"THE TEN TALONS OF TAAZ!" SMASHING NEW ST. FRANK'S SERIES JUST STARTED.

The GEM

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JOIN UP BELOW WITH THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S FOR—

THE MYSTERY

A ship in distress off the rocky coast of Devon—an almost unreadable message for help in a bottle found in the sea. . . . These dramatic events set Tom Merry & Co. on the trail of a mystery of the sea—a mystery that adds many thrills to their holiday in Devon!

CHAPTER 1.

Merely a Misunderstanding!

FIGGINS of the New House came striding across the old quad at St. Jim's with his long strides.

From the doorway of the School House three juniors watched him coming, and they exchanged a cheery grin.

The three were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell Form.

"Behold, he cometh!" murmured Monty Lowther. "He cometh alone into the hands of the giddy foe!"

Tom Merry held up a warning hand.

"Wait till he gets inside the House," he said.

"He mayn't be coming in."

"Oh, he's coming in!" said Tom Merry. "Pratt said that Figgins had something to say to me—he's coming over looking for trouble, you know. My suggestion is that he shall find some."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep back behind the door and collar him as soon as he comes in," said Tom Merry. "We'll rush him upstairs and bump him into the study and anoint his chivvy with ink."

The juniors of the School House and New House were always ready to rag each other, for a keen rivalry existed between the two Houses.

Figgins unsuspiciously came up the steps of the School House.

He walked cheerfully into the House, and as he did so three forms rushed forth, and Figgins went rolling on the floor with the Terrible Three rolling over him.

"Oh!" roared Figgins. "Yaroooh!"

"Collar him!"

"Yow! Ow! Yoowp! What the—— Gerrup!"

Figgins was whisked off the floor, and the Terrible Three carried him to the stairs with a rush. One of Figgins' arms and one of his legs trailed on the floor, but the rest of him was secured in the grasp of the Terrible Three as they rushed him along.

"Yarooh!" roared Figgins. "Leggo! Chuck it! What's the row? I came over to see Tom Merry——"

"Well, here I am," grinned Tom Merry. "Bring him along. Don't make a row. I believe Railton's in his study."

"What-ho!"

"Yow! Look here——"

Figgins was bundled up the stairs, struggling violently. Needless to say, it was not done without considerable noise.

A study door opened in the passage below, and Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, looked out. But

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—A ROLLICKING, THRILLING HOLIDAY IN GLORIOUS DEVON.

OF THE SEA!

by MARTIN CLIFFORD

the juniors had passed the bend of the staircase and were out of sight, and the Housemaster went back into his study.

"All together!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yow! Leggo!"

"Rats!"

With a combined effort the Terrible Three got their prisoner up the last stair and brought him with a rush into the upper passage.

There Figgins resisted desperately. With his collar torn out, and his hair wildly ruffled, and his jacket split up the back, and his trousers covered in dust, the hero of the New House struggled, but in vain.

He was whirled along the passage towards the Shell quarters.

Bump!

Outside Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage Figgins dragged his captors down in a whirling heap, and four juniors rolled over and over on the linoleum.

"Hold him!" panted Tom Merry. "Don't let the bounder get away!"

"Yow!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed a voice, as the door of Study No. 6 opened. "What is all this feahful wow?"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. He adjusted his eyeglass in his right eye and gazed at the wild scene in astonishment.

"Bai Jove! What a set of howwid wuffians!"

"Lend a hand!" exclaimed Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs!"

"What's the row there?" sang out Jack Blake's voice from within the study.

"Rescue, School House!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! That altahs the case, of course!"

D'Arcy rushed to the aid of the Terrible Three. Blake came out of the study and lent a hand, too. Then Figgins' desperate resistance was over. In the hands of five juniors he was quite powerless, and he could do nothing but gasp helplessly.

"Bring him along to the study," panted Tom Merry.

"What's the row?" demanded Blake.

"He came over looking for trouble—and he's found it."

"I—I—I——" gasped Figgins. "I—I came——"

"Yank him along!"

Figgins was rushed into the Shell passage, and into Tom Merry's study. There he was bumped on the floor. Tom Merry slammed the door shut, and the five School House fellows stood in a ring round the dusty and dishevelled Figgins, chuckling.

"Caught!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you silly chumps!" roared Figgins. "You dangerous asses! What have you piled on me like this for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We heard that you were coming over, and we were ready," explained Tom Merry. "Here's the trouble you were looking for. We're going to anoint you with ink——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you know, that's a wippin' ideah! Of course, you will be careful of Figgins' linen. There is no excuse for damagin' a fellow's linen."

"You fatheads!" roared Figgins. "I didn't come over to look for trouble!"

"What did you come over for, then?" demanded Tom

Merry. "Pratt distinctly told me that you were coming to speak to me."

"So I was, idiot!"

"Well, then——"

"Well, ass, can't you see, chump, that I might come over and speak to you without looking for trouble, idiot?" bellowed Figgins. "I came over to ask you to come with me to my uncle's place in Devonshire."

"Oh!"

"I've got an exeat from the Head, and he says I can take a few chums with me. I was going to ask Lowther and Manners, and D'Arcy and Blake as well——"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

The School House fellows all said that they were very sorry, but as they were roaring with laughter all the time it could not be supposed that their sorrow was very deep.

Figgins grunted, rose to his feet, and wrestled with his collar. But it was impossible to make that collar look like a collar again.

"Well," he growled, "are you coming?"

"Invitation still open?" grinned Monty Lowther.

Figgins grinned, too.

"Yes," he said. "Will you all come?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Jolly pleased, old boy," said Tom Merry. "We'll give you many little treats like this while we're staying with you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kerr and Fatty Wynn are coming," said Figgins. "It will be jolly, having the lot of us there. Cliff Lodge, my uncle's place, is right on the coombs, near Clovelly. Jolly good swimming, bathing, boating, and so on. You're all coming?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Yaas! And undah the circs, I think we ought weally to apologise to Figgins for this wuff weception of him——"

"Oh, good!" said Figgins. "Then I'll go and get tidy, if you utter idiots have finished."

"Quite finished, thank you," said Monty Lowther.

"I weally considah——"

But Figgins departed without waiting to hear what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy "weally considahed."

CHAPTER 2.
Down in Devon!

"BAI Jove! It's blowin'!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark.

Eight St. Jim's juniors were tramping along a rough and rocky road. Figgins' holiday party had lost no time in packing and departing from St. Jim's for London, where they had taken the train for the West Country. The long journey had been uneventful, and now they were on the last stage of it—the walk from the station over a cliff road to Cliff Lodge.

Away on their left the juniors could hear the boom of the sea—the wide Atlantic, stretching out endless to the west. But they could not see it, save for an occasional gleam of foam. Night had fallen on the wild, beautiful coast of West Devon.

The storm had been rising all the afternoon, and as night came on it blew harder and harder. Deep down in the coombs the juniors could hear the waves thundering over the pebble ridges. Trees, black and grim, surrounded them with dark shadows.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had, in the first place, suggested calling a taxi. The suggestion had been received with a yell of laughter by the other fellows, and even the big, stolid Devon man sent to meet them at the station allowed his iron visage to relax into a grin.

D'Arcy understood by this time that taxis would not have been much use on a road like this.

The juniors had to walk, and their bags were to be sent on afterwards. It was the only way.

"Bai Jove! It's blowin'!"

The remark was not really needed. The booming of the sea, the crackling of the trees, the rush of the wind in their faces sufficiently indicated to the juniors that it was blowing.

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther. "Have you really noticed that at last?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"There's going to be a storm to-night," said Tom Merry. "Pity the chaps who get driven on the shore down there. I say, Figgins, how much farther is it to your uncle's house?"

"Not very much farther, I think," said Figgins. "Blessed if I can tell in the dark. We get half-way down the street in Clovelly, and then turn."

"Bai Jove! Are we neah Clovelly?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes."

"I suppose we can get a taxi there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause for wibald laughtah, Figgay. I am gettin' a twifle tired, and I should weally like to get into a taxicab."

"I think you'd like to get out of it again, if it started down the High Street of Clovelly," chuckled Figgins. "Here we are at last."

The wind roared at the juniors as they reached the top of the main street of Clovelly. Lights twinkled from some of the old-fashioned houses in the quaint old street. Arthur Augustus halted, panting.

"Tom Mewwy, I am quite fatigued, and awfully blown about. I insist upon callin' a cab."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I insist——"

"Look at the street, you ass!" shrieked Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"

"A cab couldn't get down there, unless it could play hop-scotch. Come on!"

"Bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus, after turning his eyeglass round him, had to admit that a cab, even if there had been one obtainable, would hardly have been a safe conveyance. For the High Street of Clovelly was a path that proceeded in a series of huge steps down the face of the cliff to the sea.

"Bai Jove! This is vewy wemarkable," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this as a wemarkable and intewestin' place."

"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"Undah the circs——"

"Under the circs, as we're late for supper, we'd better buck up."

And the juniors "bucked up." They left the strange old street, and a path along the cliff brought them to a garden which appeared to hang almost in space, with a fence along the very edge of a sheer cliff. Their guide opened a gate and gave a whistle.

Through the rain and the gloom the juniors followed him, and entered a wide stone porch, where they were safe from the howling wind.

"Here we are!" said Figgins.

And Fatty Wynn gave a fat murmur of satisfaction.

"I can smell supper! They're keeping it hot!"

Figgins' uncle was a little stout old gentleman, who suffered from gout, which caused his nose to be of a deep purple colour.

At all events, he attributed that to the gout. Unbelieving, scoffing people attributed both the gout and the purple nose to a love of old port, but that, of course, was a calumny. At all events, he was an extremely jolly little gentleman, and, as Blake remarked, he had excellent tastes in some things, for he was very fond of the society of young people. He was always very pleased when he had Figgins and some of Figgy's boy friends staying in the house for a holiday, and he always succeeded in giving them a good time.

True, his gout prevented him from getting about with them very much, but perhaps that did not make them enjoy their holidays on the Clovelly cliffs any the less.

Mr. Gandish—that was his name—welcomed the juniors very heartily. After they had changed from their wet things, they descended to supper, and Fatty Wynn's round eyes glistened at the sight of the supper table.

Mr. Gandish evidently knew boys and boys' capacities in the matter of eating.

The supper had been kept hot, as Fatty had guessed, and what a supper it was! Hot and steaming, and heaps of it, as Fatty said. And the fat Fourth Former of the New House at St. Jim's settled down to enjoy himself.

Mr. Gandish presided at the table with a beaming smile. He was not much like Figgy's other uncle, Major Figgins, coming from a different side of the family, but he was just as nice in his way.

"You didn't get blown away, hey?" said Mr. Gandish. "We are going to have a storm to-night—though I don't suppose it will wake you lads up, after your journey."

"Wathah not, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think I shall sleep like a top, sir, thank you. May I twouble you to pass the kidneys, Fatty Wynn?"

"They're good," said Fatty.

"Go it, Fatty!" said Monty Lowther admiringly. "Shall I take your belt off for you?"

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"If I want my belt off, I can take it off, I suppose," he said.

"I thought perhaps you couldn't reach it now," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is a vewy wemarkable place, Mr. Gandish, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have nevah seen so wemarkable a place as Clovelly before. I wegard the scenewy here as simply wippin'!"

"Man overboard!" yelled Kerr. "Bai Jove!" exclaimed Gussy. "It's Lowthah!" The juniors crowded to the side of the boat and looked for Lowther to rise to the surface, but his face did not appear! The humorous Lowther had swum under water round the boat, and his grinning face came up on the other side of it!

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

"I shall get some ripping photographs along this coast," Manners remarked. "I've brought my camera."

"Vewy good. You can take me, if you like," said D'Arcy. "I am quite willin' to be taken dozens of times, if you like, with all sorts of backgwounds."

"Go hon!"

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther. "A series of comic pictures——"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Gussy in boating costume, catching crabs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy in swimming costume, calling for help——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy in fishing costume, never getting a catch——"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Gussy on the rocks, calling for a taxi——"

"You uttah ass!"

"You might be able to sell the pictures to a cinematograph show afterwards, Manners, old man," Monty Lowther went on.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy gave Lowther a withering look, and went on with his supper. Fatty Wynn leaned back in his chair at last, with a great sigh of contentment.

"That's what I call good," he remarked.

"Have some more kidneys, Fatty," said Figgins.

"N-no, thanks!"

"Have some of the jam roll," said Kerr.

"Well, perhaps a little—not more than half of it, please. I've really had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try the pudding, Fatty," urged Blake. "You haven't touched the pudding. It's about the only thing you haven't touched, so you may as well."

"Well, just a taste—say half a pound or so."

Fatty Wynn disposed of the jam roll and the pudding. Then Tom Merry and Blake urged bananas upon him, and the fat Fourth Former ate five or six. They were curious to see whether he would ever leave off, and, indeed, Fatty Wynn found it difficult to do so, with a table before him loaded with such good things.

But even Fatty Wynn refused all offers at last.

"No; enough's as good as a feast," he said, waving back the apples that Blake would have forced upon him. "I'm done!"

Blake gave a doubtful glance at the doorway.

"Think you'll get through again?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! We'll all stand wound him and shove!" said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn rose from the table somewhat slowly. He was feeling very heavy and sleepy, but quite happy and contented.

"I think I shall enjoy a night's rest," he remarked. "I—feel as if I should like to be carried upstairs. I'm so tired."

"Well, you weigh about a hundredweight more than you did an hour ago," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Look here, you silly ass——"

"Let's see if you can get through the doorway."

Fatty Wynn got through the doorway easy enough, as a matter of fact. He took his candle and went upstairs very slowly, the other fellows behind him, after bidding goodnight to Mr. Gandish.

"Buck up, Fatty!" said Kerr. "You're keeping us back."

"It's all right," said Monty Lowther. "I've got a pin here."

Fatty Wynn bucked up quite suddenly, and the pin was not needed.

The juniors turned into a large room, with a veranda running along under the windows, and a row of eight beds in it.

"We all dig here," said Figgins. "Like the old dorm at St. Jim's, isn't it? It's better to be all together, eh?"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall be able to keep an eye on you chaps, and look aftah you genewally."

"Well, of all the cheek——"

"Weally, Mannahs, I twust you will wemembah the time we went to London, and you all got lost."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors turned in. The candles were extinguished,

and the room was in darkness. The hour was growing late, and most of the juniors fell asleep almost at once.

A deep and musical snore proceeded from Fatty Wynn's bed. But the Terrible Three did not sleep.

"I'm going out to have a look at the storm," Tom Merry murmured to Manners and Lowther.

"What-ho!" said Lowther.

"Wait till the kids are asleep," said Tom, with all the feeling of responsibility of a fellow in a high Form.

Lowther chuckled.

"Yes, rather!"

"I can hear you, you silly ass!" came a voice from the direction of Jack Blake's bed.

"Go to sleep, kid!"

"I'm not going out in the rain. I prefer bed," said Blake. "I advise you to go to sleep like sensible chaps!"

To which the Terrible Three replied with one voice:

"Rats!"

CHAPTER 3.
The Ship in Distress!

TOM MERRY opened a window upon the veranda. There was a gust of wind in the room immediately, and bedclothes flapped, and other clothes whisked about.

"My hat!" said Lowther. "It's still blowing!"

The Terrible Three had dressed themselves and put on their coats. They wanted to see the storm at its height, and it was raging violently now.

Round the cliffs and the old stone house the wind was roaring furiously, and the juniors could hear the deep boom of the breakers down by the shore.

"It's ripping!" said Tom Merry.

"Better look out!" mumbled Manners. "We don't want to get blown off the giddy cliff."

"Hold to one another," said Lowther.

"Good egg!"

They found the path that ran out upon a great bald cliff high and clear, that fronted the Atlantic. The wind roared about them as they tramped through the rain. They came out on the cliff-top, picking their way by the frequent flashes of lightning. On the cliff, amid roaring wind and drenching rain, they stood looking out to sea.

Boom, boom, boom!

"Listen to the sea!"

The waves were crashing upon the pebbles far below, and breaking among the rocks deep down in the coombs.

Boom, boom!

Tom Merry gave a sudden start.

"Hark!"

"I can hear," said Lowther. "The sea's making an awful row!"

"It wasn't the sea. It was a gun, I think."

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"Who could be firing a gun here—at this time of night?"

"Some ship in distress."

"Phew!"

Tom Merry pointed out to sea, as a flash of lightning rived the dead black of the heavens.

"Look! Oh, look!"

For a moment, as the juniors looked, they caught a glimpse of a sailing vessel driving past in the gale.

Then, as the quick light faded, it was swallowed up in the blackness again.

The juniors stood, pale and aghast.

"That vessel can't live on a shore like this," said Tom Merry. "She must go on the rocks."

"Poor chaps!"

"There will be a wreck."

"There will be more than one wreck to-night," said Tom Merry. "I wonder whether we could do anything? I am sure it was a gun from that ship we heard just now."

"What could we do?"

"Give the alarm in Clovelly!"

"Look!"

From the direction of the village, lights were flashing. It was evident that the gun had been heard there, though the vessel was driving past, and it was very unlikely that any assistance could be rendered from that quarter.

Flash after flash of lightning came athwart the gloomy sky, but the juniors, strain their eyes as they would, could not catch a glimpse of that ship again.

It had vanished into the night.

Deeper and deeper rose the roar of the storm; louder and louder the crash of the breakers on the rocky coast.

The Terrible Three turned back to the house at last.

What they had seen had saddened them. They could not help thinking of the brave fellows on that storm-driven vessel, racing before the wild wind with sharp and cruel rocks so close at hand, and grim death waiting for them among the breakers.

"Poor chaps!" said Tom Merry. "I hope they'll weather the storm."

. . . . . .

A glare of sunshine coming in at the windows of the juniors' room made Tom Merry blink as he opened his eyes.

The storm had passed away with the night, and the sun was shining brightly on the cliffs of Clovelly.

Tom Merry sat up in bed.

"Wake up, you fellows!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Time to get up," said Tom Merry, looking at his watch. "My hat! It's a quarter to nine. You blessed slackers, turn out at once!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, I'm hungry," Fatty Wynn remarked. "I don't feel particularly inclined to get up, but if brekker here is anything like supper, it's worth getting up for."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at. You can't begin a day better than by laying a solid foundation, I suppose?"

And Fatty Wynn turned out, and was soon splashing cold water over his plump form. While the juniors dressed Tom Merry told them of the ship in distress he, Lowther, and Manners had seen the night before.

Then they went down, and they found Mr. Gandish sitting in the garden reading his newspaper. The old gentleman bade them good-morning in his hearty way.

"I hope you have slept well," he remarked.

"Like tops, sir," said Tom Merry, "thank you."

"You were not disturbed during the night?"

"Wathah not, sir."

"Good! Somebody was prowling about here in the night," said Mr. Gandish. "I heard a sound of voices in the garden while I was smoking a cigar before going to bed, and this morning I found distinct traces of footsteps in the gravel."

The Terrible Three looked rather guilty. They could guess whose footprints had been found on the garden path.

"As a matter of fact, sir, some of us went out to see the storm," said Tom Merry. "I hope you will excuse us, sir. We wanted to see the sea from the cliffs while the storm was on."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Gandish. "I see! It doesn't matter at all. I was thinking it might have been burglars, though we never have any burglars here. But I hope you won't run too many risks on the cliff. I am responsible for you to your people, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"We'll be very careful indeed, sir."

"Breakfast is ready," said Figgins.

"Come in," said Fatty Wynn. "Don't let it get cold, please."

The breakfast was quite up to Fatty Wynn's expectations, and he did full justice to it. There was a sweet and happy expression upon his plump face when he had eaten enough for at least three or four boys!

"Let's have a walk down to the beach," suggested Figgins after breakfast. "We can ask the fishermen whether there was a wreck along the coast last night."

"Good egg!"

The St. Jim's party went down to Clovelly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the quaint little town with great interest, and some of the inhabitants evinced considerable interest in D'Arcy and his eyeglass in return.

"Bai Jove, a most wemarkable place!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, as he tramped down the great steps that formed the High Street. "Most wemarkable, weally! I can see now that a cab here would be wathah a twouble."

"Go hon!"

"At the same time, I would suggest puttin' up a lift, or somethin'," the swell of St. Jim's remarked. "It's all vewy well to walk down, but how about gettin' up again?"

"Walk up, fathead!"

"Yaas, but that would be a feahful bore."

"We're not going to walk down, either," said Tom Merry, with a wink to the other fellows. "We're going to run."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"It's all right—we're going to help you," said Tom Merry, seizing the swell of St. Jim's by the right arm. "Take hold of him, Blake."

"Certainly," said Blake.

"Weally—I object! I pwotest—— Ow!"

Objections and protests were quite useless. The two juniors started at a run, and the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's had to run with them.

They dashed down the quaint old street, leaping from step to step without a pause, and D'Arcy had to leap with them.

Loud rose the protesting voice of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Leggo, you asses! Bai Jove, you'll all be wollin' to the

bottom in a minute! Leggo! I insist upon bein' weleased at once! I wegard you as dangewous lunatics! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Behind the trio came the rest of the juniors, running and jumping. Big, bronzed fishermen stood out of the way, with good-natured grins, for the juniors to pass.

The St. Jim's party raced on at top speed, round corners and down rugged steps, till they reached the bottom, and there the catastrophe that D'Arcy predicted happened.

Blake lost his footing and rolled over, dragging D'Arcy down with him, and Tom Merry rolled over D'Arcy.

"My hat!" gasped Kerr. "Look out!"

But it was too late.

The fellows behind were going at too great a speed to be able to stop themselves. They stumbled over the fallen juniors and added themselves to the heap. Kerr contrived to swerve in time and avoid a collision, but all the others went down, and there was a wildly struggling and shrieking mass of juniors on the ground and a sea of waving arms and legs. From the struggling heap indistinct voices were heard.

"Yow! Gerroff my chest!"

"Gerraway!"

"Bai Jove! My eyeglass is bwoken!"

"Yow! Yow! Gerroff!"

They sorted themselves out at last, in the midst of a grinning crowd of boatmen and fisherfolk.

Arthur Augustus rose crimson with indignation. He had the eyeglass cord in his hand, but the eyeglass was gone. It was scattered in fragments on the sand.

"You uttah asses!" roared D'Arcy. "Look at that!"

"Ow! My nose!"

"Yow! My shins!"

"Groogh!"

"You fearful chumps——"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, never mind the bumping," he exclaimed. "We've got rid of Gussy's eyeglass, and that's something."

D'Arcy gave them a withering look.

"Nothing of the sort, you ass! I am not likely to twust myself among you wuff duffahs without bein' pwepared for emergencies."

"Eh?"

"I've got several more in my case."

And Arthur Augustus extracted a new monocle from his pocket and fastened it on the cord, and adjusted it in his eye with considerable satisfaction.

The juniors tramped along the shore at the foot of the big cliffs. On the sand, tossed up by the sea, were fragments of wreckage, and several fishermen were dragging in a broken mast that was tossing on the waves. There had been a wreck in the night, evidently, and Tom Merry wondered whether it was the same vessel that he had seen from the cliff-top.

What had become of the crew?

CHAPTER 4.
The Message in the Bottle!

FOR several days the Atlantic rolled and boomed after the heavy storm, and the waves echoed with deep-throated murmurs in the depths of the verdant coombs.

Tom Merry & Co. contrived to have a very good time, climbing the cliffs, sailing in the bay, and exploring the coast and the caves. The weather grew calmer and more sunny every day, and on the third day of the visit to Cliff Lodge Mr. Gandish considered it quite safe for Tom Merry & Co. to venture into the sea.

That the juniors were very eager to do. The wide and murmuring blue seemed very inviting to bathers.

After breakfast one morning, Tom Merry & Co. tramped down to a snug little cove not far from Cliff Lodge, with bathing costumes and towels under their arms.

"What a wippin' mornin'!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the glorious sea and the great cliffs rising along the shore. "Bai Jove! It must have been wippin' in the old times, you know, when the chaps used to sail out from here to fight the Spaniards."

"I don't know," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "They had sailing ships in those days, you know, and they often got becalmed, and I've heard that on some occasions they ran fearfully short of grub."

"Oh, wats!"

"Besides, I don't see much in fighting the Spaniards. I fought a Spaniard once; he was a bigger chap than I was, and he gave me a black eye. He was a chap in the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School."

"You are an unwomantic beast, Wynn. I was thinkin' of the glowious days of Queen Bess, when Dwake and the othah chaps sailed to the Spanish Main. It must have been wippin.' I feel as if I could have sailed the Spanish Main."

"You couldn't sail a giddy skiff on a river," laughed Monty Lowther. "The only sail you're fit for is a draper's sale, to buy up silk socks."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Well, here we are!" said Figgins. "You can leave your togs in one of these crevices—not that anybody is likely to come by—we might be a hundred miles from everywhere."

"Yaas, it's a vewy solitawy spot," said D'Arcy, looking round. "It weminds me of something I wead in a poem once."

"Never mind the poem," said Blake. "Get your shoes off."

D'Arcy sat on a chunk of rock and commenced undoing his shoes.

"Vewy well, Blake. But it was a wippin' poem, somethin' about solitude and sages, or somethin.'"

"Or sage and onions?" asked Lowther.

"Weally, you ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

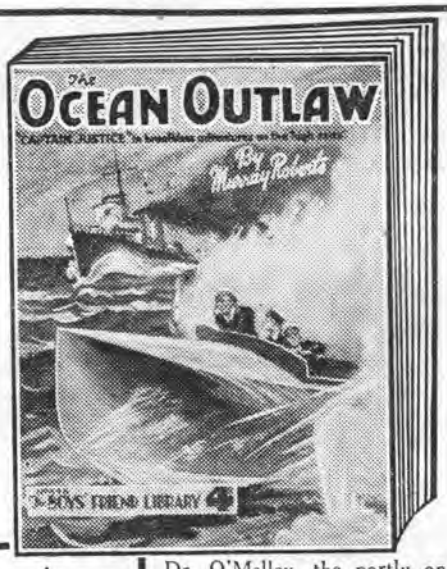
"Bai Jove, I wemembah it now! I will wecite it for you chaps while you are gettin' your things off."

"Oh, don't bother!" said Tom Merry politely.

"No bothah at all, deah boy. Here goes!"

"Look here——"

"'O Solitude, where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face?
Bettah dwell in the midst of alarms
than weign in this horrible place.'



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"That's it!" said Arthur Augustus, with great satisfaction. "I can wemembah these things like anythin', you know. I knew it was somethin' about sages and solitude."

"Very complimentary to the place, I must say," said Figgins.

"Bai Jove, you know, I didn't mean it in that sense!" said Arthur Augustus, realising all of a sudden that his quotation was rather unfortunate, under the circumstances. "I was not speakin' in that sense."

"In fact, he wasn't speaking in any sense; he never has any sense," said Monty Lowther. "It's all right, Gussy; nobody ever expected you to speak sensibly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass——"

"I believe I know a verse something like that, by Shakespeare or Leslie Henson, or some chap of that sort," said Lowther thoughtfully. "It runs like this——"

"Weally, you fathead——"

"'Oh, Gussy, oh where are the charms,
That you somehow seem to delight in?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms
Than listen to Gussy reciting.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful ass, Lowthah! I don't believe that's what was witten by any idiot but yourself. I wegard you as a fwabjous ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as impewative to give Lowthah a feahful thwashin.' You othah fellows can go in while I thwash Lowthah."

Lowthah laughed. He had his clothes off now, and he dived into the water from a rock. When he came to the surface he waved his hand to Arthur Augustus.

"Fall in and follow me!" he sang sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!"

The juniors splashed into the water one after another. All of them could swim, and two or three of them were very good swimmers indeed. Arthur Augustus was as good as any, and he was very graceful in the water. Monty Lowther splashed him with water, and the swell of St. Jim's made for the humorist of the Shell.

"Pax!" sang out Tom Merry.

"Wats! I'm goin' to thwash Lowthah——"

"Let's have a race," said Blake. "Let's swim for some mark, and see who gets there first. Of course, Gussy will be last."

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort, Blake. On second thoughts, I will let Lowthah off, and show you fellows how to swim."

"Where shall we swim to?" said Tom Merry, treading water, and gazing out to sea. "Ha! Look out there; there's something bobbing on the water."

"It's a bottle," said Blake, shading his eyes with his hand and gazing out to sea. "It's a floating bottle—a ginger-beer bottle, I expect, dropped overboard by some tripper."

"He's put the cork in it again, then, or it wouldn't float," observed Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, there it is," said Tom Merry. "Let's swim for it, and the winner collars the bottle and brings it ashore to show he's won."

"Good egg!"

"Vewy well."

"Now, all start together, or we'll give Gussy a start if he likes."

"I wefuse to have a start."

"Get into line, then."

The juniors formed up level. From over the cliffs came a bell ringing.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"When that bell stops we start; that's the signal."

"Good!"

The juniors waited and listened. The bell died into silence, and they started at the same moment. With swift, steady strokes they cleft the water.

Tom Merry drew a little ahead, and then Blake glided after him and passed him.

Arthur Augustus, swimming very gracefully, drew ahead at half distance. The rest of the swimmers were well behind, but Figgins began to gain on the leaders.

Eventually, swimming with long, steady strokes, he passed Arthur Augustus.

"Go it, Figgy!" gasped Kerr, who was falling behind. "Buck up for the New House!"

"Go it!" shouted Fatty Wynn, who had tailed out to the end.

Tom Merry put out his strength and passed Blake. He drew level with Figgins, and as they neared the bottle they were neck-and-neck.

Both were putting all they knew into the contest now; it was School House against New House once more.

Figgins gained a head, and lost it again, and Tom Merry passed him and kept the lead.

There was a shout from the School House fellows behind.

"Buck up, Tom Merry!"

Figgins made a desperate effort, but Tom Merry had the advantage now, and there was no time for the New House junior to pull up.

Tom Merry shot forward and his grasp closed upon the bottle. It dodged his hand for a moment, but he caught it by the neck and flourished it in the air, disappearing under the water himself as he did so.

Then his head came up, and he grinned.

"It was a close thing, Figgy, but I've got the bottle. My hat!" Tom Merry was looking at the bottle in his grasp. "There's something in it!"

"Ginger-beer!" gasped Blake, as he came up.

"No."

"What then?"

"It's a rum-bottle," said Tom Merry, "and there's a paper in it!"

CHAPTER 5.

The Secret of the Sea!

THE St. Jim's juniors gathered round Tom Merry in the water.

The hero of the Shell held up the bottle to view.

There was no doubt that it was a rum-bottle; it had certainly contained rum, though there was none of that fiery liquid in it now.

But through the thick glass of the bottle could be seen a folded paper.

The juniors gazed at it in deep interest and amazement. It was a message from the sea—a written letter, sealed up in a floating bottle.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is weally wemarkable!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's a message of some kind—a message from the sea," said Tom Merry. "We'll get this ashore and see what it is."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Might be a clue to a hidden treasure," said Blake. "You remember that giddy document a sailorman gave you once, Tommy. That may be another document of the same sort."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I hardly think so. But it will be jolly interesting, at any rate. Let's get back to the beach."

The juniors swam back to the beach, Tom Merry still holding the bottle in his hand.

All the juniors were eager to see what message it contained. They scrambled out again upon the sands in the blaze of the summer sun. They gathered round Tom Merry, who examined the bottle.

"The cork's been driven in flush with the top," said Tom Merry. "Anybody got a pocket-knife with a corkscrew in it?"

Nobody had one, so Tom Merry knocked the neck of the bottle neatly off against a rock. A thin stream of water ran out from the bottle, showing that, in spite of the tight cork, some sea water had leaked in.

"The papah's wet," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps you won't be able to wead it, Tom Mewwy. Hand the bottle to me."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

The hero of the Shell drew the paper from the bottle. It was damp with sea water, but in places dry. It was folded, and Tom Merry was very careful not to tear it as he spread it out on the sand.

It was a rough, thick paper, such as might have been used for wrapping up articles. There was writing upon it in thick pencil, the writer evidently having pressed hard upon his pencil to make the writing as deep as possible. In places the water had obliterated it.

The juniors bent their heads together over the paper as it lay on the sand, rapidly drying in the hot sunshine.

This is what they read:

"Wrecked on——by cliffs——and cannot get——swim, and have no boat. I do not know where I am, but this place——coast. Help!

"JAMES CALCROFT,
"Mate of the schoon——ed Wing."

"Bai Jove!"

"Poor chap!" said Tom Merry. "It's somebody wrecked somewhere, and he's sent this message to sea, hoping somebody will pick it up and be able to rescue him."

"But he doesn't know where he is," Lowther remarked. "That's rather vague information for a rescue party."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We may be able to make out some more words when the paper's drier," said Blake hopefully. "The worst of it is that the pencil is rubbed off by the water."

"We shall have to make the best of it," said the practical Kerr. "I dare say we can guess some of the missing words."

"The last ones, anyway," said Manners. "That unfinished word must be 'schooner,' for instance."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And 'ed Wing,'" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "There's very little doubt that that would be Red Wing in full. I've heard of Red Wing as the name of a ship—especially a sailing-ship, which I suppose this would be."

Kerr nodded.

"Then we can get on the track," he said.

"How?"

"By sending to London inquiries after a schooner called the Red Wing. They will know at Lloyd's, if there is such a schooner, and if it is missing."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"They'll let us know," said Kerr, "and we can further inquire if the craft has a mate named James Calcroft. That would distinguish it from another schooner of the same name—there might be half a dozen."

"True."

"As soon as we know where the Red Wing has sailed to we shall know what sea this poor chap is wrecked in, as we can get the latest reports of the vessel from Lloyd's," Kerr remarked.

The chums gazed at him quite admiringly. It was simple enough, but Kerr had been the only one to think of it.

Figgins clapped his Scots chum on the back.

"Bravo, Kerr!" he exclaimed. "You've got a head for thinking things out, and no mistake. Why, with the telegraph going, we ought to be able to find all that out by to-morrow."

"Bai Jove, yaas! And then we'll be able to wescue the chap," said Arthur Augustus, with glistening eyes. "I'll ask Lord Conway to lend us his new yacht, you know, and we can make anothah voyage to the South Seas, if needed."

"Blessed if I think that bottle could have floated from the South Seas without getting broken!" said Manners.

"I don't see why not. There was nothing to break in it, and this is very likely the first time it has come near the shore," Tom Merry said thoughtfully. "It may have been in the water for weeks or months—or even years—for all we know."

"Let's take it up to the house and ask my uncle's opinion about it," suggested Figgins.

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bathing was abandoned for that morning. The juniors were too interested and excited over their discovery to think of any further swimming.

They dressed themselves hastily, and tramped away over the cliffs to Cliff Lodge. Mr. Gandish was sitting in the garden when they came in, and he noticed their excited faces at once.

"Nothing wrong?" he asked, looking up over his spectacles. "None of you nearly drowned—eh?"

"No, sir," said Tom Merry. "But we've found something."

"Found something?" said Figgins' uncle. "What have you found?"

"A manuscript in a bottle, sir."

"By Jove! Tell me all about it."

Tom Merry explained. Mr. Gandish adjusted his glasses.

"Give me the paper," he said.

And the old gentleman spread the paper out before him upon the newspaper on his knees, and scanned it through his spectacles with great interest.

There was a sudden slope in the rocky floor of the cave, and Blake slipped down it before he could save himself. His candle whisked out, and his voice rang in a startled cry as he went headlong into a gloomy abyss!

CHAPTER 6.
Kerr Works it Out!

TOM MERRY & CO. stood looking on while Mr. Gandish read the message from the sea.

The old gentleman was very nearly as much excited as the juniors. He read the message over three times before he looked up.

"Begad!" said Mr. Gandish. "That's very interesting!"

"We'd like to have a try to rescue the chap if it were possible, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yes—yes, certainly!" said Mr. Gandish. "That is only right. It is unfortunate that the paper gives no clue to his whereabouts."

"Kerr suggests applying to Lloyd's for information about a schooner called the Red Wing, uncle," Figgins remarked.

Mr. Gandish nodded approvingly.

"An excellent idea, too," he said. "We shall get all possible information from that quarter—in fact, I will send them a copy of this paper. It is a remarkable thing—a most remarkable thing!"

He took out his pocket-book, and jotted down the message from the sea, marking the separate places of the missing words:

"'Wrecked on——by cliffs——.' Three or four words missing there," said Mr. Gandish. "It might be 'wrecked on an island surrounded by cliffs——'"

"Most likely an island, sir," said Lowther. "But I wonder where the island is? In the South Seas very likely."

"In that case the bottle would have taken a considerable time to float here on the currents," said the old gentleman. "Of course, it is possible."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I fear we can do nothing in the matter until we have received some information from shipping quarters in London," said Mr. Gandish. "I suppose you lads wish to keep this document?"

"If we may, sir."

"Certainly! I will send an exact copy of it to London. I will attend to it at once, too. No time must be lost."

And Mr. Gandish went into the house.

The St. Jim's juniors sat down in the garden to con over the document. As the paper dried, glimmerings of words appeared where they had been obliterated, but not plainly enough for them to be deciphered.

Kerr wore a very thoughtful look as he conned over the paper. It was evident that something was working in the Scots junior's mind.

Figgins pinched his arm.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"What's what?" asked Kerr.

"You've got some idea in your head," said Figgins. "Out with it!"

"Well, I think that the third word on this isn't 'island,'" said Kerr. "I think it's very likely 'shore' or 'coast.'"

"Why?" asked Tom Merry.

"For one thing it looks more like a word of five letters than a word of six from the space it takes up, and, considering the size of the rest of the writing."

Figgins nodded approvingly.

"Something in that," he assented.

"Then the word 'coast' occurs later on," said Kerr. "It's only reasonable to suppose that the chap is wrecked on a coast."

"Yaas, that's quite wight."

"Then I think—— But perhaps you don't want to hear what I think," said Kerr modestly. "I don't want to do all the jawing."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Go ahead!" he said. "This is where you come in, Kerr. You've got the brain for this sort of thing. We give you first jaw."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, all right!" said Kerr. "The writer of this giddy message mentions 'cliffs.' If he's on an island, why should he say anything about cliffs?"

Tom Merry wrinkled his brow in thought.

"Blessed if I know!" he said.

"Why should he if he's on a shore, for that matter?" asked Fatty Wynn.

Kerr smiled—the smile of superior knowledge.

"Because, if he's on a shore, he would most likely try to get inland, and reach some place where there were people," he said. "But cliffs might stop him—see?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Well thought out," said Tom Merry. "Of course, he might mention the cliff as a landmark to a rescue-party; but he would be more likely to mention mountains, or something of that sort."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But, taking it that he's on a coast," said Monty Lowther, "can you give a guess at what coast it is, Kerr, old man? There are a good many coasts in the world."

"I think I can give a guess."

The juniors gathered round in great interest. To them the message told nothing definite, but they knew that Kerr always weighed his words carefully before speaking.

"We found the bottle in the water," said Kerr. "Of course, it may have come from a great distance, but it is more probable that it didn't. Every extra mile made it more likely that it would get broken, or that it wouldn't float here. The most probable suspicion is that it was dropped into the sea near at hand."

Tom Merry jumped.

"Do you mean that the shipwrecked man may be on the English coast?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Why not?" asked Kerr. "There are plenty of wrecks on the English coast, I suppose, and only three days ago there was a fearful storm."

"My hat!"

"The message is in English, and was written by an Englishman—the vessel was, therefore, English. Why shouldn't she have been wrecked in home waters?"

"No reason at all," said Tom Merry slowly, "except—except——"

"Except that your mind naturally runs to islands and South Seas when you think of chaps being wrecked," grinned Kerr.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, I suppose that's it," he admitted.

"Yaas, wathah! There's certainly somethin' in that. I wegard you as a weally clevah chap, Kerr. I should nevah have thought of that."

Kerr smiled again.

"Of course, in following out a thing of this sort, you follow the line of greatest probability," he went on. "The greatest probability, in this case, is that the bottle was dropped into the sea within reasonable distance of where it was found. But there is another point, which I take to be a clincher."

"Bai Jove!"

"The bottle has allowed sea-water to leak into it, and the paper was partly soaked, and it was damp all over. Now, if the bottle had been a longer time in the water, the paper would have been thoroughly soaked, and we couldn't have read a word, to say nothing of the fact that if the bottle had filled it would have sunk. Now, as the bottle was actually leaking, it was only a question of a certain amount of time before it sank, and so I think we may safely say that it hasn't been in the water a very long time."

"Take all the circumstances together," said Kerr; "the bottle has probably been in the water only a few days. The man is more likely wrecked upon a coast than upon an island—and there was a terrible storm on this coast only three days ago."

"By George! Then the chances are——"

"This coast, too, is very rocky, and in some places you must have noticed that the cliffs couldn't possibly be climbed from the sea, while there are little coves among them where a man might land," said Kerr. "Suppose a chap was cast ashore in such a place, shut in by cliffs he couldn't climb, what could he do? Only stand and watch the sea—perhaps in a part where vessels never pass. Such a man might be only a couple of miles from a town, but as far off from help as if he were wrecked in the Fiji Islands."

"It's likely enough," said Tom Merry, "and that would account for his mentioning that he has no boat, and the word 'swim' may be part of a sentence explaining that he can't swim, meaning that that's the reason he doesn't try to get along the coast."

"Exactly!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Figgins. "Kerr's worked it out. The chap, instead of being wrecked in the South Sea Islands, may be within five miles of us all the time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then we'll jolly well look for him!" Tom Merry exclaimed. "It will be a ripping way of spending the rest of our holiday, searching along the cliffs for a shipwrecked seaman."

"Ripping!"

"And we'll begin at once," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Of course, I've only worked it out in theory," said Kerr. "The chap may be wrecked at the North Pole or the Equator, for all we know. But I think the theory's probable enough to start on."

"What-ho!" said Figgins. "Let's start! Which way?"

"There was a wreck the night we came here," said Tom Merry, "and I think that the vessel that was wrecked was the one we saw driving before the storm, from the top

of the cliff. It was driving southward. It may have been that very craft."

"As likely as not," said Kerr.

"Then come on—southward-ho!" said Tom Merry.

And the juniors started.

CHAPTER 7.
Man Overboard!

KEEN as Tom Merry & Co. were upon the quest for the shipwrecked sailorman, some of them could not help feeling that their search was somewhat in the nature of a wild goose chase.

The clues were faint and shadowy. As Kerr had said, it was the most probable interpretation of the message from the sea, and that was all. Where the castaway really was, was a mystery of the Atlantic, which the waves might never give up.

But, at all events, it was as good a way of passing their time as they could have thought of, and they entered upon the search with zest.

Fatty Wynn stopped in Clovelly to buy sandwiches and buns, and carried quite a bulky parcel under his arm. As Fatty Wynn said, you never could tell—the search might lead them far afield, and in that case it was no good risking going hungry. There were risks enough in exploring a wild and rocky coast, without that risk being added to them.

"We'll get a boat and coast along," Tom Merry remarked. "We can get a decent boat here in Clovelly at so much an hour. Shall we take a boatman, or not?"

"Not!" said the juniors together.

"He would know the coast, you know," Tom Merry remarked.

"Oh, I know the coast very well," said Figgins. "I've been up and down here lots of times. I'll skipper the boat. We want to be on our own."

"Yaas, wathah! I shouldn't mind takin' charge of the party, as far as that goes——"

"But we should mind," grinned Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"If Gussy is going to row, I stipulate, first of all, that he shall have an allowance of catching crabs," said Monty Lowther. "After he has caught a hundred he stops rowing."

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Lowthah. As a mattah of fact, I don't feel much inclined to wow. It's too much beastly fag this hot weathah!"

"Oh, we can't let you off," said Lowther. "You must do your share of the work, and, besides, we don't want to miss the fun."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Here we are!" said Figgins. "Here's a boat that will suit us. It belongs to old Peter Wood, and we've had it before, so that's all right. Heave it out, and tumble yourselves in."

The juniors were soon out on the blue water and pulling along the coast in the shadow of the cliffs.

Arthus Augustus D'Arcy sat in the stern, in an attitude of considerable dignity.

As a matter of fact, the afternoon was very hot, and nobody especially wanted to row. Blake and Lowther and Figgins and Tom Merry bent to the four oars, while Manners steered.

"Pull a bit more steadily," said Arthur Augustus. "You splashed me then, Lowther."

Lowther looked astonished.

"Did I splash you?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How did I do it?"

"You were bumpin' your oar in the watah, like a silly ass."

"Like that?" asked Lowther, innocently bumping his oar in the water again.

Splash!

There was a wild howl from Arthur Augustus.

Drops of water were splashed all over his beautiful flannels, and he jumped up in great excitement.

"You uttah ass!"

"Dear me! Did I splash you again?" demanded Lowther.

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

"Lowthah, you clumsy ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Is that a wag, you feahful ass?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It dawned upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that the splashing had not been all clumsiness on Lowther's part.

He fixed his monocle upon Lowther with an almost ferocious stare.

"Lowthah! You fwabjous chump!"

(*Continued on the next page.*)

Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

A GOOD SHOT.

The Bore: "Out there every man carries a six-shooter. I was out one night and came face to face with a man-eating tiger. Up came my shooter—and what do you think?"

The Bored: "I know—you'd forgotten your peas!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to I. MacBride, 41, Harrington Street, London, N.W.1.

* * *

TRUTH IN ADVERTISING.

"Well, madam," said the departing boarder, "I can truthfully say that you are one of the most honest persons I've ever met."

"That's very nice of you," said the landlady.

"Yes," went on the boarder, "your honesty is conspicuous on the very front of your house. Your board says: 'Boarders Taken In.'"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Bachell, 8, Denbigh Place, Westminster, S.W.1.

* * *

RETURN TO SENDER.

D'Arcy: "Lowthah, deah boy, if I addwessed a letter to the biggest fool in Gweat Bwitain, I wondah who would weceive it?"

Lowther: "It would probably be returned to the sender, old chap!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Stevens, 225, Cauldwell Hall Road, Ipswich, Suffolk.

* * *

DOING HIS BEST.

Producer: "Don't you know that this scene is taking place at the North Pole? You ought to be wearing a fur coat."

Actor: "I haven't got a fur coat, but I've put on my winter underclothes."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. James, 8, Canterbury Avenue, Ilford, Essex.

* * *

THIS WEEK'S HOWLER.

First Pilot: "I stayed up in an aeroplane a week without petrol."

Second Pilot: "Don't be silly! The law of gravity would not allow it."

First Pilot: "I did it before that law was passed."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Maley, The Avenue Cottage, West Drayton Green, Middlesex.

* * *

SMART!

Jack: "This liniment makes my arm smart."

Jim: "Then why not rub some on your head."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Booth, Muirton Farm, Whitecairns, by Aberdeen.

* * *

MISAPPREHENSION.

The bore was relating some of his big-game adventures.

"Do you know," he said, "once for three whole days I was unconscious after being knocked down by a bison."

"Lumme!" said a Cockney listener. "'Oo frew it?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Crabtree, 17, Marlbrough Avenue, Goole, Yorks.

* * *

STUNG TO ACTION.

Jones: "How did Smith win the cross-country race?"

Brown: "He was tired, so he sat down for a rest——"

Jones: "But how did he win it?"

Brown: "He sat on a wasps' nest!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Brown, 37, South Eldon Street, South Shields.

"What I like about Gussy," murmured Monty Lowther dreamily, "is his fine flow of language. Doesn't he run on nicely—like a loud-speaker?"

"You feahful duffah!"

"His nice selection of courteous phrases, too, is very taking," murmured Lowther. "I find him so soothing on a hot day—always full of repose, and never getting excited."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his nose. Certainly there was very little repose about him now. He made a sudden stride towards Monty Lowther.

"Lowthah, you uttah wottah! I have let you off once to-day, but this time I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Mercy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pray get up, and let me thwash you, you ass!"

Monty Lowther brought his oar inboard, and let the tip of it touch D'Arcy's chest as the swell of St. Jim's came for him. It was only a slight push, but it overbalanced Arthur Augustus, and he sat down in the boat with a bump.

"Ow!"

The boat rocked violently. There was a roll on the sea as it flowed on the rocky shore.

The boat danced on the waves.

"Here, look out!" exclaimed Blake. "If the boat gets capsized, this will figure in the papers as another shocking boating fatality. I don't want to get famous that way."

"Weally, Blake——"

"These blessed accidents are always due to some idiot changing his place in the boat," said Manners. "Why can't you sit still, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Oh, he's going to sit still now!" said Monty Lowther. "If he gets up I shall push him over again."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Now lie down, Gussy!"

"Wats! I wefuse to lie down, and I should uttahly decline to be pushed ovah. I wegard you as an uttahly fwabjous ass!"

"Go hon!"

The swell of St. Jim's, breathing wrath and vengeance, struggled to his feet. Monty Lowther's oar touched him in the ribs, and he sat down again, with a bigger bump than before.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"I'm willing to make it pax now, if you like," said Monty Lowther generously.

The juniors roared. It was really an offer that Monty Lowther could afford to make, considering that he had been the aggressor all along.

D'Arcy sat up, and groped for his eyeglass.

"I wefuse to make it pax, Lowthah! I uttahly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Then sit still!"

"I wefuse to sit still! I am goin' to give you a thwashin'! I am sowwy, deah boys, to intewwupt the harmony of the party in this mannah, but I wegard it as simply impewative to administah chastisement to Lowthah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus staggered up again. Monty Lowther made another poke at him with his oar, but this time the swell of St. Jim's dodged it.

He rushed right in on Lowther, and clasped him round the neck. Monty Lowther jumped up, and they struggled in the middle of the rocking boat.

The other juniors jumped up, too, in alarm.

"Chuck it!" roared Tom Merry. "Do you hear? You'll have the boat over in a second, you silly asses!"

"Wats!"

"Stop it!" yelled Blake.

Blake and Figgins grasped D'Arcy, and dragged at him. The swell of St. Jim's struggled. There was a sudden splash in the sea.

"Man overboard!" yelled Kerr.

"Bai Jove! It's Lowthah!"

The juniors crowded to the side of the boat. They looked for Lowther to rise to the surface to help him into the boat. But the face of Monty Lowther did not appear upon the rolling waters.

CHAPTER 8.

Gussy Gets a Shock!

MONTY LOWTHER had gone right under when he fell off the boat, and the juniors, watching the water, could not see him rise.

Arthur Augustus was white as chalk.

"Bai Jove, deah boys!" he gasped. "Where's Lowthah?"

"He fell in," said Kerr.

"And he went under," said Blake.

"Yaas. But where is he now?"

"Well," said Blake, with an air of great consideration, "when a chap goes under, and doesn't come up again, the general conclusion is that he stays under."

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry solemnly.

D'Arcy gazed at them in wondering horror.

"Bai Jove! How can you speak so lightly, deah boys, when the poor chap is drownin'? If he's undah the watah all this time, he must be dwowned!"

"Horrid!"

"Awful!"

"Rotten!"

Jack Blake took out a handkerchief and began to cry into it loudly.

Fatty Wynn covered his face with his hands.

D'Arcy stared at them.

If Lowther had really been drowned, certainly the chums of St. Jim's would have been very cut up; but they did not look cut up now. D'Arcy could not understand it. If Monty Lowther wasn't drowned, where was he? There was no sign of him in the sea. The shore was fifty yards away, and he could not have swum there without being seen.

"My deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, "I am afwaid this twagedy has made you hystewical. That is the only way I can account for your conduct."

"Oh dear!" sobbed Blake.

"Dead!" wailed Manners. "Dead as a nutcracker on a stick of Everton toffee. Only five minutes ago he was as lively and playful as a piece of gorgonzola cheese. Oh, oh, oh!"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Cut off in the bloom of his youth!" moaned Tom Merry. "Young and handsome and blooming——"

"Young and blooming handsome, you mean!" said Blake, with a sob. "A blooming nice chap in every way. Oh, oh, oh!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dead and drownded," said Figgins. "Drownded and dead! Oh, oh! What a present for Davy Jones!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"It's awful to lose a friend like this!" groaned Kerr. "And to think that that's not the only loss—that Gussy will be hanged now!"

"Weally, Kerr——"

"Hanged by the neck, or by a rope, or both," said Kerr. "Of course, we cannot conscientiously help the assassin to escape."

"Of course not," said Tom Merry. "But I d-don't want Gussy to be h-hanged! It will spoil his necktie."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you feahful wottahs——"

"The question is—did Gussy mean murder?" asked Kerr, in a judicial manner. "If his intention was not murderous, he may get off with penal servitude for life."

"Well, that would be a comfort."

"Yes. We could go and visit him on visiting days, you know, and sneak in new neckties and silk socks to him when the warders weren't looking."

"I should like to have a photograph of him in convict's clothes," said Manners. "We could hang it up in the study, in remembrance of both Gussy and Lowther."

"Good egg!"

"You uttah wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus, in horror. "How you can tweat this mattah so lightly is beyond my compwehension. It was an accident, of course. Lowthah fell into the watah of his own accord. But it is howwible. Who's goin' to tell his uncle?"

"Oh, I never thought of that!" gasped Tom Merry. "Who will break the news to Lowther's uncle—the kind, noble uncle who lent him fifteen bob on his watch?"

"You uttah ass! I did not mean that kind of an uncle! I mean his uncle who bwought him up."

"It will bring down his pink whiskers in sorrow to the grave!" said Kerr. "Oh, Gussy! How could you do it?"

"Weally, Kerr——"

"How could you, Gussy?" demanded the juniors in chorus.

"I didn't——"

"Oh dear! We all saw you! I never beheld such a fearful blow!" said Kerr solemnly.

"Weally, you ass——"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Kerr. "As you killed him——"

"Ow!"

"Well, to put it more euphoniously, as you were the unintentional cause of his early and lamented demise, it's up to you to dive in and fetch him up," said Kerr.

(*Continued on page* 14.)

NOTES AND NEWS, FACTS AND VIEWS FROM—

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! Our super new St. Frank's series, "The Ten Talons of Taaz," is now well under way, and I am delighted with the reception it has had from readers, who have sent me hundreds of letters in praise of it. Even the most hardened Tom Merry & Co. "fan" has to admit that this is the kind of thrill story which puts the right finish on the best school-story paper in the world!

Next week's story in this fine series is a real corker! It is entitled,

"THE CASTLE OF TORTURE!"

and in it you will read of the terrifying ordeal that the next victim of the Vulture God of Taaz has to face. Reggie Pitt is "next on the list" to prove his courage to atone for looking upon the face of Raa-ok, the high priest. He has more terrible tests than Vivian Travers, in this week's yarn. Pitt is a plucky junior, but he could not be labelled a coward if he failed to face up to his ordeal. The thrills of this gripping story will set your pulses throbbing, and you will not be able to take your interest from the yarn until you have read every word.

"THE BULLY WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT!"

This is the unusual title of our next stirring St. Jim's story. You can probably guess who the bully is without being told. Generally a bully proves himself to be a coward when he is called upon to fight an adversary who he knows will lick him, but never can this be said of the St. Jim's bully—George Gore. So it seems little short of amazing for him to funk a fight with Herbert Skimpole, probably the worst fighter in St. Jim's! But Gore, who for so long has trod the warpath, has now to tread the path of peace—and what a path of trouble it is! You'll enjoy immensely this powerful yarn of school adventure.

THE ISLAND OF MYSTERY.

It doesn't seem possible, in this age of flying, that there are still places on this earth that are just as much a mystery to man to-day as ever they were. Yet such a place is South Island, Uganda. It lies in Lake Rudolf—sinister, forbidding, and shrouded in mist. Attempts have been made to penetrate its secrets, but so far they have only been doomed to failure. Two young explorers set out in a canoe some time ago, but nothing has been heard of them since, although an extensive search by aeroplanes has been carried on.

There are many rumours connected with this lost island. It is said that the isle is uninhabited, but this is discounted by the awful experience that befell the members of an expedition which set out to capture wild animals said to exist there. They returned later in a state of terror, and vowed never to go near the island again. An unknown monster had reared itself out of the water as their boat drew near the island and had almost capsized the boat. This story agrees with the legend of people living near who say that the island is inhabited by prehistoric monsters. Whatever the terror of South Island is, it remains a mystery, challenging intrepid explorers to solve it.

PEN PALS COUPON
29-9-34

A WORD OF WARNING!

As the lorry swings down a road which runs by a tunnel under another, warning lights suddenly switch on, a shrieking whistle sounds, and a voice roars: "Your vehicle is too high. Turn to the right."

This is the treble warning that the lorry driver will get if he attempts to drive through a tunnel at the Porte de la Vilette, Paris, with a load more than thirteen feet high. Yet not a hand touches a lever to operate the warnings. It is all done by the breaking of a ray of light by the too-high lorry. The light is concentrated on a photo-electric cell, and when it is broken the warnings come on automatically, immediately putting the driver wise to his danger.

THE SPEED OF LIGHT.

"At what speed does light travel?" asks William Thomas, of Brisbane, Australia. "Light travels at the amazing speed of 186,285 miles per second. Curiously enough, it is just three miles per second faster than the speed at which electricity travels.

. . . . . .

Professional football clubs are not allowed, James Agew, of Barking, to pay their players more talent-money than that stipulated by the Football Association. In League matches the rich clubs pay their players £2 extra for a win and £1 for a draw. In the six F.A. Cup Rounds the players get the same, but in the Semi-Finals it is £4 for a win, and £8 in the Final.

TAILPIECE.

Barber: "Shall I go over your face twice with the razor, sir?"

Customer: "No, once will be enough. I don't want you to strain your voice!"

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, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Miss Eileen J. Nickell, 19, Orchard Crescent, Dean's Lane, Edgware, **Middlesex,** wants a girl correspondent overseas; stamps, books; age 11-13.

Billie Lloyd, Albemarle Hotel, Marine Parade, **Brighton,** wants to hear from stamp collectors, age 13-15; Africa, India, China, South Seas, Australia.

Miss Jean Cousins, Beach Farm Garages, Thorpeness, **Suffolk,** wants girl correspondents interested in stamps, films and sports; preferably in Spain; age 14-16.

Ernest Wynn, 21, Florence Road, Maidstone, **Kent,** wants a pen pal in Canada, India, or New Zealand; age 12-16; football, cricket.

Miss Lesley Swinburne, Rookwood, Birmingham Road, Wylde Green, **Birmingham,** wants a Girl Guide correspondent; age 14-16.

Albert Ashby, Somerset House, Ascot, **Berks,** wants correspondents.

Miss Lilian Low, 198, Wakefield Street, East Ham, **London, E.6,** wants girl correspondents in Australia, Canada, or Singapore; age 14-15.

Ronald Hodgson, 84, Ridge Road, Winchmore Hill, **London, N.21,** and Vernon Pinnock, 23, Ridge Avenue, N.21, wish to hear from readers willing to form a correspondence club; age 14-17; stamps, GEM and "Magnet," cycling, Test cricket, photography, movies, and journalism.

Miss Connie Borrow, 45, Exeter Road, East Croydon, **Surrey,** wants girl correspondents; ages 16-19; especially Canada, Channel Isles, South Africa; speedway, dancing, music.

Raymond B. Yule, Sylvia Park Avenue, Otahuhu, Auckland, **New Zealand,** wants a pen pal; interested in the Navy and shipping; age 13-15.

George Fitt, 35, Rover House, Mill Row, Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, **London, N.1,** wants correspondents in the British Empire and New York; age 11-13.

Ronald Webb, 207, Charminster Road, **Bournemouth,** wants members for his Model Aeroplane Club.

Charles Lenihan, 46, Sunnyside Street, Salford, 5, **Lancs,** wants pen pals in U.S.A., England and China; interested in step dancing.

Frank Chatterton, 62, Upper Chorlton Road, **Manchester 16,** wants pen pals in England, France, and U.S.A.; interested in dance bands and cycling.

D. H. Webb, 38, Beltran Road, Fulham, **London, S.W.6,** wants correspondents; sport and stamps.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEA!

(*Continued from page* 12.)

"Hear, hear!"

"But—but——"

"Have a sandwich before you start," said Fatty Wynn, holding out one to Arthur Augustus. "They're really quite good."

Fatty Wynn ought to have known about that, for he had already consumed more than a dozen. D'Arcy waved the proffered sandwich back.

"How can you possibly eat at such a moment, you howwid boundah?" he exclaimed.

Fatty Wynn stared.

"Because I'm hungry," he said.

"I wegard it as howwible!"

"Rats! At a time like this, you ought to eat to keep your pecker up," said Fatty Wynn. "Besides, we can consider this in the light of a funeral, and this is the funeral feed. I'm burying him with ham—see?"

"You howwid wottah!"

"Are you going in, Gussy?"

"Weally, you know——"

"I don't think we ought to return without the body," said Manners, with a shake of the head.

D'Arcy stripped off his jacket, and his other things followed. Even at such a moment the swell of St. Jim's was not inclined to spoil his clothes.

"Vewy well, deah boys," he said. "I'll go in."

"Go it!"

"Bravo!"

"I don't suppose I shall find him, but I'll do my best, deah boys."

Splash!

Arthur Augustus dived into the sea where Lowther had gone in, and disappeared. Then the boat rocked as Monty Lowther, quite alive and cheerful, climbed in on the other side. He had been hanging on there all the time, concealed by the gunwale from D'Arcy's eyes, though all the others, of course, knew that he was there.

The juniors grinned as he climbed in.

"I feel quite wet," Lowther remarked. "I suppose there's not any special objection to my changing into Gussy's clothes?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther tore off his wet things, and towelled himself down. On the shining sea the head of Arthur Augustus appeared. The swell of St. Jim's was panting. The juniors bunched round Lowther to conceal him from D'Arcy's eye as the swell of St. Jim's looked towards the boat.

"I can't find him, deah boys."

"Have another try," said Kerr encouragingly.

"I'm afwaid it's useless."

"Never mind, go it! You can't expect to murder people in this reckless way, without a little trouble afterwards," said Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr——"

"Oh, have another try!"

"Vewy well."

The swell of St. Jim's disappeared under the water again.

Lowther puffed and blew from his vigorous towelling, and began to dress himself in D'Arcy's clothes. They were a size too small for Monty Lowther, but they were dry, and that was something.

No. 33. Vol. 1. (New Series.)

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling

Hallo, everybody! Smile, please—as the photographer-turned-dentist remarked to his victim. Buck Finn tells me lots of American houses are on rollers. When the occupier hears a burglar, he just creeps down and pushes the house to the police station! As the coalman said, finding the house on fire: "Where shall I put the coal, ma'am?" A cold splash starts the day well, says an authority. But what if we don't like grapefruit? Here's some advice: Don't be a fisherman or a shepherd if you don't want to live by hook or by crook! A reader asks: My dog keeps barking at night. What shall I give it? Why not give it away? 'Nother inquirer: Why do barristers wear wigs in court? To distinguish them from the prisoners, old chap! The difficulty is that even pawnbrokers have "redeeming" features! I hear a diver has written his autobiography. Deep stuff! When Mr. Ratcliff made a speech at the Governors' meeting, it wasn't important—just self-important! Third Form Room flashes: Mr. Selby frowned at D'Arcy minor. "Construct a sentence using the word 'archaic,'" he ordered. D'Arcy minor replied: "Can we have archaic (our cake) and eat it, too?" But it was Curly Gibson who thought a chiropodist was a man who taught canaries to sing. Then there was the film star who, trapped in the burning building, refused to jump into the life-net below. He wanted his "double" to do it! "Nice to wake up and find yourself famous," sighed Crooke. "I found myself famous—and then woke up!" grunted Mellish. Kangaroo has an old iron-bound chest which he can't open. Just label it "WITH CARE" and send it somewhere by rail, Kangy! Do you know any good football jokes? inquires a reader. I do, old chap, but I mustn't mention any names! Two octogenarians met outside the school gates. "Why," exclaimed one, "it's old Jackson! Don't you remember me fagging for you when we were boys?" "Bend over!" said the other octogenarian laconically. Did you hear about the absent-minded mechanic who crawled underneath his bed to sleep? Reilly and Kerruish took their radio set with them when they went camping. As the loud-speaker remarked when the last shred of their tent blew away: "Some wind probable; outlook stormy!" New House did a Shakespeare play the other day. The spotlight throughout was thrown on George Figgins. He was luckier to get nothing heavier! Mr. Ratcliff likes to open his meal with an appetiser. We often open our study tea with a tin opener. As Nero put it—keep the Rome fires burning! I'll be seeing you, chums!

Our Seven Days' Weather Forecast; ? ? ! ! ? ? ? (Copyright).

Eastwood League

REDCLYFFE ROUTED

It's a Shame to Take

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone

St. Jim's match against Redclyffe away has opened at a fast and furious pace. Judd and his men were late on the field, but now the whistle's blown, they're playing up like tigers. It's a job to follow the ball as it bobs to and fro at a rapid speed. By Jove, here come Redclyffe, swooping down on the St. Jim's citadel. Boomph! Judd shoots hard and straight, but Fatty Wynn drops on one knee, gathers the ball to his podgy bosom, and boots it well away up the field. Saints are in motion again, swift and eager, but Judd & Co. stem their attack and are soon bearing down on Fatty Wynn's goal again. I've never seen anything like these Redclyffians for pace—if they can keep this up, it'll be a giddy miracle! Wham! Judd lets fly again, but this time with more pace than direction. The leather clears the bar, Fatty Wynn's leap being a mere precautionary measure. A ball sometimes drops unexpectedly, as Fatty well knows.

On with the game—Saints are getting into their stride now, and Blake and Merry pepper the Redclyffe keeper with shots which, at times, the latter is somewhat lucky to save. Play swings back into the Saints' half now, with the Redclyffe forwards as eager as ever for goals. Judd, a dashing leader, tricks a defender and smashes home a real pile-driver which Wynn touches but cannot stop. Redclyffe one up, and deservedly.

Now, are the Saints "rattled"? Not a bit of it! Merry and his men, steady as rocks, resume with grim determination, but there is no wild kicking. Merry sends Gussy, my major, away with a smooth long pass, and Gus makes ground as swift as a deer. The ball swings across. Merry leaps, gets his head to it, twists his neck and pops the sphere just past the outstretched fingers of the Redclyffe goalkeeper—scores level, one all! Great stuff, Gus and Merry!

Now it's a different story. Where are the storming R away in th bellows to them! St out game, the upper possession the keeper, to one! in motion crowns a number th vain across Resumin dash which match—bu ocity, and the sticks. short-lived men are se much as th ill-timed ef yourselves are so fit th the match. Judd and Blake of jesters, and winds better keep stopped. murmuring points? think of it playing in Judd wher There goes from Kang five yards with a lugu Saints are blown, and rushes up ram home never ever Eight to o time, Judd

SMART ST. FRANK'S RECOVERY

Special Message by Phone

Visiting Bagshot, Nipper and his men met with an early reverse, Cecil Pankley netting a great first-minute goal which so galvanised his team that for a while they were all over St. Frank's. Nearing the interval, however, Nipper led a lightning raid, and Tregellis-West headed the equaliser. During the second half St. Frank's, by untiring and skilful play, took command of the game, and Nipper and Pitt each added a goal. Handforth gave a great display of goalkeeping throughout, holding the Bagshot sharpshooters at bay!

REDCLYFF
Judd

BAGSHOT
Pankley

CLAREMON
GREYFRIA
ST. JUDE'S

Leading
now: St.
combe Gr
St. Frank'
table and
and Rive
Claremont

Week Ending September 29th, 1934.

OUTED BY SAINTS

o Take the Points

storming Redclyffians who took our breath away in the first few minutes? They've got bellows to mend, that's what's wrong with them! St. Jim's, playing a fast, well-thought-out game, suddenly find themselves with the upper hand. Merry feints when in possession in front of goal and beats Bellairs, the keeper, all ends up! Saints leading, two to one! And no sooner has the ball been set in motion again than D'Arcy, my major, crowns a brilliant run by crashing home number three for St. Jim's, Bellairs diving in vain across his goal. Half-time, 3—1.

Resuming, Redelyffe show us a little of the dash which startled us at the beginning of the match—but they haven't quite the old ferocity, and Fatty Wynn is safe and sure between the sticks. As before, the rush is fierce but short-lived, and very soon Tom Merry and his men are settling down to run the game pretty much as they please. Redclyffe's gallant but ill-timed efforts show that it is no good playing yourselves out at a reckless pace unless you are so fit that you can keep it up right through the match. Merry nets again with a low shot, and Blake adds number five. Lowther, king of jesters, puts in a spot of pretty dribbling, and winds up with a cross-drive which better keepers than Bellairs would not have stopped. Six to one! Do I hear someone murmuring that it's a shame to take the points? In footer, though, a team has to think of its goal average, that is, when it is playing in a league. I guess this will show Judd where he ought to make a few changes. There goes number seven, a smashing shot from Kangaroo at centre-half from twenty-five yards out. Bellairs tosses the ball out with a lugubrious expression, as well he may. Saints are pressing as the final whistle is blown, and on the very stroke of time Figgins rushes up from his position at right-back to ram home a cannon-ball shot which Bellairs never even sees! That's the lot—pheeeep! Eight to one for St. Jim's. Better luck next time, Judd, old chap!

FULL RESULTS:

REDCLYFFE ... Judd	...	1	ST. JIM'S ... Merry (3), D'Arcy, Blake, Lowther, Noble, Figgins.	8
BAGSHOT ... Lankley.	...	1	ST. FRANK'S ... Tregellis-West, Nipper, Pitt.	3
CLAREMONT	...	0	RYLCOMBE G. S.	3
GREYFRIARS	...	5	ROOKWOOD ...	2
ST. JUDE'S	...	0	HIGHCLIFFE ...	2

Leading teams in the Eastwood League are now: St. Jim's, 6 pts., goals 17—3; Rylcombe Grammar School, 6 pts., goals 10—2; St. Frank's, 6 pts., goals 14—4. Full League table and reports of games between St. Jim's and River House and St. Frank's versus Claremont, next week.

Flying Squad Report

"CRAZY FLYERS" BOMBED

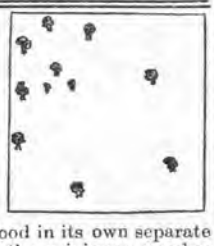
News of formation of Rylcombe Grammar School "Crazy Flyers" aroused St. Jim's Flying Squad. Crazy Flyers commanded by Gordon Gay. First exploit of Crazy Flyers was a surprise raid on St. Jim's, while Flying Squad were on Little Side. Various sports trophies taken from Flying Squad studies. Gay sent note to effect that trophies would be returned if Flying Squad admitted Crazy Flyers top dogs! Chief Air Marshal Merry called conclave after classes and reviewed all warplanes in quad. Massed planes flew to Rylcombe and loaded up with bombs—over-ripe fruit of every description—at local greengrocer's. Flying Squad in full majesty zoomed over Rylcombe Grammar School, catching Gordon Gay and Crazy Flyers at football practice. Flying Squad flew straight on to pitch and let fly with bodyline bombardment! Direct hits scored on Gay and Monk—juicy "bombs" bursting over them. Crazy Flyers caught on hop, and fled in all directions, covered with smashed "bombs"! Under Gay's exhortation, they rallied at safe distance—but too late! St. Jim's Flying Squad had reached gates and were retiring in good order from enemy base! Flying Squad reached St. Jim's in triumph—a detachment under Blake having recovered trophies from Grammarians' studies while main body of Flying Squad routed Crazy Flyers!

THE FAG'S LAMENT

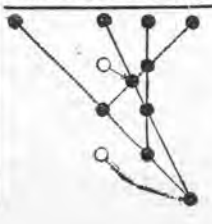
There ain't no sense sitting on a bench
All by myself in the Form-room.
There ain't no thrill writing out Virgil
All by myself in the Form-room.
There ain't no fun fidgeting with my heels
Listening to the shouts, out on the playing fields.
Selby's a beast—two hours at least
All by myself in the Form-room!

(With apologies to the publishers of "All by Yourself in the Moonlight.")

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER



Farmer Blunt had a field containing eleven trees, and he wanted to fence off every tree so that it stood in its own separate plot of land, but using the minimum number of straight fences. Kerr showed him the way to do it with four fences—can you see how?



Solution of Last Week's Puzzle

Monty Lowther dressed himself rapidly. D'Arcy's head came up beside the boat.

"I'm afraid it's no go, you fellows!"

"You're not going to leave him there, are you, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry reproachfully. "Think of his uncle's feelings."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Now, look here, Gussy——"

"Help me into the boat."

Tom Merry glanced round. Monty Lowther had almost finished dressing, and was sitting on a thwart, putting on D'Arcy's shoes.

"Oh, all right, you can come in!"

He lent D'Arcy a hand into the boat.

The swell of St. Jim's clambered in, and caught sight of Monty Lowther calmly sitting there. The elegant junior stared—and stared.

"Gweat Scott!"

CHAPTER 9.
Strangers.

"HA, ha, ha!"

The juniors simply shrieked at the expression upon the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He was gazing at Monty Lowther as if the latter were a ghost.

Lowther, without even looking up, went on quietly doing up his shoes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you are not dwowned?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther looked up.

"Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah! You—you are not dwowned?"

"I hardly think so," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "I don't feel drowned, at all events. Do I look drowned?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"I'm not even wet," said Lowther blandly.

"How—how did this happen? You fell into the watah, and we all thought—or pewwaps only I thought—you had gone to the bottom. How did you come up?"

"Oh, I came up, and swam under water round the boat!" Monty Lowther explained cheerfully. "I hung on there till you dived overboard."

D'Arcy gasped.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottah!"

"Well, you know, I was in mortal terror," said Lowther. "You looked so awfully ferocious, I simply dared not enter the boat."

"You—you——"

"I had to wait for you to cool down. Even now I'm feeling frightfully nervous."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of St. Jim's breathed hard through his nose. He realised that it was a "rag," and his noble blood was at boiling point.

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aftah this aftahnoon I shall uttahly decline to wegard you as fwiends. I dwop your acquaintance all wound."

"Oh, Gussy—Gussy!"

The swell of St. Jim's waved his hand.

"I don't know you any longah," he said. "As for you, in particulah, Monty Lowthah, I wish to impwess upon you nevah to speak to me again."

And the swell of St. Jim's looked round the boat for his clothes.

He found Lowther's wet clothes, but his own were on Lowther's limbs, and for the moment the swell of the Fourth did not notice that circumstance.

"Bai Jove! These are not my clothes!" he exclaimed, looking round. "They are somebody else's beastly clothes, and they're all wet!"

The juniors rowed on. No one replied to D'Arcy. The oarsmen kept their eyes steadily before them, and the others scanned the sea and the cliffs. No one appeared to hear D'Arcy speak.

"I wepeat," exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's warmly, "these are not my clothes! Who has taken my clothes?"

Silence.

"Tom Mewwy, you ass——"

Tom Merry looked at him.

"Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then kindly refrain from doing so again," said Tom Merry, with dignity. "I dislike being talked to by strangers!"

"Eh? What?"

Tom Merry looked away again.

"Stwangahs!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "What do you mean, you fwabjous ass?"

"I mean that I don't know you."

"What?"

"You've dropped my acquaintance—consequently, I don't know you. I decline to talk to a chap I don't know!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

Tom Merry waved his hand chidingly.

"Please don't address me," he said. "I was always shy with strangers; and I really don't like it."

"You uttah ass!"

Tom Merry did not appear to hear. He rowed on steadily.

D'Arcy gave him a wrathful look and turned to Manners.

"Mannahs, deah boy——"

Manners did not even look at him.

"Mannahs, have you seen my clothes?"

"Eh!"

"Have you seen my clothes?" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Possibly. I'm not in the habit of specially noticing clothes worn by strangers, however. Kindly do not address me."

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"I dislike very much having strangers' conversation forced upon me."

"You fwabjous ass!"

D'Arcy looked round the boat. He recognised his clothes. He made a step towards the humorist of the Shell, his face pink with wrath.

"Lowthah, you howwid wottah, you have got my clothes on!"

Lowther stared steadily out to sea without answering.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caught him by the shoulder and jerked at him.

"Lowthah, you wottah——"

"Hallo!"

"Give me my clothes!"

"Eh? Who are you?"

"You know who I am, you dweadful ass!"

Lowther shook his head solemnly.

"Not at all," he replied. "Not in the least! I don't know you. I've seen you before. I believe you're a St. Jim's chap, aren't you? But I don't know you."

"Give me my clothes!"

"Please don't speak to me."

"I insist——"

"It is impossible for me to hold a conversation with a fellow I don't know," said Monty Lowther. "Pray desist."

"I must have my clothes!"

Lowther did not reply.

"Lowthah, you ass—Lowthah!"

Still silence.

The swell of St. Jim's shook the Shell fellow by the shoulder.

Monty Lowther gazed round appealingly to the others.

"Lend a hand to keep this idiot off me!" he exclaimed. "I don't know him, but he persists in forcing his acquaintance upon me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Lowthah—— Oh!"

Kerr and Manners and Blake took hold of Gussy and sat him down upon a thwart. The swell of St. Jim's gazed at them in helpless fury.

"You—you fwabjous beasts!"

"Sit there!" said Blake severely. "It's bad enough to have a stranger in the boat, spoiling the harmony of the party—especially a chap who goes about like a giddy Fiji Islander, without any clothes on——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"But we can't have a stranger rowing with a fellow we know. Sit tight!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I——"

"Then we'll drop you overboard and trail you along after the boat," said Tom Merry.

"I should wefuse to be twailed aftah the boat."

"Will you keep order?"

"Certainly not! I am goin' to thwash Lowthah and take my clothes off him!"

"There's a rope here," said Figgins. "We could tie him up, if you like."

"Good egg!"

"I wefuse to be tied up! I——"

"Lowther's clothes are pretty nearly dry now," Kerr remarked. "Could you let him have them—I mean, could we trust them with a stranger?"

"I wefuse to dwess in them. I——"

"Better let him have them," said Tom Merry. "There's an excursion steamer yonder, and it will pass pretty near us—and there are ladies on board."

D'Arcy turned the colour of a beetroot. He made a wild grab at Monty Lowther's clothes, and was dressed in them in record time.

CHAPTER 10.
Exploring the Cave!

THE juniors pulled in nearer the shore, Arthur Augustus sitting in an attitude of chilling dignity in the boat. But the other fellows did not appear to observe it. They did not know D'Arcy now—and they were keeping it up till the swell of St. Jim's should come round.

The blaze of the sun had dried Lowther's clothes, and D'Arcy found them dry enough; what worried him chiefly was the fit of them. Besides, Lowther's colour scheme was more florid than suited D'Arcy's taste.

Arthur Augustus was very particular on the subject of stripes and spots. But it could not be helped now, and the swell of St. Jim's had to put up with it.

It was what Arthur Augustus would have called roughing it with a vengeance.

Big black cliffs rose against the sea as the boat pulled in—big soaring cliffs, penetrated by the deep green gullies, or coombs, which would be climbed by active climbers to reach the road over the cliffs inland.

The sea boomed and broke on the sand and shingle at the base of the echoing coombs. All looked dark and solitary; though here and there holiday-makers on the cliffs could be seen.

"Well, this looks as jolly lonely as the island on the Pacific, the time we were looking for the giddy treasure," Blake remarked.

Arthur Augustus opened his lips to say: "Yaas, wathah!" but closed them again with the words unuttered, remembering that he and the other fellows were strangers yet.

"Yes, doesn't it?" said Figgins. "Just the place to look for a shipwrecked chap who can't get off. Some of those coombs can't possibly be climbed, you see; and a chap chucked in there by the sea would be a prisoner, unless he could swim out."

"That's where we shall find him," said Kerr.

"I think so," said Tom Merry.

The boat pulled closer in.

It was certainly a likely theory that the juniors were following up; though on such an extent of wild coast the search was likely to be very like that of looking for a needle in a bundle of hay.

Mile upon mile of giant cliffs stretched there, and the searching of them would be the work probably of weeks and months.

But the juniors were hopeful.

"Land here and begin," said Jack Blake.

"Right-ho!"

It looked a lovely spot. The sea ran in with curling foam between two big masses of cliffs, and farther on shelving sand ran from the water's edge to the edge of a thick cluster of wood.

The juniors ran the boat upon the sand and jumped ashore.

Round them the cliffs rose in great walls of rocks, and three hundred yards above them, at least, could be seen the tops, clothed in green. The rocks were inaccessible to a climber, offering hardly foothold enough for a seagull.

Kerr nodded his head in a convincing way.

"Suppose our boat were biffed on the rocks now," he remarked, "and suppose we couldn't swim. What could we do? Simply send a note out to sea in one of the ginger-beer bottles."

"Yes, rather!"

"Here's a cave!" said Figgins.

The cove into which the juniors had rowed was a small one—they could have examined the surroundings quite simply without moving from the spot. In the midst of the cliffs, a deep, dark cavern opened, and it was plain that

if the castaway was in the cove at all, he had taken refuge in the cave.

"That's where we begin," said Tom Merry. "Get out the candles, you chaps."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors were excited now. Whether the castaway was there or not, there was something thrillingly interesting in exploring a cave. It might have been used by smugglers in past time. There might be casks and old pistols, and perhaps even skeletons in the gloomy recesses. In the caves near to Clovelly they had found old boots and ginger-beer bottles, relics of modern trippers, but this cave was too far off the beaten track for that.

The candles were lighted, and the juniors plunged into the cave. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hesitated whether he should follow.

He finally decided to do so.

Blake and the others stared at him as he entered the cavern.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "What's this stranger doing round here? I say, you fellow, who are you?"

"Really, Blake——"

"I'm sorry," said Tom Merry gently, but firmly, "but we can't allow chaps we don't know to join our party."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Anybody here know this chap?"

"Nobody!"

"Then I must ask you to walk farther off, you stranger."

"You uttah ass! I should wemain in the boat, but I am convinced that you fellows will get into some feahful twouble unless I am here to look aftah you," said the swell of St. Jim's indignantly. "That is my only weason for comin'."

"I am afraid I can't discuss the matter," said Tom Merry. "My grandmother always warned me against being too ready to enter into conversation with strangers."

"Same here," said Blake. "Who is this chap who keeps on persisting in talking to fellows he doesn't know?"

"You feahful, fwabjous chumps!"

"I say, come on, you fellows!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "We shall lose all the afternoon if you hang about talking to chance acquaintances like this."

"Quite right! Come on!"

The juniors marched on into the cave, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bringing up the rear. The cave narrowed as they advanced, as if the big rocks were going to close up their path altogether, but the opening ran on in a narrow tunnel, and then it widened again. Right into the heart of the cliffs the tunnel ran.

The candles flared and flickered as they walked on. Round them the cave widened and narrowed in turn, and the candle-light gleamed and glistened on the surface of the rough rock.

When they spoke their voices had a hollow, booming sound, echoing strangely in the hollows of the rock.

"My hat!" said Manners. "Look here, the chap can't have come right in here, even if he was wrecked in the gully yonder."

"Might have," said Figgins. "He might have followed this cave to see if it would lead out anywhere inland. It must run a good way through the cliff, anyway, considering how far we've followed it."

"Well, that's possible."

"Anyway, we may as well explore it to the end," said Kerr. "It doesn't look as if there had been any smugglers here, though, does it? I haven't seen any casks or skeletons, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh rang weirdly and eerily through the cavern.

"Blessed if it doesn't seem to be getting on without a blessed end at all!" said Tom Merry, holding up his candle and peering ahead. "The direction has changed several times, and I don't think we're going inland now."

"Can't possibly tell here."

"I suppose not; but I think we're following the coast, and if the tunnel has an opening it will be in another coomb along the sea."

"Well, we'll see," said Blake, pushing on ahead.

"Mind! The rock's slippery here!"

"Oh, I'm all right—— My hat!"

Blake's foot slipped as he spoke.

There was a sudden slope in the rocky floor of the cave, and Blake went down the slope, slipping before he could save himself.

His candle whisked out, and his voice rang in a startled cry as he went headlong into the darkness.

Tom Merry dashed forward, holding up his candle.

"Blake! Blake!"

"Look out! You'll be in, too!" shrieked Lowther, grasping his chum by the shoulder.

They halted on the sloping rock.

(Continued on the next page.)

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Before them lay a deep, black opening as they held forward the candles—and into the gloomy abyss Jack Blake had disappeared.

CHAPTER 11.
Safe!

TOM MERRY & CO. stood frozen with horror.

They gazed with white, scared faces at the gloomy abyss opening almost at their feet, into which their chum had vanished.

"Good heavens!" muttered Lowther. "He's gone!"

"Blake! Blake!"

"It mayn't be deep," Figgins muttered. "I—I thought I heard a splash!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Blake! Blake!"

"Hold me by the hand so that I can get nearer the edge and look down," said Tom Merry, in a low voice.

"Mind, it's risky!"

"All right!"

Lowther took Tom Merry's left hand, and Manners took Lowther's, and the rest of the juniors held on to Manners. Thus Tom Merry drew near the edge of the abyss, and with his free hand held the candle over it.

The light flickered and wavered in a strong draught.

"Blake! Blake!"

Tom Merry's voice rang out loudly with deep echoes in the hollows of the rock.

"Blake!"

He could not see far into the deep gloom of the chasm. He listened with straining ears for a reply from below. Where was Blake? How deep was the abyss?

Was Blake stretched in death upon the cruel rocks deep below? The thought was like a hand of iron clutching at the junior's heart.

"Blake! Blake!"

"Hallo!"

It was a faint, echoing shout from below.

Tom Merry's heart leaped.

"Blake! That you?"

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven!"

Tom Merry breathed a sigh of relief. There was a murmur from the juniors behind him. They had heard Blake's voice, too, and it had lifted a load of anxiety from their hearts.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I've been feelin' howwible, you know. It was simply dweadful."

"Blake!"

"Hallo!"

"Are you hurt?"

"I think I've twisted my ankle a bit. It hurts," came Blake's voice in reply. "I fell in about three feet of water, though, and I think that saved me. I've got out of it. I'm sitting on a rock. Are you showing a light?"

"Yes."

"I can't see it. The rock bulges out here over my head, I think. But I can see light in the distance here. I think this is near the end of the tunnel."

"Daylight?"

"It must be."

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps we had bettah dwop down aftah Blake, you know——"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "There may be no way back again. One of us had better go after him, and I think I'd better be the one."

"Bosh!"

"Stuff! Better let me go," said Figgins. "You see——"

"Weally, Figgins, as Blake's special chum, I——"

"Oh, you're strangers now, you know."

"Pway don't be an ass!"

"Shut up a minute while I speak to Blake," said Tom Merry. He bent over the verge of the abyss again. "Blake, old man!"

"Hallo! I'm still here!"

"How's your foot?"

"Only pains a bit."

"Can you climb?"

"No."

"Move at all?"

"Yes. I think I had better get along here out into the daylight. If I come out into a coomb you can bring the boat along and take me off."

"Good egg! But how will you let us know?"

There was a long pause.

"Ask me another," said Blake at last.

"I'm coming down after you," said Tom Merry.

"Don't, it's too risky."

"How deep do you think you dropped?"

"Twenty feet at least."

"Well, if you can drop twenty feet, I can drop twenty feet," said Tom Merry. "You're not going to stick there alone."

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "One of us can dodge back and get a rope from the boat. We brought plenty of ropes. Then it will be safe."

"Doesn't he think of things?" said Figgins admiringly. "This is what comes of being a blessed Scotsman, you know."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "You buzz back, Kerr, and be as quick as you can."

"You bet."

And Kerr ran off with flickering candle. The juniors occupied the time while he was gone with arguing which of them should join Blake. Arthur Augustus, as Blake's own chum in the Fourth Form, claimed the right to go.

"It's all wot!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "If Hewwies or Dig had been here, they might claim it, but I'm Blake's only weal chum, and I'm bound to go."

"That's all very well," said Manners. "But you don't know Blake now."

"Ass!"

"We can't trust a stranger to look after Blake——"

"Weally, you silly ass——"

"So I'd better go," said Figgins. "I'm in the Fourth Form, and Blake's in the Fourth, and that's a good reason. We can't trust Shell fellows on a job of this sort."

"Yaas, I agwee with you there, Figgay, but I considah——"

"Rats!"

"Oh, Figgy can't go!" said Lowther briefly. "Figgy is our host, and he's bound to put himself in the background."

Figgins sniffed.

"Quite wight!" said D'Arcy. "I'm sure Figgay will not neglect the unwitten wules of etiquette. Figgins is off. You see, I'm bound to go."

"I'm going," said Tom Merry. "I'm skipper of the party, and I'm bound to show the way. Besides, the Shell always leads."

"Wats!"

"Let's leave it to Blake," suggested Manners.

"Bai Jove! That's a good ideah. I nevah thought of that, you know."

"Blake, old man!"

"Hallo!"

"One of us is coming down to keep you company! Who will you have?"

"Oh, any old thing will do!" said Blake cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Toss up for it," suggested Blake.

"Good ideah! I nevah thought of that, eithah!"

And the juniors tossed up for it, by candlelight, and Tom Merry won.

By that time Kerr was back with the rope.

The end of the rope was fastened round the hero of the Shell, under the armpits, and he slid over the edge of the chasm.

"Careful!" he muttered. "This rock has a sharp edge here—it's like a knife."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The rope slid out.

Tom Merry swung into the darkness of the abyss, his boot scraping against the rock as he turned on the rope. His candle went out in the draught, and he was left in darkness.

He felt his way with his hands against the wall of the rock.

"Blake, where are you?"

"Here!" came the echoing answer from the blackness.

"Keep away from under me, in case of accidents."

"It's all right. I'm under the rock. You couldn't fall on me if you tried!" said Blake cheerfully.

"I can hear the rope scratching on the rock. If it goes—— Oh!"

The rope parted with a twang.

Tom Merry shot downwards.

Almost before he cried out he was plunging up to his waist in icy water.

CHAPTER 12.
On the Track!

TOM MERRY'S fall, however, had been a short one, and he was not hurt.

He floundered in the water, still holding tight to the candle. Blake's voice came from the gloom.

"My hat! Are you hurt, Tommy?"

"N-no!" Tom Merry gasped. "Only a shock! Ow! I'm wet up to the waist, and it's horribly cold!"

"Yes; I've found it so!"

"Grooogh!"

"Got any matches?" asked Blake.

"Yes, that's all right."

Tom Merry carried a book of matches in the top pocket of his coat. He groped for it, and fortunately it was not wet. He struck a match above the level of the water, and after some attempts succeeded in getting the candle-wick alight.

The juniors above were calling down anxiously.

"I'm all hight," Tom Merry shouted back, "only the rope's gone."

"Bai Jove!"

"The rock's cut through it."

"That's rotten!" said Figgins, from the top. "It looks as if we shan't be able to pull either of you up."

"It's impossible; the rope would part, and it would take longer pulling up than letting down, too. There's no chance."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Follow the tunnel to the end, and see what comes of it."

"Then we'll wait here?"

"Yes; it's all right. It won't take long; I can see daylight."

"We've found him!" exclaimed Blake, as the two juniors heard a groan. Tom Merry did not reply; he entered the cave, to see the tattered figure of a man stretched on the ground. His face was pale and emaciated, and his eyes turned wildly upon the juniors. "Help!" he muttered feebly.

Tom Merry's candle flickered on rough walls of wet rock. At his feet flowed sea-water, and as it was flowing outwards he could tell that the tide was not coming in. But it showed that the tunnel was on a very low level.

"My hat!" Tom Merry muttered. "When the tide turns, I dare say this place will be full up. How ripping for us!"

Blake grunted.

"We should be drowned like giddy rats in a trap," he said. "Let's buzz."

The candlelight showed Blake sitting on a rock projecting from the water. The tunnel, as it ran on, was flooded, but in no place to a depth of more than three feet.

Tom Merry held out his hand to Blake.

"Can you walk if I help you?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so. I can't climb, but I can hop along if you let me lean on you, and lend a hand."

"I hope it's not serious, old chap!"

"Oh, it's only a sprain. I've had things as bad on the footer field," said Blake, with undiminished cheerfulness; "and it doesn't hurt much, excepting when I move. Let's get off. We're starting, you fellows!"

"Right-ho! We're waiting here till we hear news from you," sang back Figgins.

"Good!"

Tom Merry and Blake, wading sometimes waist deep, sometimes knee-deep, followed the course of the tunnel. The candle went out again, but Tom Merry did not trouble to relight it. The gleam of daylight was clear before them, and the opening of the tunnel was in sight.

Jack Blake leaned heavily upon the Shell fellow's arm. In spite of his cheerfulness, the injury to his ankle hurt him considerably.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Tom Merry, at last.

The water ran on into a little cave, embosomed in cliffs. The juniors trod out upon the rock, and looked about them.

They were in a little embayment of the cliffs. Before them the sea rolled, wide and blue, in the distance, but they could catch only a narrow glimpse of it, so close were the big, towering cliffs. Round them and behind them the cliffs rose like great walls of rocks, crowned with trees and thickets.

At high tide it was certain the sand at their feet would be covered with water, several feet deep at least. Then the tunnel through which they had come would be blocked with water, and impassible. If the tide caught them there, they could only climb up the cliffs for safety, and the cliffs could not be climbed to any great height, for the rocks were steep and in places overhanging.

"The tide won't turn for an hour at least," Tom Merry said, looking at the sea.

Blake nodded.

"We ought to have the boat round here by that time," he said, "but I doubt if the boat could get near here. The chaps will have to come over the cliffs, and let down a rope to us."

Tom Merry gazed about him.

"But where are we, exactly, I wonder?" he said. "This can't be very far from the coomb where we left the boat; but——"

"But where is it? That's the question. It's to the southward, anyway," said Blake. "I feel pretty sure of that."

"Yes, I think so," said Tom Merry, looking out to sea. "But——"

"Better cut back and tell the fellows to get back to the boat, and come along the coast," said Blake. "It's no good their following us here this way. We should be shut in here by the tide, with no escape."

"Quite right. You'll be all right if I leave you?"

"Yes, I'll bathe my ankle in sea-water—it will do it good."

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry plunged back into the tunnel.

Without Blake to help, he traversed it quickly, and in a few minutes he caught the gleam of a candle in the gloom overhead, and he knew that he was near the spot where Blake had fallen in.

"Hallo!" he called out.

"Hallo!" came back Figgins' voice.

"We've found the outlet," Tom Merry called up. "There's no way from it, though—it's quite shut in. You fellows get back to the boat, and go along the shore south. You'll come right upon us that way. It can't be far."

"Right you are, Tommy!"

"Au revoir, then!"

Tom Merry returned the way he had come, and joined Blake in the little cove. Blake was sitting on a rock with his foot immersed in the water, bathing the swollen ankle. He held something in his hands—a fragment of wreckage he had picked up in the sand, and held it up as Tom Merry joined him.

"Look at that!" he said.

It was a fragment of a broken boat. On it were painted several letters, and the junior looked at them in deep interest.

"Red W——"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The Red Wing!"

CHAPTER 13.
The Castaway!

THERE was no doubt that the fragment of wreckage had belonged to the schooner Red Wing—the wrecked vessel of which the juniors were in search.

There was little doubt now that the wreck had really been on the Devon coast, as Kerr had worked out from the message in the bottle.

The mystery of the sea was becoming clear. The wreck had been on these rocks, and perhaps in this cove lingered the castaway, shut in by inaccessible cliffs, who had sent that message floating in the bottle to summon help.

"By George," said Blake, "I think it's pretty clear now! Kerr worked it out all right. The wreck was along here somewhere."

Tom Merry looked round.

"And this is just the place where the man might be!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. If he were tossed in here by the sea, he certainly couldn't get away again, unless he were a first-class swimmer, and then he would have about even chances of getting drowned."

Tom Merry's eyes scanned the cove, and the grim, frowning rocks.

If part of the wreckage of the Red Wing had been washed into the little cove, it was quite possible that the castaway had been washed there, too. But in that case, where was he?

When had he sent that message on the waters? Doubtless on the morning after the wreck, when he had found that it was impossible to escape inland. What had happened to him since? Wrecked probably without food of any sort, he must have famished since. He might have fallen into some desperate hole in the cliffs, or he might have tried to escape by water, and had been drowned. His hope that the message in the bottle would be found could have been very slight.

"Poor chap," said Tom Merry in a low tone. "I wonder——"

"He may be here," said Blake.

"But where?"

"Let's look for him."

"Can you walk?"

Blake grinned faintly.

"I can limp," he said. "Come on."

The juniors had nothing to do while they waited for the boat to come. They moved slowly along the cove, and Tom Merry called out at intervals, in case there should be anyone within hearing.

But no reply came to their call.

If the castaway was there he could not hear—or he would not answer. Tom Merry paused suddenly, and stooped down in the sand. He picked up a cap—a sailor's cap, and held it up for Blake to see.

"Somebody's been here," said Blake in a hushed voice.

"Looks like it."

"And look here!"

On the rocks lay a broken tobacco pipe.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. They were on the track, he felt sure.

"He's here, Blake," he whispered.

"By Jove, I believe so!"

"But—but——"

"Why doesn't he answer, then?"

"He might be asleep somewhere," said Tom Merry, in a shaking voice.

Blake did not reply. The same thought was in both minds, that they might stumble upon a dead body in their search, and the juniors felt their hearts beat faster at the thought.

The sun was blazing down upon them, and the juniors were soon dry, and they were thirsty, too.

Tom Merry had brought a bottle of ginger-beer and some sandwiches along in a small haversack, and he took out the ginger-beer. Blake touched his arm.

"Hold on, Tommy!"

"What do you mean?"

"If that chap has been shut up here, he can't have been able to get anything to drink. There is no fresh water here at all, unless some of the rain was left in the crevices. Keep that, in case we find him!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Quite right, Jack; I ought to have thought of that. Come on!"

And the bottle remained unopened.

They tramped along the rocks, searching for a clue, but not finding one. Near the tunnel by which they had entered the cove, a deep cave opened in the cliff.

They paused as they came to it.

"Just where a chap might creep for shelter!" Blake whispered.

"Yes."

"Let's look, anyway."

The crevice was deep in shadow. Tom Merry called out: "Is anybody here?"

He started as a faint sound came from the shadows.

It was a groan!

Blake clutched his arm.

"We've found him!"

Tom Merry did not reply; he entered the rocky cave. He stopped just in time to avoid stumbling over a man who lay stretched on the ground.

He was a young man, not more than thirty, with a pale, emaciated face, white through the sunburn on the skin.

His eyes, deep and hollow, turned wildly upon the juniors as they came into the cave.

He tried to raise himself upon his elbow, and sank back again from sheer exhaustion.

"Help!" he muttered feebly.

Tom Merry knelt by his side.

"We're here to help you," he said. "Are you James Calcroft, the mate of the schooner Red Wing?"

The man stared at them.

"Yes," he murmured.

"Good! We're here, searching for you!"

"Then—then——"

"We found the message in the bottle."

"Oh, Heaven be praised!"

The man was evidently utterly exhausted. He groaned again as Tom Merry took the bottle from his haversack and drew the cork.

"You are thirsty?" the junior asked.

The sailorman groaned.

"I'm dying of thirst!"

"Drink, then!"

Calcroft drank the ginger-beer eagerly. The slaking of his burning thirst seemed to put new life into the man.

He dragged himself to a sitting posture.

Light came into his eyes, and a trace of colour into his wan cheeks. He gazed at the boys with eyes a little less wild and haggard.

"Have you anything to eat with you?" he muttered.

"I've some sandwiches."

Tom Merry handed them to the castaway. It was pitiful to see how eagerly the man ate.

"Oh, thanks—thanks!" he murmured, when the sandwiches were gone. "I've eaten nothing for three days!"

The last morsel was eaten. Then Calcroft's strength seemed to be returning. He leaned back against a rock with a sigh of contentment.

"You found the bottle?" he asked.

"Yes; look here!"

Tom Merry showed him the half-decipherable document. The mate of the Red Wing looked at it with a peculiar expression upon his wan face.

"I never thought I should see it again," he said weakly, "and I couldn't climb the cliffs round the cove. I've tried, and I've twisted my leg by falling. There was no escape for me, and I thought I would die of hunger here. The rum bottle was thrown ashore with other things, and I

thought of sending a message to see in it. And that's saved my life—thanks to Providence!"

He scanned the paper again.

"It's been wetted by the sea-water," he said. "I fastened it up as tightly as I could. Some of the words are blotted out!"

"Yes; we had to guess a lot of it."

Calcroft looked over the message again.

"I can tell you how it should have read," he said. "This is how I wrote it: 'Wrecked on coast, shut in by cliffs, and cannot get inland. Cannot swim, and have no boat. I do not know where I am, but this place must be on the Devon coast. Help!' The word Devon is gone," he said. "How did you know I was on this coast at all, then? It might have been on any coast."

Tom Merry smiled.

"We thought of South Sea Islands at first," he said. "But Kerr—one of our chaps, you know—worked it out like a regular Sherlock Holmes. That's how we came along here looking for you!"

"Thank Heaven you came! You have saved my life. I've had nothing to eat for three days; nothing to drink except some rainwater I found in a crevice the first day. But it was dried up by the second, and there has been no rain since. Thank Heaven you came! You have a boat, I suppose?"

"We didn't come by boat."

Calcroft stared.

"You could not have come over the cliffs, surely?"

Tom Merry explained how they had arrived in the cove. The man gave a groan.

"Then the boat may not find you—you are lost, as well as I!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"The other chaps won't give up till they find us, anyway," he said. "It's all serene!"

Blake held up his hand.

"Hark!" he exclaimed.

Faintly through the air, echoing among the cliffs, came a distant shout.

"Hallo!"

CHAPTER 14.
The Rescue!

"HALLO!"

The hail echoed and re-echoed among the cliffs of the cove.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"That's our chaps," he said.

"What-ho!" said Blake. "Now we shan't be long!"

"Rather not! You don't mind if we leave you for a minute, Mr. Calcroft—we'll come back for you!"

"Ay, ay; it's all right now!"

Tom Merry and Blake went out of the cave. The shouting of the St. Jim's juniors echoed in the little cove, but they could not be seen. There was no sign of the boat on the sea or among the rocks of the little inlet.

Tom Merry looked round in surprise.

"Where are they?"

"Hallo!"

"They're shouting," said Blake. "Let's shout back!"

"Good! Give 'em a yell!"

And Tom Merry and Blake yelled together:

"Hallo, St. Jim's! Hallo!"

Their voices rang with a thousand echoes among the cliffs, startling the seagulls. From the distance a shout came back.

"Here we are!"

The voices sounded from above, and Tom Merry scanned the cliffs with a keen eye. A cap waved over the summit of a grey cliff and he recognised Monty Lowther.

"There they are, Blake!" he exclaimed, waving his hand.

"Jolly good!"

The two juniors ran towards the cliff, Blake limping. They had to stand some distance out from the base of it, however, to see the juniors on the top. The cliff was eighty feet high or more.

The St. Jim's juniors were bunched on the top of the cliff. Kerr carried a large coil of rope on his arm. They waved their caps to the fellows below.

"Here we are!" shouted Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Couldn't you get the boat round?" called out Tom Merry.

"Can't be did. The rocks are in the way, and the current would have dashed us on them. It's the most dangerous spot on the whole coast," said Figgins. "This is the part of Clovelly fishermen warned us to keep clear of."

"But it's all wight, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

(Continued on the next page.)

"Swop you my water pistol for your FRY'S"

But Smith minor isn't having any, thoughtful chap. He holds that a Fry's Monster Bar in the hand is worth two in the tuckshop when Third Lesson begins in half a minute . . . Offers half the bar + 1d. for pistol. Offer accepted.

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"We landed farthah up the shore; we're going along the cliffs looking for you."

"Jolly lucky we found you, too!" said Kerr. "If you hadn't heard us shouting——"

"But we did hear you!" said Tom Merry. "There's no way down here from where you are, and there's no way up there. You've got a rope?"

"Yes. Hundred feet!" said Kerr.

"Good! That will be plenty! It will stand two of us? Blake's got a lame foot!"

"That's all right!"

"Lower away, then!"

The rope came rattling down the face of the cliff. Tom Merry caught the end of it, and called out.

"That's enough!"

"All wight!"

"Here you are, Blake!"

Blake hesitated.

"Look here, I think I can manage——"

"Rats! I'm going to hold you!"

"The rope might give——"

"Oh, it's strong enough, and the cliff is smooth enough, too! It will be all right!"

Tom Merry fastened the rope under Blake's arms, and held on to it himself, and gave the signal for hauling.

The rope tightened at once.

"Pull away!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The rope strained and swung. The two juniors were pulled off their feet, and they swung against the face of the cliff.

"It's all right," muttered Tom Merry. "I've got you!"

He held Blake in one arm, and held the rope with his free hand, as they were dragged up the cliff.

Slowly they rose in the air.

Higher and higher!

Sea and sky seemed to swing round them, and the seagulls crossing the wide blue, seemed to be swooping upon them.

Higher and higher!

They were at the edge of the cliff.

"Oh!" groaned Blake.

His injured ankle had knocked on the cliff. Tom Merry's arm closed upon him more tightly.

"Buck up, old chap!"

Blake did not reply.

Higher! And now they were almost against the cliff-top, and Monty Lowther and Figgins reached down and grasped them with their hands, and helped them over the verge.

The two juniors were dragged upon the green top of the cliff, and they lay there, relieved to be lying safe and sound on solid ground.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Poor old Blake!"

Blake gasped.

"I—I'm all right. My ankle's got a bit of a twister, that's all."

"Safe again, anyway," said Figgins, with a gasp of relief. "We'll carry Blake to the boat. We left it nearly a mile away, down by the shore, when we came over the cliff path. We'll carry him in turns."

Tom Merry sat up, panting.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed.

"What for? We'd better be getting back as quickly as possible," urged Figgins. "Blake ought to have his ankle seen to at once."

"Yaas, wathah! I suggest that we huwwy, deah boys."

"Come on, Tom Mewwy!"

"All serene!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "But we've got to bring up the other one first."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"What other one?" asked Monty Lowther. "What are you talking about"

"The other chap, of course. He will have to fetched up."

"But there isn't any other chap, old man."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, there is, isn't there, Blake?"

"What-ho!" grinned Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Then who is he?" demanded Figgins.

"Chap named Calcroft."

"What!"

"Mate of the schooner Red Wing."

"You've found him!" shouted Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"You've found the castaway?"

"Yes."

"My hat! Where is he?"

"Down in the cove," said Tom Merry coolly. "Two of us had better go down for him, while you wait here with Blake. We'll have him up in next to no time."

"Bai Jove! You have weally found him, then?"

"You bet!"

"Then the paper was worked out all right?" said Kerr, with considerable satisfaction. "The chap was really along here all the time, you see."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here! What are you chipping in for?" demanded Monty Lowther. "I can't have strangers chipping into the conversation in this way."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"It's against all etiquette, you know."

"Undah the circs——" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"I'm afraid that I can't consent to hold long conversations with strangers, under any circumstances," said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Let's go down for that chap."

Blake rested on the cliff, while Figgins and Lowther swung themselves down on the rope.

Tom Merry had given them accurate directions, and they easily found the cave where the castaway lay. The certainty of rescue had revived Calcroft, and he was able to walk to the cliff, with the assistance of Figgins and Monty Lowther. With some difficulty, but successfully, first the castaway, and then Figgins and Lowther were drawn up the cliff.

Arthur Augustus patted the castaway on the back.

"Awfully glad to see you, Mr. Calcroft!" he said. "And I'm vewy glad that I've been the means of wescuin' you, with the help of these fellows."

"Well, of all the cheek——" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn——"

"Better hurry now," said Fatty Wynn. "We want to get in before dark, if we can, and—and, I say, aren't any of you fellows hungry?"

"We've plenty of sandwiches," said Figgins.

"Have you?" said Fatty Wynn, with great interest. "Then you might hand over a few of them, Figgy. I'm peckish."

"You're carrying them."

"Oh, those!" said Fatty Wynn, looking quite disappointed.

"Yes, those," said Figgins. "They're all right, aren't they?"

"Yes, they're all right."

"Where?" howled Figgins.

"You see, I've been having a snack or two as we came along, and—and——"

"You blessed porpoise! I——"

"You see, I get so jolly hungry at this time of the year, and——"

"Oh, come on! I believe you'll start eating one of us if we don't get in to dinner in time," said Figgins, with a snort. And the party started for the boat.

(*Continued on page* 28.)

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"THE BULLY WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT!"

By Martin Clifford.

Another great yarn of the chums of St. Jim's, starring George Gore, the bully of the school, in an unusual role.

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The third thrill-packed yarn of our wonderful new series, "The Ten Talons of Taaz!"—featuring Reggie Pitt, the second St. Frank's boy to face the ordeal of the Tibetan priests.

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THE BOY WHO WALKED WITH BARE FEET ON HOT CHARCOAL !

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BY EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Having incurred the wrath of the Vulture God of Taaz, ten St. Frank's boys are marked down by Tibetan priests to undergo a test of courage to atone for the offence. To show cowardice is death ! In this thrilling story Vivian Travers, the first of the ten, comes under the clutch of the Vulture God's talons.

The Midnight Summons!

MIDNIGHT!

As the last stroke of the hour boomed out from the clock tower of St. Frank's, Vivian Travers stirred in bed. All was quiet in that small dormitory in the Ancient House. Jimmy Potts, who shared the room with Travers, slept tranquilly.

A fitful breeze, chill with the nip of autumn, whined outside. Now and again the clouds parted and the moon shed a cold and pallid light through the dormitory window.

Travers sat up. He suddenly felt wide awake. He was thinking of an old tree on the bank of the River Stowe, known locally as the Split Oak. He wanted to go there. It seemed utterly absurd, of course, but the desire to get dressed and go to the Split Oak was irresistible.

"I must have been dreaming!" he muttered.

He dropped his head on the pillow again. But sleep was impossible. He could not even close his eyes. He could think of nothing but the Split Oak. In vain he tried to concentrate his thoughts on a different subject.

. . . . . .

Twelve men with yellow faces, and clothed in rich robes, sat in a semicircle. They appeared to be in an Eastern temple. Long, slender pedestals carried quaint lamps, which shed a weird, flickering light on the scene. In a strangely carved chair sat a veiled, motionless figure. Two eyes, full of fire, looked upon the semicircle of men. He was Raa-ok, high priest of Taaz.

Behind him towered the wild, grotesque, hideous image of Taaz, the Vulture God. And beyond this scene were black, impenetrable shadows.

The Vulture God was enormous—a gilded figure, gleaming in the unearthly light, its wings outspread, its head shaped like a human head, with hideous features. Ten great talons reached out, as though to seize the high priest, or one of his attendant priests.

Actually, this extraordinary scene was being enacted within a mile of St. Frank's—in that quaint Spanish castle which had been built in the heart of Bellton Wood. For months it had stood empty and deserted, for the Spanish nobleman who had it transported from his own country had been mad and in league with criminals. For many a day the old place had been neglected, and by the countryfolk around it was reputed to be evil and haunted. But it was a safe haven for the priests of Taaz who had disappeared, over a week ago, from the wreck of the steamship Transon, after the St. Frank's juniors had gone to their rescue in a lifeboat.

In the sinking ship the boys had looked upon the unveiled face of Raa-ok, and the punishment for this was death. As they had pluckily tried to rescue the priests, however, they had been allowed to go free, but each boy in turn would, later, be called upon to prove his courage to Taaz, the Vulture God. Hence the priests had taken up quarters in the Spanish castle, to see that every boy carried out his allotted ordeal—or died if he proved a coward.

Not a sound broke the stillness of that eerie, mysterious chamber. Even the breathing of these impassive men from far-off Tibet seemed to be suspended. They sat like men in a trance, their eyes fixed. Each man was concentrating his will power upon one boy. Vivian Travers had been chosen. They were thinking of Travers—they were willing him to do their bidding.

. . . . . .

THE CLUTCH OF THE FIRST TALON!

Travers found himself dressing. He did not remember getting out of bed, but the inclination to go at once to the Split Oak was more compelling than ever. He tried to fight against it; he told himself that he would undress and return to his bed. But his own will power was insufficient; he succumbed and continued dressing.

"Hallo! What on earth are you doing, Travers?"

Jimmy Potts was sitting up in bed. He was looking at Travers strangely, but the latter made no reply.

It occurred to the startled Jimmy, who had been awakened by the slight movements of his dormitory companion, that Travers was walking in his sleep. He jumped out of bed and shook the other by the shoulder.

"Hey, snap out of it!" he said earnestly.

Travers looked at him in the moonlight.

"I'm not asleep, Jimmy," he said. "Leave me alone. Go to sleep. I'm all right."

For some reason Jimmy Potts shivered. There was a queer tone in Travers' voice. He spoke like an automaton. Travers, as a rule, was a cool, genial, good-natured fellow. Potts did not understand.

"What's the matter with you, Travers?" he asked

sharply. "What are you getting dressed for? Don't you know it's past midnight?"

Travers reached for a necktie, and in doing so his gaze passed right over the other junior. But he did not appear to see Potts at all. Potts was suddenly alarmed.

Travers turned again, and he was looking at Jimmy—looking through him.

It was more than Jimmy could stand. He opened the door and slipped out. A moment later he was in another dormitory, shaking Nipper by the shoulder. The Remove skipper was awake in a moment.

"What is it?" he asked, alert. "What are you doing here, Potts?"

"It's Travers—something wrong with him," said Jimmy. "He's dressing to go out, and there's a strange look in his eyes. Yet he's not walking in his sleep."

Nipper took a deep breath. The voices had awakened Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson; they were sitting up, and their faces were pale.

"Better go back, Potts," said Nipper quietly. "You know Travers. He's probably up to one of his practical jokes. Go back and see what he's doing. I'll be along in a moment."

Jimmy went. In a flash Nipper was out of bed, hustling into some clothes. Tregellis-West and Watson followed his example

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "If you're thinkin' what I'm thinkin', dear old boys, we've got to look slippy!"

"It's the first summons," said Nipper, with conviction.

"Crumbs!" muttered Tommy Watson, shivering.

For over a week they had been expecting something to happen. But the week had passed uneventfully, and the mystery of the yellow men who had vanished from the shipwreck had been almost forgotten. The ten St. Frank's boys had begun to feel that the "Curse of Taaz" was just so much bunkum.

Now this!

"Remember that Taaz will be watching. Henceforth, at any minute of the night or day, one of the Ten Talons of Taaz may swoop and clutch—and then one of the ten shall obey."

Nipper vividly remembered the thin, whistling voice of the high priest; he remembered every word. And Vivian Travers, for no apparent reason, was dressing.

"We shall need some others," said Nipper tensely.

He dashed into another dormitory, and awakened Handforth and Church and McClure. They were startled when Nipper told them of what he suspected.

"Fling a few clothes on—and come," urged Nipper.

"What do you think is going to happen?" asked Handforth huskily, as he dived into his trousers.

"We don't know—we can't even guess," said Nipper. "Hurry!"

He went back into the corridor; and was just in time to see Vivian Travers come out of his dormitory. Nipper walked straight up to him and barred the way.

"Going out, Travers?" he asked casually.

"Yes!" said Travers, in that same queer, toneless voice.

He proffered no explanation; he quietly sidestepped, walked past Nipper and went towards the stairs. In that moment Nipper knew that the first talon was clutching. Travers was in a kind of semi-trance.

Jimmy Potts was in the dormitory doorway, nervous, uneasy.

"Go back to sleep, Potts," whispered Nipper. "We'll look after Travers."

There was nothing else for Jimmy to do, for he was in his pyjamas, and unready to follow. But Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson followed; and, a moment later, Handforth & Co. joined them.

"What shall we do?" whispered Handforth breathlessly. "Hadn't we better stop him? He might be going out to certain death!"

"No; we mustn't stop him," said Nipper. "We'll follow—and see where he goes."

"But why is he going out?" asked Watson uneasily. "He can't have had a message at this time of night. Those awful yellow men wouldn't dare to come to the school——"

"Rats! I believe they were all drowned," growled Handforth. "Nobody has seen a sign of 'em since that big storm. As for Travers, he's spoofing. You know what a practical joker he is. Why not grab him and ask him what he's playing at?"

"Wait!" said Nipper.

Travers had gone downstairs. He was in the lobby. Without hesitation he unbolted and unlatched the heavy front door of the Ancient House. He opened it wide, and the moonlight streamed in, accompanied by a gust of wind which reached the juniors on the stairs in a chill blast.

From the straightforward manner in which Travers was leaving the building Nipper guessed that his actions were dictated by a greater and stronger will. For had he been indulging in a foolish practical joke he would certainly have made his exit less openly—probably by means of one of the study windows.

He went walking calmly out into the cold night. The others followed, Nipper slipping the safety catch of the lock in position, so that he and his chums could get back without trouble.

There was little or no fear of their movements being seen; for St. Frank's was asleep. Not a light gleamed in any window.

Travers walked past the dark junior wing of the School House, making for the gate which led to Little Side. The gate, of course, was locked. He nimbly scaled the wall, dropping into the private lane which led to the Head's house. He scaled the second wall, and went striding in the moonlight across the playing fields.

"We'll try something," whispered Nipper, and gave a few instructions.

The six juniors ran on, overtook Travers, and then stood still, barring his path.

They held their breaths, and their hearts were thudding hard. Travers, staring straight in front of him, walked past. He did not give any one of his schoolfellows a single glance. For all the notice he took of them, they might have been invisible. They were left standing there, staring after his retreating figure.

"He must have seen us," muttered Handforth, with a gulp.

"He saw nothing," said Nipper quietly. "His will is no longer under his own control. There's devilry afoot, you chaps. I was in Tibet once. I know what these yellow-faced priests can do. The summons came to Travers invisibly—direct to his will."

The others said nothing. The boys found themselves glancing over their shoulders fearfully. They were scared.

Travers had passed out of the St. Frank's playing fields. He was walking across a meadow. He reached a gate at the other side, and vanished. Nipper and the others hurried forward. Then, silently, uncannily, a tall figure loomed from the deep shadows of the high hedge near the gate.

"Oh!" gasped Church.

The figure stepped into the moonlight. He was wearing loosely flowing robes. His face was yellow, impassive, mask-like.

He was a priest of Taaz!

"Return, my sons," he said in a low, impassive voice, and using good English.

He pointed, his long arm outstretched, and he made an impressive figure in the fitful moonlight, with his robe fluttering in the wind.

"Return, my sons, or death, swift as the vulture's swoop, will overtake your friend. Taaz is watching."

"What are you going to do with our friend?" asked Nipper steadily.

"If he pleases the great Taaz, he will live," replied the priest. "Seek not to follow, or to watch. Go in peace—and each of you await his own turn, for it will surely come. Go! Seek to aid your friend in his hour of ordeal and he dies."

A dark cloud swept across the face of the moon, and when it had passed and the pallid rays shone forth again, the priest of Taaz had vanished.

Handforth looked at his companions with reckless determination in his eyes; his fists were clenched, his aggressive jaw was squared.

"They've got Travers!" he said hoarsely. "There's fiendish devilry afoot. Come on! We've got to save him!"

He leapt at the gate and prepared to vault over. Thud! Handforth stared at his right hand, which rested on top of the gate. A long dagger, still quivering, had gone clean through his coatsleeve, a bare fraction of an inch from his wrist. His arm was pinioned to the gate.

"You have been warned!" came a voice, apparently from nowhere. "You will not be warned again!"

Handforth wrenched the dagger out, and, trembling in every limb, he flung it far into the night. Even his truculence had gone. How easily that dagger might have been aimed at his heart!

"You see?" said Nipper, and his voice was hard and strained. "We must leave Travers to face his ordeal alone. It would be madness to disregard such a warning."

A Leap in the Dark!

THE Split Oak, a gaunt and forbidding landmark, stood starkly isolated near the river. The old tree had been dead for years; its branches, barren and rotten, spread out like twisted devil's fingers. Even by daylight the tree was ugly; by night, silhouetted against the dark sky, it was like some evil creature of dreams.

Vivian Travers reached this spot, and having reached it

he suddenly shook from head to foot and stared about him in bewilderment.

In a moment the trance-like stupor left him as though he had shed a cloak. He became normal.

"Well, for the love of Samson!" he ejaculated, as he stared about him. "What am I doing here by the river? How did I get here? I don't remember——"

He paused. For he did remember. Vaguely he knew that he had dressed himself; he knew that some mysterious force had impelled him to come to the Split Oak.

Travers remembered then that strange scene in the saloon of the doomed Transon when he and nine other St. Frank's juniors had gazed upon the face of Raa-ok, the high priest of Taaz.

"It is well, my son," said a soft, impassive voice.

Travers spun round with a jolt. A figure had materialised out of the gloom; he stood towering above the schoolboy, his yellow face a mask of impenetrable immobility.

"Hallo!" said Travers, forcing himself, with an effort, to speak calmly. "Why don't you knock before you come in?"

The priest ignored the pleasantry.

"Follow!" he said briefly.

Travers shrugged. He followed. In spite of his outward calm he was thrilled through and through. His brain was crystal clear now; he knew that he was the first of the "ten" to be selected.

The mysterious priests of Taaz had established themselves somewhere in the neighbourhood; their fanatical devil worship forbade them to leave until the ten boys who had looked upon the face of Raa-ok had expiated their offence.

Not a word was spoken by the priest as they walked across the open meadows and fields. Travers had the feeling that somebody, or something, was behind; yet, when he glanced round he saw nothing. He had no inkling of what this journey portended; yet he knew, instinctively, that the next hour would be fraught with mystery and danger.

The yellow man in front of him walked with a stealthy, panther-like tread. Not once did he glance round. He seemed to know that Travers was following immediately behind. He avoided roads and lanes and footpaths.

Presently, Travers saw that they had left the meadows behind. They were out on the bleak and friendless moor.

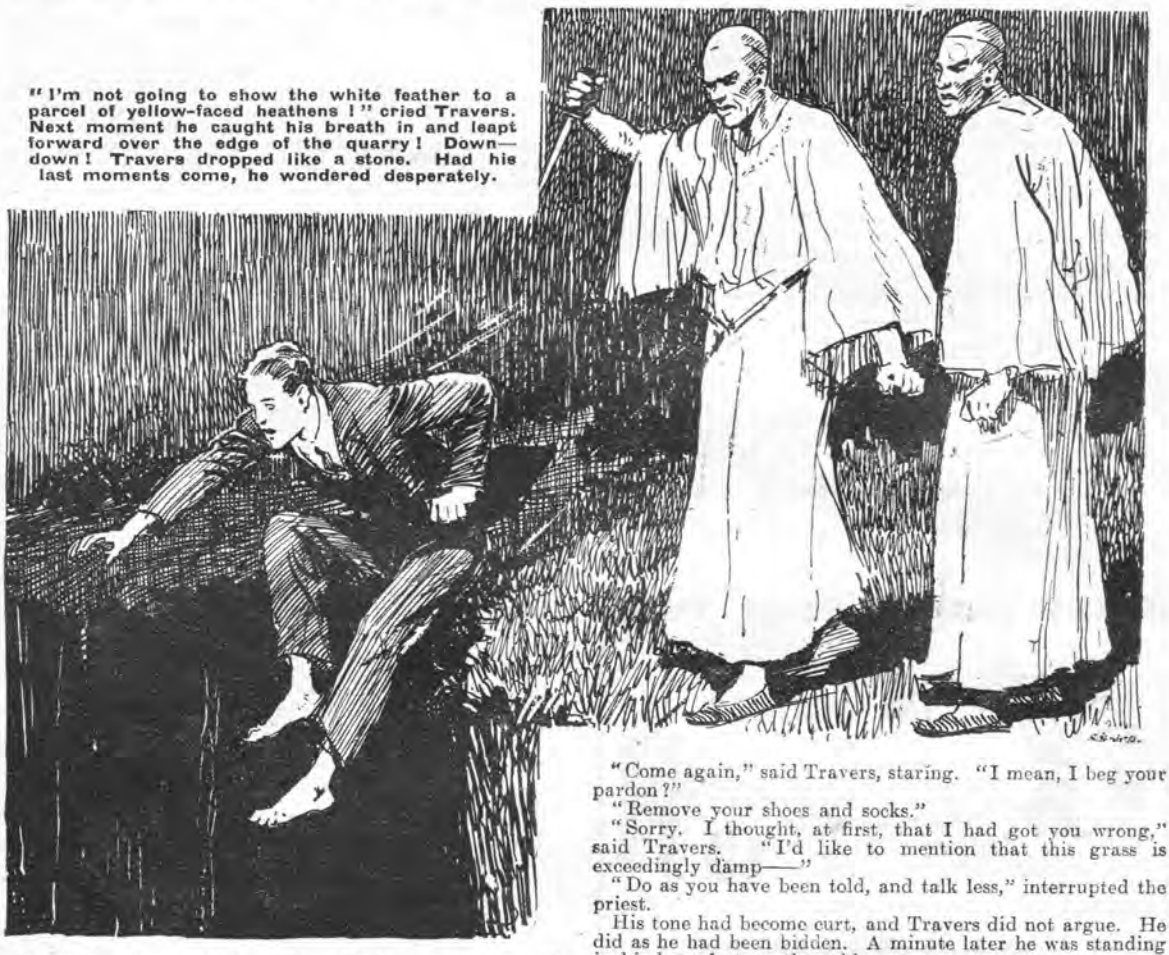
The wind was sighing mournfully, cutting across the moorland bitterly. The clouds had thinned, and the moonlight was stronger. Travers had seen this stretch of countryside scores of times—occasionally at night, too—but never had it seemed so utterly lonesome and sinister as now.

Suddenly the priest came to a halt, and he reached out a detaining hand, so that Travers could walk no farther. And then the schoolboy caught his breath in and his heart leapt.

For he saw that he was standing almost on the extreme edge of the old quarry.

The abyss yawned right at his feet—a sheer drop of some two hundred feet, with cruel rocks below. The moon was shedding its light directly on the face of the cliff, and on the rocks at its base. Farther away, in a ragged line, the edges of the quarry stretched out.

"It is well," said the priest imperturbably. "Remove your shoes and your socks, my son."



"I'm not going to show the white feather to a parcel of yellow-faced heathens!" cried Travers. Next moment he caught his breath in and leapt forward over the edge of the quarry! Down—down! Travers dropped like a stone. Had his last moments come, he wondered desperately.

"Come again," said Travers, staring. "I mean, I beg your pardon?"

"Remove your shoes and socks."

"Sorry. I thought, at first, that I had got you wrong," said Travers. "I'd like to mention that this grass is exceedingly damp——"

"Do as you have been told, and talk less," interrupted the priest.

His tone had become curt, and Travers did not argue. He did as he had been bidden. A minute later he was standing in his bare feet on the cold, wet grass.

"The moment has come, Unbeliever, for your test," said the priest relentlessly. "Taaz watches; Taaz knows all. If you offend, death is inevitable. You shall live only if you prove yourself worthy of living. My son, I bear you no ill-will; I urge you to muster all your strength, all your courage. And remember—you must obey."

"And if I do not obey?"

"Death—ignominious death—will be your reward."

The words were spoken quietly, evenly, but they carried conviction.

"I shall obey," said Vivian Travers quietly.

The priest suddenly flung out a hand, pointing downwards and outwards, over the edge of the dreadful precipice.

"Jump!" he commanded.

Travers went as cold as ice. The order had come unexpectedly, dramatically, and the priest's meaning was clear.

But Travers, who was young, vigorous, and fond of life, refused to understand.

"You mean—jump over this edge?" he asked.

"Yes," said the priest. "Jump!"

The schoolboy's heart thudded like a hammer. In the moonlight he could see the hard rocks below. He stared, fascinated, his blood surging hotly through his veins at the thought of this needless act of suicide. Yet he knew that he must obey.

"If I jump," he said rebelliously, "it will mean certain death."

"Life is sometimes more dangerous than death," replied the priest impassively. "Again, my son, I command you. Jump!"

"No, no!" Even Travers' fine spirit almost deserted him. "It's mad! I won't!"

The desire to live was strong within him. It occurred to him, then, that he had been a fool to submit meekly thus far. Even now it might not be too late. He was quick and agile. He could run like a hare. The priest was standing with outstretched hand, unprepared.

Travers spun round—and then drew his breath in with a quick, shuddering gulp. For there stood a second priest, and in his upraised hand he held a long-bladed dagger. It was poised ready to strike.

"Oh!" muttered the schoolboy.

"You see, my son, we are ready," said the first priest. "And Taaz is watching. You have but ten seconds. Jump as I have commanded, or ignoble death will overtake you. It is for you to choose."

As white as a sheet, Travers was silent for a few moments. There was no escape for him. The priest with the upraised dagger stood at his back; in front of him yawned the abyss. With a supreme effort he calmed himself, and that sterling courage of his came to his assistance.

"Very well," he said, gritting his teeth, "you've got me. But I'm not going to show the white feather to a parcel of yellow-faced heathens. I'll die gamely."

He caught his breath in, clenched his fists, and then leapt forward into what he believed to be Eternity.

The Ordeal by Fire!

DOWN—down!

Travers dropped like a stone, and during those first few seconds his mind was crystal clear; he could see the rocks below him. He wondered what would happen when he crashed. Had his last moments come?

Then abruptly, his headlong descent was checked.

He struck something—something which stretched when he came in contact with it. The next second he bumped against the cliff face, and he was sprawling and clutching at some cords. He was swaying backwards and forwards, gently, easily. He realised, with a shock of surprise, that he had fallen scarcely more than twenty feet.

He knew, now, what had happened.

He had fallen into a net—a hidden net of fine mesh which had been cunningly placed in position. From above, in the pale moonlight, it had been invisible. Through the meshes he had seen the rocks, much farther below.

"For the love of Samson!" muttered Travers shakily.

He realised it had never been intended that he should die. It was a cunning device, planned by the priests of Taaz, to test his courage! He knew that if he had refused to jump he would have branded himself a coward—and then, indeed, he would have died.

It took Travers a minute or two to fully grasp what had happened, for the shock of living, after having prepared himself for death, was stunning.

He was quickly recovering his scattered wits. The net enveloped him like a bag; there was no danger of falling out. He could, in fact, do nothing, for the fine meshes completely surrounded him. He could see the bottom of the quarry, below him, in the moonlight. He stared up, but he could see nothing beyond the cliff-top. He seemed to be alone in a world of bleakness.

The minutes slipped away. The wind whistled through the net, and Travers felt cold. He wondered if he was to be left here, suspended like a netted rabbit. Perhaps he would thus remain until morning—until his schoolfellows, alarmed at his disappearance, came out searching.

Then, suddenly, he felt the net was moving; it was gradually being lowered. So the adventure was not yet over.

The net, with its human captive, descended. At last it reached the bottom. A shiver ran through Travers as he found himself struggling in a pool of icy cold water—a shallow pool in the rocks which had evidently been left, stagnant, after the heavy rain of yesterday.

The net fell about him loosely, and for some minutes he was engaged in the task of disentangling himself, and all the while he paddled about in eighteen inches of incredibly cold water.

"There's dry ground on either side, and they have to dump me in this!" he growled. "Still, perhaps they didn't know. Anyhow, what's the odds? I'm lucky to be alive!"

The pool of water seemed to be muddy, for it had a thick, slimy consistency, and in the moonlight it looked as black as pitch. However, it was not really black, for when at last Travers stepped on to the dry rocks he saw his feet gleaming white in the moonlight.

For some moments he was unsteady, almost dizzy. Perhaps it was the result of swaying in the net. A feeling of indignation swept over him. The priests of Taaz had tricked him cruelly; never for a moment had he doubted that he had been jumping to certain death.

Well, it was over. All he had to do, now, was to find his way out of the quarry and get back to the school.

"You live only because you made up your mind to die," said a calm, purring voice.

Travers spun round. The priest stood immediately behind him.

"You again!" said Travers, forcing himself to speak carelessly. "Thought you'd put a scare into me, eh? Is there going to be any more of this jiggery pokery? Or am I free to go?"

"Follow!" said the priest impassively.

He moved away, and Travers hesitated, for the yellow man had turned his back. But when Travers looked round he saw that a second priest was just in his rear. He had no choice but to obey.

They walked along the base of the quarry cliffs, and then, rounding an angle of the rocks, another vista of the quarry floor was opened. Travers saw something, not twenty yards ahead, which caused him to utter a startled exclamation.

There was a patch of ground which seemed to be on fire; it burned with a shimmering intensity. It was confined to an oblong patch of ground four feet wide, perhaps, by twenty feet long.

The first priest led the way to this fire, and at close quarters Vivian Travers saw just what it was.

A carpet of white-hot charcoal, spread evenly over the hard, rocky ground of the quarry floor! And in the night wind the charcoal glowed ruddily and weirdly, sometimes fading to a dull, coppery red; and then, as the wind caught it, livening to a white, vivid intensity. Travers was fascinated. He found himself incapable of clear thought; he could only stare at that carpet of glowing charcoal, as though hypnotised. He was brought to a halt three feet from the end of the oblong patch, and as the wind blew over it, his nostrils were filled with the pungent fumes, and the heat, coming in waves, was grateful to his chilled body.

"My son, you have proven yourself to possess a fine courage," said the priest solemnly. "You jumped to what you thought would be sudden death. Now you must gather

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VERY glad to hear from you again, Jimmy Sutcliffe (South Benfleet). You are one of my regular old-timers, and it's good to get your letter. I think the series of mystery yarns now running is more in your line, eh? Yes, the "Black Dagger," in the Sexton Blake Library, was written by me.

* * *

From Essex we go up to Glasgow. Glad you like my stories in the fourpenny books, J. D. I wonder why you include Sessue Yakama among your favourite characters? I'm afraid I have neglected to bring the Japanese boy into the stories of late, but I dare say I shall get an opportunity of featuring him before long.

* * *

That picture postcard of yours, J. W. Cook, was very familiar. What do you think of the old place? Why did you walk straight past without calling on that old pal of yours? If ever you are down that way again, don't give him a miss. I'm sure he'd be pleased to see you.

* * *

Names List No. 12. West House, Third Form: Dickie Jones, Tommy Hobbs, Edgar Button, Freddy Mason, Victor Hoskins, Jimmy Hope, Stanley Kerrigan. There are other fags in the West House, but they have never actually been mentioned in the stories, so the above list is sufficient.

* * *

I'm afraid it's no good writing to me about back numbers, T. Chapman (Watford). A note to the Editor would be more profitable, I think. He'd tell you in a moment. Yes, the old Monster Library contained nothing but St. Frank's stories; but this publication has been out of print for quite a long time, and is unobtainable. However, I know a chap who has a few old copies, and he may be willing to part with some of them. I mentioned this some time back, but apparently you did not see it.

* * *

Very glad to hear, Phil Wencroft (Richmond), that you are such an enthusiastic reader of my stories. I've had lots of letters from other readers who are equally as enthusiastic, and I am awfully bucked about it. It's up to you and staunch readers like you to rally round and get your friends to give the Old Paper their fullest support. And, as I said two or three weeks ago, this may lead to bigger things in the future.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

---

all that courage of yours. For there is nothing sudden in the ordeal which confronts you."

He pointed straight at the oblong carpet of fire.

"Walk!" he commanded.

Travers jumped, and his blood ran cold.

"Good heavens, no!" he panted, horrified. "You don't mean it! You're trying to trick me again!"

"Walk!" repeated the priest of Taaz. "If you run, and thus seek to shorten your ordeal, you will be brought back to this spot, and must start again. Where is your courage, my son? Do as I command. Walk!"

Travers stood there, breathing heavily. He knew—now—just why he had been made to remove his shoes and socks. His feet were bare. This ordeal which confronted him was torture.

He must walk that twenty-foot carpet! He must walk—not run. He had read stories of Eastern fakirs undergoing such an ordeal as this without injury. But Travers never believed it. It was impossible—it was against all natural laws.

He would live through this terror, yes, but he would probably be injured for life. In imagination he felt the white-hot embers burning through his skin, burning into his very flesh.

He shuddered. Even his proven courage almost failed him.

Despairingly he looked up at the yellow face of the priest, and he knew there could be no escape. He saw only ruthless cruelty in that face.

"Walk!" repeated the yellow man inexorably.

Travers felt something like a needle in the small of his back. He swung his head round, and he saw that the second priest was right behind him. He knew that the man's dagger-point was at his spine.

Fury against these yellow men possessed him, but with a supreme effort he controlled himself. Never would he allow them to see that he was afraid! He gritted his teeth, clenched his fists, and strode forward.

His bare feet came into contact with that burning, glowing charcoal. He walked. The choking fumes came up around him.

He was prepared to suffer hideous agonies of torture, yet, so far, he felt no pain at all. Half-choking with amazement and incredulity, he stared down at his feet.

Yes, unquestionably he was walking over that white-hot carpet. But he felt nothing. His feet seemed to be numb.

Dizzy with the fumes, half-blinded by the ruddy glare, he stumbled on. A hazy smoke was enveloping him, and he had the impression of walking in an inferno.

He reached the end before he realised it, and, staggering away from that glowing patch, he saw, right ahead of him, a strangely carved chair, and, seated in the chair, a veiled and cloaked figure. But two piercing eyes, unblinking, stared at him. He was face to face with Raa-ok, the high priest of Taaz. On either side of the chair stood attendant priests.

Travers swayed. In spite of his surprise at the sight of the high priest, he bent down and tenderly touched his feet. He gasped with amazement. His feet were powdered with ashes, but they were unburned, unblistered.

It must be a miracle!

It could not be explained by any natural laws; and, perhaps for the first time, Vivian Travers was filled with a superstitious dread. These mystery men from Tibet were possessed of uncanny magical powers.

"It is well, my son!" came the thin, whistling voice of the high priest. "Taaz has been watching, and Taaz is satisfied. Your offence is expiated. Go, then, in peace!"

Travers felt his brain reeling.

"You—you mean——" he began.

And then the high priest and the attendant priests and the rugged background went into a whirl. He dropped forward on his knees and rolled over. In short, the valiant Travers had fainted.

The junior was chilled when he came to his senses. The wind was moaning through the quarry and ragged clouds half-hid the moon. Travers did not know how long he had been lying there. He struggled to his feet.

He had memories of a terrible nightmare. He looked about him. He was alone in the quarry. Struggling up, he did not realise, at first, that he was wearing his shoes and socks.

"A dream!" he muttered, passing his hand over his clammy brow. "I jumped over the cliff and then walked through white-hot charcoal——"

He broke off. There was a pungent smell in his nostrils. With a start he ran forward and searched about. And he found traces of scattered charcoal—still warm!

So it had been no nightmare! But his feet were unharmed, and the priests had replaced his shoes and socks. Travers had heard of the Indian fakirs walking through fire unharmed, but he had never believed that he would one day do so himself. Even now he could offer no explanation. But then he remembered the slimy substance he had walked in at the base of the quarry. That pool of water had contained something to save his feet. He had been let down into it purposely by the priests.

Travers felt stronger after he had climbed out of the quarry. He walked home, and some of his old manner returned. The First Talon of Taaz had descended upon him, and he had come through the ordeal safely. Henceforward, he had nothing to fear.

Near the school he saw some dark figures, and then, a moment later, he was surrounded by Nipper and Watson and Handforth and the others.

"You're safe, then!" exclaimed Nipper breathlessly. "We daren't follow you, Travers. We—we just—waited. What happened to you?"

"One day your turn will come, Nipper—and you others," said Vivian Travers. "Make no mistake, the priests of Taaz are going to deal with the whole ten of us. It's better that you should know nothing of what has happened to me."

"As bad as that, was it?" asked Nipper quietly.

"As bad as that," said Travers, nodding.

They were silent, for they were reluctant to ask further questions. And one thought was in every mind. Whose turn would it be next?

(Next week: "THE CASTLE OF TORTURE!")

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEA!

(*Continued from page 22.*)

CHAPTER 15.
Kind of Gussy!

TOM MERRY & CO. were in a jubilant humour. They had succeeded in their expedition, and they had succeeded in what was really a very short space of time.

There was no doubt that they had saved the life of the castaway. The man, lying exhausted in the cave by the cove, could never have moved without aid, and even if boats had passed the cove, he could have made no signal to them.

The St. Jim's juniors had saved his life, and it was a keen satisfaction to them. He owed his life more to Kerr than to anybody else, for the Scots junior had worked out the true meaning of the message from the sea, and without that the rescue could not have taken place. But Kerr did not put on any airs on that account. Calcroft would never have known that he had had anything to do with it, if the others had not explained.

Dusk was falling on the Devonshire coast when they reached the boat, and then pushed off.

"Bettah let me steer, deah boys," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"What for?" demanded Lowther.

"Because it will be wathah wisky gettin' back to Clovelly after dark."

Lowther sniffed.

"Well, we don't want to increase the risk, then," he said.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"I'll steer, as I know the coast," said Figgins. "And listen to me when I give orders, you bounders: We don't want to run ashore and get Mr. Calcroft drowned after rescuing him."

"Wathah not!"

"I wish that stranger wouldn't keep on chipping in like this," said Monty Lowther, in a peevish tone. "I wonder where he was brought up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should be sowwy to have to give you a feahful thwashin', Lowthah, on such a happy occasion as this, but if you dwive me to it——"

"Order!" sang out Blake.

"I wefuse to ordah—— I mean——"

"There are the lights of Clovelly!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors brought the boat safely to land. They landed, Blake limping on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's arm, and the other fellows helped the mate of the Red Wing ashore.

Calcroft was able to walk, with assistance.

"You're coming to my uncle's house now, Mr. Calcroft," said Figgins. "He will be delighted to see you, and we can put you up and look after you, you know."

"Thank you!" said Calcroft gratefully. "I don't know how to thank you lads, but I'm grateful."

"Oh, that's nothing!"

"Nothin' at all, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gracefully. "Pway don't mench!"

"Don't which?" demanded Lowther.

"Mench."

"What on earth do you mean by 'mench'?"

"It's an abbweviation of 'mention,' deah boy!"

"Well, of all the chumps——"

"Weally, you wottah——"

"This way!" said Tom Merry. "Get a move on!"

"Yes, for goodness' sake buck up!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm feeling simply famished, and Mr. Calcroft must be hungry, too."

The juniors were not long in reaching Cliff Lodge. Mr. Gandish was at the gate, waiting for them, rather anxious as they had not returned before dark. The old gentleman uttered an exclamation of relief at the sight of them.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "I was afraid that something had happened to you."

"That's all wight, deah sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been looking aftah them, Mr. Gandish. I wegarded myself as wesponsible."

"You are all here?" asked the old gentleman. "Dear me! Who is this? A friend of yours?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've found him."

"Found him?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"But—but I do not quite understand," said Mr. Gandish, in astonishment. "How have you found him, and who is he?"

"He's Mr. Calcroft——"

"What!"

"Mate of the Red Wing——"

"Goodness gracious!"

"The castaway, uncle," said Figgins jubilantly. "We've rescued him, and we've brought him home."

"Good gad! This is really—really surprising!" exclaimed Mr. Gandish. "Most surprising and most gratifying. Come in, my dear sir! You are very welcome—very welcome indeed! Pray come in!"

And the kind old gentleman shook hands with the mate of the Red Wing half a dozen times at least, and drew him into the house. And the rescued castaway was looked after by Mr. Gandish and the juniors, and provided with everything that he needed. In a suit of Mr. Gandish's clothes, and looking very much better, the castaway took his place at the dinner table, and he outvied Fatty Wynn himself in his exploits there. He had the want of three days to make up for, and he did his best.

Mr. Gandish beamed over the table in the highest good-humour. He was very pleased at what had happened. Arthur Augustus was beaming with good humour, too. In the course of the dinner the swell of St. Jim's rose to speak.

"Gentlemen——"

"Hear, hear!" sang out Blake.

"Hallo! Who's the fellow talking?" asked Monty Lowther. "I don't know him."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, undah the circs——"

"Three cheers for the circs!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Undah the circs on the happy and joyous occasion of the wescue of our fwiend, the castaway, I have wesolved not to allow myself to tweat you chaps as you deserve fo playin' a wotten twick on me!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I am goin' to ovahlook the whole occuwwence," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I am goin' to westore you to my fwiendship."

"Go hon!"

"How kind of you, Gussy!"

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall westore you all to the list of my acquaintances, and wegard you as fwiends," said Arthur Augustus nobly. "Undah the circs, I feel that I cannot do less."

And Tom Merry & Co., with one voice, said:

"Hear, hear!"

THE END.

Next Wednesday. ***"THE BULLY WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT!"***

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