creeping up here like a thief in the night to see if I could tell whether you were honest seamen, sir, by listening to something that might be said among you. Thank Heaven, sir, I've fallen among friends! But Pablo Lopez is in the wood, watching the camp. Heaven deliver you from him!"

Lord Conway smiled.

"I think there are enough of us to give a good account of Lopez if he ventures to interfere with us," he remarked.

The sailorman shook his head.

"You don't know him, sir," he said.

"Is the man alone here?" Mr. Dodds asked.

"No, sir. He has four niggers in the felucca with him, but they ain't of any account," said Peter Raff. "They stick in the felucca, and there ain't any fight in them. It's the Spaniard himself, sir."

"Well, I think we shall be able to handle him amongst us," Lord Conway said, with a smile.

Peter Raff responded only with another shake of the head. It was evident that the dwarf had impressed him with a terror that would not easily be removed.

The treasure-hunters did not share it, however. They were not likely to allow themselves to be scared by a single man, however desperate.

The campers returned to their sleep, and Peter Raff, after eating a hearty supper, rolled himself in blankets and slept, too.

The moon was sailing high over the island, and in the clear light it was easy to keep watch; but the Spaniard did not appear.

At earliest dawn Tom Merry & Co. were astir.

It was a fine, clear morning, the skies blue and sunny, and a soft breeze waving the feathery fronds of the palm-trees.

Fatty Wynn cast a hungry eye upon the coconut-palms.

"I'm jolly well going to have some of those coconuts!" he remarked.

"Keep out of the trees, Fatty," said Tom Merry. "You remember the orders. We're not to leave the camp excepting in a party."

"Yes; but—"

"We're going up the river this morning, and there will be heaps of coconuts."

"Oh, all serene!"

But Fatty Wynn could not give up the idea. There were no coconut-palms near at hand, but plenty in sight in the



The Bounder's Big Bluff!

Vernon-Smith, of the Greyfriars Remove, has rightly earned the nickname of "The Bounder," for time and again he has escaped expulsion by the narrowest of margins. If he disgraces himself again his millionaire father has threatened to disown and disinheret him. For the time being Vernon-Smith intends to walk warily—a far-from-easy task, considering that his new Form-master's villainous intention is that he should be sent away from Greyfriars in disgrace! How the Bounder and his rascally Form-master try to catch each other out makes a really brilliant School-story of the Chums of Greyfriars, in this week's issue of

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distance, farther along the Monkey River. Fatty Wynn helped to gather fuel for building up the camp-fire to cook the breakfast, and the coconuts overcame his prudence. There was no sign of an enemy near the encampment, and Fatty resolved to risk it. It meant only a run of a hundred yards, and then an armful of coconuts and a run back to the camp.

Leaving the fuel he had gathered in a heap, Fatty Wynn started through the thicket.

Tom Merry saw him go, and called after him.

"Fatty! Fatty!"

The fat Fourth Former of St. Jim's did not appear to hear.

"Fatty!" shouted Tom Merry. "Come back, you duffer!"

But Fatty Wynn ran on.

A belt of flowering bushes hid him for the moment from Tom Merry's sight, and the hero of the Shell started after him.

He dashed past the bushes, but Fatty Wynn had disappeared.

"Fatty-Fatty!"

Only the echo of his own voice answered Tom Merry.

He ran on a dozen yards or more, but the thickets were round him now, and prevented him from seeing any distance. He stopped, frowning.

"Fatty!" he shouted. "Fatty, you duffer, come back!"

There was a rustle in the bush.

Tom Merry turned quickly towards the sound.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "Fatty, you chump, come back to the camp! You can get the coconuts afterwards."

There was no reply, and Tom Merry plunged through the bush in search of the fat Fourth Former.

As he did so a sudden grasp was laid upon him, and he was dragged backwards and borne to the ground.

"Fatty, let go, you ass! Oh!"

Tom Merry broke off as he saw who his opponent was.

A dark, evil face was bending over him. The arms that grasped him were stronger than those of Fatty Wynn.

"So we meet again, seniorito!"

The voice was low and mocking.

Tom Merry struggled furiously, but he was as a child in the hands that grasped him. It was Pablo Lopez who was bending over him.

CHAPTER 12.

The Dwarf's Threat.

LOPEZ planted a heavy knee upon Tom Merry's chest, pinning him helplessly to the ground.

The boy struggled and gasped for breath. He strove to shout for help, but even as his lips opened something cold and sharp touched his neck. It was a knife in the swarthy hand of the Spaniard.

"Not a sound, seniorito!" said Pablo Lopez. "Not a sound! At the first cry my knife is in your throat!"

The unuttered cry died upon Tom Merry's lips.

The Spaniard meant what he said. The junior's life hung by a thread. The knife was ready for its murderous work.

Tom Merry gazed up speechlessly into the savage, cruel face above him.

The Spaniard smiled down upon him, a strange and tigerish smile.

"You understand, seniorito? Ere your friends can reach you, you are dead! Sabe?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Ah! You are a sensible boy," said Lopez, with a grin.

"If you speak, speak only in a whisper, nino!"

"You scoundrel!"

The Spaniard laughed.

"If it is any comfort to you, seniorito, to call me pretty names, you may do so, so long as it is in a whisper," he said.

"Villain!"

The Spaniard made a gesture.

"Silence!"

There was a sound of trampling in the thickets and of voices calling. The edge of the knife pressed closer to Tom Merry's throat till it almost cut the skin. The junior felt a cold shiver run through his body. Even then he wondered why Lopez did not drive the weapon home. The man was villain enough.

But Lopez did not.

Pinned to the earth by the heavy knee, with the blade at his throat, Tom Merry could not venture to make a sound. The thick, tangled bushes round them hid them from sight.

"Tom Merry!"

"Tom!"

"Where are you?"

Tom Merry caught a glimpse of a Panama hat through the bushes, but it passed. It was as well that it passed; for if the Spaniard had been discovered, and had to run, he would not have left Tom Merry living behind him.

"If they find you—" murmured Lopez.

But the voices and the footsteps passed on.

A few minutes of terrible tension, and then silence.

The Spaniard smiled grimly.

"They have not found you, seniorito."

"They will search again," said Tom Merry.

"But they will not find you then. You are coming with me, seniorito."

"I will not!"

"You will come with me, or remain dead!" said Lopez.

"Mind, a cry or a struggle, and I will drive my poniard home!"

He meant every word. That was clear from the savage look upon the swarthy face. Tom Merry did not resist.

Lopez crammed a foul handkerchief into his mouth to gag him, and tied a cord round his head to keep it there.

Then he dragged the junior to his feet.

"Vamos!" he said briefly.

With a tight grip upon the junior's arm with his left hand, and the knife still held in his right, he led the junior through the thickets.

It was impossible to resist. And Tom Merry, with his heart beating with anger, and a set look upon his face, walked beside the Spaniard quietly.

Deeper and deeper into the wood they went, but there was one feeling of satisfaction in Tom Merry's breast. The chart was not upon him now; that had been left with Lord Conway, to guide the party that was to start after breakfast.

If the Spaniard had captured him hoping to gain the chart, he would be disappointed.

Deeper into the wood.

At last, in a deep glade among the trees, half hidden from the sun by thick boughs and trailing vines, Lopez halted.

He gashed a length of wiry creeper with his knife and tied Tom Merry's wrists with it.

Then he released the junior.

"You may talk now, if you choose," he said. "They will not hear you. We are safe from them now."

Tom Merry gasped as the gag was dragged from his mouth.

"Oh, you scoundrel!" he muttered.

"Where is the chart?"

"It is not upon me," said Tom Merry steadily.

"You lie! Give it to me, or—"

"I cannot give it to you—and I would not if I had it!"

"Caramba! I shall soon see to that!"

The Spaniard returned the knife to his belt and began to search the junior. Tom Merry submitted quietly.

Lopez searched him again and again, leaving no nook of his clothing uninvestigated, till even the suspicious Spaniard was satisfied that the chart was not there.

He gritted his sharp, white teeth.

"Where is the chart, then?" he demanded.

"It is with my friends."

"Which of them?"

"Lord Conway."

"Who is that?"

"Our captain."

The Spaniard muttered a curse.

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Caranda! It will not be easy to get, then!"

Tom Merry smiled scornfully.

"It will be impossible," he said. "Lord Conway will not run the risk I ran—especially after I'm missed. You will never get the chart."

"We shall see. Do you know why I did not drive my knife into your heart as soon as I saw you?" asked Pablo Lopez in a hissing voice.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. You are villain enough."

"It was because I suspected that you might not have the chart upon you," said the dwarf. "I suspected that they might not leave it in the hands of a boy. And without the chart you are more valuable to me alive than dead."

Tom Merry did not reply.

The dwarf watched his prisoner with scintillating eyes.

"You have conned over the chart and mastered it, I do not doubt?" he said.

"I have examined it, certainly."

"You remember it?"

"To some extent."

"Could you follow the clues from memory to the place where the gold is hidden?"

"I do not know."

"You shall try," said the Spaniard. "Listen! If you help me to find the gold I will set you free and give you some of the treasure. That I swear by all the saints!"

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"I do not believe you," he said.

"Caramba! Be it so, then! But unless you guide me you shall die by torture!" said the Spaniard between his teeth. "Will you be my guide?"

"No!"

"Mind, I am a man of my word!" said Lopez hoarsely. "Unless you guide me I will bind you to the tree here and set fire to the dry bushes round you! You will burn slowly to death—slowly! You understand?"

Tom Merry shuddered, but he made no reply.

"Will you guide me, seniorito?"

"No!"

The dwarf did not speak. He flung the junior against the sapling, and wound long, wiry creepers round him to secure him there.

Tom Merry struggled furiously, careless of the knife now. But it was in vain. The terrible dwarf seemed possessed of superhuman strength.

Tom Merry was like an infant in his powerful grasp. In a few minutes he was bound fast to the tree.

Then the dwarf gathered fuel and heaped it up round him.

"Have you changed your mind, seniorito?" he sneered.

"No! Help—help!" shouted Tom Merry.

The dwarf grinned and took a matchbox from his coat. A flame flared out, and he lit a torch of twisted brushwood. Then his evil eyes turned upon Tom Merry again.

"For the last time, seniorito!"

CHAPTER 13.

The Track of the Treasure!

TOM MERRY looked at the dwarf with dilated eyes. It seemed almost impossible that the man could intend to set fire to the fuel that was heaped around him, that he could really mean to burn the junior alive.

But there was no doubting the purpose in the scintillating eyes, in the savage, swarthy face.

"Think again, seniorito!" said Lopez. "Think again! Once I have fired this pile I leave you, and no power on earth can save you! Think again!"

Small blame to Tom Merry if he surrendered then. What was the treasure in comparison to life itself?

"Shall I hold my hand, seniorito?"

"Yes!" gasped Tom Merry.

"You will guide me?"

"Yes."

Lopez gave an ugly laugh.

"I thought I should bring you to reason," he said. "Let us go."

He dragged the twining bonds away. Tom Merry's hands were still bound. His face was white and set.

His brain was in a whirl. What if he guided the ruffian to the very spot where the gold was buried—what then? A thrust of the Spaniard's knife would reward him. Lopez had no object in allowing him to live.

It was but deferring his doom.

But while there was life there was hope. The tendrils that bound his hands were not so secure as a cord would have been, and Tom Merry hoped to work his wrists loose. He might turn the tables upon the villain yet.

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"Where is the cache?" said Lopez. "Where is it, to the best of your recollections, seniorito?"

"By the mountain, near the river," said Tom Merry.

"Exactly where?"

"I cannot remember, but I may be able to follow the direction from the river," said the junior.

"Good! You shall try."

With the Spaniard's iron grasp upon his arm, the boy was led through the wood. The trees thinned away, and there was a gleam of sunlit water ahead.

"That is the river," said the Spaniard. "You meant the river that empties into the bay where your yacht rides?"

"Yes."

"That is it. We keep on till we reach the mount?"

"Yes."

"Muy buen!"

They tramped on side by side—with how different feelings! The Spaniard's dark face showed exultation and anticipated triumph. Tom Merry's face was white and desperate. As they tramped through the trees, he was working his hands cautiously, in the hope of getting them loose. The wiry tendrils held them fast, but they were coming looser and looser.

Lopez did not notice it. Perhaps he did not care. It was proved very clearly that Tom Merry was no match for him in a struggle, and he was armed and the junior was not.

The ground became more rocky and uneven, and the trees were sparser.

Tom Merry had the bearings of the chart imprinted upon his mind.

Through the rocky slopes ran a natural path from the river, leading up the acclivity to the mount. They followed it. From the trees, black-faced monkeys grinned and chattered, and wild goats looked out from the underwoods and scampered away at their approach.

Suddenly the Spaniard halted, with a muttered imprecation.

Tom Merry followed his startled glance, and shuddered at what he saw.

In a deep cleft between two great rocks, gleaming white in the sun, now high in the heavens, was a skeleton.

The bones were almost white, and the skeleton had evidently never been disturbed from the time the body had fallen there—perhaps in a strife a century or more ago.

One arm was outstretched, pointing towards a clump of heavy trees that grew thickly among the rocks at the slopes.

"Caramba!" muttered the Spaniard.

It was clear that, in his wanderings upon the island, he had never come upon the grisly object before.

He stood and regarded it in silence for some minutes.

Tom Merry's face was very white. Would his bones lie and whiten in the sun among those silent rocks?

It seemed only too likely.

"Caramba!" said the Spaniard again. "Is that a sign?"

Tom Merry started.

The idea had not occurred to him, but it was only too probable. It was like one of the dreadful deeds of the old buccaners, to leave a dead man with outstretched hand pointing, as a guide, to the treasure.

"Come!" said Lopez.

He started off again, dragging the junior after him.

Tom Merry was breathing hard. The tendrils round his wrists were loose now, and he could tear his hands free at any moment he pleased.

But what was the use?

He was a child against the dwarf, and he had no weapon. He glanced at the knife in Lopez's belt. But he would never be allowed a chance of snatching it. There was a rifle slung over the shoulder of the Spaniard, but that he could not seize.

His heart was beating wildly now.

He felt that they were drawing near to the hiding-place of the treasure, and when it was found, what was to be his fate?

Lopez halted again.

He stopped at the clump of thick trees. His eyes turned savagely upon Tom Merry.

"Is this the direction, nino?"

"So far as I remember."

"Good! Then we must be near!"

"I think so."

"Come!"

They plunged into the trees.

A sudden cry burst from the Spaniard—a cry of triumph! In the midst of the trees was an open, rocky space, shut in darkly and closely, as by a wall of green.

And there, upon a huge trunk, the bark had been gashed away by heavy blows of an axe, and in the tree-trunk a huge cross was cut.

It was the fellow of the cross upon the chart.

"The treasure!" shouted the Spaniard.



"For the last time, *senorito*!" hissed the dwarf. "Will you guide me to the place where the gold is hidden? Once I have fired this pile of brushwood, I leave you, and no power on earth can save you. Think well, *senorito*!"

And he turned upon Tom Merry, and there was a murderous glare in his eyes, and his hand flew to the knife in his belt.

CHAPTER 14. A Fight for Life!

TOM MERRY sprang away at the same moment, and with a wrench, freed his hands.

As the Spaniard came at him, he struck out fiercely, and the blow was so unexpected that Lopez received it without defence, and it sent him reeling backwards. He had not known that Tom Merry's hands were loose.

Tom Merry stood panting for a second.

To dash into the bushes was his first thought, and then he remembered that the Spaniard had a rifle. To run was to be picked off like a rabbit.

It was only a fraction of a second that he had to think, but it was enough. He followed up his blow by leaping upon the Spaniard.

Crash!

His right, and then his left, came home upon the swarthy face of the tottering Lopez, and the dwarf crashed heavily to the earth, panting.

Tom Merry was upon him in a second.

The Spaniard's hands were sprawling helplessly out, and in the twinkling of an eye, the junior snatched the knife from his nerveless fingers.

It flashed in the air in the grasp of Tom Merry.

To drive it to the hilt in the scoundrel's body would have been justifiable, and only cautious; but Tom Merry could not do it. He planted his knee upon the ruffian, and held the knife aloft.

"Keep still!" he said. "If you resist, I swear I will strike!"

And he meant that.

And Lopez knew that he meant it, and he lay still, panting convulsively, his lips drawn back from his teeth in a savage snarl.

"*Caramba!*" he hissed.

"Lie quiet, you hound!"

And the Spaniard obeyed.

His rifle had fallen beside him in the grass, still held to him by the sling. Tom Merry brought down the knife and severed the leather strap with a single cut. The rifle lay loose.

The Spaniard was watching him like a cat.

"Mind what I say," said Tom Merry, in a hard, concentrated voice. His heart was beating like a hammer, but his head was quite cool. "I will pin you like a beetle if you attempt to struggle."

"*Caramba!*"

Tom Merry picked up the rifle and rose. The Spaniard made a movement, and Tom Merry had him covered with the rifle in a flash.

"Lie there, you hound!"

"*Caramba!*"

"I will shoot if you move!"

The Spaniard did not move. It was proof that the rifle was loaded. Tom Merry had not thought of that until it was levelled at the Spaniard. But it was not likely that Pablo Lopez would be carrying an unloaded weapon.

Lopez lay with glittering eyes like a cornered cat.

His rage was too great for words; but he read the desperate determination in the boy's face, and he understood it. It was as much as his life was worth to move.

"You scoundrel!" said Tom Merry. "You deserve that I should shoot you down like a mad dog. And I will do it, if you make the least movement to attack me!"

"A thousand curses—"

"Hold your tongue, you villain! Get up!"

"*Senorito!*"

"Get up, and keep your distance, or I will fire!"

Lopez rose to his feet.

"Walk before me," said Tom Merry.

Lopez made a passionate gesture.

"Where, *caramba*—where?"

"Towards the river."

The Spaniard gave him a terrible glance. But he dared not disobey.

"I do not intend to risk being attacked from behind, you treacherous villain!" said Tom Merry scornfully. "Mind, I

will pull the trigger if you make a single movement that is suspicious!"

"Caramba!"

"March!"

The Spaniard marched.

He strode away, with Tom Merry half a dozen paces behind him. That he could march the Spaniard as far as the camp, and make him a prisoner, Tom Merry did not hope. But he meant to get out of the thickets with the ruffian at a safe distance.

They came out upon the bank of the gleaming river.

Then the Spaniard halted.

He turned a dark, furious face upon Tom Merry.

"Are you satisfied, *senorito*?" he asked, in a choking voice.

"You will wade across the river," said Tom Merry. "I

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shall keep you under cover till you have reached the other side. Then you can go!"

"It is too deep, *senor*."

"Swim, then!"

"I cannot swim."

"You must take your chance."

The Spaniard faced round to him, his features working convulsively.

"Ah, *senorito*, I can swim, but I will not!" he said.

"Shoot, if you choose, then."

Tom Merry's eyes glanced along the levelled rifle.

"I give you two seconds!" he said.

"Caramba!"

The Spaniard made a sudden spring forward.

Tom Merry kept his word.

Crack!

There was a fearful yell from Pablo Lopez.

He staggered back, with blood streaming down his face. He yelled wildly again, and clapped his hands to his head.

"Oh, I am killed!"

Tom Merry's face went white. But he had fired only in self-defence, and he did not regret it. The dwarf's blood was upon himself.

"And it might be a trick! Pablo Lopez reeled and crashed heavily to the earth, falling in the thick grass.

Tom Merry watched him.

He had no cartridges to reload the rifle, and he dropped it in his left hand, and drew the knife from his belt. If Pablo Lopez was tricking him, it was necessary to be careful.

Lopez groaned heavily.

Tom Merry turned to go his way, and paused. Could he leave the man, brute as he was, so? Lopez was evidently wounded; there was blood upon his face, and blood upon the grass.

Tom Merry approached.

"Lopez!"

The man groaned.

The junior bent over him.

And as he did so, the strong arms of the dwarf flashed up, and the boy was caught in an iron grasp.

"Now, *nino*—Oh!"

Tom Merry, the instant the treacherous scoundrel's hands were upon him, hacked out with the knife. It was a trick. Lopez was not seriously hurt! But the junior of St. Jim's was ready for his treachery.

He hacked fiercely with the long, keen knife, careless where his blows fell, for his life was in the balance.

Lopez shrieked with rage and pain, and released his hold, and sprang away. Blood was streaming from three or four wounds where the knife had gashed him.

Tom Merry faced him, panting.

"You scoundrel! You hound!"

The Spaniard, mad with rage, sprang at him again. Tom Merry slashed with the knife, and the ruffian leaped back.

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Then the junior followed up the attack, slashing savagely, and Lopez, with a howl of rage, turned and ran.

Tom Merry did not pursue him.

He was panting and giddy from the struggle—sick with the sight of blood, and with the knowledge that he had almost killed a man.

He picked up the rifle, and hurried away down the river, in the direction of the bay. Over the trees he could see a column of smoke from the camp-fire.

"Tom Merry!"

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

"Merry! Thank Heaven we have found you!"

A party of juniors and seamen from the Silver Scud, with Mr. Dodds at their head, burst from the trees and surrounded Tom Merry.

The hero of the Shell gasped with relief.

"Bai Jove! Are you hurt, dear boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy anxiously.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"But there is blood upon you—upon your hand—your coat!" exclaimed Mr. Dodds.

"It is not my blood!"

"Good heavens! Whose, then?"

"Lopez!"

Tom Merry dropped the knife, from which red drops spattered on the grass as it fell. And then Mr. Dodds caught him just in time, as he fainted.

CHAPTER 15.

The Last of the Spaniard!

TOM MERRY came to himself to find his head upon Mr. Dodds' knee, and the curate of Huckleberry Heath bathing his face with cool water from the river. The junior's eyes opened wildly.

"It's all wight, old chap," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You're all wight."

Tom Merry shivered.

"What an ass I am!" he muttered. "Did I—did I faint?"

"You need not be ashamed of fainting, Tom," said Mr. Dodds quietly. "You have been through a fearful experience. Are you better?"

"I'm all right now, sir."

Tom Merry rose, with the curate's assistance.

"Tell us how it happened," said Lord Conway.

Tom Merry explained.

"All my fault," said Fatty Wynn remorsefully. "And I never got the coconuts, after all; I went back instead."

"You ass!" said Tom Merry. "That's how I couldn't find you, I suppose."

"You see—"

"I wegard Wynn as a feahful ass," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the fat Fourth Former. "I wegard you as a feahfully dweadful ass, Wynn!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me—"

"Well, I do; and many of 'em!"

"Then I shall have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'. I—"

"Order!" said Figgins. "You can look for Lopez, and give him a fearful thrashing, Gussy. Peace in the family."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Yes, order!" said Wally. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy."

"Weally, Wally—"

"It seems that the Spaniard knows where to look for the treasure, then," said Lord Conway anxiously.

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Tom Merry. "I hope you don't blame me for guiding him. He was going to set fire to the wood round me—he really meant it!"

"Bai Jove! What a feahful beast!"

"I don't blame you, Tom," said the viscount. "You could hardly do anything else. But the Spaniard knows as much now as he could learn from the chart."

"Yes, sir—I suppose so."

"Then we have no time to lose!"

"Bai Jove, wathah not," said D'Arcy. "But didn't you say the boundah was hurt, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes; I don't know how severely, though."

"If he is in a condition to look for the treasure, he will certainly do so," said Lord Conway. "Fortunately, he is unarmed. Of course, he would have no chance against us, but it would be terrible to have lives lost in dealing with such a scoundrel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let us keep on," said Lord Conway. "I have the chart here; but it appears to me that we shall not need it now."

"Lead the way, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!"

"Right-ho!"

"By gum, sir!" said Peter Raff, in great admiration.

as he tramped beside Tom Merry through the underwoods. "By gum, sir, you're the only one I've ever heard of who came off best in a tussle with Pablo Lopez. But I wish you had put the bullet through his head, sir."

"I'm glad I didn't," said Tom Merry.

The sailorman shook his head.

"It would have been safer, sir; nothing's safe with Pablo Lopez here."

They tramped on over the rocky slopes. There was a general exclamation as they reached the spot where the skeleton lay.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy exclaimed, with a shudder. "Let's get on!"

And Fatty Wynn, who had been nibbling at a sandwich, put it away unfinished. The sight had taken even his appetite away.

As they drew near the clump of thick trees Lord Conway held up his hand.

"Hark!"

There was a sound of scuffling and scratching from the thick cover of the trees. There was no doubt what it meant. The Spaniard was there. He had had no time to obtain digging implements from the felucca, and he was making a desperate attempt to get at the buried treasure before the English party could arrive.

They broke into a run.

"Don't shoot unless he attacks," said Lord Conway. "Make him a prisoner if you can."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

They burst through the trees.

Pablo Lopez was there. He was on his knees under the tree marked with the blazed cross, tearing feverishly at the soil with a wooden stake.

The soil was soft, and it turned up rapidly under the primitive implement. The Spaniard had already excavated a foot deep, and he had dragged away the earth with his hands.

In the excavation a corner of an iron-bound chest showed through the earth.

"Seize him!" shouted Lord Conway.

The Spaniard sprang to his feet as the Britishers burst upon the scene.

He presented a terrible sight.

Tom Merry's bullet had gashed along his cheek and ear, and the scar was still raw and red, and his clothing was torn and stained with blood where the knife had struck him in the hand-to-hand struggle.

"Caramba!"

"Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! Go for the cad, deah boys!"

They rushed at the Spaniard in a body.

The ruffian whirled the stake aloft, but as he did so Mr. Dodds dodged under his arm, and closed with him.

The stake went flying from the Spaniard's hand, and he was whirled back in the grasp of the athletic curate; but he returned grasp for grasp, and the two struggled fiercely.

"Look out, sir!" yelled Peter Raff. "He'll strangle you, sir!"

"Stand back!" said Mr. Dodds. The curate's voice was cool and steady. "I can handle him!"

They gathered round the combatants.

Strong as the Spaniard was, he had met his match in the Britisher.

To and fro they reeled, struggling fiercely, tearing up the soil with their feet in the desperate wrestle, till the Spaniard was forced backward and backward, and fell to the earth, gasping and overcome.

The curate stood over him.

He was panting, too, with the terrible exertion, and his face and hands were stained with the blood of Pablo Lopez.

"Now take him," he said.

The Spaniard scrambled up. With a spring like a tiger he escaped the outstretched hands, and plunged into the wood.

"After him!" shouted Lord Conway. "He must not escape!"

"Wathah not!"

"After him!"

They rushed in fierce pursuit. Through the crackling underwoods they swept, the Spaniard leaping desperately on, the pursuers shouting and whooping close behind.

"Oh, chase me!" gasped Blake.

Round the base of the mount they ran, the wounded Spaniard still keeping ahead.

"My hat!" Figgins gasped. "The beggar can run!"

"We'll have him now!" said the Kangaroo, as the gleam of water showed ahead. "There's the sea!"

Tom Merry panted.

"And there's the felucca!"

"My hat!"

The Spaniard had reached the shore of Shark Bay. Out in the bay the felucca lay at anchor, with four negroes on

(Continued on the next page.)

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deck. They stared stupidly at the sight of the Spaniard and his pursuers bursting from the woods.

Lopez did not halt.

The crisping sands rang under his hurrying feet, and he dashed straight into the water and swam.

"With desperate strokes he swam for the felucca."

"After him!" yelled Kerr.

But Lord Conway's voice rang out:

"Stop!"

Unwillingly the juniors halted, their boots crunching up the sand on the water's edge.

"We could overtake him before he reaches the felucca, sir!" Figgins exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You remember what this bay is called?" said Lord Conway. "Probably it was not given a name without a reason."

"My hat!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" exclaimed Peter Raff. "There are sharks here; I've seen them—dozens of them! Great Davy Jones, look there!"

A fin showed above the blue waters, close by the swimming Spaniard. A trail of blood in the water had drawn a shark to the spot.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

He grasped a rifle in his hands. The Spaniard was a deadly foe—a murderous ruffian. But such a death as this!

Lopez had seen his danger. He redoubled his efforts to reach the felucca. A negro stood ready with a rope to throw to him.

But the shark was quicker. There was a gleam of white as the horrible monster of the sea turned over to seize his victim.

Crack!

It was the report of Tom Merry's rifle.

Unerringly the bullet sped to its mark. It struck the white belly of the shark as a hailstone strikes glass.

There was a wild flounder in the water, and the shark sank under. The Spaniard reached the dangling rope, and the negro hauled him aboard. The next minute the shark was swimming close by the felucca. The bullet had not been fatal. But it had saved the Spaniard's life.

He turned and shook a furious fist at the party on the shore. But the felucca was within easy rifle range. Lopez grasped a firearm for a moment, but a shot would have brought a volley upon him in return, and he knew it. He screamed to the negroes in Spanish, and the sails were shaken out, and the felucca glided out of the bay.

The glancing white sails flashed out to sea. Pablo Lopez was gone, leaving behind the treasure island and the treasure.

CHAPTER 16.

The Treasure!

"WELL done, Tom!" said Mr. Dodds, clapping the hero of the Shell upon the shoulder. "Well done, my lad! A splendid shot!"

"I couldn't let him be killed like that, sir," said Tom Merry. "I'm glad I hit the shark! It was lucky!"

"Quite wight, Tom Mewwy! The man's an awful wascal, but that would have been too howwid!" said Arthur Augustus. "Aftah all, he won't twouble us any more."

"And now for the treasure," said Lord Conway.

"Hurrah!"

The explorers turned back towards the mount.

It did not take them long to reach the spot where they had discovered Pablo Lopez.

They had come provided with digging implements, and the Spaniard had already exposed the buried chest.

The seamen were soon hard at work digging.

Round them the juniors gathered, with keen and eager faces. There was no doubt that they had discovered the exact spot where the treasure was hidden. As the chest was exposed more and more to view they could see that it was a strong, old-fashioned sea-chest of oak, clamped with iron, and evidently very heavy.

One man could never have carried it to that place and buried it.

Was the skeleton, whose grisly hand pointed to the spot, one of the men who had carried it? Had he fallen, to keep more surely the secret of the pirate—the pirate who had amassed the treasure, and had hidden it there, and was himself dust long since?

What tale of tragedy could those shadowy old trees have told?

Deeper and deeper grew the excavation.

"I think we can lift the chest out now," said Lord Conway.

Four strong seamen stood in the excavation, and with

their united efforts the chest was lifted from the depths and dragged out.

It was locked, and there was no sign of a key, and the oak and the iron clamps were still stout and strong, in spite of the time they had been in the earth.

"We will open it on the yacht," said Lord Conway.

Keen as the juniors were to see the contents of the treasure-chest, they raised no objection.

The chest was not easy to carry. Four of the party shouldered it, and then the pace was slow, and the bearers were changed several times before they reached the beach by Safe Anchorage.

The chest was deposited in the boat at last, and the explorers rowed off to the yacht. The treasure had been discovered, and there was nothing to delay them at Skeleton Island.

On the deck of the Silver Scud the chest lay amid the eager crowd while steam was got up, and the yacht moved out to sea.

"Bring an axe here," said Lord Conway.

Crash!

Crash!

The axe, wielded by Peter Raff, crashed upon the old chest.

Crash!

The lock flew in pieces, and the lid was loose.

Tom Merry raised it.

There was a buzz of deep-drawn breath as the lid of the chest was thrown back, and the interior exposed to view.

The juniors had expected to see masses of gold, piles of old coins, bags perhaps of diamonds and pearls. But nothing of the sort met their view. In the tray in the top of the chest was nothing but old moth-eaten sailor clothes, folded up.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Blessed if we haven't raided a giddy rag-and-bone merchant, instead of a pirate!" murmured Jack Blake.

Mr. Dodds quietly lifted out the tray. Then a shout burst from the juniors:

"Gold!"

"Gweat Scott! Gold!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Gold at last!"

Gold it was, undoubtedly—dulled and dim, but gold—real gold!

Gold in bars, and gold in ingots—gold in old coins crammed carelessly together—gold in every shape and form.

The gatherings of many a wild cruise, the plunder of many a hapless ship in the wild old days—the price of many a life!

Gold!

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "My only hat! It's real!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gold, and no mistake!" said Kerr. "And I wonder what that little lot is worth in cash?"

Lord Conway smiled.

"It's impossible to tell now," he said. "But certainly thousands of pounds—many thousands of pounds."

"Bai Jove!"

"And it's yours, sir," said Peter Raff, with a peculiar effort. "It's yours, Master Merry!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Nonsense!" he said. "It's not mine!"

"Ay, ay, sir! I gave you the chart!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"And I should have been killed by Pablo Lopez, gentlemen, if you hadn't come 'ere to find the treasure!" said Peter Raff. "You've saved my life! And I gave you the chart. Master Merry; and a sailorman's gift is a gift!"

"You will take your share, at all events," said Tom Merry. "We've already settled that, my sons. You will take a third of the treasure, and a third goes to myself, because you gave me the chart, and a third to the others here. That was what Lord Conway considered a fair arrangement."

"I think so," said Lord Conway. "Peter Raff cannot be left out, certainly, and Tom Merry, as owner of the chart and originator of the enterprise, is bound to take a third, at least. The remaining third goes to the rest of the party; but my share I shall divide among the crew of the yacht as prize money."

And there was a cheer from the seamen of the Silver Scud.

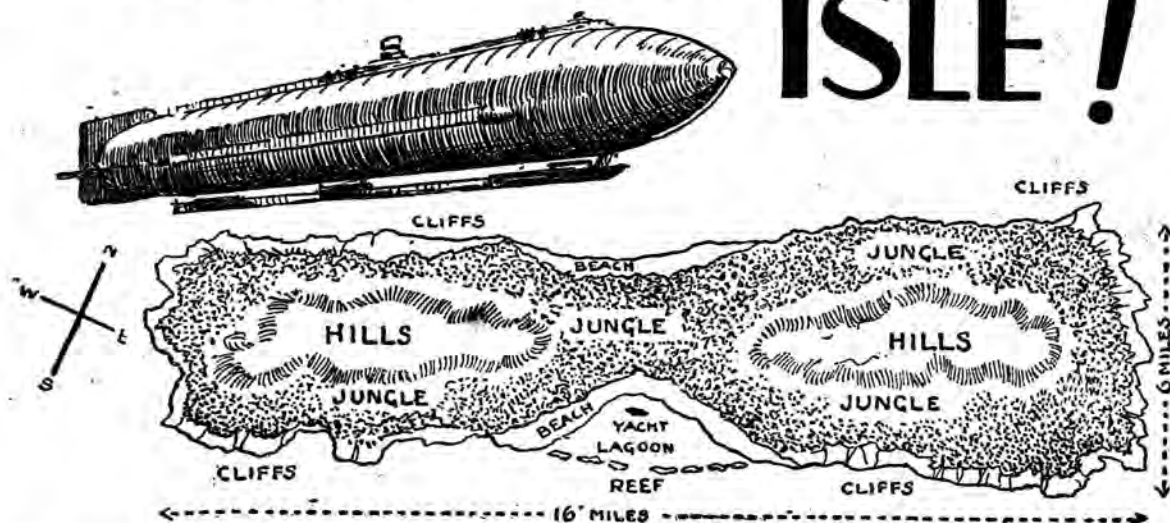
"Ay, ay, sir!" said Peter Raff. "But I gave Master Merry the chart."

"We'll leave it to the Church to decide," said Lord

(Continued on page 28.)

MORE FULL-OF-THRILLS CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND SERIAL.

TREASURE ISLE!



Doomed to the Flames!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

SECONDS were of vital importance in that dramatic situation on the placid lagoon of Tao-Tao Island. The Sky Wanderer, under perfect control, had come down over Mitchell Beverton's yacht, and her forward grapnels had secured a firm hold.

At first it had seemed a simple matter to transfer the "marooned" party from the yacht to the airship, but Doc Haynes had already shown his teeth. A challenging roar had sounded, and a shell had come screaming out from the beach. A gun, fired at such short range, could scarcely fail to find such a target as the bulky Sky Wanderer.

Nipper and the other boys, at Nelson Lee's urgent command, were racing up the airship's ladder. They knew what the danger was, and seldom in their lives had they moved so quickly. On the beach they could see blazing flares, and dozens of canoes were already sweeping out across the lagoon.

"You next, Beverton!" said Lee sharply. "Then you, Dorrie—"

"I'm on my way!" interrupted Lord Dorrimore. "We'll do it, old man!"

"It's that gun," said Nelson Lee anxiously. "I had no idea that Haynes possessed such a weapon. One direct hit would cripple us—"

Boooooom!

Another shell, small but deadly, screamed out from the beach. It passed within a couple of yards of Lee and Dorrie. By a miracle, it seemed, the shell scraped past the airship's ladder, missing the Corsair's funnel by a hairsbreadth.

"Up, Dorrie!" yelled Lee, his ears ringing. "We'll have no third chance!"

They leapt upon the ladder; Beverton and Umlosi were already on their way up. At a shout from Lee, a quick order was passed by Mr. Vickers to the control-room—an order for the grapnel-hooks to be released.

Nelson Lee, on the metal stairs, prayed that the airship would be able to get away before Doc Haynes could reload. The canoes, with their yelling savages, were a lesser menace. But the Tao-Tao blacks were armed with rifles, and they were firing wildly. The air was filled with the reports, and bullets whined all about.

An answering fire came from the airship's promenade decks, where members of the crew, and St. Frank's seniors, were stationed. Their fire was accurate and deadly. A hail of bullets was sent down into the Tao-Tao canoes, and mingled with the other sounds was the shrieking and shouting of the injured savages.

Boooooom-oooooom!

Nelson Lee, on the metal stairs, gazed shorewards, his

eardrums numbed. This time it had been no report of a discharging gun, but a terrific explosion. The detective saw a dazzling, blinding flare of flame, and he even caught a glimpse of debris shooting upwards and outwards from the beach.

"By Heaven!" muttered Lee, with heartfelt relief.

In a flash he knew what had happened. The gun had exploded! Improperly cleaned, no doubt, and imperfectly loaded, this disaster was the result. Haynes, in his desperate hurry, had overreached himself.

Shouts sounded above, mingling with the staccato rifle-fire from the canoes beneath. The airship's engines sprang into life, and she rose majestically.

"Guv'nor!" came a shout from the entrance-deck above.

"Are you and Dorrie all right?"

"Yes, young 'un," came Lee's reply.

"Then we're all aboard!" yelled Handforth exultantly.

"Hurrah! Everybody's safe, you chaps!"

Chubby Heath, of the Third, who was on the same deck near by, looked mutely at Juicy Lemon. In all this frantic excitement Handforth had not yet discovered that his younger brother had sacrificed his life so that the rest might live. At least, Willy had gone, and was either dead or in the cruel hands of the cannibals.

The airship was flying steadily now, and Nelson Lee, still on the ladder, and staring down, saw that mad panic had broken out on the beach. Men were running wildly in all directions, the canoes were returning to the shore. Two shacks had caught fire, and were blazing like immense torches. Disaster had overtaken Doc Haynes' camp, and it was impossible to know the full extent of the damage.

And the Sky Wanderer, unscathed, sailed serenely through the night sky.

It cannot be truthfully said that Willy Handforth was enjoying himself; yet it was an undeniable fact that he was playing the principal part in a drama which was taking place in a forest clearing, in mid-island.

The Third Form skipper, always full of assurance, generally liked to play a star part in anything which happened to be going. But in the present instance he had a shrewd idea that he was to be converted, at no remote time, into a cannibal supper. Interesting enough as a novelty, perhaps, but in the circumstances Willy would cheerfully have undertaken a lesser role.

In spite of the grimly significant preparations which were going on about him, however, he maintained his

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high spirits. For Willy always persisted in looking on the bright side. The odds were undoubtedly against him, but he considered that his position was not entirely hopeless.

For he knew that the Sky Wanderer had got clear—that she was sailing, undamaged, somewhere over the island. He had a general impression that Sir Hobart Manners had gone to the lagoon to rescue the juniors who were in Doc Haynes' hands. But while there was life there was hope—and he was still very much alive.

The airship would search for him later. He hoped it would not be "too late."

His immediate misgivings were undoubtedly justified; for the party of Tao-Tao blacks who had taken possession of him—at Haynes' invitation—were evidently bent upon an orgy of amusement.

Willy had been carried along jungle paths in the darkness, and at various points additional savages had been gathered in—until the party now numbered a full hundred. These blacks were in no way interested in Haynes' troubles on the southern beach. They even gave no thought to their chief, K'bili. The white youngster was in their hands, and they had permission to do as they liked with him; and their motto, evidently, was to make hay whilst the sun shone.

An irregular-shaped clearing in the jungle had been reached. It was a kind of grassy hollow, surrounded on all sides by dense trees, the branches of which were entangled with thick creepers.

Willy, guarded by two of the blacks, who never relaxed their grip on him, was a spectator of what followed. Fires were made in a wide ring, completely round the clearing.

Willy did not fail to notice that there was a scorched, blackened spot towards the centre—hinting that this was a recognised "sacred" scene. To give strength to this supposition, some of the blacks dragged a crudely constructed contrivance into the clearing's centre, placing it right over the blackened spot.

At this point Willy began to take part in the proceedings. A big wooden pole—part of the crude contrivance—was placed on the ground, and Willy was securely bound to it. He could not help noticing that the central part of this pole was blackened and burned, and he came to the inevitable conclusion that he was not the first victim. It was significant, too, that he was lashed to the pole, not by ropes, or creepers—but by lengths of ancient iron wire.

It would have been a waste of time to question his captors, for he could not speak their language, and they could not speak his; moreover, he had a pretty good idea of what was about to happen.

The savages were jabbering excitedly among themselves as they made their preparations. Two wooden structures, like trestles, had been fixed in position. At the top the cross-pieces formed an open "Y"; and Willy's pole, with Willy attached, was lifted on high and the ends dropped into the "Y" slots.

The youngster had not failed to observe that at one end of the pole there was a wooden wheel with a grooved rim. This wheel projected beyond the support, and lower down, attached to the same support, there was a larger wheel, made out of a section of a round tree. To this wheel was a handle, and its rim was also grooved. When a rope was passed from the lower wheel to the upper one, Willy knew just what he was in for.

This crazy contrivance, in fact, was a spit.

One of the blacks tested it, turning the handle, and Willy, bound helplessly to the pole, revolved round and round.

"Looks like being a slow business, blow it!" muttered Willy. "The slower the better, perhaps—within limits."

As the pole revolved, he saw, at first, the blackened ground beneath, and then the sky above. During those brief seconds he searched the sky anxiously, for he never gave up hope.

He was under no misapprehension; he knew that he was to be roasted alive. And, after that—But Willy did not allow his thoughts to dwell on what might follow. He was not interested in cannibal feasts, although he was to be the sole item of the menu. What he was interested in was the possibility of escape.

For once his own ingenuity would not serve him. Slippery as he was, he could do nothing now. The blacks were settling down into a kind of slow dance. They did not start it deliberately, but seemed to drift into it.

One after another would join in, and presently dozens were circling round the outer ring of fires, dancing in a kind of erratic walk, their bodies bent, their arms occasionally outflung. More of the blacks were piling fuel on to the fires, and the flames were now leaping up amid a smother of sparks and smoke.

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More of the blacks joined in, and gradually, almost imperceptibly, the pace increased. As it did so, the movements and gesticulations of the cannibals became more and more grotesque—more wild. They were working themselves, by slow degrees, into the necessary condition of fanatical frenzy. From a spectator's point of view, it was a unique sight. But Willy Handforth was really the only spectator, and he wasn't at all happy about it.

Two of the blacks were operating the crazy handle now, and they kept it up continuously. Round and round went Willy on the spit, until he became dizzy and sick. Yet, strangely enough, no fire had been placed beneath him. He had expected to be dead before now.

But soon he understood the devilish cruelty of this hideous slow torture. With ever-increasing frenzy, the blacks danced on, and now they were breaking their previous silence, and chanting a wild, droning song.

It increased in volume, in frenzy, and as the circular movement went on one of the blacks suddenly made a grab at a fire as he passed, and secured a burning brand.

And with a wild dash he reached the clearing's centre and flung the burning brand beneath the revolving spit. A shower of sparks came up, many of them floating round Willy's head. But the flames, mercifully, died down.

Then another of the blacks snatched a brand and added it to the first. Then another and another.

"My only sainted aunt!" gaped Willy. "So that's the game!"

In spite of his sterling pluck, he was horrified. The ghastliness of his predicament sickened him. He knew that the fire beneath him was to be built up gradually, until it was a roaring, white-hot mass. Already the hastily flung brands were forming themselves into a whole. Flames were licking hungrily, and smoke was choking him. And overhead the spit turned and turned.

Touch and Go!

"HANDFORTH, you must be brave," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Now that the excitement is over you are naturally overwhelmed by the news concerning your brother."

Edward Oswald Handforth was white-faced.

"But can't we do anything, sir?" he asked hoarsely.

"Willy was given to the savages by Haynes, and that can mean only one thing," replied Lee. "There may yet be time to search."

"Haynes will hang for it!" broke in Handforth fiercely. "The smooth-tongued devil! Sometimes I thought he wasn't half so black as he had been painted. What a fool I was! He gave Willy into the hands of the blacks, knowing that they would sacrifice him—murder him—"

Mr. Vickers came running up.

"There's a big glare in the jungle, sir," he reported. "Looks as though it might be something."

"I'll come!" said Lee briefly.

Very few minutes had elapsed since that dramatic scene over the lagoon. The Sky Wanderer had gained height, her grappels had been telescoped, and her ladder drawn up. She was now sailing under perfect control, cruising with three-quarter-throttled engines over the island.

When Nelson Lee went out upon the promenade deck, Handforth was with him. Other boys were there in dozens—silent, anxious, breathlessly excited.

There were two lurid glares visible—one on the beach near the lagoon, where the burning shacks were making a great blaze; and the other towards the island's centre, where the jungle was dense. A ring of flame could be seen in this latter place, caused, undoubtedly, by a circle of bonfires in a great clearing.

Nelson Lee did not fail to appreciate the significance of such a sight. The spot was only a mile or so from the northern beach, where Willy Handforth had been captured.

With increased speed, the Sky Wanderer soared overhead; and Nelson Lee was leaning over the chromium rail with powerful binoculars to his eyes. One of the officers, in answer to Handforth's frantic appeals, had lent his binoculars to the burly Removite.

"See anything?" muttered Church, who was near by.

"Don't let it get you down, Handy—"

"It's Willy!" panted Handforth, with a groan. "Oh, my goodness! I don't know whether he's alive or dead! But he's there, tied to a long pole of some sort. Can you see, sir?"

"Yes, Handforth, I see," replied Lee grimly.

He saw with startling, horrifying clarity. The powerful glasses brought that dreadful scene almost in front of Lee's eyes—like a "close-up" on a cinematograph screen. He saw the ring of frenzied blacks. He saw the crude spit in the centre of the clearing, and the fire which was gradually being built under the bound, helpless figure on the horizontal pole, which was revolving on its high trestles.



"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Willy Handforth as the dancing and yelling savages flung flaming brands into the fire beneath him. "So that's the game!" Already flames were licking up towards him, and smoke was choking him. And continuously he turned and turned on the spit!

"Is there any hope, sir?" asked Handforth, deadly calm. "There might be," replied Lee. "As yet the fire is low—it is being built with slow, diabolical cunning. Dorrie!"

"Right here," said his lordship promptly. "Dash and get me a long length of rope, and see that there's a grapple hook fixed to the end of it," said Lee crisply. "Vickers will give you the hook—a small one with four prongs. Tell Manners to take the airship lower and to cruise right over the clearing at slow speed."

Without a word, Lord Dorrimore sped off, running like a hare. Nelson Lee's eyes were glittering; for he had seen the open ends of the trestles. He knew that the pole was lying loosely in the "Y" pieces. And there was that wheel at the end, too—a point of paramount importance.

Lee realised that it would be madness to fly overhead and send a riddling rifle fire into the clearing—for, by so doing, it was likely enough that Willy himself would be hit. To effect a landing was impossible. There was one chance, and one only.

Within a few seconds, it seemed, Lord Dorrimore had returned with the necessary length of rope, and to the end of it was attached a slim, light-weight steel grapple of great strength. It was a kind of anchor, with four prongs.

"Stay here, Handforth—and you other boys, too!" commanded Lee. "I'll do the best I can—but I must work alone."

With fleet steps he raced down the stairs to the lower entrance deck. This was now open, and Lee leaned far over the guarding rail. The airship, at the moment, was flying low, and approaching the clearing with its circle of blazing fires. The searchlight swung down, sending its pitiless, glaring light full upon the scene.

The effect was instantaneous, for the blacks ceased their frantic dance and fled in all directions. The sudden advent of the Sky Wanderer changed their fanatical frenzy to panic.

Swissssss! Unerringly the rope shot down from Nelson Lee's hand. The distance was not great, for the airship had dropped lower and lower. Everything depended upon this first cast. Nelson Lee was as expert with the lasso as any Western cowboy—and his skill was now proved. For the grapple hook shot clean down, swung below the wheel at the end of the horizontal pole, and the rope slithered just where Lee had intended. With a sharp jerk he pulled it tight—and the prongs of the grapple caught firmly in the wooden wheel.

Like lightning Lee hitched the rope round a strong knob of the guard rail, and as he did so he held his breath.

Would the rope hold? Would the steel prongs retain their grip? The airship drifted on, and with a twang the rope tautened, and the pole lifted clean out of its sockets and swung free.

It was the crucial moment.

The prongs, deeply embedded in the wheel, retained their hold. The pole swung down now perpendicularly, and at a shout from Lee men came to his assistance. Lord Dorrimore, Vickers, Beverton. They hauled the rope in.

"Gently—gently!" urged Lee. "Any jerk might be fatal. Keep it up, Dorrie."

He climbed over the rail, swung himself down, clinging precariously. And when at length the wheel came within his reach he flung an arm round the pole, holding it securely. Above, the others were keeping the rope taut. Lord Dorrimore, as nimble as a monkey, climbed down to Lee's help. Together they eased the pole up, and eager hands, reaching down, obtained an additional grip.

"All serene, sir!" came Willy's cheery voice. "I thought you'd turn up before it was too late."

The Surrender!

WILLY HANDFORTH was saved, and, although he was game enough to carry on, Lee saw that he was fit only for the airship's private hospital.

As soon as the crude iron wires had been unfastened Willy was lifted clear. He asked those about him not to fuss, and he declared that he was quite capable of walking.

But when he attempted to stand his knees sagged and he swayed giddily. It was his spirit, not his body, which was undamaged. The wire had cut viciously into his skin, making ugly gashes, and in many parts of his body he was badly blistered. Without delay his wounds were attended to by Lee himself, and he was put to bed.

Meanwhile, high jubilation ran rife throughout the airship. Willy by his plucky act had saved them all, and now Willy himself was safe, too. The Sky Wanderer was proudly cruising in the air far beyond the reach of Doc Haynes and his modern buccaneers.

"Well, sir?" asked Handforth, when Lee's medical duties were over.

"You can go in and see him now," replied the detective kindly. "You've had rather a bad spell—eh, Handforth?"

"I can't tell you what I feel, sir," replied Handforth huskily. "It was touch-and-go for a minute, wasn't it?"

"Another two minutes of that ordeal, and his burns would have been gravely serious—if not fatal."

"Will he be all right now?"

"He'll have to remain in bed for some days; but within a week, I fancy, he will be as active as ever," replied Lee confidently.

"By George, I'd like to thank you for what you did, sir!" said Handforth. "But I can't think of the right words. The way you yanked him up was marvellous, and I—I want to say—"

"Go in and see your brother, Handforth," interrupted Lee gently.

Handforth gulped and went in. He found Willy lying in bed, swathed in bandages.

"What-ho, Ted!" said Willy sleepily. "You might tell Chubby and Juicy that I'm all right."

"You don't look all right, kid," said Handforth with concern.

"Kid yourself!" retorted Willy. "Mr. Lee is dotty; he says I shall have to remain here for a week, but I'll bet you a level two bob that I'm out in three days."

"I wouldn't bet on a thing like that, you young ass!" growled Handforth. "I wouldn't bet at all, if it comes to that. H'm! I don't think you're so very bad now I come to look at you. This is what comes of being so reckless!"

The boys, rather to their disappointment, were sent straight to bed; but, as Nelson Lee pointed out—and he was their headmaster—it was long past their usual hour, and there was to be no further excitement. The adventure, in fact, was over; Doc Haynes had been foiled, and the Sky Wanderer, with her full passenger list, was safe and sound.

"But what about the treasure, sir?" Nipper had asked.

"The treasure is Mr. Beverton's concern, not ours," replied Nelson Lee. "Don't forget that we are on an educational tour, not on a treasure-hunt."

And with that the boys had to go to bed. Many of them were only too glad to do so—particularly those like Nipper, who had been prisoners in Haynes' hands. They had had little chance of sound sleep in soft beds for many days.

"I tremble to think of the narrow escapes our ship has had since darkness fell," said Sir Hobart Manners gravely. "It is little short of a miracle that we are in the air intact, and in no further danger. I propose that we leave at once, continuing on our original course—the course we were on when we sighted this infernal island."

There was an informal conference in the luxurious lounge. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Mitchell Beverton were present, in addition to one or two of the airship's officers and Beverton's own men.

"But if you do that, Sir Hobart, what of my yacht?" asked Beverton. "I realise that I am deeply in your debt, and I regret the dangers you have faced on my account. But I am alarmed at the thought of leaving the island now, after we have gained so much success. Practically my entire fortune has been invested in the yacht and the treasure-hunting expedition—"

"And you naturally dislike giving it all up?" interrupted Nelson Lee dryly.

"So do I," growled Dorrie. "Can't we help him to bag that treasure? What's the hurry?"

"Well, there's no particular hurry for to-night," said Lee, glancing at Sir Hobart. "I propose, therefore, that the airship should cruise round the island until dawn; then, perhaps, we shall be in a better position to see how things stand."

"That's what I call good talk!" said Dorrie heartily. "Hang it, we're top dogs now! Haynes can't hurt us; yet we can bomb him into complete submission if we like!"

"Always eager to take the warpath, Dorrie—eh?" chuckled Lee.

"I don't know about that, but I'm darned reluctant to clear off and leave Haynes more or less unpunished," replied his lordship. "That's how you feel, too, isn't it? All right,

then. We'll potter around until the mornin' an' see what daylight brings."

They took a much-needed rest, and during the remaining hours of darkness the Sky Wanderer, with close-throated engines, cruised over Tao-Tao Island at a height of 5,000 feet.

It was full daylight, and the tropic sun was shining brilliantly, when Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore re-appeared. They were resplendent in clean suits; they had shaved, and in every respect they were their old selves.

The decks were by no means empty, for Beverton was already up, talking with Captain Bridges and his other officers. Many of the schoolboys had turned out early, too, for with the coming of daylight they sensed there would be some fresh activity. Far below, Tao-Tao Island was a vivid splash of green and brown and white surrounded by the eternal blue of the Pacific.

"Looks a peaceful enough spot," commented Dorrie.

Beverton came forward.

"Haynes and his men are signalling to us," he said. "They've been doing it for some little time. See?"

Far below, on the white sands of the southern beach, tiny specks were visible. They were human beings—and they sprang into prominence when seen through binoculars. There were no blacks within sight.

"Safe enough to take her lower down, isn't it?" asked Dorrie. "They can't do us any mischief now. Let's get down to within three or four hundred feet."

Nelson Lee agreed, and men were told off to stand ready at the rails with rifles. They were armed with gas bombs, too. Lower and lower dropped the Sky Wanderer, swinging round, so that she drifted leisurely right over the lagoon, towards the beach.

There were only eight men on the sands, and they were all bare to the waists. In the forefront was the mahogany-faced Bill Button, and he was waving frantically. Near at hand were the charred remains of the burnt-out shacks. With her engines scarcely ticking over, the Sky Wanderer dropped lower and nearer.

"Airship ahoy!" came Bill Button's voice, clear and distinct. "No need to train them guns on us. Can't you see we're unarmed? We surrender!"

"Another trick of the genial Haynes?" murmured Dorrie, glancing at Nelson Lee.

"Does Haynes surrender?" hailed Lee. "Why isn't he here?"

"He ain't fur off, sir—but he's past surrenderin'!" shouted Bill Button. "He's dead. Ay, so's that swab, Red Harker. So's the black devil, K'bili. Four of 'em altogether."

"Do you expect us to take your word for that, Button?" shouted Mitchell Beverton.

"I ain't askin' ye to, cap'n!" yelled Bill. "Ye've got eyes, ain't ye? Well, look where! Best tell them boys to turn their heads, because it isn't a pleasant sight."

He and some of the other men pulled at a heavy tarpaulin which was spread over a part of the beach. Nelson Lee, who had glasses to his eyes, caught his breath in sharply. One look at what was revealed was enough. Corpses, mangled, shattered—

"Cover them up!" shouted Lee sharply.

"We're finished, gents!" shouted Button. "If Mr. Beverton will take us back, we'll serve him loyal, and we'll return to our duties like good sailormen."

"He means it!" exclaimed Beverton tensely. "Button was never a scoundrel, Mr. Lee. This mutiny is over—the men are eager to serve me again. I'm not vindictive, and I know that Haynes was the ringleader. I'll forgive the others."

Nelson Lee was a shrewd judge of character, and he knew that the men on the sands below were in deadly earnest.

At Nelson Lee's suggestion the airship made a landing on the beach. Sir Hobart was reluctant to do so at first, but he relied upon Nelson Lee's judgment. The grapnel arms telescoped downwards, and soon the Sky Wanderer was rigidly at rest.

Fully armed, Lee, Dorrie, Beverton, and several others went down the ladder. Bill Button and his men came forward to meet them. They came with empty hands—hands upraised in complete token of surrender. Their faces were eager, hopeful.

"It's up to you, Mr. Beverton, sir," said Bill earnestly. "We're asking you to take us back, and to let bygones be bygones."

"You're asking a lot, Button!" said Beverton grimly. "While Haynes was alive you were willing enough to serve him—"

"No, sir," interrupted one of the other men. "We daren't do nothing else but serve him. If we had jibbed he would ha' killed us like he'd kill a rat. I'll admit we was mad when we mutinied, but arter that we was all led away by Haynes."

"That's very possibly true," said Beverton. "Haynes was

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masterful, and he got you all under his thumb. How did he die?"

"He was killed by the explosion, chief," said Bill Button. "Haynes was firing that gun, and the shell jammed, or somethin'. Anyways, it flew to pieces—and Haynes went to pieces with it."

He pointed to the tarpaulin, with its grim shapes beneath. "Red Harker's under there, too—and K'bil," he said. "Blown sky high, they was, when the gun busted."

"A fitting retribution for the rascal," said Nelson Lee. "He died as he was in the very act of attempting to destroy a large number of innocent lives. Well, Beverton, it seems that your troubles are over. You'd better take these men back. After what has happened, I do not doubt that they will serve you faithfully."

It was an unexpected development, and Beverton, as much as anybody else, was delighted. The Corsair's men, free of Haynes' influence, were childishly frantic in their eagerness to serve their old employer. Very soon the camp was reorganised, with Mitchell Beverton in full command.

"We leave Tao-Tao Island, then, at peace," said Sir Hobart Manners. "We can continue our cruise, and let these treasure-hunters carry on with their original job."

Nelson Lee looked at Lord Dorrinore with twinkling eyes. "We'll make just one experiment, shall we, Dorrie?" he said. "After all, there's an undeniable lure about age-old buried Spanish treasure."

The Treasure of Don Manuel!

THERE was great excitement amongst the boys when Nelson Lee's decision was known. All dangers were at an end, and the prospect of a real treasure hunt was fascinating.

Nelson Lee did not overlook the fact that there might be danger from the blacks; so when he led a strong body of

explosion and a terrific cascade of boulders. Yet so cunningly had the charges been placed that the destruction was limited to a restricted area.

"If the natives had been thinkin' of comin' back that explosion will scare 'em off again!" grinned Dorrie. "H'm! What have we here?"

"The crocodile hole, fully exposed, so that we can get at it with ease," replied Lee.

After the dust and smoke had cleared, they could see the shaft in the rocks above, which led to that outlet in the upper canyon. But the mudhole was now fully exposed to the daylight; the blasted rocks had fallen away, filling the river bed and making a dry approach. If there had been any crocodiles they had made themselves scarce.

"I propose now that we carefully drag the thick mud at the bottom of this noisome hole," said Nelson Lee. "Yes, Mr. Beverton, my theory is that the treasure is here."

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated the explorer, his eyes gleaming.

"If we fail, then you must continue your random digging—and I wish you luck," replied Lee. "This crocodile hole is the only definite spot indicated by the arrows."

"Definite" is hardly the word, Mr. Lee," objected Beverton. "It seems to me that the crocodile hole is only vaguely indicated. True, the arrows pointed to the loose rock in the canyon—"

"And when the loose rock was moved, we found ourselves in a shaft which led straight down into this mud-hole," said Lee. "The shaft led nowhere else. How do we know that it was a mud-hole in the old pirate days? At that time it might well have been a dry pit. Since then the river possibly took a new course, and in the course of years the water seeped through the cliff, and filled the hole with mud, after which the crocodiles claimed it as their nest. That, at least, is how I read it."

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men into Death Valley, he saw that they were fully armed. Other men were closely guarding the airship. Yet there was little enough danger from the natives, for the events of the night had thoroughly scared them, and they had betaken themselves into the deeper recesses of the jungle. Later on, perhaps, they would again show themselves, but for some days the white men would have everything their own way.

"I have no intention of staying, Beverton," said Nelson Lee crisply. "I'm just going to make this one experiment—because I'm curious. If we're lucky, all well and good—you'll be able to set sail from the island without delay, and thus you'll avoid any encounter with the blacks."

"I don't understand you," said the explorer, staring.

"Yet you must remember the significant arrows we saw in the rock canyon—before we made our raid on the yacht?" asked Lee. "The arrows were undoubtedly engraved in the rock by the pirates who concealed the treasure of Don Manuel Alvarez."

"But they pointed to the shaft which led down through the rock into the crocodile hole!" protested Beverton. "The chart indicates Death Valley as the hiding-place."

"With an arrow pointing straight across the valley—to the opening high in the cliff, where the engraved arrows commence," said Lee, nodding. "Those old-timers were careful, Beverton. They did not wish to put their indications too plainly. Anyhow, it's worth the trial."

They had arrived at the river bank, at the extremity of the valley, where on one side rocks rose almost sheer, straight from the river. Under the bank there was the hidden hole through which the crocodiles passed into their nest.

Acting under Lee's orders, engineers from the airship drilled into the rock, and strong charges of dynamite were prepared. By midday everything was ready.

The dynamite was discharged by electrical contact, and the entire face of the rock cliff fell away, amid a thunderous

"And, by gosh, it is a clever theory!" said Beverton breathlessly. "The more you elaborate, Mr. Lee, the more convinced I am that you are right."

His men, the ex-mutineers, worked like slaves. They were all eagerness to show their loyalty to him now. And while Lee and Dorrie went back to the airship for a meal the work continued. Hastily contrived drags were brought into operation, to say nothing of dredging-scoops, by means of which the mud was cleared out of the hole.

It was towards evening that the excitement rose to fever pitch. As there was now virtually no danger Lee permitted the boys to come ashore, and they gathered round the scene of activity in breathless groups. Something solid had been found in the thick mud which still remained in the foul pool. It might prove to be nothing but a rock, but there was always the chance.

"A chest—a great sea-chest!" went up a sudden yell from one of the men.

A great object, oblong in shape and over six feet long, had been brought to the surface. A dozen men, smothered with mud, dragged it free, using great hooks and chains. Other men were ready with water from the neighbouring river, and when this was dashed against the find, the mud fell away, revealing a crumbling chest, heavily bound with copper.

It was a wonder it had not fallen to pieces whilst being salvaged, for no sooner were picks brought into use than the sudden lid crumpled, and one of the sides fell away in mouldering pieces.

"Great Scott! The treasure!" yelled Handforth.

"Hurrah!"

"It's found!"

"And Mr. Lee did it!" yelled Nipper.

"I'm not likely to forget it!" said Beverton fervently.

"We owe everything to Mr. Lee!"

They crowded round in a wildly excited mob—men and boys. Nelson Lee was the only cool person present; even Dorrie was infected by the sudden fever, and the St. Frank's fellows were very excited.

Nipper and Dorrie and Handforth were lucky enough to be close at hand, and they saw heavy piles of dull, black discs falling from the shattered chest. Many of them were stuck together with age and filth; but there could be no doubting their nature.

"Dobloons!" gurgled Handforth. "By George! Look here, you chaps!—Pieces-of-eight!"

"Dobloons, yes," said Dorrie; "but not pieces-of-eight, young 'un. These coins are pure gold—an' pieces-of-eight were silver coins. Ye gods and little fishes, there's an immense pile of gold here!"

"Jewels, too, sir!" said one of the men, diving his hands into that horrid looking mass. "If these ain't rubies I'm a Tao-Tao black!"

With great care the treasure was removed, washed, and sorted out. In this work Bill Button and his companions were not allowed to take part. Beverton felt that they could not be trusted—yet, in all truth, the men were glad enough to be taken back. They were sick of lawlessness.

The treasure proved to be of greater value, even than Beverton had expected. There were rubies and emeralds and diamonds of immense size. For centuries they had been lying hidden at the bottom of that foul mud-hole, but they had come to no harm.

"I can scarcely credit it," said Beverton, during the evening. "Yesterday Haynes was in full command of the island, and we were in great danger. To-day we are the masters, and the treasure is found."

"It's a rummy world!" said Dorrie, as he lit a cigarette.

"To you gentlemen I owe everything, and I think you will agree I owe most to Mr. Lee," continued Beverton.

"This treasure, I am assured, is worth close upon a million

pounds. It is my intention to make a present to every officer and man on the airship—yes, and to every boy."

"Leave me out, please!" begged Dorrie. "I've got a lot more money than I know what to do with as it is. It's huntin' the treasure which attracts me—not the dividin' of it after it's found."

One more night was spent on that lonely Pacific island; then, the next day, when steam was up in the Corsair's boilers, the yacht took her departure. It was a tricky business getting through the break in the reef, but Bill Button had sailed the seas for years with Doc Haynes, and he was familiar with the passage. He piloted the Corsair safely out into the open sea.

And as she steamed off, so the triumphant Sky Wanderer dipped in salute overhead, and away she went on her interrupted travels.

This time she headed for home—back to St. Frank's, for Nelson Lee rightly considered that the boys had had enough excitement to last them for a long, long while.

Yet how soon it was to be before excitement of another and totally different kind cropped up!

THE END.

Don't forget, chums, a gripping new serial of the boys of St. Frank's starts in next week's ripping number. Make sure you travel with Nipper & Co. to

"GHOST RIVER RANCH!"
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HIDDEN GOLD!

(Continued from page 22.)

Conway, with a smile, turning to Mr. Dodds. "What do you say, Mr. Dodds?"

Peter Raff touched his forelock. He had all an old sailor-man's respect for a parson.

"Ay ay, sir! I'm willing to leave it to the gentleman," he said.

"Then I endorse Lord Conway's decision," said Mr. Dodds. "I think it is the fairest arrangement possible. And there is certainly sufficient gold here to make everyone concerned quite rich."

"Bai Jove! It's wippin'!"

"Hurrah!"

Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed. He grasped Figgins by the arm.

"Figgy, old man! I say, Figgy!"

"Hallo!"

"What a feed we'll stand when we get back to St. Jim's!" Figgins roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Trust you to think of that, Fatty!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I suppose we ought to celebrate finding a treasure of this sort," said Fatty Wynn warmly. "When we get

back to St. Jim's, we'll stand a regular, glorious feed to all the fellows. That's what I think."

"Yaas, wathah! I weward Fatty Wynn's idea as weally wippin', undah the cires."

"Only we haven't got the treasure to England yet, gentlemen," said Peter Raff.

"Nothing but foul weather can stop us now," said Lord Conway. "It's a straight run home, my man."

"I was thinking of Pablo Lopez, sir."

"He cannot harm us now."

But a shadow of doubt remained upon the sailorman's sunburnt face. Wounded, defeated, put to flight, the Spaniard still filled him with dread and uneasiness.

"There goes the treasure island," Kangaroo exclaimed. The juniors turned to take their last look at the treasure island.

The lonely isle was sinking into the blue Pacific behind them. The shelving sands, the dark belt of trees, the curling waters on the barrier reefs sank from sight, and the wooded hill sank last into the shining waters.

Against the dark bill, ere it vanished, Tom Merry caught for a moment a glimpse of the white sail of the felucca. Felucca and island vanished astern, and the Silver Scud throbbed on over the vast Pacific, homeward bound.

THE END.

But Tom Merry & Co. have many more thrilling adventures ere they reach St. Jim's again. Watch out for next week's star story, "THE ST. JIM'S CASTAWAYS!"

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