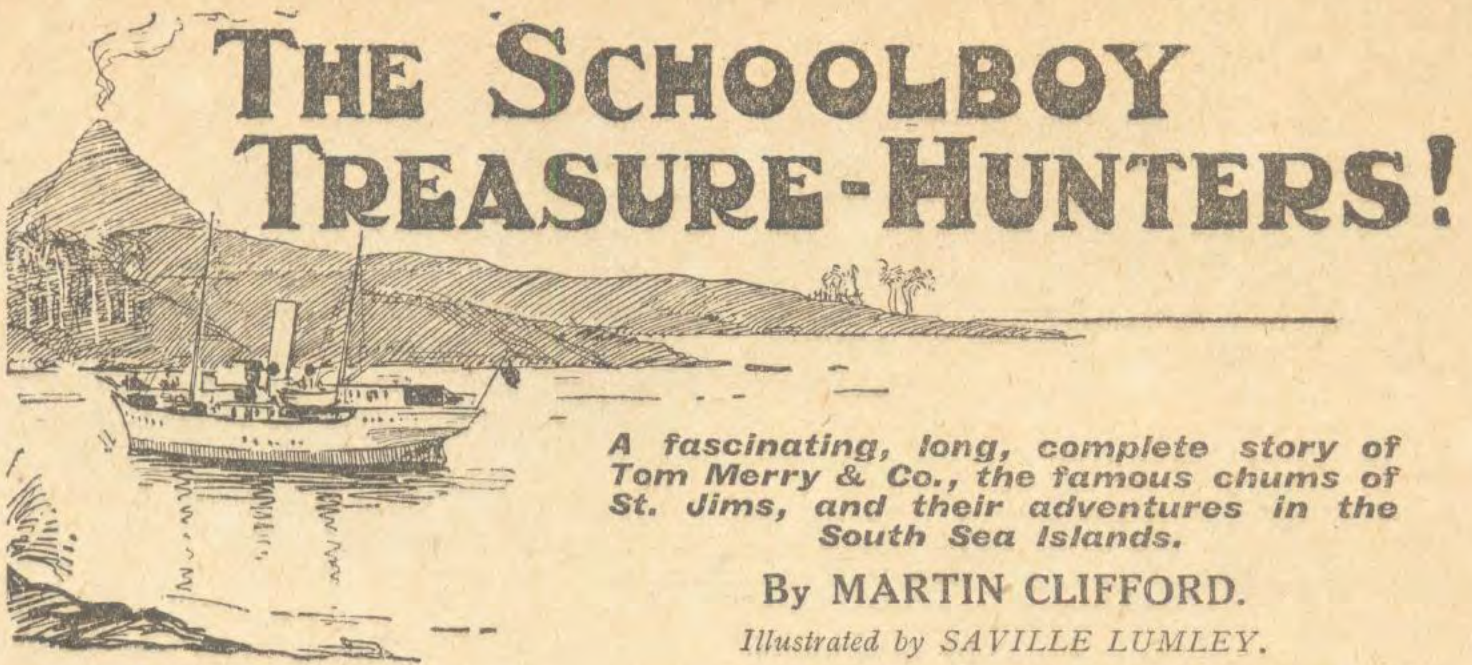




A fascinating, long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co., the famous chums of St. Jims, and their adventures in the South Sea Islands.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Illustrated by SAVILLE LUMLEY.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A Strange Meeting

"**S**ENORITO! Senorito!"
Tom Merry stopped in sheer amazement.

He was sauntering along Rylcombe Lane towards St. Jim's, when the voice called from the wood. With his hands in his trousers' pockets, and his straw hat on the back of his curly head, Tom Merry looked a picture of happy and careless boyhood. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and there were plenty of the fellows up the river bank, and in the glades of Rylcombe Wood, and Tom Merry had expected to be hailed from the wood as he strolled towards the school. But to be hailed in a foreign tongue was a surprise to him.

"Senorito!"

Tom Merry looked round into the big, overhanging trees that bordered the lane. The voice came from the wood, but he could not see who called.

"Senorito!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Who is it?"

He looked with puzzled eyes into the deep shadows of the wood. In contrast with the burning sunshine in the lane, the wood seemed very dark and sombre. The trees grew thickly, with great ferns intermingled. From the shadow a little swarthy face with twinkling black eyes looked out, and Tom Merry started as he discerned it. For the face was the face of a man, yet from its height

above the ground it appeared it must be that of a boy.

"Senorito!"

The swarthy face came nearer to the edge of the wood, and the man it belonged to emerged from the cover of the thicket. Then Tom Merry understood. The man was a dwarf—with a large, dark face and massive shoulders, and powerful arms; but his body seemed to shrivel away lower down, and his total height was not more than four feet six.

He nodded to Tom Merry, with a peculiar grin—a grin in which there was expressed much more of malice than of humour.

"Senorito! Stop a minute!"

The man was a Spaniard evidently, but he spoke English very well. Tom Merry stood in the sunny lane, and looked at him.

"Yes," he said. "What do you want?"

"I am looking for someone, senorito," said the little man; "a friend of mine—a dear comrade whom I have missed upon the road—a sailorman. Have you seen him?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No," he replied.

"Ah, you are sure you have not seen him?"

"Quite sure," said Tom Merry. "There are not many sailormen about here. I am sure I should have noticed him if I had seen him on the road."

The little man contracted his heavy brows, and his black eyes looked piercingly at the St. Jim's junior.

"You are quite sure, *senorito*?"

"Yes, I tell you."

"But—you are not lying to me?"

Tom Merry flushed.

The Spaniard had stepped out of the wood now, and he stood in the sunny lane, in Tom Merry's path. Tom, as he looked at him, could not help wondering what had brought the swarthy foreigner to that quiet Sussex countryside. There was a seafaring look about the stranger, in his manner and his clothes; but St. Jim's was a good distance from the coast, and seafaring men seldom came so far.

"No," said Tom Merry quietly, "I am not lying, and in this country, my man, we don't say things like that to strangers. If you don't learn better manners, you may have them taught to you free of charge."

"Listen to me," said the Spaniard, still barring Tom Merry's path. "I know that the man took this path, and I have been watching for him from the wood. He has not passed me. You must have seen him on the road, from the way you came."

"I have told you I did not."

"But you must have seen him, *senorito*. He may have gone into the wood before coming so far as this, and you have seen him."

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture.

"Once for all, I tell you I have seen no sailorman upon the road," he said. "Now let me pass, or there will be trouble."

The Spaniard grinned mockingly.

"There will be trouble, as you call it, if you do not tell me the truth, little *senor*," he said. "What path did the sailorman take?"

Tom Merry did not reply to the question. He had had enough of bandying words with the swarthy stranger, and his anger was at boiling point now. He made a stride towards the Spaniard, and grasped him by the shoulders to swing him aside.

Then he had a surprise.

The Spaniard, dwarf as he was, stood like a rock, and Tom Merry's powerful swing did not move him an inch from where he stood.

He laughed in the boy's amazed face. Tom Merry was the finest athlete in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's, but he realised that his strength was as nothing to that of the little Spaniard.

"It is not so easy, *senorito*!" grinned the dwarf.

"Get aside!" panted Tom Merry.

"Not yet!"

Tom Merry made a movement to pass the man. Then the long arms grasped at him, and he was whirled round. He struck out now in deadly earnest, and the Spaniard gasped as the boy's fist crashed into his dark face.

He relaxed his grasp for a moment and Tom Merry made an effort to get away.

But it was in vain.

The strong, hairy, sinewy hands closed upon him again, and he was swung off his feet, and the Spaniard carried him as easily as if he had been a baby into the wood, and hurled him there upon the grass under the heavy branches.

The next moment he was kneeling beside Tom Merry, and his hand was upon the junior's throat. His fierce black eyes blazed down at the boy.

"Now, *senorito*!" he hissed. "Now will you answer?"

Tom Merry panted.

"You scoundrel! Let me go!"

"Bah! I will throttle you unless——"

His grasp tightened. He looked savagely angry enough to carry out his threat. Tom Merry made an effort, and sent a shout for help ringing through the wood.

"Help! Rescue, St. Jim's!"

The Spaniard gritted his teeth.

"Ah, will you?" he said.

And his grasp fastened tighter; the evil face above, and the branches of the trees swam before the dizzy eyes of the St. Jim's junior.

But Tom Merry's cry had been heard.

There was a ringing shout from the wood.

"This way, deah boys! Wescue, St. Jim's!"

And a junior ran out of the trees, and the crashing in the thickets showed that others were following behind.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Wrong Man

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, paused one second to jam his eyeglass into his eye. He took in the scene at glance; and then,

allowing his famous monocle to drop to the end of its cord, he rushed at the Spaniard.

The dwarf looked up, his evil eyes glittering, and his grasp relaxing upon Tom Merry. Before he could rise to his feet, D'Arcy was upon him.

"You uttah wascal!"

The Spaniard went over in the deep grass, with Arthur Augustus rolling over him.

"Carambo!"

"Bai Jove! Help, deah boys—the beast is awfully stwong!"

Jack Blake and Digby and Herries, of the Fourth, ran out of the thickets. They had been strolling through the wood with D'Arcy, and all four of them had heard Tom Merry's desperate cry for help as the ruffian's grip closed on his throat. Herries paused for a moment and looked back into the wood.

"Towser! Towsy!"

Gr-r-r!

"Come on, Towsy! Seize him!"

The Spaniard had leapt to his feet, throwing off D'Arcy as if he had been a child, much to the astonishment of the swell of St. Jim's.

He stood back, a strange wild figure against the green of the thickets, his dusky face aglow, his breath coming thick and fast through the thick, bearded lips.

"Carambo!"

"Collar him!" shouted Blake.

"Bai Jove——"

"Hold on!" said Herries. "Towser's got him!"

The bulldog leaped forward.

The Spaniard had not quailed from the crowd of boys, but at the sight of the bulldog's open jaws he turned and ran.

Crash!

Headlong through a thicket he went; and Towser, with a short, sharp growl, went after him, loudly encouraged by his master.

"Go it, Towser! Seize him, Towsy! Go it!"

"Bai Jove! Towsah is useful for once!" gasped D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! The beast has no wespect whatever for a fellow's twousahs, but——"

"Go it, Towser! Seize him!"

Meanwhile, Digby helped Tom Merry to his feet. The captain of the Shell was white and dazed, and his hands were shaking.

"Thanks!" he gasped.

"Who was it?" said Digby. "What's the row?"

"The—the hound! I—after him!"

"Good!" said Blake. "I suppose he was going to rob you, the cad. Let's run him down."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry was not vindictive; but his blood was boiling now. He wanted to get to close quarters with the Spaniard again. He dashed off through the wood on the track of Towser, who clung to the track of the Spaniard. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy followed him.

"It's all right," Herries gasped. "No need to worry, you know. Towser won't lose that track; Towser's simply ripping at following a trail——"

"Wats, deah boy——"

"Look here, D'Arcy——"

"Buck up!" shouted Blake. "Don't jaw!"

"Look here——"

"Bai Jove! Towsah's got something!" D'Arcy exclaimed.

There was a sound of loud, fierce growling, and a voice raised in angry alarm. The juniors of St. Jim's burst out of the trees into a glade, where a man was backing against a tree, trying to keep the bulldog off with thrusts of a heavy cudgel.

"Got him!" roared Herries, rushing on to the attack.

"Stop!" gasped Tom Merry.

"What!"

"That's not the man!"

"My hat!"

Herries stopped just as he was about to hurl himself upon the stranger. So certain was he about Towser's unerring instinct, that he had not thought of looking at the man to see that there was no mistake.

"Bai Jove! Towsah's twacked down the w'ong man——"

"As usual!" grinned Blake.

The man was a short, thick-set fellow in seafaring garb. His face was tanned by

tropical suns, and his eyes were deep-set and gleaming. There was a bundle tied in a red handkerchief on the grass, and remnants on the ground seemed to show that the seaman had been making his lunch there of sandwiches.

The man bore no resemblance whatever to the Spanish dwarf, but Towser was evidently not the kind of dog to be troubled by distinctions of that kind. So long as he ran somebody down he seemed to be satisfied.

And it would probably have gone very hard with the brown-faced sailorman or with Towser if Tom Merry & Co. had not arrived upon the scene.

Either Towser would have been brained by the cudgel, or the sailorman would have felt the bulldog's teeth in his leg, but for their arrival.

"Call him off!" shrieked the sailorman. "If that there dorg belongs to you, call 'im off! I'll brain him!"

Gr-r-r! Yow!
"Call him off!"

"You let that dog alone!" said Herries. "That's my bull dog——"

"Call him off, you ass!" said Blake.

"Towser! Towsy! Come off, old boy! Towsy!"

Gr-r-r!

Towser did not seem inclined to come off. He made another spring at the sailorman, and popped back just in time to escape a fierce slash of the oaken cudgel. Herries gave a shout of wrath.

"Stop that, you ruffian!"

"Bai Jove! That's wathah cool, you know, Hewwies."

"Oh, rats! Towser! Towsy!"

"Collar the beast!"

"If you're calling Towser a beast, Blake——"

"Collar him, you ass!"

Herries snorted, and ran at Towser. He grasped the bulldog's collar, and said soothing words, but Towser wanted a great deal of quieting. Towser had had some knocks with the cudgel, and Towser's blood was up.

He tried again and again to rush at the sailorman, and Herries was dragged to and fro by the dog, shouting to him to "lie down!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "This is jolly near as good as a circus! Go it Herries! Go it, Towser!"

"Ha, h a, ha!"

"Towser, old boy! You beast, be quiet! Lie down! Good dog! Good doggy!"

"H a, h a, ha!"

Towser's efforts relaxed at last. Perhaps he recognised his master's voice, or perhaps he was getting tired. The sailorman lowered the cudgel, which he had been holding in readiness in case the dog should get loose.

"Better take that brute away!" he panted. "Rot!" said Herries. "He's very quiet—you could trust him with a baby! I expect you're not much class, or Towser wouldn't go for you."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "Take the beast away. My hat! If I had a dog like that I'd borrow a gun for him."



A little swarthy face with twinkling black eyes looked over the ferns, and Tom Merry started as he discerned it. "Senorito! Stop a minute!" said the man. (See page 271).

"Bosh!"

"Yaas, wathah! And I would lend you one with pleasuah, deah boy."

"Oh, rot!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Come on, Towser—come on, old doggy!"

And Herries marched off with Towser with a great deal of dignity.

"We're awfully sorry," said Tom Merry, to the panting sailorman—"very sorry indeed. We were looking for somebody else."

"Yaas, wathah! We beg to apologise most pwofoundly, sir," said D'Arcy, taking off his hat with a bow.

The sailorman grinned.

"No offence," he said. "I ain't used to dorgs. I guess there's no 'arm done, young gentleman. It's all right."

"We were looking for a friend of yours, I think," said Tom Merry. "At all events, he had been inquiring for a sailorman on the road."

The seaman started, and a shade of pallor came into his mahogany face.

"A friend of mine," he said. "I ain't got no friends in these parts, I reckon. Wot was he like, young gentleman?"

"Oh, a foreign chap, who was inquiring for a sailorman," said Tom Merry.

"A foreign chap?"

"Yes."

"Not a Spaniard, by any chance?" asked the sailorman; and there was an inflection of strange eagerness in his voice.

"Yes; I took him for a Spaniard," said Tom Merry, wondering at the agitation in the tanned face of the seaman.

"Not a little ugly figure of a man," said the seaman, in a shaking voice—"a little black-jowled demon as strong as a horse and the height of a boy—'bout so high?"

And he stretched out a tanned hand.

"A dwarf?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"Yes, that was what he was."

"With rings on his fingers, maybe?"

"Yes, I noticed that," said Tom Merry, his hand going to his throat. "I felt it."

"Ah! It was Pablo, then."

"Pablo?"

"Pablo Lopez," said the sailorman. "So he is here, is he? And all the way from South-

ampton I ain't seen him, and I reckoned he was right off my course by this time. And he's here, looking for a sailorman!"

He muttered the last words in low, fearful tones, looking round him into the sombre depths of the wood, as if in terror of seeing the evil face of the Spaniard looking at him from the shadows there.

There was something in his terrified manner that had a strange effect upon the juniors. They felt that there was something in this that they could not understand—something that hinted of tragedy and mystery. What were these two men doing in the quiet Sussex country-side?

Tom Merry understood now that the Spaniard had been speaking falsely when he had said that he was looking for a friend.

It was evidently not as a friend that the sailorman regarded the man he called Pablo Lopez.

"Where is Lopez now, young gentlemen?" the sailorman asked, his glance returning to the astonished juniors.

"He's in the wood."

"In this wood—near here?"

"We were after him," Tom Merry explained. "We've had a row; he's a ruffianly cad. We've lost him now, though."

"But he hasn't lost me," said the sailor.

"Is he an enemy of yours?" asked Blake.

"Ay, ay!"

"And he is after you?"

"Ay, ay!"

"I should think you could handle a little boulder like that!"

The sailor looked at him queerly.

"It's more than my life's worth to meet Pablo Lopez, young gentleman," he said. "I've got something that he wants. You see that? He means to have it, too, but not while I'm alive—not much!"

He cast a quick look round into the wood.

"I reckon I'll be getting on," he said.

"If Lopez is here, this ain't a place for me to drop my anchor."

And he tramped away into the wood, with his head sunk and his eyes gleaming on either side of him at the slightest sound in the trees.

The juniors stood silent, lost in amazement.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

The Treasure Chart

"**B**AI JOVE!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first to break the silence with that ejaculation.

"My hat!" said Digby.

"It's a giddy mystery of some sort!" said Blake slowly. "That sailor chap looked as if he thought his life was in danger. Judging from the looks of the foreign bounder, I think it may be."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I've got an idea," said Tom Merry quietly. "The Spanish fellow is still in the wood, and he's looking for the sailor. If he finds him——"

"There'll be mischief!"

"Exactly! Let us follow the sailor."

"Follow him?"

"Yes; we've nothing to do, and we might as well see the man clear of the wood. We may drop on the Spanish chap again that way, too, and give him something to remember us by."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! We'll have Towsah, then!"

"Herries! Towser!"

But Herries and Towser were gone. Tom Merry and Blake and D'Arcy and Digby cut sticks in the thicket, in case they should have need of weapons, and followed on the track of the seaman. They could hear him tramping doggedly on some distance ahead through the thick wood.

"He'll come out on the Wayland road if he follows this path," Digby remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Listen!"

The juniors paused.

They had reached the edge of a broad, sunny glade which the sailorman had crossed. He was about to plunge into the trees on the opposite side, when a figure bounded into view from the fern.

It was the dwarf.

The sailorman saw him as the juniors did, and he sprang back against a tree, his right hand swinging up with the cudgel grasped in it; but the cudgel was shaking like a leaf

from the trembling of his hand. It was evident that he was in deadly fear of the dwarf.

"Stand back, Pablo Lopez!" he exclaimed. "Stand back!"

The dwarf laughed—a low, ugly laugh.

"I have found you, Peter Raff!" he said.

"Stand back!"

"Where is the chart?"

"I ain't got it."

The dwarf laughed again.

"You are lying, friend Peter!" he said.

"You are lying! You have the chart in your pocket, and you know you have! Give it me!"

Peter Raff set his white lips desperately.

"I won't!" he said. "You shall kill me first!"

"It will not take me long to do that, Peter!"

"Look you 'ere, Pablo," said the sailorman, his eyes watching wildly every sinuous motion of the dwarf, who seemed about to spring upon him every moment. "Look you 'ere, you belay! You ain't in the South Seas now! You're in England, my man, and there's a law 'ere to hang up men who use their knives. You see?"

"I am not afraid of your law, Peter."

"Stand off!"

"Besides, I shall not use my knife," grinned the dwarf. "My hands will choke the life out of you, Peter, if you do not give up the chart!"

"I won't!"

"Hand it over!"

"No!"

"Carambo!"

The Spaniard leaped forward like a tiger.

Peter Raff brought the cudgel down with a swing, but his hand was shaking so that the Spaniard had no difficulty in avoiding the blow.

The cudgel missed its mark, and the next instant the dwarf's terrible grip was upon the sailorman.

Peter Raff, powerful fellow as he was, was borne back against the tree, and the next moment was rolling in the grass with the dwarf upon him.

"Now!" panted the dwarf. "Now, hombre! The chart!"

"Never!"

"The chart, or your life first!"

"Help!"

The juniors were dashing across the grassy glade, and the sailor's rolling, despairing eyes had caught a glimpse of them. The dwarf's back was to them, and he saw nothing.

He laughed mockingly.

"There is no help here, Peter," he said.

"We are alone—the wood is lonely. Bah! The chart or your life! Will you trouble me to take it from your dead body? You are a fool! The chart, I say!"

"You hound!"

Tom Merry sprang upon the Spaniard. Pablo Lopez started up with a fierce cry.

"You! You, nino; you again!"

He whirled round upon the juniors, but they were ready for him. Four sticks were lashing out; they did not feel disposed to stand upon ceremony with the murderous ruffian.

The dwarf reeled back from the crashing sticks with a yell of pain.

Crash!

He made a savage spring forward, with murder in his snapping black eyes; but the juniors of St. Jim's stood their ground, hitting out fiercely.

"Bai Jove! Down with the wottah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Give him socks!"

The Spaniard retreated, hissing like a spiteful cat.

"Carambo, I will—I will——"

"Get out!" said Tom Merry. "Buzz off, or you'll get worse than that, you scoundrel!"

"Senorito——"

"Buzz off, I tell you!"

Tom Merry made a motion with his stick, and the Spaniard retreated again. Strong

A man was backing against a tree trying to keep the bulldog off with thrusts of a cudgel. (See page 273)



as he was, he was no match for the four juniors.

He turned a savage look upon the sailor-man, who had risen to his feet, and was leaning against a tree, gasping.

"I shall see you again, Peter Raff! You will not escape me!"

Then he disappeared into the wood, muttering Spanish imprecations.

"Gweat Scott!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that fellow as a wank wottah! I twust you are not hurt, Mr. Waff?"

The sailorman was breathing hard, and the colour was ebbing in his tanned face.

"No," he said. "I've been near it, though. P'r'aps you young gentlemen would——"

He paused.

"We'll do anything we can for you," said Tom Merry. "If you're afraid of that fellow, why not apply to the police for protection?"

The sailorman gave a hollow laugh.

"The police wouldn't be much use agin Pablo Lopez," he said. "You don't know him. I was with him in the South Seas. I've seen him——" He broke off abruptly. "Young sir, you saved my life just now! If Pablo Lopez had fastened his grip on my throat, I should have been a gone coon!"

"I did no more than the others," said Tom Merry.

"You was the first," said the sailorman; "but I'm obleeged to you all. I want you to do something more for me, and p'r'aps for yourself. What is your name, sir?"

"Tom Merry."

The sailorman was fumbling in his breast.

His hand came out with something in it—something that looked like a crumpled paper. But as the juniors looked at it, they saw that it was a kind of leather—a pale-coloured, delicate kind of leather they had never seen before. There were marks upon it in Indian ink, tattooed into the leather.

"Look at that," said the sailorman.

He handed the fragment of leather, which was about four inches by six, to Tom Merry. Then, a sudden thought seeming to strike him, he closed his rough hand over it.

"No, don't look at it! Young gentleman"—he came closer to Tom Merry, and looked sharply and searchingly into his face—"young gentleman, I can trust you?"

"I hope so," said Tom Merry.

"You wouldn't go back on a poor sailor-man?"

"Certainly not."

"Wathah not," said D'Arcy. "I assuah you that you can wely entirely upon Tom Mewwy, my deah fellow. He's all wight."

"You take that chart," said the sailorman, placing it in Tom Merry's hand. "Wrap it up and don't look at it."

"Do you want me to mind it for you?"

"Ay, ay."

"Very well."

Tom Merry took out his handkerchief and wrapped it round the oblong leather. The sailor watched him with anxious eyes.

"Now make a knot," he said.

Tom Merry smiled and knotted the corners of the handkerchief.

"You won't look at that?" said the sailor. "You won't open that and look at it while it's in your 'ands?"

"Certainly not."

"Right you are," said the sailorman. "I can trust you; I know it in your face. Look you 'ere, then. I'm goin', but, if I live, I'll come back agin and ask you for that paper, or else let you know where to send it by post. You see?"

"Yes."

"If the Spaniard finds me agin—and I reckon he will—he can't get that chart now," said the sailor. "He won't suspect me of giving it away—not he. But he won't find it on me now. You savvy?"

"I understand."

"If I write to you within three days, you send me that chart in the post," said the sailorman. "You savvy that?"

"Yes."

"If you don't 'ear from me on the third morning," said the sailor, in low tones, "it will be because I can't write to you, because—well, because the chart won't be no use to me in Davy Jones' locker."

"My dear chap——"

"Ay, ay, I know what to expect," said the sailorman. "But Pablo Lopez will never have it; that's my comfort. Where can I write to you?"

"Tom Merry, School House, St. Jim's."

"I reckon I shall remember that."

"Why not write it down?"

The sailorman shook his head.

"No; Pablo Lopez would find it and guess! No; I'll bear it in mind. Mind, if I don't write you by the third morning, I shan't never claim that chart, and it is yours."

"Mine?"

"I reckon so," said the sailorman. "Mind, I came by it honest; I swear that on the Good Book! It's mine, and if I don't claim it in three days, I give it to you; and these young gents are witnesses."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Maybe, you'll have friends who can stand by you and 'elp you to find what's written on that chart," said the sailorman. "P'r'aps you won't see Pablo Lopez agin. He won't know you've got the chart. He may never even know that the treasure's been lifted at all."

"The treasure?" said Tom Merry with a gasp.

Peter Raff nodded.

"Yes, the treasure," he said. "There's treasure enough on Skeleton Island to make a dozen rich—rollin' in money, I reckon. But it's got to be found, and Pablo Lopez means to find it. You steer clear of Pablo Lopez, and you're all right. Keep that chart out of sight."

"I will take care of it."

The sailorman looked round into the wood.

"I reckon I'll go now——"

"Shall we see you clear of the wood?" asked Blake.

"If you'll be so kind, young gents."

The juniors walked with the sailorman as far as the Wayland road. They walked in silence. The circumstances were so peculiar that they did not know what to think. Was the man a dreamer, and did he imagine that the leather chart he had given to Tom Merry had the value he assigned to it? That he was speaking in good faith, and believed every word he said, was evident.

But it was clear, too, that the Spaniard believed in the chart—else why his desperate effort to obtain possession of it.

And the dwarf did not look like a dreamer.

The whole thing was amazing.

The sailorman walked with dogged steps, like a man who felt himself in the grip of a fate from which there was no escape, but would not yield to fear. He marched on grimly, his eyes well about him, and he seemed to breathe more freely when they came out of the wood, on the sunny Wayland road.

He held out a big, rough hand to Tom Merry.

"Good-bye, young gent!" he said. "And thank you kindly—thank you all kindly. I don't suppose I shall write for that there chart; but if I do, you'll send it to me."

"Immediately."

"And, remember, if you don't 'ear from me in three days, the chart's yours, to do what you like with—all yours," said the sailor man.

And he pressed Tom Merry's hand, and ducked his head to the other fellows, and went tramping away down the road towards Wayland.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Glorious Prospects!

"WELL, this is a rum go!"

That was how Jack Blake summed up the amazing events of the afternoon—and the rest of the juniors agreed with him. On the way back to St. Jim's, the party discussed the matter in all its bearings, but, naturally, came no nearer to a solution of the mystery.

Immediately on arriving at the school, Tom Merry slipped his notted handkerchief, which of course still contained the mysterious strip of leather, into a big envelope, sealed it, and gave it into the safe keeping of Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, who locked it up in his big safe.

The juniors then began to count the hours. If no word came from Peter Raff during three days, the piece of leather, with its mysterious secret, passed into the absolute possession of Tom Merry.

And no word came.

On the third day Tom Merry met the postman at the gates at both morning and after-

noon deliveries, but there was nothing for him.

From the sailorman there came no word.

After the last post Tom Merry asked the Head for the envelope, and Dr. Holmes handed it to him. Tom Merry carried it off to his study, his hand trembling with excitement.

Quite a crowd of fellows were waiting for him there.

Monty Lowther, and Manners, and Blake, and D'Arcy, and Herries, and Dig were there, of course, with Figgins & Co., from the New House. Kangaroo, of the Shell, had come in, and a dozen more would have come if there had been room. But Monty Lowther had gently but firmly declined to have the study packed like the inside of a sardine-tin, a limit was placed on the number.

There was a general exclamation as Tom Merry came in.

"Got it?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

Lowther closed the door. The fellows all gathered eagerly round the table as Tom Merry laid down the knotted handkerchief.

"I've given the man every chance to write," said Tom Merry slowly. "He said I was to open it if I didn't get a letter this morning. There have been two posts since then, and I

haven't had a line. It means that he isn't going to write. Either he wants me to have the chart, or he isn't able to write." The junior's voice faltered a little. "That Spanish villain has killed him. I don't want to think so—I hope it isn't so—but if he is living, it's clear that he wants me to have the chart, or he would have written. I suppose all you fellows think the same?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite right, Tommy!"

"You all agree that I ought to open it now?"

"Yes!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!"

Tom Merry untied the handkerchief. Every eye was bent eagerly upon the leather chart as it rolled out.

Tom Merry spread it flat upon the table.

There was a deep-drawn breath from the crowded juniors.

They gazed eagerly at the chart.

It was marked on the leather in tattoo, and the black marks showed up clearly against the pale colour

of the leather.

There was the outline of an island, and, outlined round it, were coral reefs. The points and indentations of the coast were named, and in the interior were further indications. The juniors, gazing at it with breathless curiosity, read out the names marked on the chart:

"Danger Point!"

"Shark Bay!"

"Dingo Creek!"

"Pirate's Mount!"



The next instant the dwarf's terrible grip was upon the sailorman, and Peter Raff was rolling in the grass. "Now!" panted the dwarf. "The chart!" (See page 276.)



To face page 281.

THE GREAT FIRE OF ST. JIM'S

THE GREAT FIRE AT ST. JIM'S

*A Thrilling and Terrible
Scene from the Past*

IT was in the reign of George the Third—that monarch whose reign was such a curious compound of good and bad—that the Great Fire of St. Jim's occurred.

At that time, the New House had not come into being. It was in the historic School House that the fire broke out; and it occurred, as do most fires, in the watches of the night.

The masters and seniors did everything in their power to prevent a panic. And the boys of St. Jim's hurriedly rose and dressed, and were paraded in the quadrangle, which was now illuminated by a lurid glare.

Unfortunately, the only apparatus for coping with fires in those days consisted of ladders and pails of water. An amateur fire-brigade was hurriedly formed, and a long chain of boys, armed with pails, worked hard to check the conflagration.

Then the dread message passed from mouth to mouth that a couple of fags were imprisoned in that fiery furnace. These two boys were in the punishment-room, the door of which was securely bolted, and they had been temporarily forgotten.

It was at this stage that Carfax of the Fifth performed a deed of valour which will ever be remembered in the school's annals. Paying no heed to the warning shouts of his school-fellows, he caused a ladder to be reared up to the window of the punishment-room, and hastily ascended to the rescue of the two fags. At grave personal peril, he extricated them from their prison. Both were overcome by the fumes, and Carfax had great difficulty in bearing his unconscious burdens safely to terra firma. Needless to state, the gallant fellow received a tremendous ovation.

The fire was at last extinguished, though not before considerable damage had been done. One wing of the building was practically gutted; but the majestic school tower was preserved inviolate, and still stands proudly erect—one of the landmarks of the countryside.

(Continued from page 280.)

"Look! 'Gold buried here.' By Jove!" A black spot was marked "Pirate's Mount," and at the foot of it was a cross, with the words "Gold Buried Here."

The words seemed to fascinate the juniors. "Gold buried here," repeated Blake, with a deep breath.

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat! And it only wants picking up!" said Herries. "If we were there, I'll bet that Towser would find that place in next to no time, and——"

"Wats!"

"Oh, it's ripping!" said Blake. "What a find! Is the latitude given?"

"Yes; look at this in the corner."

"Good egg!"

In the corner was scratched, "Latitude of Sydney."

"My hat!" said Kangaroo. "That's the latitude of Sydney, in Australia, of course. But the longitude isn't given."

"Easy enough to find it from the latitude, though," said Kerr shrewdly. "You only have to take the latitude of Sydney for a guide, and sail on that parallel till you come to the island."

"Might have to go right round the world," grinned Figgins.

"What's this?" said Tom Merry.

He pointed to two dotted letters in the right-hand bottom corner of the chart. The letters were "W. L."

The juniors wrinkled their brows over them.

"'W. L.,' " repeated Blake. "They can't be the initials of the owner. They would be 'P. R.,' for Peter Raff."

"May have been some previous owner; this is a jolly old document," said Digby. "I should think it's been in existence more than a century."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Perhaps it's a warning of some sort," Herries said thoughtfully. "It might mean 'Wild Lions' or 'Wild Leopards.'"

"Or 'Woolly Lambs,'" suggested Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"Look here, Lowther——"

"Or 'Wallop Lowthah,'" said D'Arcy. "And, undah the cires., I considah——"

"Order!"

"I weally considah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr, bursting into a sudden laugh. "What asses you fellows are! It means 'West Longitude,' of course."

"By Jove! Yes, of course. The longitude isn't given."

"W. L.—West Longitude," said Blake.

"Of course! They don't give the degrees."

"No; that's unfortunate, but probably the chap who drew up the chart doesn't—or didn't—know the exact longitude himself," said Kerr. "It's pretty certain that this island isn't marked on any map."

"Wathah not!"

"He's given us the West Longitude—that's longitude west of Greenwich—and the latitude of Sydney," said Kerr. "That ought to be quite enough to find the island by."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Then——"

"Then we lift the giddy treasure!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!" said Kangaroo. "The long vacation's just on us, you know. Could we fix it to search for the treasure?"

"We might get leave——"

"Bai Jove! I weally think we ought to get leave," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I wathah think I can awwange the mattah."

"Rats!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Might get up a round robin to the Head, or something to that effect," said Herries; "and he could be assured that we should be all right, you know. I should explain to him that we were taking Towser with us."

"Bai Jove! What?"

"Towser, of course, would have to come. He——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Manners. "We haven't got leave to go at all yet, and we can settle about Towser when we do get leave."

"Something in that," grinned Blake. "But how are we to get leave? That's the question."

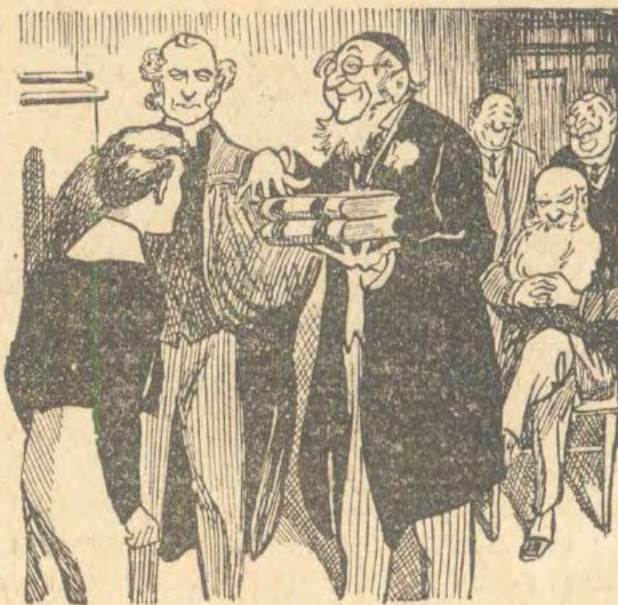
"I think I could awwange——"

"Bosh!"

"I could awwange——"

Great Days at Greyfriars

Speech Day



This day is styled the "Gasbags' Day,"

It's one long round of chattering;
When bearded veterans, old and grey,
Prizes galore are scattering.
So many trophies have I won
For prowess intellectual,
I look at them, and say (in fun)

"Oh, help! I can't collect you all!"

I've taken first in "Maths.," though why

I got it is a mystery;
A dull and dreamy duffer I,
Except at rhymes—and history.
I'm fond of Stevenson and Scott,
I worship G. A. Henty, too;
Yet it's for Latin that I've got
Ten prizes out of twenty-two!

The Governors called me "Clever boy!"

I'd shake the hand of each if I
Thought it would give them any joy,
Or help the gents to speechify.
But people like Sir Highbrow Tubbs,
Might think me too familiar,
And say, "Of all the silly cubs,
I've never met a sillier!"

Speech follows speech; the listening throng

Grows wearier and wearier;
And all the Greyfriars fellows long
For functions that are cheerier.
Speech Days, you are a nuisance, quite,
And in this merry ANNUAL
We set it down, in black and white,
That we should love to ban you all!

"Order!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "It's just barely possible that Gussy may have a sensible suggestion to make."

"Nonsense!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I could awwange it, I tell you," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You chaps know my bwothah Conway; you wemembah he was elected an M.P.—"

"What the dickens——"

"He's goin' on a cwuise in the South Seas. I've heard fwom him about it to-day, and he's comin' down here to-morrow to say good-bye to my brother Wally and me."

"My hat!"

"You see, he's been wathah seeday since he went into the House of Commons, owin' to bein' wowwied with Budgets and things. He's paired off with anothah chap, and he's goin' on a cwuise. My ideah is to capture him when he comes down heah and make him pwomise to get the Head to let him take us."

"Good egg!"

"Let's wait till Lord Conway comes," said Tom Merry. "We'll make him agree. If he won't, we'll shut him up in the study and start Gussy singing tenor solos to him."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Conway, who had the honour of being D'Arcy's elder brother, arrived the next afternoon. The juniors met him at the gates in a crowd, and marched him in triumph into D'Arcy's study—No. 6 in the Fourth.

A cheerful-looking youth with a smear of ink on his collar and a blot on his nose was already there. It was D'Arcy minor of the Third, more familiarly called Wally.

"Hallo, cocky!" said Wally cheerily.

"Weally, Wally——"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" implored Wally. "Sit down, Con, old chap, and make yourself at home. You chaps buck up and get tea."

Lord Conway laughed.

"You're all very kind," he said. "I'm going to dine with the Head, so——"

"Bai Jove! You're going to have tea with us, first, Conway?" said Arthur Augustus. "We shall weally take no wefusul."

"A very light one, then."

"Buck up, you fellows! Fill the kettle, Wally. Cut the cake, Dig, deah boy. Buck up with stirrin' the fiah, Lowthah."

Over tea the subject of the proposed excursion to the South Seas was delicately approached. The chart was shown to Lord Conway, and the story of how Tom Merry had obtained possession of it was related to him—most of the juniors speaking at once.

The young man was genuinely interested. He scanned the chart, and looked it over, and felt it in his hands.

"By Jove," he said, "this is—is——"

"It's a clue, ain't it?" said Blake.

"Yes. But I did not mean that. Do you know what this leather is made of?"

"Never seen anything like it before," said Tom Merry.

"They made leather like it, from the skins of aristocrats, in the French Revolution," said Lord Conway quietly. "I've seen leather like it in Africa."

The juniors caught their breath.

"Human skin?" said Tom Merry.

Lord Conway nodded.

"Good heavens!"

"Gruh!"

"How howwid!"

"Some grim old pirate drew up that chart," said Lord Conway. "It's genuine enough. I can see that it's a great deal more than a hundred years old. I shouldn't be surprised if there's something in it."

"Oh, we're convinced of that!" said all the juniors at once in a breath.

Lord Conway laughed.

"Naturally you would be," he agreed. "At your age I should have been convinced of it without any proof at all. But there may be something in it. I wish I could take you all to the South Seas with me to look for the island."

The juniors exchanged glances.

Lord Conway's careless remark had brought them to their subject. Several of them started at once.

"That's just what we want."

"You see, Conway, deah boy——"

"That's it!" said Wally. "We're coming!"

"Weally, Wally——"

Lord Conway stared.

"Well, I would take you," he said. "You would make the yacht lively enough, I've no doubt, and prevent the cruise from being monotonous. But you could never get leave from your headmaster to leave school for so long a time."

"That's just it," Tom Merry explained. "We want you to get leave for us."

"Me?"

"Yaas, wathah!

Our governah is a governah of the school, you know, Con, deah boy, and you are an old Saint. You've got heaps of influence with the Head."

"Yes, rather!"

"Do it—there's a good chap!"

"But I couldn't ask——" began Lord Conway, in dismay.

"Yes, you could, you know!"

"No 'buts,'" said Wally. "You've got to do it, and you may as well make up your mind to it. If you refuse Gussy is going to sing to you till you give in!"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Conway set down his teacup and rose to his feet, smiling.

"I'll speak to the Head," he said. "Mind, I don't promise anything; but I'll do my best for you."

"Hurrah!"

Lord Conway made his way to the Head's study, with a very dubious expression upon his face. The juniors waited for him in the passage with the keenest anxiety.

The viscount was quite a long time in the study, and the juniors could hear a faint murmur of voices. Their anxiety grew in keenness every moment, and several times

Arthur Augustus had to be restrained forcibly from going in to his brother's aid.

The study door opened at last, and Lord Conway came out, smiling.

The juniors gathered round him breathlessly.

"Bai Jove! What is the verdict, deah boy?"

"What does he say?"

"It's all right," said Lord Conway, laugh-

ing. "You can come with me, you young rascals, on condition that you promise to behave yourselves."

"Hurrah!"

"Thanks—thanks awf'ly, old chap!"

"Bravo!"

And Tom Merry & Co. rejoiced. And from that hour little was spoken of among them but preparations for joining Lord Conway's yacht and voyaging to the South

Seas in quest of the treasure island.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Luggage Limited.

"TAGGLES!"

"Yes, Master D'Arcy?"

"Pway be careful with the hat-box!"

"Yes, sir."

"And careful with the twunk."

"Yes, sir."

"And vewy careful with the suit-case."

"Suttingly, sir!"

"And with the——"

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



Tom Merry spread the chart flat upon the table, and the juniors gazed at it with breathless curiosity. (See page 280).

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

Biff, biff!

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

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

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

"Ow!"

Crash!

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

"Ow! Ah! Oh!"

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

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

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

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scrambled to his feet. He had certainly ruined the topper. It bore some distant resemblance to an opera-hat now, but was more like a concertina. There was dust on D'Arcy—on his beautifully-fitting Eton jacket, on his elegant grey trousers, on his gorgeous waistcoat.

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

"Tom Mewwy! You ass!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"Weally, Hewwies——"

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

"Weally——"

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

"I should uttably wefuse to be left behind."

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

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"I have thwee boxes, a twunk, a hat-box, and a suit-case, with my dwessin'-bag and——"

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

"Weally, Manners——"

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

D'Arcy gave him one indignant look, and then dashed into the School House. He knew that Blake wouldn't wait, and he was in danger of starting on his journey in a dusty jacket, dusty trousers, and without his hat.

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

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

Arthur Augustus never started on a journey

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

Blake was in the brake already, with Digby and Herries. Herries had been persuaded at a great cost of argument, to leave his bulldog behind. Herries regarded his bulldog, Towser, as a valuable addition to any party; in fact, according to Herries, merely to know Towser was a liberal education. But Herries had been overruled. He was not convinced that Towser would be superfluous. But he was somewhat influenced by a suggestion made by Kerr, of the New House, that the climate mightn't agree with Towser. And there were cannibals to be considered, and poisoned arrows.

Upon the whole, Herries had agreed to leave Towser in the kennels at St. Jim's. But Herries had made up his mind that if Towser didn't come, neither should D'Arcy's superfluous luggage; and most of the other fellows agreed with him.

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

Taggles, the school porter, came out groaning under a heavy trunk. Taggles always groaned under any trunk; he had found out by long experience that a groan or two had a perceptible effect upon the tips.

But he had reason to groan this time. In that gigantic runk was the famous trousers-press, and several suits of clothes, additional trousers, and overcoats galore. Taggles bumped the trunk down on the ground, and gasped for breath.

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

Tom Merry grinned.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Master D'Arcy said——"

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

"Wot about the other boxes?"

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

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

"Gussy! Gussy! Gus!"

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

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

"You cheeky young bounder——"

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

"Gussy."

"Oh, never mind Gussy!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Hallo! Sorry, Digby! Did I drop my bag on your feet?"

"Yes, you ass! Ow!"

"Blessed if I know what a chap wants with such big feet! Can't you put them under the seat?"

"I'll—I'll——"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Werry well, sir."

Taggles tramped gasping into the house again. He had had a liberal tip from D'Arcy, and he meant to bring all the baggage out, whatever became of it. Blake looked over the heap.

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

Gore grinned, and picked up D'Arcy's hat-box. It was the smallest of all the boxes, but it was a good size, for it was constructed to hold two silk hats and a bowler. It was the lightest of the baggage, and Gore handed it up easily. Blake stowed it away.

"My word!" said Digby.

"Is Gussy going to take nothing but toppers?"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy! Gussy! Gussy!"

The fellows all stood up in the brake and roared.

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

"It's all wight, deah boys!"

"We're starting."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come down!"

"I sha'n't keep you waiting more than five minutes."

"That you jolly well won't!" agreed Blake.

"Drive on, Johnny!" The brake moved off.

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

"Rats!"

And the brake rolled away towards the New House, Blake kissing his hand affectionately to the excited junior at the window.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

D'Arcy Runs for It

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY came breathlessly out of the School House. For once, the swell of St. Jim's had lost the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. He stood on the lowest step and waved a glove and a cane and, shouted:

"Stop, you boundahs!"

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

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

"Go it, Gussy!"

"After them!"

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

"Stop, you uttah wot-tahs!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"You've left all my baggage behind. I insist upon your weturnin' for my twaps."

"Ha, ha!" The brake rolled serenely on.

It halted outside the New House. Figgins and Co. were waiting

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

"We're ready."

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn lifted their trunks in, aided by the School House fellows, and came in after them. Blake looked back across the quad.



The plan which Peter Raff gave to Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus, holding cane and gloves in one hand, a light coat over his arm, and keeping his hat on with a firm grasp, was sprinting across the quad.

Loud shouts of encouragement from the crowd outside the School House followed him.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Put her through."

"Hurrah!"

The swell of St. Jim's did not heed the shouting.

He dashed on at top speed; but the brake was in motion again now, and rolling down to the gates.

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

And the man grinned and cracked his whip. The brake increased in speed. D'Arcy put on a spurt, and overtook the vehicle as it reached the gates.

"Stop, you wascally boundahs!" he gasped.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't stop, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

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

"So will I," said Kangaroo.

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

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

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

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

"The hat-box!" grinned Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to twavel to the South Seas with nothin' but a hat box!" shouted D'Arcy keeping pace with the brake, which was now outside the school gates, and travelling down the dusty lane at a good speed.

"Jump in, Gussy!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Jump in!" said Manners.

"I decline to jump in, Mannahs."

"Fancy a chap preferring to run on a warm day like this!" Figgins remarked. "You must be feeling awfully fit, Gussy."

"Keep it up, old man."

"Hoof it!"

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

"I uttably wefuse to leave my luggage behind," he said. "I insist upon your turnin' the bwake wound and goin' back for my twaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, driver!"

"Yessir!"

D'Arcy dropped a pace or two behind.

"Better jump in, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

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

"I insist——"

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

"Weally, Kerr——"

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

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

"Pax, you know," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Easy, driver."

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy panted.

"You utter wottahs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have nothing but a silk hat and a bowlah to take to the South Seas with me——"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Words failed the swell of St. Jim's. He sat gasping for breath, and mopping his perspiring face with a cambric handkerchief, till the brake rolled up to the station. Then the porters carried the boxes in, and Arthur Augustus reluctantly followed the crowd of juniors upon the platform.

"Suppose we catch the next twain, Tom Mewwy?" he suggested. "We could send back to the coll. for my baggage, and——"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Here's the train!"

The train rolled in. Boys and boxes were soon aboard. The swell of St. Jim's stepped into the train with his nose very high in the air. He had given up hope of the baggage by this time.

"Cheer up, Gussy!" said Blake. "You won't be able to change your clothes in the South Seas, but you can wear two silk hats and a bowler, piled on one another, you know, like an old clothes man——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake."

"Well, I'm only trying to make useful suggestions," said Blake in an injured tone.

"Wats!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

Lopez

WALLY, leaning out of the window, was the first to recognise the tall form of Lord Conway, his eldest brother, standing on the platform at the terminus. Lord Conway was waiting for the train that was to bear the juniors of St. Jim's.

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

"Here's old Conway!" said Wally, turning back into the carriage.

"Weally, Wally, that is hardly a wespectful

way of speaking of your eldest bwothah and a future membah of the House of Peers," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, don't you begin, Gussy!"

"Weally——"

"Train's stopping," said Blake. "Get a move on."

"You're intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"Exactly! Buck up."

The train stopped, and the juniors crowded out.

Lord Conway shook hands with them in his genial way.

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

"I've been tweated with gwoss diswespect, deah boy."

"Too bad!" said Lord Conway cheerfully.

"You will come and dine with me and then we will go aboard."

"I have some shoppin' to do——"

"Shopping?" echoed the viscount.

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

Lord Conway smiled.

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

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

"We have exactly an hour."

"Pewwaps we could put off startin' till to-morrow?" Arthur Augustus suggested.

The viscount laughed.

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

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

Lord Conway presided at the meal with a cheery manner and an unfailing flow of pleasant talk. He was very popular with the boys. When the meal had progressed as far as dessert,

Tom Merry's chart was produced, to be conned over once more, and handed from one to another.

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

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

But Tom Merry had determined that if the treasure were discovered, a full share should be kept for the sailorman—for the hero of St. Jim's still hoped that Peter Raff was in the land of the living.

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

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

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

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

"And Shark Bay!" Monty Lowther remarked, looking at the chart over Tom Merry's shoulder. "That sounds promising for bathing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the caves, too!" said Wally, rubbing his hands. "It will be ripping, exploring the caves! I wish I'd brought my dog Pongo!"

"Wats!"

"Pongo would have been more useful than Gussy," said Wally. "It isn't too late to send Gussy back, and have Pongo instead, if we sail to-morrow instead of to-day."

"And here's the reefs," said Manners.

"Jolly ticklish work, I expect, getting through the reefs into that safe anchorage, I should say."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

Tom Merry laughed.

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

"Unless what, deah boy?"

"Unless the gold's already been lifted," said

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

Blake snorted.

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

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



Lord Conway rose to his feet. "I don't promise anything," he said. "But I'll ask the Head if you can come with me to the South Seas." (See page 284.)

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And Sydney wasn't in existence then."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry smiled.

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

"True!"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I think——"

Tom Merry broke off suddenly. His startled glance was fixed upon the open window.

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

"Lopez!" panted Tom Merry.

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

Tom Merry rushed to the window.

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

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

The Mate of the "Silver Scud"

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

The Spaniard was gone. How long had he been there at the open window, before Tom Merry had seen him? It was an important question, for, from where he had been

standing, the Spaniard could have heard every word that was spoken in the room.

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

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

But if he followed the party to the Treasure Island, he would be an awkward enemy to encounter there.

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

Kerr nodded.

"I'm jolly certain!" he said. "He was most likely there all the time we were having dinner. He knows where to look for the island, now."

"He doesn't know where to look for the treasure, though," said Figgins.

"No. We've got the advantage, there."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

"I haven't done my shoppin', yet!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come on, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Oh, come on!"

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

"Weally, Conway——"

"Come on!"

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

"Exactly! Come on!"

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

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

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

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

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

Blake grinned at the fat Fourth-Former.

"Feeling qualmy, kid?" he asked.

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!"

"Hallo! Anything the matter, Fatty?"

"N-no."

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

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I've certainly seen him before somewhere!"

"Looks an athlete," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll swear I've seen those shoulders before, somewhere! Behind a wicket, I believe!" said Monty Lowther, thoughtfully. "They're

associated, somehow, with your old place, Tom—Huckleberry Heath."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

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

Who was the man?

"By George!" Tom Merry exclaimed suddenly.

"You know him?"

"I think so."

Tom Merry ran forward.

The broad-shouldered mate turned round.

"Mr. Dodds!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Mr. Dodds laughed and smiled.

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

"By George, yes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

"Bai Jove, and this is a pleasant surprise to us, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "We're awf'ly glad to see you, sir, aren't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" said the juniors, heartily.

"Thank you," said Mr. Dodds.

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

Mr. Dodds nodded.

"Certainly! I had to have a change for my health, and Lord Conway heard of it. As I could not afford to go abroad on my own, he very kindly offered the post of mate on his yacht for the trip to the South Seas. I shall

take up my work again when I return to England. Lord Conway's kindness—"

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

Fatty Wynn lurched a little.

"No-o-no, sir!" he gasped.

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

"Groo!"

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

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

"Groo!"

"Bai Jove! I feel a little—a little—gwoo—"

"You, too, Gussy!"

"Gwooh!"

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

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Round the Horn

SUNNY seas and bright skies!

Day after day the steam yacht had ploughed her way to the southward. English skies and English waters had long been left behind.

After the first couple of days the juniors had got their "sea-legs," even Fatty Wynn; though the Bay of Biscay had tested them severely. Daily the juniors enjoyed their trip more and more.

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

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

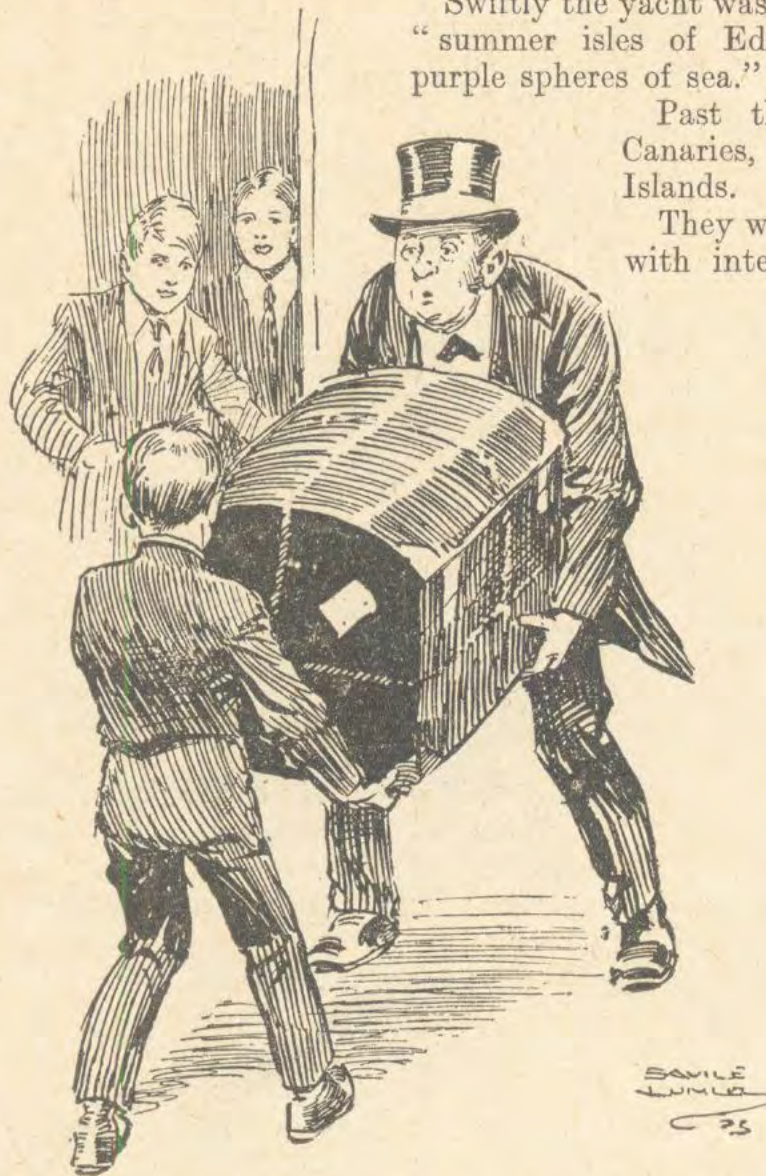
They were names that teemed with interest to the juniors of St. Jim's; names that had been only names to them; portions of geographical lessons—now realities.

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

"Land ahead!"

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

last throw of the dice at Waterloo—had been all. At St. Helena the juniors would gladly have landed to explore. As Monty Lowther remarked, they had had Napoleon's imprisonment and death at St. Helena in their history books at St. Jim's, and after being bored with it in that way, it would have been only a just compensation to have a run over the place. But time did not permit, and, leaving the last prison of a great adventurer



The juniors burst into a roar as Taggles and Toby staggered out with the huge box. "Faith, Gussy's taking enough!" said Reilly. (See page 287.)

behind them, the voyagers had plunged into the wider waters of the South Atlantic.

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

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

"Bai Jove! Land!" he said.

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

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

Lord Conway laughed.

"That is Tristan da Cunha," he said.

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

"Our search begins here," said the skipper.

"Bai Jove!"

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

Lord Conway followed a line with his finger.

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

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

Tom Merry whistled.

"That's a big order, sir."

"Quite so. If the man who tattooed your chart had known the exact longitude—or had cared to write it down—we could have

steamed directly to the spot. All the clue to the longitude, however, is contained in the words West Longitude—taking that W. L. to mean west longitude. That gives us exactly half the globe to choose from. The only way to make a thorough search is to follow the thirtieth degree of south latitude right round the globe—west of Greenwich—excepting where land intervenes."

"Bai Jove!"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

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

Lord Conway laughed.

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

"Good!"

The yacht steamed on.

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

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

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

Bad weather, for the first time in the voyage

came upon them, and the yacht glided on to the south through foaming waves and under black, threatening skies.

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

But the Silver Scud made good time.

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

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

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

At Valparaiso the stop was short.

There was no time to waste, and, after taking in the necessary supplies, the Silver Scud put to sea again. The juniors had no time to explore the place; but as they steamed out of the harbour, they inwardly vowed to return some day and see more of the wild and romantic land at the foot of the Cordilleras.

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

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

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry suddenly fixed a keen stare upon the felucca.

The handsome vessel had passed so close, that the figure on the deck could easily be distinguished.

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

"What's the —"

"Hand them to me!"

"Certainly, deah boy."

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

His face was pale with excitement.

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

"It's he!" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"What!"

"He! Who?"

"Lopez!"

"Gweat Scott!"

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

"Look, then!"

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

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

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

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

The latter was doubtless the correct theory.

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

"My hat!" said Figgins. "It's a race, then—the Spanish villain is going there, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

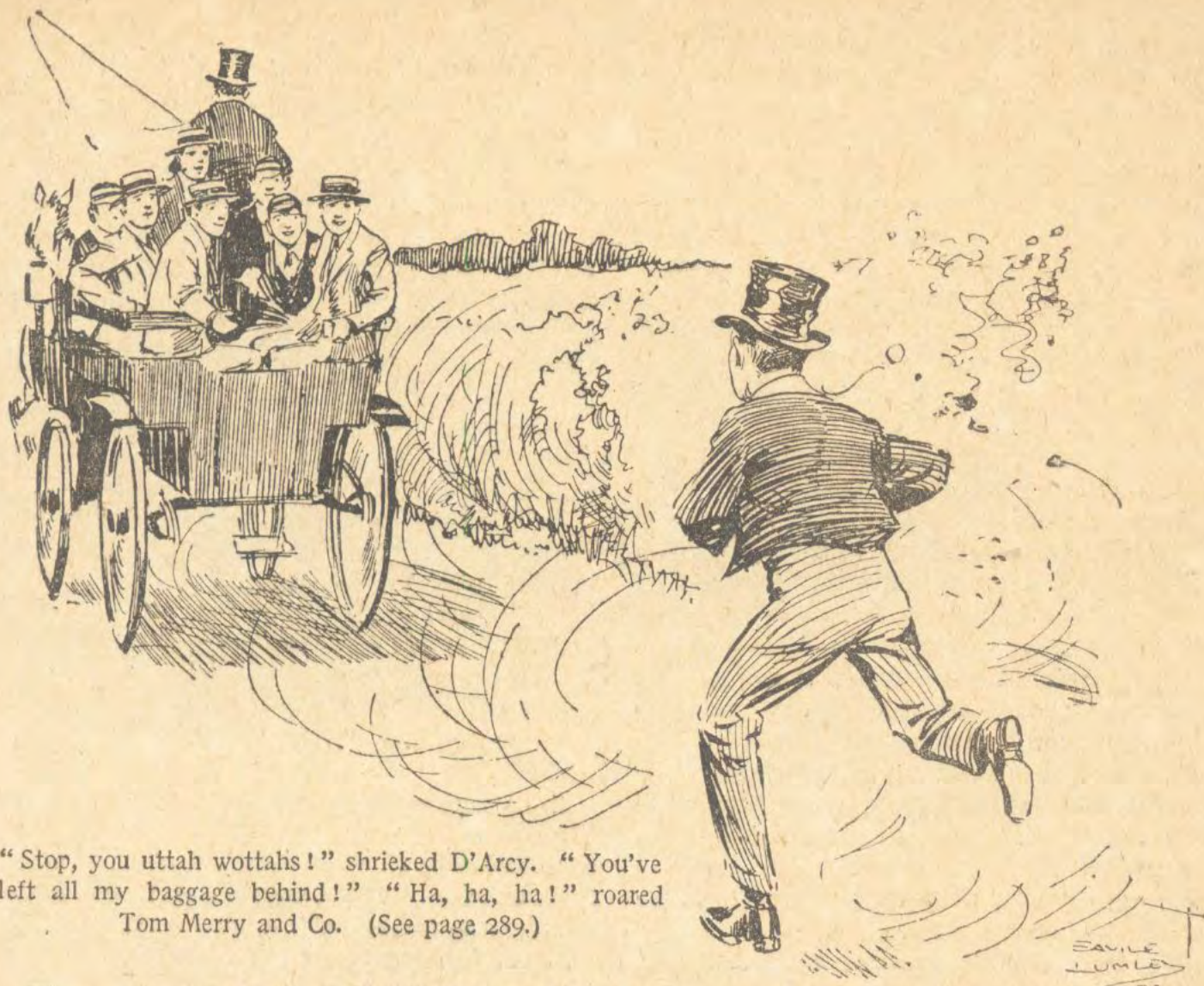
Lord Conway turned his glasses upon the felucca.

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

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

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

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



"Stop, you uttah wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You've left all my baggage behind!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Co. (See page 289.)

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

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Treasure Island

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

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

When would the island be sighted?

In hundreds of miles, or thousands, from the coast of South America? They did not

know. They knew that it was on or near the thirtieth degree of south latitude, but the longitude was a secret.

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

That was what the voyagers had to discover.

But all of them had faith that the chart was written truly—that they had the latitude, and had only to discover the longitude. Even Lord Conway was catching the infection of the boys' enthusiasm. As for Mr. Dodds, he had been quite keen upon the subject ever since he had been shown Tom Merry's chart.

Morning after morning the juniors scanned the sea.

Day after day nothing met their gaze but

the wide rolling waters, and sometimes a glancing sail, or the rolling smoke of a steamer. Whalers and sealers bound for the south passed them, and exchanged greetings, as the yacht ran on.

"We shall get to New Zealand if we keep on far enough," Kangaroo remarked. "We shall pass within sight of the North Cape of the North Island, unless we find our destination this side of Maoriland."

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a shout from the look-out.

"Land ho!"

And there was a rush of the juniors to see.

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

"Land! Land!"

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

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

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

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

"Indeed it is."

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

The juniors watched eagerly.

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

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

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

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

"Ay, ay, sir."

The yacht seemed to crawl now.

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

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

"And they're cocoanut-palms," said Fatty Wynn, with a smack of the lips. "We shall be able to gather cocoanuts—for nothing."

"Good old Fatty."

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

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

The anchor glimmered down.

Then the juniors gave a shout.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The hill flung back the sound with a thousand echoes.

"Hurrah!"

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

No wonder the juniors cheered!

The sun was sinking behind the hill, and glimmering on the thick woods round the base of it. The island was silent and still; there was no trace of life upon it. How long was

it since that lonely isle had been trodden by human feet?

Years—centuries! It looked like it!

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

"Oh, of course!"

"Not a doubt about that."

"I suppose we're going ashore now?"

Lord Conway shook his head.

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

"Why not, deah boy?"

"There may be danger."

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

"It looks like it; but it may be inhabited all the same, and if it is seldom or never visited by ships, the natives may be in a primitive state of barbarity," said the viscount quietly. "We shall go ashore in parties, and well armed. It would not be pleasant to fall into the hands of cannibals."

"Cannibals!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And you must not forget the Spaniard."

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

"He could."

"But he would be far behind us."

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

"Bai Jove! Then he may have woped in the tweekure."

Lord Conway shook his head with a smile.

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

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

"If he is here, he is waiting for our arrival,"

said Lord Conway, "hoping to get a clue to the treasure from us."

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy exclaimed suddenly.

"Hallo! What is it?"

"Look there, deah boys!"

D'Arcy pointed to the sand.

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

The juniors gathered eagerly round the spot. Most of them had been Boy Scouts at home, and they had learned to study tracks and footprints. Tom Merry dropped on his knees to examine the track.

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

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

"No fear!"

"And it's a small size in boots," said Tom Merry. "Lopez is a dwarf, and his feet are naturally very small."

"Bai Jove, it's Lopez!"

"I believe so."

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

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

An Alarm in the Night

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

full round moon was sailing up over the eastern sea.

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

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

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

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

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

The juniors gathered fuel on the borders of the wood to build up a huge camp-fire.

They looked into the gloomy depths of the forest with strange feelings. In those black thickets, what foes might lurk?

They did not venture out of sight of the beach.

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

Fatty Wynn was in his element now.

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

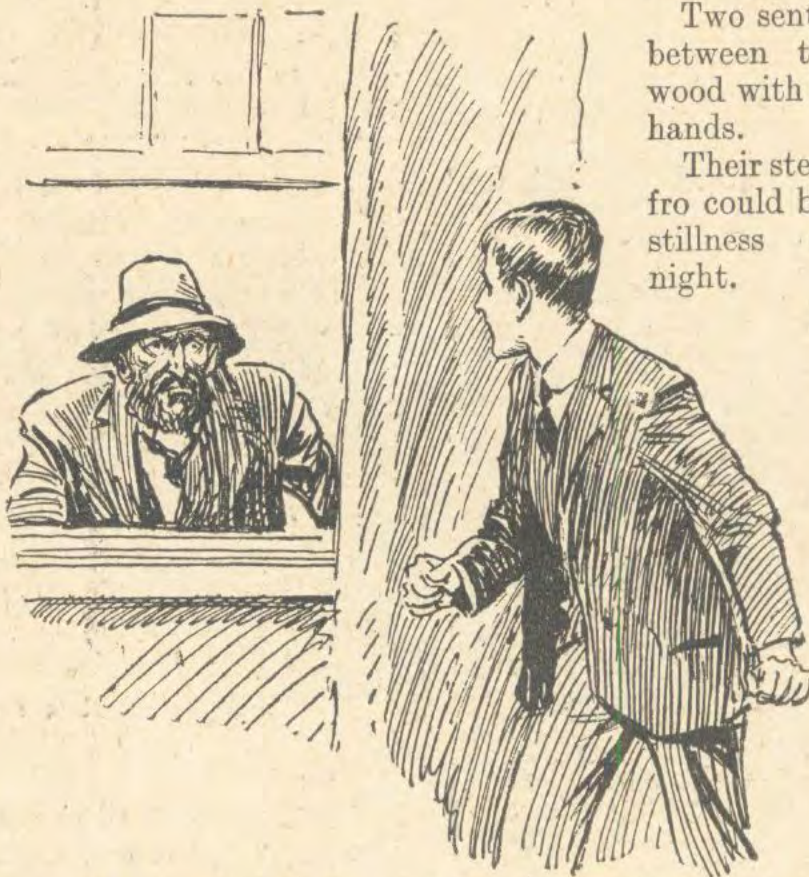
Couches of fresh leaves gathered under the trees, and camp stools brought from the yacht served for seats as the campers had their supper.

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

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

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

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



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

"Yes, rather."

"What are you looking wound like that for, Kerr?"

"I was just thinking," said the Scottish junior.

"Penny for your

thoughts," said Wally, with a grin, "and pass the beef before you tell 'em!"

"You cheeky young wascal——"

"You're interrupting Kerr, Gussy. I'm surprised at you," said Wally. "And pass the beef, too."

"What were you thinking, Kerr, old chap?" asked Tom Merry. "You generally think something when you do think."

Kerr grinned.

"Well, I was thinking that if Lopez, or any chap of his kidney, was in the wood yonder with a rifle, we should make splendid targets sitting here by the fire."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry rushed to the window. "Lopez!" he panted. "The Spaniard!" (See page 292.)

"Great Scott! Kerr! You don't mean——"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

Crack!

The campers sprang to their feet electrified. Crack-ack!

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

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

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

Faces were pale, now, in the glare of the camp-fire.

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

"It must be Lopez."

"But who is he firing at?"

"Us, I should think."

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

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

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

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

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

The campers waited and listened.

But the shot was not repeated.

They resumed their seats, and their talk; but there was a tone of anxiety in their voices

now, and they frequently glanced over their shoulders.

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "Besides, you old chaps would be in a feahful wisk if we weren't here."

"Hear, hear!" said Wally.

And Lord Conway laughed and yielded the point.

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

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

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

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

Had they slept at their posts.

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

He stood with beating heart peering into the gloom.

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

But what was that softer sound nearer at hand?

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

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

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

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

Lopez?

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

The moon was about to emerge from the clouds.

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

"Halt!" he shouted.

The man leaped to his feet with an inarticulate cry. The rifle in Tom Merry's hands was levelled at his breast, steady as a rock.

The moonlight glimmered on his face.

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

"Peter Raff!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

The Enemy

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

He was shaking in every limb, and there was no colour in his sunburnt cheeks. He had a rifle in his hand, but it was of little danger to anyone but himself. It was evident that the man's nerve was gone.

"Master Merry!" he exclaimed.

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

"So it's you!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad

to see you alive, my man. Come on. There's nothing to be scared about."

"Who is that, Tom?"

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

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

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

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

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"And I don't," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Well, he is alive and kicking, whether you said so all along or not, Gussy," Figgins remarked; "and I'm sure we're all jolly glad. Sit down, Peter, my son. Was it you shooting in the wood a while back?"

The sailorman shuddered.

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

"Who by?" asked Lord Conway quietly.

"Pablo Lopez, sir."

"Then he is here?"

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

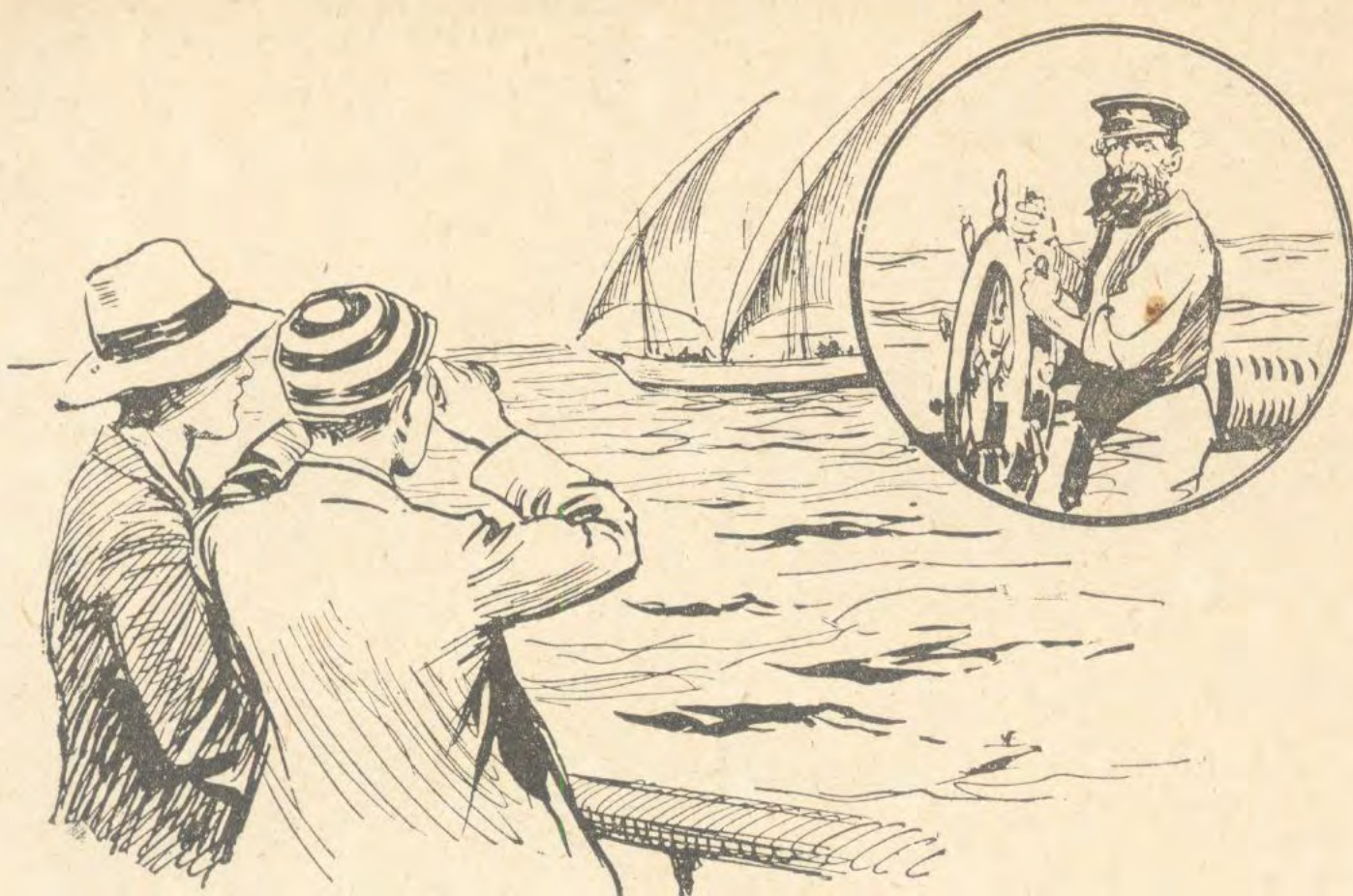
"You'd better tell us all about it," said Tom Merry. "How did you get here? You never asked me to let you have the chart again."

The sailorman shook his head.

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

"I suppose so."

"So I came out this way on the fastest boat I could," said Peter Raff. "And I got a passage to Kermadec on a fast whaler, and some Kanakas brought me over here on their schooner. I fitted them up with a



Tom Merry was pale with excitement as he peered through the glasses at the felucca. "It is he!" he said tensely. "Lopez, the Spaniard, is also going to the island!" (See page 296.)

yarn of having left some papers on the island, and I should have got the gold safe enough, I dessay, but——"

"But Lopez arrived?"

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

"I hoped it might be Master Merry and his friends, and yet I thought it couldn't be;

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

Lord Conway smiled.

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

The sailorman shook his head.

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

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

"No, sir. He has four niggers in the felucca with him, but they ain't any account," said Peter Raff. "They stick in the felucca,

and there ain't any fight in them. It's the Spaniard himself, sir."

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

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

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

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

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

At early dawn Tom Merry & Co. were astir.

It was a fine, clear morning, the skies blue and sunny, and a soft breeze waving the feathery fronds of the palm-trees. Fatty Wynn cast a hungry eye upon the cocoanut palms.

"I'm jolly well going to have some of these cocoanuts!" he remarked.

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

"Yes, but——"

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

"Oh, all serene!"

But Fatty Wynn could not give up the idea. There were no cocoanut palms near at hand, but plenty in sight in the distance, further along the Monkey River. Fatty Wynn helped to gather fuel for building up the fire to cook the breakfast.

The thought of the cocoanuts overcame his prudence. There was no sign of an enemy encampment, and Fatty resolved to risk it. It meant only a run of a hundred yards to secure an armful of cocoanuts, and bring them back to the camp.

Leaving the fuel he had gathered in a heap, Fatty Wynn started through the thicket, Tom Merry saw him go, and called after him.

"Fatty—Fatty!"

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

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

But Fatty Wynn ran on.

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

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

"Fatty—Fatty!"

Only the echo of his own voice answered Tom Merry.

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

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

There was a rustle in the bush.

Tom Merry turned quickly towards the sound.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed.

"Fatty, you chump, come back to the camp! You can get the cocoanuts afterwards."

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

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

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

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

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

"So we meet again, señorito!"

The voice was low and mocking.

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

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

In the Hands of the Enemy

LOPEZ planted a heavy knee upon Tom Merry's chest, pinning him helplessly to the ground. The boy struggled and gasped for breath. He strove to shout for help, but even as his lips opened something

sold and sharp touched his neck. It was a knife, in the swarthy hand of the Spaniard.

"Not a sound, señorito," said Pablo Lopez—"not a sound! At the first cry, my knife is in your throat!"

The unuttered cry died upon Tom Merry's lips.

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

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

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

Tom Merry nodded.

"Ah! You are a sensible boy," said Lopez, with a grin. "If you speak, speak only in a whisper, nino!"

"You scoundrel!"

The Spaniard laughed.

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

"Villain!"

The Spaniard made a gesture.

"Silence!"

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

But Lopez did not.

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

"Tom Merry!"

"Tom!"

"Where are you?"

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

"If they find you——" murmured Lopez.

But the footsteps and the voices passed on.

A few minutes of terrible tension, then silence.

The Spaniard smiled grimly.

"They have not found you, señorito."

"They will search again," said Tom Merry.

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

"You will come with me, or remain here dead!" said Lopez. "Mind, a cry or a struggle, and I drive my poniard home!"

He meant every word. That was clear from the savage look upon his swarthy face. Tom Merry did not resist. Lopez crammed a handkerchief into his mouth to gag him, and then tied a cord

round his head to keep it there.

Then he dragged the junior to his feet.

"Vamos!" he said briefly.

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

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



"So we meet again, señorito!" Tom Merry struggled furiously as he heard the low, mocking voice, but he was as a child in the hands that grasped him. It was Pablo Lopez who was bending over him! (See page 304.)

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

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

Deeper into the wood.

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

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

Then he released the junior.

"You may talk now, if you choose," he said.

"They will not hear you. We are safe from them now."

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

"Oh, you scoundrel!" he muttered.

"Where is the chart?"

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

"You lie! Give it to me, or——"

"I cannot give it to you, and I would not if I had it."

"Carambo! I shall soon see to that."

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

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

He gritted his sharp, white teeth.

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

"It is with my friends."

"Which of them?"

"Lord Conway."

"Who is that?"

"Our captain."

The Spaniard muttered a curse.

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

Tom Merry smiled scornfully.

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

"We shall see. Do you know why I did not

drive my knife to your heart as soon as I saw you?" asked Pablo Lopez, in a hissing tone.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. You are villain enough."

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

Tom Merry did not reply. The dwarf watched his prisoner with scintillating eyes.

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

"I have examined it, certainly."

"You remember it?"

"To some extent."

"Could you follow the clue to the place where the gold is buried, from memory?"

"I do not know."

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

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"I do not believe you!" he said.

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

"No!"

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

Tom Merry shuddered, but he made no reply.

"Will you guide me, señorito?"

"No!"

The dwarf did not speak. He flung the junior against the sapling, and wound long, wiry creepers round him to secure him there. Tom Merry struggled furiously, careless of the knife now. But it was in vain. The terrible dwarf seemed possessed of superhuman strength. Tom Merry was like an infant in his powerful grasp. In a few minutes he was bound fast to the tree.

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

"Have you changed your mind, señorito?" he asked.

"No! Help! help!" shouted Tom Merry.

The dwarf grinned, and took a tinder-box from his coat. A spark flickered out, and he blew a flame in the tinder. Then his evil eyes turned upon Tom Merry again.

"For the last time, señorito?"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

The Track of the Treasure

TOM MERRY looked at the dwarf with dilated eyes.

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

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

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

"Shall I hold my hand, señorito?"

"Yes," gasped Tom Merry.

"You will guide me?"

"Yes."

Lopez gave an ugly laugh.

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

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

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

It was but deferring his doom.

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

"Where is the cache?" said Lopez. "Where is it, to the best of your recollection, señorito?"

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

"Exactly where?"

"I cannot remember, but I may be able to

follow the direction from the river," said the junior.

"Good! You shall try."

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

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

"Yes."

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

"Yes."

"Muy buenn."

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

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

The ground became more rocky and uneven, and the trees were sparser. Tom Merry had the bearings of the chart imprinted upon his mind.

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

Suddenly the Spaniard halted, with a muttered imprecation.

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

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

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

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

"Carambo!" muttered the Spaniard.

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

He stood, and regarded it in silence for some minutes. Tom Merry's face was very white. Would his bones lie and whiten in the sun amongst those silent rocks?

It seemed only too likely.

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

Tom Merry started.

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

"Come on!" said Lopez.

He started off again, following the indication of the dead hand, dragging the junior after him.

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

He was a child against the dwarf, and he had no weapon. He glanced at the knife in Lopez's belt. But he would not be allowed a chance of snatching it. There was a rifle slung over the shoulder of the Spaniard, but that he could not seize.

His heart was beating wildly now.

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

Lopez halted again.

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

"Is this the direction, nino?"

"So far as I remember."

"Good! Then we must be near!"

"I think so."

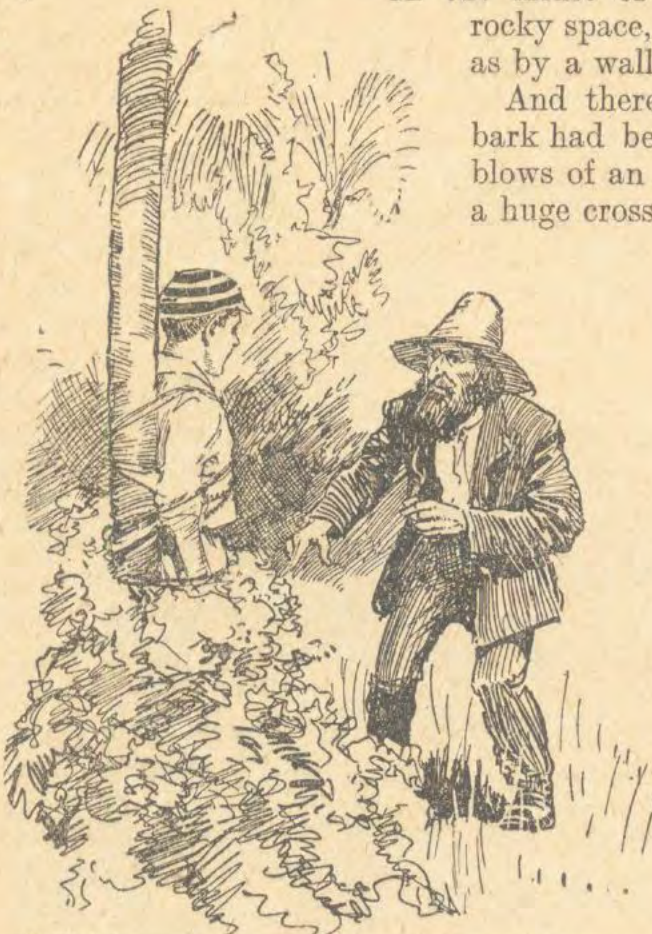
"Come!"

They plunged into the trees.

A sudden cry burst from the Spaniard—a cry of triumph.

In the midst of the trees was an open, rocky space, shut in darkly and closely, as by a wall of green.

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



It was the fellow of the cross upon the chart.

"The treasure!" shouted the Spaniard.

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

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

A Fight for Life

TOM MERRY sprang away at the same moment,

and with a wrench freed his hands.

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

Tom Merry stood, panting for a second.

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

It was only a fraction of a second that he had to think, but it was enough. He followed

"Think again, seniorito," said Lopez. "Once I have fired this pile I leave you, and nothing on earth can save you! Think again." (See page 307.)

up his blow by leaping upon the Spaniard.
Crash! crash!

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

Tom Merry was upon him in a second.

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

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

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

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

And he meant that.

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

"Carambo!" he hissed.

"Lie quiet, you hound!"

And the Spaniard obeyed.

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

The Spaniard was watching him like a cat.

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

"Carambo!"

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

"Lie there, you hound!"

"Carambo!"

"I will shoot if you move."

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

Lopez lay with glittering eyes, like a cornered rat.

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

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

"A thousand curses——"

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

"Señorito!"

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

Lopez rose to his feet.

"Walk before me," said Tom Merry.

Lopez made a passionate gesture.

"Where? Carambo, where?"

"Towards the river."

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

"I do not intend to risk being attacked from behind, you treacherous villain," said Tom Merry scornfully. "Mind, I will pull the trigger if you make a single movement that is suspicious."

"Carambo!"

"March!"

The Spaniard marched.

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

There the Spaniard halted.

He turned a furious face upon Tom Merry.

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

"You will wade across the river," said Tom Merry. "I shall keep you under cover till you have reached the other side. Then you can go."

"It is too deep, señor!"

"Swim, then."

"I cannot swim, señor."

"You must take your chance."

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

"Ah, señorito, I can swim, but I will not," he said. "Shoot if you choose, then."

Tom Merry's eye glanced along the levelled rifle.

"I give you two seconds!" he said.

"Carambo!"

The Spaniard made a sudden spring forward.

Tom Merry kept his word.

Crack!

There was a fearful yell from Pablo Lopez.

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

"Oh, I am killed!"

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

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

Tom Merry watched him.

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

Lopez groaned heavily.

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

Tom Merry approached.

"Lopez!"

The man groaned.

The junior bent over him.

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

"Now, nino—oh, oh!"

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

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

Lopez shrieked with rage and pain, and released his hold, and sprang away. Blood

was streaming from three or four wounds where the knife had gashed him.

Tom Merry faced him, panting.

"You scoundrel! You hound!"

The Spaniard, mad with rage, sprang at him again. Tom Merry slashed with the knife, and the ruffian leaped back. Then the junior followed up the attack, slashing savagely, and Lopez, with a howl of rage, turned and ran.

Tom Merry did not pursue him.

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

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

"Tom Merry!"

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

"Merry! Thank Heaven, we have found you!"

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

The hero of the Shell gasped with relief.

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

Tom Merry shook his head.

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

"It is not my blood!"

"Good Heavens! Whose, then?"

"Lopez!"

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

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

The Last of the Spaniard

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

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

Tom Merry shivered.

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

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

"I'm all right now, sir."

Tom Merry rose with the curate's assistance.

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

Tom Merry explained.

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

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

"You see——"

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

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me——"

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

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

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

"Weally, Figgins——"

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

"Weally, Wally——"

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

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Tom Merry. "I hope you don't blame me for guiding him. He was determined to set fire to

the wood round me—he really meant it."

"Bai Jove! What a feahful beast!"

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

"Yes, sir—I suppose so."

"Then we have no time to lose."

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

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

"Right-ho!"

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

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

The sailorman shook his head.

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



Tom Merry bent over the dwarf. As he did so the strong arms flashed up, and the boy was caught in an iron grasp. "Now, nino!" (See page 310.)

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

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

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

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

"Hark!"

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

They broke into a run.

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

"Ay, ay, sir!"

They burst through the trees.

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

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

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

"Seize him!" shouted Lord Conway.

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

He presented a terrible sight.

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

"Carambo!"

"Collar him!"

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

They rushed at the Spaniard in a body.

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

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

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

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

They gathered round the combatants.

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

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

The curate stood over him.

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

"Now take him!" he said.

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

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

"Wathah not!"

"After him!"

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

"Wun like anythin'!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, chase me!" gasped Blake.

Round the base of the mount they ran, through the jungle paths, up slopes, and over arid ridges, the wounded Spaniard still keeping ahead.

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

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

Tom Merry panted.

"And there's the felucca!"

"My hat!"

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

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

Lopez did not halt.

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

With desperate strokes he swam for the felucca.

"After him!" yelled Kerr.

But Lord Conway's voice rang out:

"Stop!"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

"My hat!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" exclaimed Peter Raff.

"There are sharks here—I've seen them—dozens of them! Great Davy Jones! Look there!"

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

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

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

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

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

Crack!

It was the report of Tom Merry's rifle.

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

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

Dripping, exhausted, the Spaniard stood upon the deck.

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

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

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

The Treasure

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

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

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

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

"Hurrray!"

The explorers turned back towards the mount.

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

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

The seamen were soon hard at work digging.

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

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

Was the skeleton whose grisly hand pointed to the spot one of the men who had carried it? Had he fallen, to keep more surely the secret of the pirate—the pirate who had amassed

the treasure, and hidden it there, and was himself dust long since?

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

Deeper and deeper grew the excavation.

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

Four strong seamen stood in the excavation, and with their united efforts the chest was lifted from the depths and dragged out.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Bring an axe here!" said Lord Conway.

Crash!

Crash!

The axe, wielded by Peter Raff, crashed upon the old chest. Crash, crash! The lock flew in pieces, and the lid was loose.

Tom Merry raised it.

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

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

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

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

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

"Gold!"

"Gweat Scott! Gold!"

"Hurrray!"

"Hip, hip, hurray!"

Gold at last!

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

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

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

Gold!

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

Lord Conway smiled.

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

"Bai Jove!"



Pablo Lopez was on his knees under the tree marked with the blazed cross, tearing feverishly at the soil with a wooden stake. (See page 312.)

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

Tom Merry laughed.

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

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

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"And I should have been murdered by Pablo Lopez, gentlemen, if you hadn't come 'ere to find the treasure!" said Peter Raff.

"You've saved my life; and I gave you the chart, Master Merry, and a sailorman's gift is a gift!"

"You will take your share, at all events," said Tom Merry. "We've already settled that, my son! You will take a third of the treasure, and a third goes to myself because you gave me the chart, and a third to the others here. That was what Lord Conway considered a fair arrangement."

"I think so," said Lord Conway. "Peter Raff cannot be left out, certainly, and Tom Merry, as owner of the chart and originator of the enterprise, is bound to take a third, at least. The remaining third goes to the rest of the party; but my share I shall divide among the crew of the yacht as prize-money!"

And there was a cheer from the seamen of the Silver Scud.

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Peter Raff. "But I gave Master Merry the chart!"

"We'll leave it to the church to decide," said Lord Conway, with a smile, turning to Mr. Dodds. "What do you say, Mr. Dodds?"

Peter Raff touched his forelock. He had all an old sailorman's respect for a parson.

"Ay, ay, sir; I'm willing to leave it to the gentleman!" he said.

"Then I endorse Lord Conway's decision," said Mr. Dodds. "I think it is the fairest arrangement possible. And there is certainly sufficient gold here to make everyone concerned quite rich."

"Bai Jove! It's wippin'!"

"Hurrah!"

Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed. He grasped Figgins by the arm.

"Figgy, old man! I say, Figgy!"

"Hallo?"

"What a feed we'll stand when we get back to St. Jim's!"

Figgins roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Trust you to think of that, Fatty!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I suppose we ought to celebrate finding a treasure of this sort," said Fatty Wynn warmly. "When we get back to St. Jim's we'll stand regular glorious feed to all the fellows. That's what I think."

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Fatty Wynn's ideah as weally wippin', undah the cirs."

"Only we haven't got the treasure to England yet, gentlemen," said Peter Raff.

"Nothing but foul weather can stop us now," said Lord Conway. "It's a straight run home, my man!"

"I was thinking of Pablo Lopez, sir."

"He cannot harm us now."

But a shadow of doubt remained upon the sailorman's sunburnt face. Wounded, defeated, put to flight, the Spaniard still filled him with dread and uneasiness.

"There goes the Treasure Island!" Kangaroo exclaimed.

The juniors turned to take their last look at the Treasure Island.

The lonely isle was sinking into the blue Pacific behind them. The shelving sands, the dark belt of trees, the curling waters on the barrier reefs sank from sight, and the wooded hill sank last into the shining waters.

Against the dark hill, ere it vanished, Tom Merry caught for a moment a glimpse of the white sail of a felucca. Felucca and island vanished astern, and the Silver Scud throbbed on over the vast Pacific, homeward bound!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

Sunk at Sea

CRASH!

Crash!

Tom Merry started and awoke.

He was lying in his bunk aboard the Silver Scud. He had been dreaming of home—St. Jim's and the fellows there, and as he started into sudden wakefulness, it seemed to him for the moment that he was back at the school, and that he was in his bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's. There was a

sound of creaking and straining, and of rushing water, of excited voices and hurrying feet.

Tom Merry sat up in bed.

What had happened ?

His brain cleared immediately from the mists of sleep ; he remembered where he was, on board Lord Conway's yacht, gliding through the moonlit waters of the South Pacific, homeward bound for England after a holiday cruise in the South Seas.

" Look out ! "

" She's struck ! "

The engines were throbbing still—the yacht was trembling and shivering like a frightened animal. Tom Merry put his legs over the side of the bunk, and there was a yell from below him. Jack Blake had just put his head out of the bunk beneath Tom Merry's, and Tom Merry's feet had come into violent contact with it.

" Ow ! " roared Blake. " What's the little game ? Ow ! "

" Sorry ! "

" You ass ! "

" Bai Jove ! " came the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from the darkness. " Bai Jove, deah boys, there's something up, you know ! "

" She's struck ! "

The shout came again hoarsely from the deck. The juniors turned out in hot haste, scrambling into their clothes. It was pretty clear that an accident had happened to the yacht. Tom Merry, in trousers and shirt, bare-headed, dashed up on deck.

Wild confusion reigned there.

The full round moon sailed high in a cloudless sky. Round the yacht glimmered the wide rolling Pacific. There was no sight of land—the yacht was solitary in the midst of the great southern ocean.

The engines had stopped now. The yacht was heeling over drunkenly. Lord Conway, the skipper, was on deck with Mr. Dodds, the mate, and both were perfectly cool, but their faces were pale.

" What is it, sir ? " Tom Merry panted.

" An accident," said Lord Conway quietly.

" We have struck upon a coral reef, I think—a reef not laid down in any chart."

" Good heavens ! "

Lord Conway turned away. He had plenty to do at that moment. He was rapping out orders quickly, and the well-trained seamen were obeying them. Everyone was on deck now, some with clothes in their hands.

The yacht was filling.

There was no doubt about it—the Silver Scud, the handsome yacht that was Lord Conway's pride, was a hopeless wreck. She had dashed upon the treacherous reef fair and square ; her bows had ground upon the reef where it was concealed under the surface of the water, with hardly a line of foam to mark the place—and the stout hull of the yacht had been crushed in by the violent impact.

The Silver Scud was sinking !

The terrible reality rushed upon the minds of the juniors of St. Jim's with stunning force. Ten minutes ago they had been sleeping safe and sound in their bunks, homeward bound, rich with the treasure they had found upon Skeleton Island. Dreaming of home, of St. Jim's, and of the celebration they would have at the old school when they arrived there. And now——

Now the vessel that had been between them and death was filling and sinking.

It was well that, in that terrible moment, captain and crew kept their heads. Lord Conway's orders were given sharply and concisely, and obeyed instantly. The two boats were lowered, and water and provisions conveyed into them. Some of the juniors helped ; some of them were too dazed.

There were twelve fellows in the party from St. Jim's—Tom Merry and Manners, and Lowther, and Kangaroo, of the Shell ; Blake, and Herries, and Digby, and D'Arcy, and Figgins, and Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth ; and Wally D'Arcy, of the Third. They belonged to different Forms and different Houses at St. Jim's, and at school were generally on fighting terms ; but they had enjoyed the holiday together wonderfully well. All the same, they were looking forward to their return to the school, and relating their adventures in the South Seas to interested audiences in the studies and Form-rooms. They could scarcely realise that their homeward voyage was stopped ; perhaps for ever—that they were wrecked in the lonely wastes of the South Seas,

and might never look upon a white man's face again. It was so sudden, and so terrible.

They had come to the South Seas in search of treasure, and they had found it. The great oaken chest, crammed with gold in bars and ingots and coins, was on board, being conveyed home in triumph. Pablo Lopez, the Spaniard, their rival in the quest, had been defeated and put to flight. All had seemed plain sailing now—when the Silver Scud ran upon the sunken reef, and all was changed in the twinkling of an eye.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping wildly for his eyeglass, which was hanging on its cord down the back of his neck. "Bai Jove, you know, it's howwible! But keep your heads, deah boys—keep your heads!"

"Keep yours!" growled Blake. "I'm cool enough."

"We ally, Blake——"

"Yes, keep yours, ass, and don't be as excited as a giddy old hen!"

said Monty Lowther. "Keep your head! There's nothing in it, but keep it!"

"Weally, Lowther——"

"Get into the boats!"

"Bai Jove! I shall have to get up my luggage——"

"There is no room for luggage, Arthur," said Lord Conway. "Not even a hat-box. Tumble in."

"But weally——"

Jack Blake and Digby seized the swell of St. Jim's by the arm and hurried him to the side.

"Buck up, you ass!" said Blake.

"There's no time to lose!"

"Pway keep your heads——"

"Oh, rats!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was rushed into a boat, and Blake and Digby followed him. Monty Lowther and Manners jumped in, Manners not having forgotten to sling on his camera.

Manners was getting quite a collection of pictures of the South Seas, on rolls of films to be developed after his return to England. If Manners had been sentenced to execution he would probably have taken his camera with him.

"What about the chest, sir?" Tom Merry asked.

Lord Conway nodded.

"It is going into the boat, Tom."

Sturdy seamen were already dragging the chest out upon the deck.

It was slung over the side with ropes, and bumped down into the boat. Even in that hour of terrible peril not one of the voyagers thought of abandoning the great treasure for which they had run so many risks.

"Bai Jove, that's all wight!" said D'Arcy. "I dare say we shall be picked up in the morning, and we shall save the twarehouse, you know. But don't lose your heads, deah boys!"

"Oh, shut up!"



There was a wild flounder in the water, and the shark sank under. At the same moment, Lopez grasped the rope and the negro hauled him aboard. (See page 313.)

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

The yacht gave a wild lurch. There was a shout from the few men remaining aboard.

"She's sinking!"

"Look out!"

"Stand by there!"

Men tumbled into the boats. Lord Conway's voice rang out.

"Pull—pull!"

Oars were put out, and the oarsmen pulled. The boats glided from the lurching, shaking yacht. They were in danger of being drawn down in to the vortex caused by the sinking vessel.

With a last plunge, the Silver Scud disappeared into the waters. Bubbles rose, and broke, and the seas rolled where the yacht had been—and nothing but a few fragments of floating wreckage remained to mark the place.

Upon the wide, wild waters, under the soaring moon, two boats crammed with men and boys floated—alone in the heart of the Pacific.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

In an Open Boat.

TOM MERRY drew a deep, deep breath.

It seemed like a dream—it was but twenty minutes since the crash of the yacht upon the hidden reef had awakened him in his bunk. He shivered; the night was not warm, and the junior was but half-dressed.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in a low, awed voice. "Bai Jove! It's tewwible, you know. But don't lose your heads."

Tom Merry looked round him.

The embarkation in the boats had been hasty, and he did not know who was with him, or who was in command. In Tom Merry's boat, the smaller of the two, was the chest of gold, and most of the juniors of St. Jim's were there. Tom Merry found Manners and Lowther sitting beside him, and Digby and D'Arcy and Jack Blake were in the boat. Wally, Kerr, and Wynn, the New House fellows, were there. Then there was Peter Raff, the sunburnt sailorman who had given the treasure-chart to Tom Merry in Rylcombe Wood, and first caused this strange adventure in the South Seas. Kangaroo, the sturdy Cornstalk, was there, too, quite cool and collected.

There were no men of the Silver Scud in the boat; the seamen had tumbled into the other, the junior's boat being pretty full already. Herries was in the other boat, and so were Mr. Dodds and Lord Conway. The moon glided behind a mass of clouds, and a deep shadow fell over the ocean. Lord Conway's voice hailed the junior.

"Tom Merry!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Keep close to us!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Peter Raff, who had seated himself at the tiller. "We'll keep company, sir, never fear!"

"Burn a light," said Lord Conway. "I will do the same. We must not risk parting company. It will be daylight soon, and then we will make a new arrangement of the crews of the boats. We had better wait till then."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

The sea was rolling a little. It would not have been safe for the boats to approach too closely in the darkness, for the men to pass from one to another. There seemed little danger of their separating by accident.

"My hat!" said Blake, as the boat rocked on the deep. "My only hat! Who'd have thought this?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of it, you know."

"It's risky bizney, sailing in unknown seas," said Tom Merry. "But we're lucky to have had time to get into the boats."

"Yes, rather."

"It will be an awful blow to Lord Conway, losing the yacht," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! Poor old Conway!"

"If we save the treasure," said Tom Merry, "we shall have a new Silver Scud built out of it before it is divided. That's the least we can do."

"Good egg!"

"If we save it," said Kerr, with a rueful grin. "Yes, and if we are saved ourselves. We're hundreds of miles out of the track of ships—in open boats."

"Hallo! It's beginning to blow!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

A cold, sharp wind swept over the boat, and the sea was beginning to curl round them.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER

Alone on the Deep

TOM MERRY & Co. looked at one another in dismay.

They had not expected this, though the old sailor-man could have told them.

Each of the boats was under sail, and, hidden from each other's sight as they had been in the darkness, it was pretty certain they would part company. If they had not had their canvas out, the result would have been the same—the rough wind and the rolling waters would have drifted them apart. The boats had parted company, and there was little hope of their rejoining each other.

With the morning came calmness of wind and wave. There was still breeze enough to fill out the sail, and the boat glided on to the northward. Northward lay the only chance of the shipwrecked. If the boat came into the regular track of steamers before their provisions gave out, or before rough weather overwhelmed them in the sea, they had a chance of rescue. But every hour was precious. Leagues upon leagues of desert ocean lay to be traversed before they had the remotest chance of being picked up. In that lonely sea, perhaps a sealer or a whaler might chance upon them; but it was a very remote chance.

"They're gone, bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, dropping his glasses.

"Gone!"

"They're as safe as we are, young gentlemen," said Peter Raff. "It wasn't likely that the boats would keep company when the wind got up."

"Wathah not! But——"

"It may be all for the best," said Kerr. "If the boats are apart, one of them stands a better chance of being picked up; and if one is picked up, search can be made for the other."

"True enough."

"And the water and provisions were pretty equally divided, I believe," said Tom Merry. "We've got all the gold here, but that's less than a loaf of bread would be."

Peter Raff looked at the heavy chest lying in the bottom of the boat.

The juniors looked anxiously at the water. In the yacht they would have scarcely noticed the wind; but in the open boat they were terribly close to the water. The curling waves seemed as if they would leap the gunwale.

"It's all right, young gentlemen," said Peter Raff. "There ain't any danger—it won't be a blow."

"It seems to make the watah wuff, Waff," said Arthur Augustus.

"But the boat's safe enough, sir."

"I twust we shall not get our clothes wetted," said D'Arcy anxiously. "I have only the clothes I am wearin', and I feah that they would shwink, too."

"Go hon!"

"It is wathah a sewious matter, deah boys. You see——"

"Ahoy there!"

It was a hail from Lord Conway's boat.

"Ay, ay, sir!" shouted back Peter Raff.

"Keep company if you can! If you should miss us, we are heading due north."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

It was the last word heard from Lord Conway's boat. With the wind came great banks of clouds that hid the moon, and for a time the light of the other boat twinkled above the black waters, but at last it disappeared.

Lord Conway's boat was swallowed up in the darkness.

Peter Raff kept upon the course to the north, but in his heart he knew—though he did not say so to the juniors—that it was not likely that the other boat would be in sight at dawn.

And he was right.

When dawn came up in silver light over the eastern sea, the juniors stood up in the boat and scanned the ocean in all directions. But Lord Conway's boat was not in sight.

East and west and south and north the juniors searched the sea. D'Arcy had slung on his binoculars before entering the boat, and the juniors used them in turn now, to scan the ocean for their friends.

But the other boat was not to be seen.

They were alone upon the ocean.

"It might be better to pitch it into the sea and done with it," he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"Why?" asked Tom Merry.

Peter Raff scanned the sea with his keen eyes before replying.

"Because if we're picked up it may mean death to all of us," he said. "Traders in these waters ain't over particular, and they'd cut our throats for that treasure as soon as look at us. Many of 'em would."

"Bai Jove!"

"There are enough of us to take care of ourselves, and we're not unarmed," said Tom Merry.

"We'll save the treasure as long as we can, at all events."

"Ay, ay, Master Tom!"

The sun was rising higher in the heavens. It gave promise of a blazing day—a day of tropical, shadeless heat.

The prospect was very different from what it would have been on the trim yacht. There the juniors had

spent lazy hours of tropical heat under wide awnings, with iced drinks to help them out. Here they were exposed to the blazing sun, unsheltered, and water was more precious than gold. With the strictest economy, it might not last them till they were picked up.

"We shall have to allowance ourselves with food and water," Tom Merry said.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

The boat glided on under the sail, with a keen wind behind, while the sun climbed

higher and higher into the cloudless blue.

High overhead, at last, it blazed down pitilessly upon the defenceless boat.

The juniors crowded as well as they could in the shadow of the sail, but it afforded them little shelter.

Of all the party in the boat, D'Arcy was the only one who had dressed himself fully before leaving the Silver Scud.

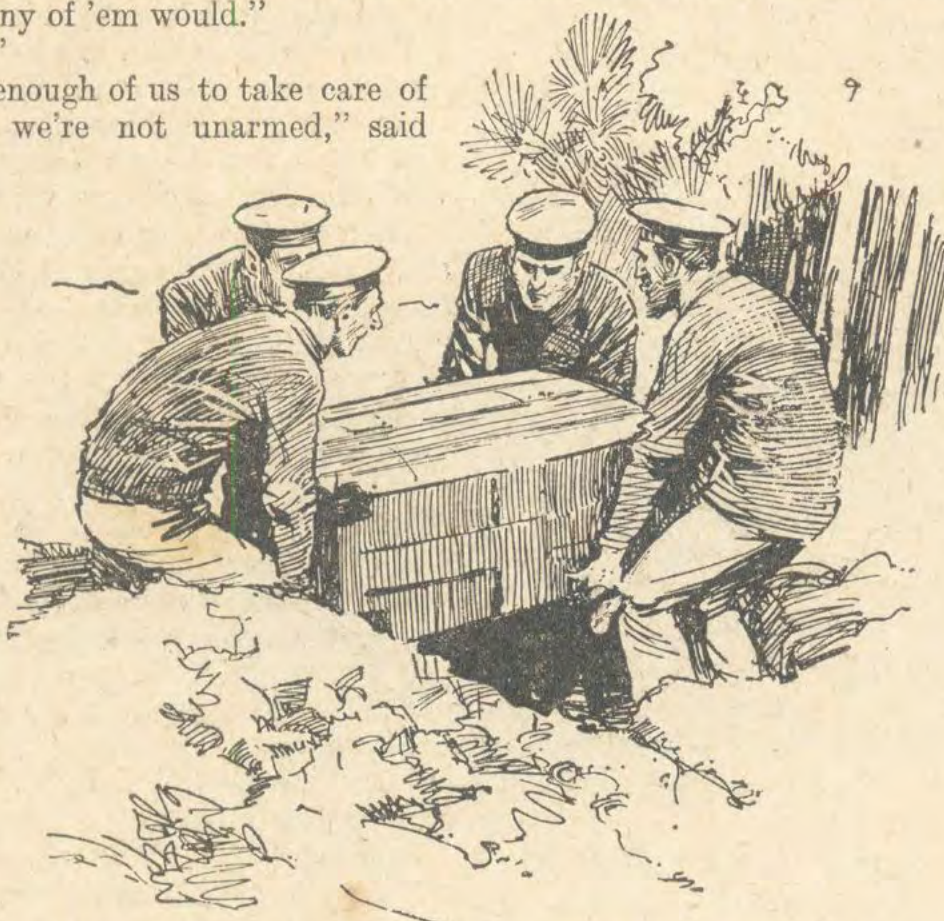
The swell of St. Jim's had brought on deck the clothes he could not put on in the cabin, and had finished dressing there. He was complete, even to the diamond pin in his tie.

But the juniors, half dressed as they were, began to discard clothing as the rays of the sun grew more powerful.

D'Arcy was the last to yield. For a long time—till past

noon—the swell of St. Jim's sat tight, in a stiff collar and with his silk hat on. For D'Arcy had not forgotten his silk topper. It being impossible to bring any baggage into the boat, D'Arcy had put a tall hat on as the only possible means of saving one for possible need. He had a cap in his pocket in case of necessity, and his first surrender to the heat was the changing of the silk hat for the cap.

Then, after an interval, he removed his jacket. His waistcoat followed. After an



Four strong seamen stood in the excavation, and with their united efforts the chest was lifted from the depths and dragged out. (See page 314.)

hour or so longer, he took his collar and tie off. His boots followed. By that time he was in a state of *deshabille* pretty nearly as complete as the others.

The tropical heat seemed to sap away the strength of the juniors. They sat or lay about the boat in listless attitudes, longing for sundown.

But the pitiless blaze continued overhead.

The sea showed no sign of life. No sail—no smoke on the horizon. Occasionally a flying-fish, gleaming in the sun, glanced upon their view—or a wide-winged albatross sailed by on giant pinions.

That was all! Round them the ocean heaved—smiling, pitiless. Over them was the arch of the blue sky, blazing with heat.

“Bai Jove!” murmured Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, at last, as he drew his hand from the blistering woodwork of the boat. “Bai Jove, I’m thirsty.”

“So are we all,” said Tom Merry.

“Don’t you think you’re being a little too stwict with the watah, deah boy?”

“There’s only enough for four days at the present rate,” said Merry. “Goodness knows whether we shall see a sail in four days’ time.”

There was a sudden shout from Wally. He was sitting in the bows, watching the shining sea with glassy eyes. He sprang to his feet, waving his cap and yelling. The juniors turned round upon him in alarm, the fear in every mind that the heat and glare had turned his brain. But Wally was sane enough; only wildly excited.

“A sail—a sail!”

“Bai Jove!”

“A sail!” yelled Wally. “Look! A sail! We’re saved!”

And a shout burst from all the juniors—a shout of joy and relief! “Hurrah!”

“Hip, hip, hurrah!”

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

The Felucca.

WHITE against the blue of sea and sky, the strange sail glanced and glimmered.

It was standing westward, clear across the course of the gliding boat. Only the glimmer of a great sheet of canvas could be seen, and

the juniors could not yet make out the form of the vessel. But it was a sail—a sail—there were men there, sailormen—who would help sailors in distress. If they could attract the attention of the vessel. They were saved!

The thought was almost enough to turn them giddy.

The vessel was far, far away—a glancing patch of white on the blue. But she was drawing towards the course of the boat, and by changing their course a little to the west, the castaways might hope to intercept her; or at least get near enough to be seen and heard. Peter Raff trimmed the sail, and as the boat glided on, the strange vessel rose more and more clearly into view.

“What vessel can it be, I wonder?” Tom Merry said. “Not a sealer or a whaler, Peter?”

Peter Raff shook his head.

“No, Master Tom. It’s not the build. It’s some small trader, I should say—perhaps a blackbirder.”

“Bai Jove! A what?” asked D’Arcy.

“Blackbirder,” said Peter Raff. “A vessel employed to kidnap natives off the islands. That trade ain’t extinct yet, whatever they may say about it. I’ve seen——” The sailorman paused, and changed the subject. “If it’s a blackbirder, they’ll pick us up; I make no doubt; but they’ll murder us for that chest.”

Tom Merry glanced thoughtfully at the treasure-chest.

“If it’s a suspicious vessel, when we get nearer we’ll pitch the chest overboard,” he said. “It would be madness to take it with us among a crew of lawless ruffians.”

“Ay, ay, sir!”

“Whatever that vessel is, we can’t lose this chance of being picked up. If they’re white men, they must be humane enough to take us in, and we can pay them afterwards.”

“Ay, ay!”

The boat glided on. Larger and larger the strange vessel rose over the waters till the juniors could make out great lateen sails.

Peter Raff gave a groan.

“It’s all over.”

“What do you mean, Peter?”

"That's a felucca."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's Pablo Lopez's vessel."

"Oh!"

The juniors gazed with fixed, startled eyes at the sail.

Tom Merry wondered he had not thought of it before. Pablo Lopez, the dwarf Spaniard, whom they had defeated on the Treasure Island in the fight for the buried gold, had come there in a felucca from Valparaiso, and had fled in that vessel after his defeat. It was not likely that there was another vessel of the same rig in this lonely waste of waters.

If the felucca was the Spaniard's craft, anything was better than falling in with it. With or without the chest of gold in the boat, they had only savage ferocity to expect from the Spaniard.

Peter Raff stepped towards the sheet.

"Better change the course, Master Tom," he said.

"Hold on!"

"Lopez will murder every soul in the boat, if he discovers us," said Peter Raff.

"We'd have no chance agin him."

"He had only four blacks in the felucca, when he was at the island," said Tom Merry.

"We are enough to protect ourselves."

"The felucca will run the boat down."

"Bai Jove!"

"But it mayn't be Lopez's felucca," said Blake. "There may be another sail in these waters. Even if the felucca isn't a common rig in these seas, there may be more than one of them."

Peter Raff shook his head.

"I vote we make sure," said Figgins.

"Ay, ay, sir; have your way then!"

The boat kept on its course.

The felucca was now quite clearly in view, and she had not altered her course, though the boat must have been visible from her deck. If she had wished to pick up the castaways, a shift of the great lateen sails would have brought her swooping down towards the boat. But she did not alter her course, and unless she did so, it was plain that she would sweep on to the westward before the boat could reach her.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "They're not going to try to pick us up."

"Bai Jove! The wascals!"

Tom Merry put the binoculars to his eyes.

As he brought the glasses into line, the distant vessel rushed, as it were, into clear and close view, and it almost seemed as if he could tread upon her deck.

He could make out the deck, dirty and uncared for, the dull, rusting plant, and the black faces of her crew. On the deck, looking towards the boat, was a white man—a man with a massive head and a black beard—a man Tom Merry knew.

It was Pablo Lopez.

He was looking towards the boat, but he had no glasses. Perhaps he had none on the felucca; or perhaps he did not care to take the trouble of examining the castaway. His glance towards the boat was indifferent and careless, and he turned away carelessly, and rolled a cigarette.

Tom Merry lowered the glasses.

The felucca fell into the distance again, and the Spaniard became a blur against the sail.

"It's Lopez!" said Tom Merry.

"Sure?"

"Look yourself!"

"Bai Jove! It's Lopez wight enough."

"And he's not going to pick us up," said Figgins. "He can't make out who we are, without glasses—and he doesn't care. He knows there's an open boat here, with people in it; and he's going straight on his way."

"The villain!"

"The awful scoundrel!"

Villain the Spaniard undoubtedly was, but there was no doubt of his intention. The felucca did not alter her course an iota.

There were shipwrecked sailormen in the boat, and the Spaniard was passing on, callously leaving them to their doom.

And the irony of it was, that in the boat were the party he was seeking; in the boat was the chest of gold for which he had come to the South Seas.

Had he felt a single impulse of humanity, had he run down to the boat to rescue the shipwrecked, he would have found in it what he had long sought.

But no thought of humanity crossed his mind.

The felucca raced on.

And the juniors made no further effort to reach her. They had only the bitterest enmity to expect from the Spaniard; and if they reached the felucca, it would only be a case of passing from the frying-pan into the fire.

Peter Raff, at the sight of Tom Merry, changed the course of the boat. It was better to steer clear of the felucca now.

The grey lateen sails still loomed up white against the blue, but they faded more and more into the sea till they disappeared at last.

Once more the boat rocked alone upon the waste of the Pacific.

Hope had animated the juniors for a time; but hope destroyed left sickness and despair in their hearts.

They fought against the despondency, but it would not be shaken off, and the boys sat about in the boat in deep dejection.

The only sail they had seen through that endless day was a foe—and would they see another?

The sun sank down at last, sinking red and flaming into a sea of gold. Darkness came on with the suddenness of the tropics.

"The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out; at one stride comes the dark," as the poet sings. Darkness rolled over the face of the ocean—Welcome to the juniors.

For if it lessened the chance of the boat being seen and picked up, it saved them, at least, from the pitiless blaze of the sun.

With the night came shade and coolness.

But there was little sleep for the castaways. Their anxiety was too keen; and hunger and thirst were gnawing them.

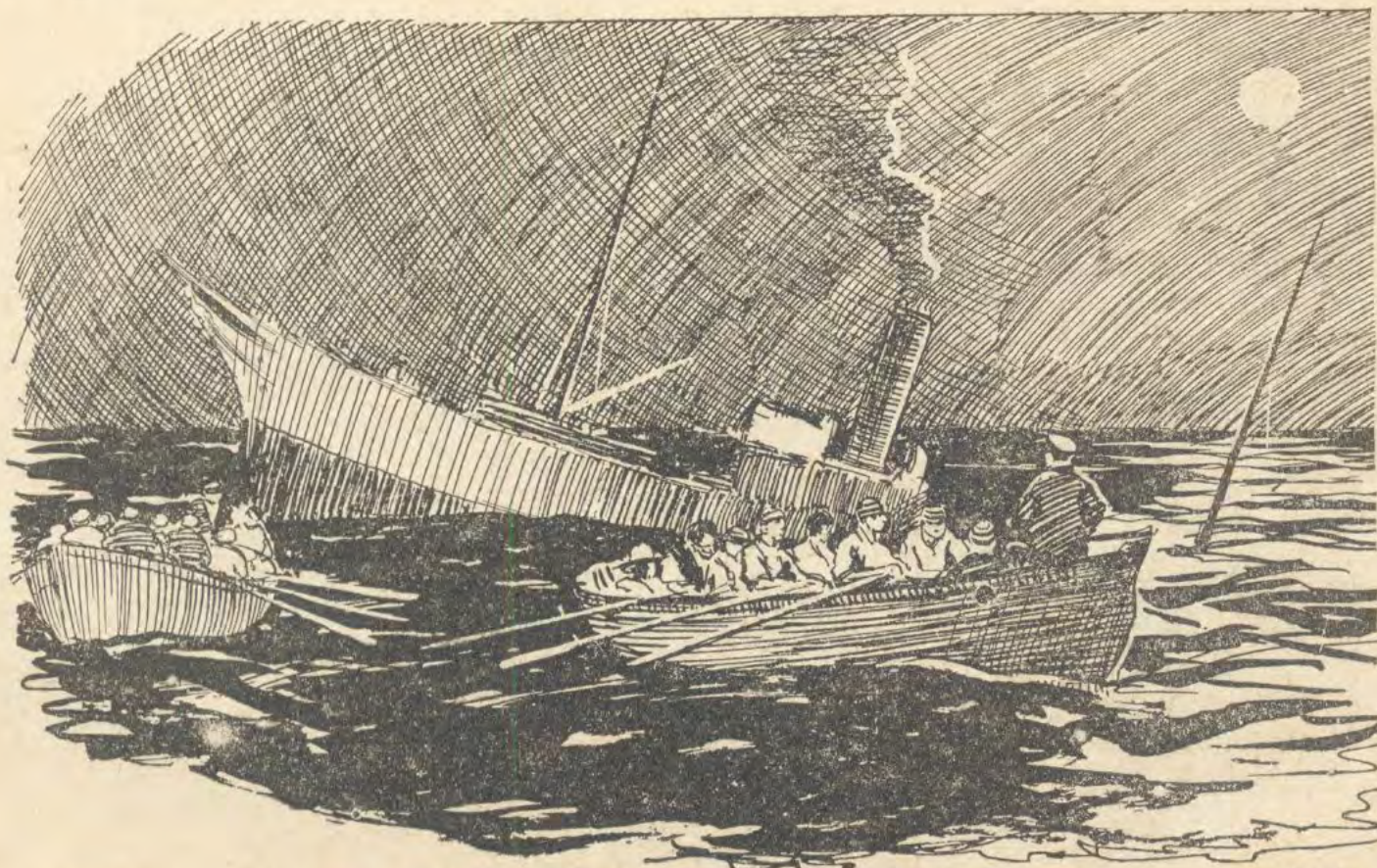
How was this to end?

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

The Last Hope.

THE next day passed like a nightmare, to be followed by another weary, sleepless night.

The sun rose again upon the boundless



"Look out! She's sinking!" Lord Conway's voice rang out. "Pull, men—pull!" As the boats glided away, the Silver Scud, with a last plunge, disappeared into the waters! (See page 318.)

Pacific, but with it came no gleam of hope to the castaways.

It was the third day on the waste of waters, and supplies were running very low indeed. Two or three of the boys lay in a state that was almost comatose, and Digby had begun to wander a little.

Tom Merry scanned the sea.

The boat was not moving; there was no cloud in the sky of burning blue—no cloud, no wind, no promise of rain.

Burning blue, and burning sun, that burnt into the very eyeballs and scorched them, and made the castaways dizzy and sick.

High soared the sun over the rolling sea, and over the floating boat with its suffering crew.

The treasure-chest lay unheeded, unnoticed. How gladly the boys would have given that mass of gold for a deep drink of pure water.

Gold!

What was the gold to them now? It was a mockery. Water—water—water was the crying need. And there was water, water all around, and not a drop to drink.

“Water, water, all around,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Not any drop to drink!”

The words came strangely into Tom Merry's dizzy mind. He had read of such things—read with breathless interest. He had never dreamed of suffering them himself. Yet it is the daily risk of those that go down to the sea in ships. One frail keel is all that stands between them and doom.

Weary eyes scanned the water. Would the smoke of a steamer ever come into sight? It seemed not.

The burning day passed, and another night descended—a night of suffering and of unrefreshing slumber.

Then another day.

It was the fourth day, and the rations were near their end. At mid-day Tom Merry served out the last precious drops of water. Food there was, on short commons, for some time longer, but the water was at an end. It was useless to parch and save the last drops;

they drank them, and lay down in the boat, weary to death.

Burning sky and gleaming sea! Their dizzy eyes turned from the scene.

Digby started to his feet in the blazing afternoon. He made for the gunwhale, and Tom Merry caught him in time.

“Dig! Dig, old man,” said Tom huskily. “Sit down!”

Digby struggled in his grasp. The junior's face was white and strained, and there was a wild light in his eyes.

“Let me go!” he cried hoarsely.

“What are you going to do!”

Digby laughed wildly.

“Drink!” he said.

“Dig!”

“I must drink—I'm dying with thirst! Let me go!”

“Dig, old man, chuck it!” said Arthur Augustus feebly. “Chuck it, old fellow! You can't dwink salt watah!”

“I must drink.”

The boy was not himself. He struggled to plunge his head over the gunwhale, into the water that surged temptingly by.

Tom Merry dragged him back.

It was death to drink, he knew that, though Dig had forgotten it. He dragged the junior back to his seat.

“Hang you!” yelled Digby. “Let me go, I say!”

“You can't drink, Dig.”

“I will—I will!”

“It's salt water, old man—you've forgotten!”

“I don't care—let me go!”

He made an effort to tear himself away. Blake came to Tom Merry's aid, and the feverish junior was held down on the thwart.

Then the fit passed, and Dig sank into their arms, white and sick, and fainting. They laid him in the bottom of the boat.

Tom Merry and Blake exchanged hopeless glances.

“How long is this going to last?” muttered Blake.

“Heaven knows!”

Blake groaned.

“The sooner it's ended the better, I think.”

“I—I say, I'm sorry I brought you here,”

said Tom, in a strained voice. "It's all my fault; but for me, you might all be safe and sound at St. Jim's. It's all my fault."

And he groaned aloud.

"Rats!" said Blake. "We came of our own accord, didn't we? Rot!"

"Yaas, wathah, wot!" said D'Arcy faintly. "You are talkin' dweadful wubbish, Tom Mewwy."

Tom Merry sat on a thwart and covered his face with his hands.

His self-reproach was deep. He was not to blame; but it seemed to him at that moment that he had brought doom to his friends—his chums whom he would have given his life to save.

Was there no help?

Peter Raff was standing up in the boat, shading his eyes with his hand, straining his glance to the blazing west.

What was he looking at?

Many and many a time, to the dizzy eyes of the juniors, a white sail had seemed to glance into sight, only to fade into the blue.

Tom Merry looked up, and as he saw Peter Raff's attitude, he staggered towards the sailorman.

He grasped him by the shoulder, but Peter Raff did not turn his head. His eyes were fixed upon the west.

"What is it?" asked Tom Merry.

The sailorman did not reply. His glance was fixed and wild. Tom Merry looked into the west; but he could see nothing but the glowing sunset, red as a furnace.

"Peter! What is it?" he cried hoarsely. "Not a sail?"

The sailorman shook his head.

"What is it, then?"

"A cloud!" muttered Peter Raff.

"A cloud—does that mean wind?"

"Perhaps."

"What else?"

"Rain!"

"Oh, heaven!"

The word electrified the juniors.

Rain!

No greater boon could have befallen them save rescue. Rain! The words thrilled through their hearts like new-born hope.

They watched the west. Truly enough, a

dark cloud was rising from the horizon, and blotting out the coppery sun.

For the first time, as it seemed for ages, there was a stir on the face of the waters.

A ripple ran past the boat; the canvas moved and shook on the mast. The boat rocked and surged through the water.

The wind was upon them. But it was not a refreshing wind. It was a wind laden with burning heat, that fanned and scorched their faces like the breath of a furnace.

They gasped for breath. The cloud was larger and larger now, blacker and blacker, and a deep, dense shadow had overspread the burning sky. The hot wind dropped, and a cold blast succeeded it—a cold blast that was inexpressibly relieving to the scorched and blistered faces of the castaways.

And—what was that?

A cool, refreshing drop fell upon Tom Merry's upturned face, and he cried aloud in joy:

"Rain!"

THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

Cast Ashore.

RAIN! Rain, at first in large drops and then in sheets.

Rain!

Rain drenching down upon the sea, drenching the juniors, drenching the boat, flooding them and soaking them, to their almost delirious delight.

They opened their mouths to it—they drank it from their caps, from their pannikins, they lay down in the boat and drank it as it swamped about them. It seemed as if their terrible thirst would never be satisfied.

But satisfied it was at last.

The rain was coming down in blinding sheets, and the wind was tearing at the boat. Round them the sea rolled and spun.

The storm was rising! In their delight at the rain, the juniors did not notice or care for the new danger. But as their thirst was slaked, they saw it only too clearly. The rain was flooding the boat, and the juniors set to work to bale it out.

They filled the kegs with the rain for future use. That was Tom Merry's first thought. Then they baled out the boat.

Harder and fiercer the rain drenched down. The juniors were soaked to the skin, wet and drenched, but they enjoyed it. After the long baking under the tropical sun, it was the greatest pleasure they could have had.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is wippin'! But if it goes on like this we shall be swamped, you know."

"Bale away!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

They baled away heroically.

It was several hours before the rain slackened, and the juniors were hard at work all the time.

But the down-pour slackened off at last. The boat was flooded, but as soon as it was safe, they ceased to bale. The wind was rising all the time, and the boat, without the sail, was plunging swiftly through the water.

"Stand clear!" Tom Merry shouted suddenly.

"Bai Jove! Look out!"

The mast was whipped out of the boat like a stick, and tossed away upon the waves. With the torn canvas dragging upon it, it raced on the waves for a few moments like a wounded bird, then vanished.

The boat rushed on.

Round the little craft now the waters were roaring. It seemed marvellous that the boat was not engulfed every moment. Yet it lived amid the roaring seas.

Peter Raff was steady at the tiller. The juniors began to bale out again as the water swamped over the gunwale. It was no longer rain, but salt water, that flooded the boat.

With weary and aching limbs they worked baling and ever baling.

Darkness as black as pitch was on the waters. It was night now—deep, dark night, unrelieved by a single star.

Where were they? Whither were they rushing? They did not know—and they had no time to think. They needed all their energies to escape instant destruction in the midst of the boiling seas.

Suddenly, from the black darkness, there came a glimpse of a sheet of curling white foam, and Tom Merry shouted:

"Rocks ahead!"

The boat rushed on.

It was land—land of some sort—perhaps a solitary isle of coral rock in the heart of the Pacific. They did not know—they had no time to think—they could make no effort to save themselves. They could only rush on blindly in the boat, and trust to Providence.

In the darkness, the foam of the breakers glimmered

to right and left. As if by a miracle the boat glided between the reefs.

A black mass glimmered for a moment in the darkness ahead—whether a rock, or a mass of trees, or a mountain, they did not know. The boat was rushing on, and they knew that it was rushing upon a shore.

"Look out!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good-bye, you fellows! Save yourselves!"

Crash!

Crash!



Tom Merry could see three or four fellows struggling in the water, and he rushed to their assistance. (See page 327.)

In a terrific shock, the juniors were thrown off their feet. But the boat had not struck upon hard rocks as they had feared. It was in deep, soft sand that the bows had crashed, and for a moment the little craft was held there, with the waters bubbling and boiling round it.

From the sea came a great wave, smashing upon the boat, and sweeping the juniors landward as it rolled on.

Tom Merry felt himself caught up and dashed from the boat; he felt shifting sand under his feet, and he clawed it wildly, and he was thrown down at last, and the wave, its force expended, receded to the sea, and sucked at him, but he dug his feet and hands in the sand, and held his own.

The water swept back, and Tom Merry staggered to his feet. He was breathless, dizzy, exhausted; but his thoughts were for his friends.

His eyes were used to the darkness now, and he could see. The boat was still jammed in the yielding sand, and the successive crashing billows seemed to drive her more firmly there.

He could see three or four fellows struggling in the water, and he dashed to their assistance. He dragged D'Arcy ashore, and then Digby, and then Blake. Kangaroo was already on the land, and he had Wally in his grasp.

"Come and help!"

Another and another of the juniors was dragged out. Manners was still clinging to the boat, and Peter Raff and Tom Merry plunged in together and brought him off. The thundering waves chased them up the beach, and they sank down exhausted.

"How many are here?" gasped Tom Merry, striving to rise, and sinking down again with the effort.

"All, I believe," said Kangaroo.

"Call over the names."

Kangaroo called the names over. To his name each junior answered "adsum," as if it were calling-over at St. Jim's.

All answered. Last of all came Peter Raff's deep: "Ay, ay!"

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of relief.

"We're all here! Thank Heaven!"

"But where are we?" said Blake.

"Goodness knows."

"The boat's done for."

"Never mind the boat."

"And the gold?" said Blake. "The treasure chest?"

"Never mind the treasure."

And the juniors agreed with Tom Merry. They were alive, at all events, and on firm land; and the treasure was a light price to pay for their safety!

THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER

Cast Away

TOM MERRY & Co. lay on the wet sand, exhausted—too exhausted to move. The heavy waves were beating upon the boat, beating it to pieces, but they had no strength left to attempt to save it. They could only lie and gasp on the wet sand just out of reach of the breakers.

For long hours they lay, hardly speaking, till the light of dawn flushed in the sky, and with the dawn the wind fell. The sea was still rolling heavily, the waves bursting upon the beach with a sullen roaring, and churning up the sand.

Tom Merry sat up at last.

He was wet and cold, and the earliest ray of the sun was welcome.

"My hat," he ejaculated, "it's rising-bell, you fellows!"

And there was a feeble laugh. This was very different from a morning's awakening at St. Jim's, when Taggles rang the rising-bell. One after another the juniors staggered up.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping among his wet clothes for his eye-glass—"bai Jove, I wegard that as a wotter expewience!"

"Better than floating on in the open boat," said Tom Merry. "We had about reached the end of our tether. This is dry land, at all events—and there must be water here, and some grub of some sort."

"Plenty of water, at all events," said Blake, shaking the heavy drops out of his clothes.

"I mean fresh water. And there will be cocoanuts, I suppose, so we shan't starve. Pictures of coral islands always have coconut-trees."

"And savages."

"H'm!"

"Bai Jove, it wouldn't be very wippin' to wun into a gang of cannibals, deah boys!"

"We shall have to keep our eyes open, that's all," said Figgins, "and the first thing we'd better do is to get hold of some sort of weapons. The cartridges are in a tin case in the boat's locker, and we may be able to save it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The sun rose higher, and the warm, bright beams were very welcome to the shivering juniors. As the light strengthened, they looked about them. They were standing upon the sandy shore of a wide bay open to the Pacific. At the mouth of the bay, long lines of foam showed where the sea was breaking on sunken reefs.

Behind the juniors was a gentle slope, crowned with thick, dark woods. A stream ran into the bay within a hundred yards of them.

Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened as he looked towards the trees.

"Cocoanuts," he said.

"Yaas, wathah—heaps of them, too!"

"I'm awfully hungry."

"Wait a bit, Fatty," said Tom Merry.

"You remember the trouble you got into on the Treasure Island through going after cocoanuts. Wait a bit till we've got hold of the fire-arms, and we'll go in a party."

"I'm fearfully hungry."

"Pull in your belt, and grin and bear it," said Kerr.

"I'm famished, you see."

"Well, famish quietly," said Blake.

Fatty Wynn grunted, but Figgins linked arms with him, and did not allow him to start for the woods. The cocoanuts in their graceful clusters looked tempting enough, but the juniors knew perfectly well that tattooed savages might be lurking in the groves, with war-clubs and bows and arrows ready for mischief.

They were evidently upon an island, and it was certainly of some extent; and, therefore, it was not likely to be uninhabited.

The boat had been smashed to fragments by the pounding of the waves, and most of the

pieces had been driven up high upon the beach, and lay half-embedded in the sand. The canister of cartridges was discovered unbroken, and the juniors seized upon it gladly.

There was only one rifle in the boat, and several revolvers, and all of them were saved. They required careful cleaning before they would be of any use, and to that task the juniors addressed themselves first.

Fatty Wynn was chafing with impatience. He was, as he said, fearfully hungry, and the cocoanuts were growing in sight. The danger of savages under the trees appeared to Fatty Wynn quite mythical, under the circumstances. But Figgins kept a tight hold upon the fat Fourth-Former's arm.

"Look here, I'll just cut across and get a couple of them, one for you and one for me, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn persuasively.

Figgins chuckled.

"You just won't do anything of the sort," he replied. "You'll just stick here with me till we're all ready, Fatty."

"Look here, Figgy——"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah, wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking severely at the fat Fourth-Former. "Wats, deah boy! Pway keep your feahful appetite under contwol, or you will make me feel quite nervous. When you were in the boat, you looked at me once or twice in a way that thwew me into quite a fluttah."

"You ass!" said Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

"I wefuse to be called an ass! Besides, I think we ought to make ourselves as wespectable as possible before leavin' this spot in case we meet any of the inhabitants. There may possibly be white people here, and, anyway, even niggahs are entitled to some wespect. I twust you fellows will put up as decent an appeawance as possible."

The fellows laughed.

Their clothes, soaked with sea-water, and drying in the blaze of the sun, shrunken and stained and shapeless, did not look very respectable. They were ragged and unkempt and untidy all over; but that was really the least of their troubles.

But D'Arcy was always D'Arcy!

While the other fellows were rescuing the fragments of the wreck, and cleaning the fire-

arms, D'Arcy was rescuing what remained of his silk hat, and cleaning himself. The silk topper had come ashore with the other things, and was lying on the sand, woefully battered, soaked, apparently ruined.

But there is a great deal of life in a silk hat; they have been known to survive the roughest handling, and come up smiling, as it were, after care has been taken with them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dried his hat, and smoothed it, and pushed out the concavities in it, and generally tended it as if it were a favourite and very delicate infant, and it was amazing to see what an improvement he made in it.

It bore little resemblance, it is true, to the glossy topper that the swell of St. Jim's was in the habit of wearing in the old quad. But it was a silk topper, of not unrespectable appearance, and it afforded the elegant junior much satisfaction.

With the topper on his head, and his eyeglass in his eye, D'Arcy felt that he was prepared to face fortune. D'Arcy's clothes were in a most unhappy state. But wringing out, and drying and pinning up made them look much better, and the swell of St. Jim's was soon certainly the most respectable-looking of the party.

From a leather case which he carried upon his person, and which was waterproof, he produced a clean collar and tie, and donned them with lively satisfaction.

Monty Lowther looked at him with great admiration, shading his eyes with his hand, as if the sight were almost too glorious for him.

"I must say that's ripping, Gussy," he said. "I'm sure that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like that."

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

"Weally, Lowther, you ass——"

"Only I really think it's a bit dangerous," said Lowther. "I don't think Gussy ought to add to our dangers in this way."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the humorist of the Shell.

"I fail to see my dwessin' wespectably can add to our dangah, Lowthah," he said.

"I was thinking of the cannibal girls," Lowther explained blandly. "If they see you, they certainly won't be willing to let you leave the island. We can't go without you, and so——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!"

"I say, I'm fearfully hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "Ain't it time we made a start for the cocoa-nuts?"

"Yes, come on," said Kangaroo. "I must say I've got a healthy appetite, too. I could almost eat Gussy, he looks so nice."

"Weally, Kangawoo——"

Tom Merry loaded the rifle, and slung it

on his arm with the muzzle up.

"Ready," he said. "Keep your eyes open for natives."

D'Arcy looked round through his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove, you surely don't expect to find any here, Tom Mewwy?"

"I think it's very likely."

"Where, deah boy? If we could find any, they would be much nicah to eat than cocoa-nuts."

The juniors stared at him.

"Well, you blessed cannibal!" exclaimed Manners.

"Weally, Manners——"

"You giddy anthropophagist!" said Wally.



D'Arcy started back in amazement as the black man crawled before him. "Bai Jove!" exclaimed Gussy. "Is he off his sillay wockah?" (See page 331.)

"You ass! I am weally vewy fond of natives, and I fail to see any harm whatever in eatin' oystahs, so long as you're sure they're all wight!"

"Oysters, you ass!" roared Tom Merry. "The natives I was referring to are niggers, not oysters, you champion chump—niggers with war clubs!"

"Oh, I see!"

"Come on," said Fatty Wynn. "We'r wasting time while Gussy's jawing. It's no good waiting for him to leave off."

"Weally, Wynn——"

But Fatty was starting, and the rest followed. Five minutes later they were among the cocoanuts.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER

Arthur Augustus' New Role

FATTY WYNN paused under a cocoanut-tree, and looked up. Fatty Wynn's girth had been reduced a little during the days in the open boat, and his belt was drawn tighter than of yore. But the palm-tree's trunk was difficult to negotiate, and Fatty Wynn felt that he was not the fellow for the task. He turned a persuasive smile upon the other fellows.

"I suppose you're going to climb up, Gussy," he said.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I'm sowwy I can't oblige you, Wynn, deah boy. But my twousahs are alweady in a wuinous state, and I'm afwaid I can't wisk makin' them worse."

"Figgy, old man——"

"Oh, I'll look on!" said Figgins cheerfully.

"I'll watch anybody climb, with pleasure."

"Wally——"

"Rats!" said the hero of the Third.

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"Look here, I suppose we're going to have some of those blessed cocoanuts!" he exclaimed. "They've got to be got down."

"What price chucking up stones?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Good. Run down to the beach and fetch some stones."

"Rats! You fetch the stones, and I'll chuck them."

"H'm! Perhaps we could bring them

down with the rifle?" Fatty Wynn suggested. Tom Merry laughed.

"As a matter of fact, there must be a good many blown down in the wind last night," he said. "Suppose we look for them."

"By George, yes!"

Fatty Wynn hunted for fallen nuts. There were dozens of them further on, and the fat Fourth Former picked up one and cracked it against a tree. The inside was beautifully white and creamy. Fatty Wynn started upon it.

There was a sound as of an army of rats gnawing at a beam. Fatty Wynn's jaws were going as if by machinery.

"Is it nice, Fatty?"

Gna-w-w-w-w-w!

"Do you like it?"

Gna-a-a-w-w-w!

Fatty Wynn was too busy to speak.

"Bai Jove! I think I'll twy one!"

D'Arcy picked up a fat cocoanut. He regarded it doubtfully, and jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded it again.

"You have to crack it in your teeth, you know," said Monty Lowther.

D'Arcy took no notice of the suggestion. He cracked the nut by slamming it against a tree-trunk, and gave a little yelp as the juice spurted out up his sleeve.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, there's nothin' whatevah to gwin at. I can see that if I stay here long, I shall uttably wuin what is left of my clothes."

D'Arcy looked into the cracked nut. The interior was black as the ace of spades. He regarded it very dubiously.

"Is that nut quite wight, Lowthah?" he asked.

Lowther shook his head.

"No; it's black," he said.

"You uttah ass!"

"It's all right," Kangaroo cheerfully.

"Black cocoanuts are a special variety, with a flavour of their own. Try it."

"Oh, vewy well!"

D'Arcy took a bite at the cocoanut, and then he started sputtering and spluttering and gasping. The black cocoanut certainly had a

flavour of its own—and not a pleasant one.

“Ow! Oh! Gwoo! Ywooh!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared Kangaroo.

“Bai Jove! Ow! It’s wotten!”

“Well, you ass,” said Tom Merry, “did you expect it to be good, when it’s that colour? Ha, ha, ha!”

“Kangawoo said——”

“I said it had a flavour of its own,” said the Cornstalk. “Hasn’t it?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I wegard you as an ass!”

“Try this one!” said Kerr, passing the swell of St. Jim’s another nut.

And D’Arcy tried it, and found that it was good; and he was soon gnawing away as busily as Fatty Wynn.

The cocoanuts were good and plentiful. They made a very good meal; and the juniors were hungry enough to eat anything.

In their eager meal they had forgotten all about the possible danger of natives. They cracked nuts after nuts and devoured them.

Suddenly there was a rustle in the under-woods, and Tom Merry dropped his cocoanut and grasped the rifle. Peter Raff caught a revolver from his belt. A black face looked out of the bushes at the juniors, a startled but not hostile face.

Tom Merry levelled his rifle.

“Don’t shoot, sir!” said Peter Raff hurriedly. “Don’t begin it, sir!”

Tom Merry smiled.

“I don’t mean to begin it,” he said; “but one can’t be too careful!”

He made a sign to the black to come out.

A little man, with a blackish-brown skin, came out of the bushes. He was clad in a loin-cloth, and his skin was dark and shining, and tattooed over in strange devices.

He glanced at the juniors in wonder, and did not seem at all alarmed at the levelled rifle. It was pretty clear that he had never seen a firearm before.

The juniors left off eating cocoanuts, and looked at the savage. A savage he certainly was; but he did not look unfriendly. The sight of him quite banished their vague thoughts of raging, ferocious cannibals.

Tom Merry lowered the rifle.

“Bai Jove!” said Arthur Augustus, jam-

ming his monocle a little tighter, and surveying the stranger. “Who may you be, deah boy?”

The savage was looking steadily at D’Arcy. He seemed to take no notice of the other fellows. Suddenly he advanced towards the swell of St. Jim’s. He dropped his spear to the ground, and fell upon his knees before the elegant junior, touching the earth with his forehead.

D’Arcy started back in amazement.

“Gweat Scott! Is he off his silly wockah?”

“My hat!”

“What is he up to?”

The native remained in the same attitude of veneration, tapping the ground with his nose and forehead. The juniors looked on in amazement. Monty Lowther burst into a sudden roar:

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Shut up, Lowther!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” shrieked Lowther. “It’s the topper that’s done it, and the monocle. The chap takes Gussy for a king, at least—perhaps a god. Ha, ha, ha!”

The juniors yelled at the idea.

D’Arcy turned very red.

“You uttah ass, Lowthah! I suppose he wecognises my supewiowity, but that only shows that he’s an intelligent chap.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The savage rose to his feet, trembling.

As a matter of fact, it occurred to D’Arcy that the spontaneous worship of the innocent savage was something of a compliment to him. The black fellow evidently recognised him as something superior to the common ruck, and D’Arcy was not at all inclined to attribute it solely to the eyeglass and the top hat. The swell of St. Jim’s bestowed a gracious smile upon his worshipper.

The smile encouraged the stranger. He came nearer to D’Arcy, and passed a large black hand over him.

“Bai Jove!” murmured D’Arcy. “What on earth is he gettin’ at?”

“Mind he doesn’t pick your pockets,” said Wally.

“Weally, Wally——”

“He’s trying to make out if it’s real!” said Monty Lowther. “Gussy looks as if



"Look out!" shouted Blake suddenly. From the trees, a crowd of tattooed savages had suddenly burst, yelling and waving their spears in the air. (See page 334.)

he's just got off a Christmas card, you know, and——"

"Weally, Lowthah—— Bai Jove! Mind my hat, deah boy!"

The savage was feeling over the top hat. The nap of that hat had suffered considerably from wear and tear in the last few days, and D'Arcy was very nervous about it. But he did not like to offend the stranger by stopping him.

The islander felt the hat all over. Top hats were evidently as strange to him as firearms were. Suddenly the hat toppled off under his pressure, and he started back in alarm. He uttered a loud cry, and prostrated himself upon the earth.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther, almost in hysterics. "He didn't know it came off. He thought it was part of the idol."

The juniors shrieked.

Arthur Augustus, with a very red face, replaced the silk hat. It was some minutes before the savage ventured to raise his face from the earth. When he saw the silk topper

in its place again he calmed down, and rose to his feet and continued his investigations.

He felt over the eyeglass that was jammed in D'Arcy's eye. D'Arcy involuntarily let it drop to the end of its cord, and again the savage jumped away in alarm.

"He thinks you take to pieces now like a mechanical toy!" grinned Lowther.

"You uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy replaced his eyeglass. He was beginning to get a little "fed up" with the investigations of the islander.

But the stranger had apparently finished now. He began to make signs with his hands, pointing to the interior of the island, and indicating that the juniors should follow him.

"He wants us to go to his village," said Manners. "I think we might as well. I should like to get some photographs of a cannibal village."

Tom Merry looked very dubious.

"I don't know about risking it," he said.

"This chap is very friendly, but his friends

mayn't take the same view, and if we get among the crowd of them, there might be ructions. We don't want trouble."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We can't speak his blessed lingo, or we could tell him that if he wants to worship our idol, he'll have to come with us," said Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young wascal——"

The savage was growing excited in his gesticulations. But Tom Merry shook his head, and pointed back towards the beach. It would have been the height of imprudence to risk themselves in the interior of the island, on the faith of a savage.

"We can't come, deah boy, but we shall be pleased to see you if you call again," said Arthur Augustus.

The savage knelt and touched the ground with his forehead. Then, with many backward glances at the juniors, he disappeared among the trees.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Sudden Attack.

"**B**AI Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the islander had disappeared. "I wegard that as a most wemarkable expewience."

"Yes," said Tom Merry, laughing.

The juniors gathered up armfuls of the cocoanuts, and carried them back to the beach. Close by the spot where the stream ran into the bay were several high rocks, and there the castaways pitched their camp in the shade. The sun was high in the heavens now, and the heat of the tropical day was pouring upon the island.

"We shall have to wait a bit and see more what the natives are like before we explore the place at all," said Tom Merry. "The other fellows may not be friendly, and there may be more than one tribe, too. And we don't want to leave the shore, either. We want to have what chance there is of seeing a sail."

"Not much chance, I'm afraid," Blake remarked.

"It's our only chance of ever getting off the island," said Tom Merry.

"That's true."

"The boat is stove to pieces, and we could never rebuild it from the fragments," said Tom Merry. "Besides, we have no provisions to put to sea with. We couldn't sail away with a cargo of cocoanuts and water enough for only four days. That's all the kegs will hold."

"Wathah not."

The juniors looked very serious. They had been so overjoyed at escaping from the horrors of the open boat, and finding themselves on firm land with food and drink in abundance, that they had not considered their prospects further. Now they had to consider them. They had been fortunate—there was no doubt about that. But the prospect was that they would remain a long time, perhaps years, perhaps for life, on that lonely island, and the thought of it made their faces grave.

"Bai Jove, it's wotten!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Might have been worse," said Blake, who always took the optimistic view. "We might have died of hunger and thirst in the boat."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No good giving up hope," said Tom Merry. "We're alive and well, that's one comfort, and we're all together. I wish we knew what had become of the other boat."

"Yes, rather!"

"Old Herries was in it," said Blake. "It would be frightfully rotten if anything happened to old Herries. Of course, it would be rotten if anything happened to the other chaps, too."

"They had a better chance than we had," Manners remarked. "It was a larger boat, and better supplied with provisions and water. If they're still at sea in it, they haven't run out of water and grub yet, by a long way. Lord Conway intended the two boats to remain together, and in the morning they'd have passed more grub into our boat—only we got separated. But they're better off than we were."

"Yes, that's a comfort."

The sun was at the zenith now, blazing down upon the island. There was no sign of the savages. The sea, calmer and calmer, every hour, was rolling now in gentle ripples on the

shore, curling in white lines of foam on the golden sand.

In the blaze of noon the juniors lay and rested in the shadow of the big rock. Some of them slept. But always some two or three were awake to watch for a possible visit of the natives, and the firearms were kept ready.

But the islanders did not appear. If the man they had seen had carried the news to his friends, they had not come yet to see the strangers. It might mean that the savages were seeking to lull the castaways into a sense of security, with the intention of taking them by surprise. The juniors were very much on their guard.

In the cool of the afternoon, Tom Merry went down the beach to look for the treasure-chest. It lay where it had fallen from the boat, half-buried in the sand, with the waves of the Pacific curling over it. One iron-bound corner stuck up into view from the water, and glistened in the sun.

The schoolboys' gold was safe so far, but it was not in a safe position. Tom Merry suggested dragging it ashore with the ropes that had been saved from the boat.

"If we get off, we want to take the gold with us," he said. "We can bury it in the sand, and come for it whenever we please."

"Jolly good idea!" said Digby.

The rope was passed round the sunken chest, and it was dragged with great efforts through the soft sand, and above the high water mark. Then the sand was scooped out into a hollow, and the chest was rolled in, and covered up.

The juniors stamped down the sand round and over it.

"We ought to make some indication of where it is, to remember it," Manners suggested.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry paced the distance from the buried chest to the big rock in whose shade they had camped.

"Twenty paces," he said, turning and pacing back, "and as you come from the rock, you keep exactly in a line with that bunch of palm trees yonder."

"Good!"

"Let's write it down, in case of accidents," Digby suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No fear. If Pablo Lopez comes, and he may, we don't want to have any written clue he might get hold of."

"True."

"We shall remember that, if we need to dig up the chest again," said Tom Merry. "Twenty paces from the big rock, in a line with the bunch of palms."

"Good!"

"Look out!" shouted Blake suddenly.

The juniors rose upon their feet in a moment.

From the trees, a crowd of tattooed savages had suddenly burst, yelling and waving their spears in the air.

They rushed straight at the juniors.

"My hat! There's our old friend at their head too," said Monty Lowther, in surprise. "But they're on the war-path now, and no mistake."

The early acquaintance of the juniors was coming on at the head of the rushing savages. He was waving a spear like the rest.

"My hat! Look out!"

"Man Friday seems to be as excited as the rest," Blake remarked. "It looks like a tussle."

The juniors gathered together, close against the big rock. Tom Merry levelled the rifle, and Peter Raff and Lowther, and Blake and Figgins, who had a revolver each, raised their weapons. The other juniors had nothing but sticks and boathooks, but they were prepared to put up a good fight. It looked like trouble.

Yet they hesitated to fire.

The savages rushed right on, yelling and gesticulating, till they were quite close. Then they suddenly halted, and the Man Friday, as Blake had named the savage, after Robinson Crusoe's old friend, came forward alone.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Don't shoot till you have to," he muttered.

"Right-ho."

Man Friday, to give him that name—he probably had one of his own, but the juniors did not know what it was—stepped towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He knelt at D'Arcy's feet, and touched the sand with his forehead, and at the same time the rest of the natives knelt down before Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove, they mean well enough, aftah all," said the swell of St. Jim's, in great relief.

"Good old Friday!" murmured Lowther.

Friday rose to his feet, and gesticulated, and pointed to his friends, and then with his spear to the interior of the island. His meaning evidently was that D'Arcy should go with him. Of the others he took no notice.

"They want you, Gussy," said Manners.

"Bai Jove!"

"They want our giddy idol," grinned Wally.

"Weally, Wally——"

"Gussy's not going," said Tom Merry. "There may be a cooking-pot at the end of the journey. Here, you, Friday, you buzz off."

He laid his hand on the savage's shoulder.

Friday turned upon him, with a sudden ferocious glare in his face, and made a savage thrust with his spear. Tom Merry just saved himself by leaping aside.

"Look out!" shouted Blake.

Friday made a rush at Tom Merry, thrusting again. The savages made a simultaneous move forward. Tom Merry countered with his rifle barrel, and knocked the spear aside. The savages were closing up.

"Shoot!" shouted Peter Raff.

There was nothing else for it. D'Arcy was evidently sacred in the eyes of the savages, but they were prepared to murder the others with the peculiar irresponsibility of the savage nature.

"Shoot! Shoot!"

Tom Merry threw his rifle up.

Crack!

Man Friday gave a terrific yell, leaped into the air, and dropped flat upon his face.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Spaniard Again.

THE report of the rifle rang in a thousand echoes along the beach and reverberated back from the wood.

The savages stopped dead, as if thunder-struck.

For one moment they stood paralysed, and then, with loud cries of fear, they took to their heels and ran.

It was like the change of a kaleidoscope. One moment a yelling horde surrounded the juniors, and the next, the beach was clear, save for themselves and the fallen savage. The blacks had vanished into the trees.

Friday lay motionless where he had fallen.

Tom Merry was very pale.

"Good heavens!" muttered Blake.

"Is he dead?" whispered Wally.

"Heaven forbid!" said Tom.

"It was his own look-out, Master Tom," said Peter Raff. "He tried to kill you with his spear."

"I know; but I did not fire to kill," said Tom Merry. "I think he is more frightened than hurt. I wanted the bullet to graze his head, and I think it did not go too close."

He stepped towards the fallen savage.



Peter Raff touched Tom Merry's arm. "Shoot—shoot!" muttered the sailorman. "You'll never have another chance like this, Master Tom—never!" (See page 337.)

Friday lay motionless.

There was a trickle of blood from his ear, where the bullet had carried away a fragment of skin. The wound was trifling, but the savage did not move. He seemed to be frightened to a comatose state by the report of the rifle.

Tom Merry caught up his spear, and passed it away to Kangaroo. It was safest to disarm the savage. Then he touched the man, and he stirred and moaned.

"It's all right," said Tom Merry. "You're not hurt! By George, I wish I could speak his language! Don't you know any of the lingo, Kangy?"

"I know some black fellows' talk," said Kangaroo. "I don't suppose this chap talks the Australian bush language, though, I'll try."

He spoke a few sentences in a strange tongue. But the savage did not move.

"He doesn't savvy," said Blake.

"I expect he'll come round," said Tom Merry. "Poor chap! I'm sorry to scare him like this; but those beggars meant murder."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They're coming back, sir," said Peter Raff.

On the edge of the wood, the black-brown faces were reappearing. The savages, evidently frightened, were peering out from the trees in dread and wonder.

Friday sat up at last. His face was full of pitiful terror. He shuddered as he looked at the rifle in Tom Merry's hand, and crawled towards it on his hands and knees and touched the sand with his forehead before it.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "He think's it's alive, you know. He must take it for an idol too."

Friday rose to his feet at last and backed away from the rifle. His aspect had lost all its ferocity. His brown face expressed nothing but humility and fear.

"It's all wight, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "We're not going to hurt you."

Friday prostrated himself before D'Arcy. Then he wriggled away into the wood and disappeared.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the Dutch," said Kangaroo.

"It's a vewwy wemarkable expewience."

"Poor wretches," said Figgins. "They've

never seen a firearm before, you can see that. I fancy we shall be safe from them after this."

"Yaas, wathah."

Man Friday having rejoined his comrades, the whole of them disappeared. The juniors remained very much shaken up by the strange adventure. It might have ended very much worse for them, they knew that. But for the terror inspired by the firearms, they would have had little chance in a struggle with a horde of armed savages. The spears and clubs would have done deadly work.

But the sudden glancing of a white sail on the sea caught the attention of the juniors, and in a moment the savages were forgotten. Kerr was the first to see it, and he shouted:

"A sail!"

Tom Merry caught up the binoculars, and turned them upon the sail, which had glanced up like a white bird's wing from the blue of the sea.

Then he uttered an exclamation of disappointment.

"The felucca!"

"Lopez again!"

The felucca was standing into the bay. The dwarf figure of the Spaniard could be seen at the helm.

"The felucca!"

"And the Spaniard!"

"Cover!" said Tom Merry, quickly.

The juniors gathered behind the big rocks. So far, the Spaniard could not have seen them. It was as well to keep their presence from his knowledge, if possible.

The felucca came closer in. The four blacks who formed the crew could be seen on the deck, and the voice of the Spaniard rapping out orders came on the wind, though the juniors could not understand the words.

"He's going to anchor here," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what is he doing here at all?" Blake exclaimed, in amazement. "Can he know anything about the yacht being wrecked?"

Tom Merry nodded quickly.

"That's it! He's found some of the wreckage, or—or perhaps Lord Conway's boat."

"Bai Jove!"

"And he knows the treasure is still in the

South Seas," said Tom Merry. "He's searching for it, and us."

The juniors looked grave. It was only too likely. It meant another fight with the Spaniard if he found them on the island. Not that they were afraid; there were too many of them for the Spaniard, if it came to open warfare. But there would be bloodshed, there was little doubt of that.

Tom Merry watched the felucca as it swept closer in under its lateen sails. The Spaniard at the helm was in full and easy view now, in easy range. Tom Merry half-raised the rifle.

He could have picked the man off as easily as a rabbit.

Peter Raff touched his arm.

"Shoot—shoot!" muttered the sailorman. "You'll never have another chance like this, Master Tom—never."

"It would be only prudent," said Tom. "But——"

"But you can't do it, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm surprised at you, Petah. It would be howwid."

"The man's a murderer," said Peter Raff—"a murderer twice over, as I've seen. He means death to us."

"Yaas, but——"

Tom Merry shook his head. It would have been, as he had said, only prudent, but it was impossible. He could not shoot a man down in cold blood.

"He deserves it," he said. "But it can't be done. Besides"—Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as a new idea flashed into his brain.

"What are you thinking of?" Blake asked.

"We might capture the felucca!"

"What?"

"The rascal's going to anchor in the bay here," said Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "He will leave the felucca some time, if only to search for us. He can't fail to see the fragments of the boat on the beach. Well, when he is in the woods, we can have a try for the felucca. I don't think the niggers will stop us."

"No fear."

"It's a ripping idea!" exclaimed Kerr. "We can take the felucca—the rascal's declared war himself, and we're entitled to capture his craft if we can. We can maroon the

brute on the island here, where he can't do any damage, and sail away with the treasure-chest in the felucca."

"I suppose we could handle that craft," Figgins said, with a dubious glance at the great lateen sails, which the negroes were now lowering.

"We could learn," said Tom Merry. "After all, most of us can sail a boat at home, and we could soon get in the way of handling a felucca. Better than building a raft to get away from the island upon, and that's what we thought of first."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And there will be provisions on the felucca, too," observed Fatty Wynn. "We shall have plenty of grub for the voyage, and——"

"Hallo! Hold on, Peter Raff!"

The sailorman had suddenly dragged the revolver from his belt, and levelled it at the Spaniard on the felucca. Tom Merry dragged his arm down just in time.

"Stop it!" he shouted.

The sailorman looked sullen.

"It's the safest way," he muttered.

"It's murder."

"It's what he means for us, Master Tom."

"We can protect ourselves. I tell you you shall not shoot," said Tom Merry; and he jerked the revolver away from Peter Raff, "Now——"

The sailorman nodded.

"I give in to you, Master Tom; but you'll be sorry for not letting me shoot the villain down while we had a chance."

"I don't think so."

The great sails were down now, and the felucca floated gently in the bay. The anchor slipped into the water, and the handsome craft rocked on the waves a score of yards from the shore. A little skiff dropped into the water, and the Spaniard rowed himself ashore. The blacks remained on board the felucca. They were close enough for the juniors to see their faces, and it was easy to see that they were simple black sailors, with none of the ruffianly characteristics of the Spaniard about them. Probably Lopez dared not sail in company with scoundrels like himself—for if a gang of his own kidney had helped him to win the treasure, they would certainly have murdered

him for the possession of it afterwards. He preferred to rely upon himself, and have nothing to fear, at all events, upon his own vessel.

The skiff grounded on the sand, and the Spaniard leaped ashore. The juniors drew closer into the cover of the rocks, watching him.

That the Spaniard was suspicious was evident. He stood scanning the shore, and watching the woods, with a keen, gleaming eye. It was very clear that, out at sea, he had heard the report of the shot Tom Merry had fired at Man Friday, and that it had warned him that there were whites on the island. And in those lonely seas it was not hard for him to conclude that they were the party he sought.

He uttered an exclamation in Spanish as he caught sight of a broken oar lying on the sand. He picked it up, and looked at it, and then searched along the beach. He came upon many fragments of wreckage, and the bows of the broken boat still embedded in the sand. Again his voice was heard on the silent shore.

"Carambo!"

Tom Merry held his rifle ready. The Spaniard was on the track now with a vengeance. The footprints in the sand caught the man's eye, and he followed them, scanning the sand eagerly. He came striding towards

the big rocks behind which the juniors were concealed, and they drew back closer into cover.

His heavy boots could be heard grinding the sand as he came on, closer and closer. In a few seconds he would be round the rocks, and in full view of the castaways.

Tom Merry raised his rifle ready, his finger on the trigger.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy "Look out!"

A shadow fell at their feet. The Spaniard came swinging on, round the big rock. He started back, his hand flying to his belt as he caught sight of the juniors. But he had no time to draw a weapon. The muzzle of the rifle was at his breast.

Tom Merry's voice rang out.

"Halt!"

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face.

PABLO LOPEZ halted.

He had no choice in the matter, for the

muzzle of the rifle was within a foot of him, and Tom Merry's finger was on the trigger, Tom Merry's steady eye glancing along the barrel.

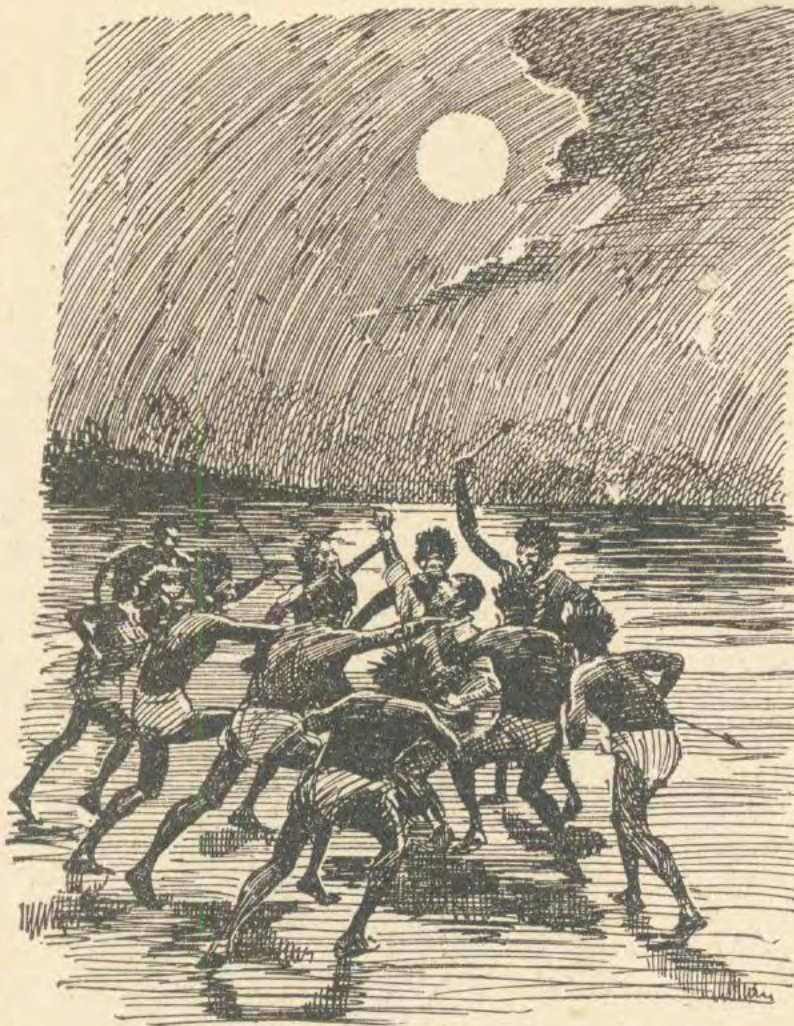
"Carambo!"

"Halt, you scoundrel!"

The Spaniard stood with his hands clenching and unclenching, his features working with passion.

But his rage was nothing to the juniors.

He was at their mercy now.



The fighting, struggling forms leaped into view as the moon came grandly out from the clouds. Pablo Lopez was in the grasp of the savages! (See page 341.)

"Don't try to touch your pistol," said Tom Merry quietly. "I shall send a bullet right through you if you do."

"Carambo!"

"I don't know what cawambo means," said D Arcy; "But fwom the way that wottah uttaks it, I should take it as a swear word, and I object to it. I insist upon the wascal usin' more wespectful language."

"Disarm him, Peter," said Tom Merry. "I'll keep him covered, and shoot him if he resists."

The Spaniard was trembling with passion. Peter Raff was trembling, too, but it was with dread of the man he feared so much. Yet at other times Peter Raff had shown himself to be a brave man.

But the sailorman obeyed Tom's order. He stepped towards the Spaniard, and took the pistol and the knife from his belt, and unslung the rifle from his shoulder, and then took off his bandolier.

"Oh, but you shall pay for this yet, all of you," said the Spaniard between his teeth.

Tom Merry made a gesture of contempt.

"We are not afraid of you," he said. "You will be wise to keep clear of us from this moment. I warn you that we shall not show any mercy if you attack us."

Lopez ground his teeth.

"Why not make him a prisoner now," Blake exclaimed. "If we tie the cad up, he will be unable to do us any harm."

"Yaas, wathah."

The Spaniard sprang back.

"You will not make me a prisoner, senoritos," he said, in a voice choking with passion. "You may kill me, but you will not make me a prisoner."

"We'll see about that!" Blake exclaimed. "Collar him!"

The juniors rushed forward.

Lopez sprang away.

It would have been easy for Tom Merry to shoot him down; but that the cunning rascal knew very well the junior would not do, excepting in self-defence. Lopez sprang away round the rocks, and dashed across the sand towards the felucca.

"After him!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Collah the cad!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors entered into the chase with zest. Strung out in line, the fleetest ahead and the slower ones behind, they raced over the sand after the Spaniard.

But Lopez reached his skiff first.

He leaped into it, and pushed off, and the skiff went rocking away towards the felucca, the Spaniard standing up in it, oar in hand, ready to strike down any of the juniors who should pursue him further.

But that they did not do. They halted on the shore, baffled, while the boat rocked away towards the anchored craft.

"Bai Jove! The wascal's gone!"

The Spaniard glared at them from the boat.

"Oh, but wait a little, senoritos!" he exclaimed. "You have not seen the last of Pablo Lopez."

And he dipped the oar into the water and sculled away to the felucca, and the juniors saw him jump aboard.

"Will he go now?" Blake muttered.

"I should say not."

Tom Merry was right.

The Spaniard had disappeared on board the vessel, but the great lateen sails were not raised, and the craft did not move from her anchorage. Pablo Lopez had come to stay.

THE TWENTY-NINTH CHAPTER.

Fallen Among Foes.

THE juniors returned to their camp behind the rocks.

The situation on the island was growing curious. On the one side were the brown-skinned natives, whose ferocious enmity might break out again at any moment. On the other was the Spaniard. It was pretty certain that Pablo Lopez was waiting on the felucca for the fall of night, with the intention of trying his luck a second time under cover of darkness. And without being timid, the juniors looked forward to nightfall with some uneasiness.

"I can tell you what his little game is, young gentlemen," Peter Raff said moodily. "He intends to hang about us in the dark and kill us one by one if he can. He has more firearms aboard the felucca, for a certainty, and he will get ashore in the dark

and pick us off whenever he gets a chance of sniping."

"If he shoots, we shall shoot," Tom Merry said.

Peter Raff shook his head.

"You won't have another chance, Master Tom."

"Bai Jove, I must wemark that you're an awful cwokah, Petah!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed. "I wathah think that we shall be a match for the wuffian."

"And what about the black fellows?" Kangaroo exclaimed. "I don't believe they will give up the game either."

Tom Merry smiled.

"If they both come after dark, we shall have a lively time," he said. "We can only sit tight and hope for the best."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'd better get some more grub here in case of accidents," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "If the niggers start on us, we shan't be able to go to the wood."

"Quite wight, deah boy!"

"It will be awful to have to live on cocoanuts," Fatty Wynn remarked despondently. "What price a good rich beefsteak, Figgy, with onions, and——"

"Oh, shut up," said Figgins, "you make me feel famished!"

"What price a nice juicy pork-pie——"

"Shut up!" roared the juniors.

And Fatty Wynn sighed and shut up.

But his suggestion was good, and as the sun went down the juniors gathered armfuls of cocoanuts and carried them back to the camp in the rocks. A change of diet was very desirable, but cocoanuts were better than nothing. As for hunting some of the wild goats they had seen in the distance, Tom Merry decided that it would be too imprudent.

The savages were still probably lurking in the woods. After all, as Kerr remarked very thoughtfully, they were lucky to have plenty of cocoanuts.

The sun sank in the west.

With the quick nightfall the juniors became more watchful and anxious. Fatty Wynn sat munching endless cocoanuts, and dreaming with deep yearning of beefsteaks, onions, fried potatoes, and pork-pies. The other

fellows waited and watched while they rested.

"We'll see about building some shelter to-morrow," Tom Merry remarked. "This would be a pretty open spot if it rained again. It's all right for to-night, though."

"We ought to have a stockade, you know," said D'Arcy, with a dim remembrance of some treasure story. "A stockade and a blockhouse, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't know where we shall get them," he said, "but we'll see what we can do in the morning. We shall have to look for some grub a bit more solid than cocoanuts."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn emphatically.

"Listen!" said Jack Blake.

He held up his hand.

It was very dark now; and the juniors, as they listened, could hear a sound of rustling from the distant trees.

They had no doubt as to what caused it.

Man Friday and his friends were reappearing on the scene, encouraged by the fact that the darkness made them invisible to the castaways.

"Hark!"

It was a splash from the sea.

"Lopez!"

"Both together!" said Figgins. "We are booked for a warm time. Look here, let's climb up on top of these rocks. The moon will be up soon, and we could hold the rocks for a long time against those blessed niggers, and without shooting any of them. I shall be sorry to have to pot Man Friday."

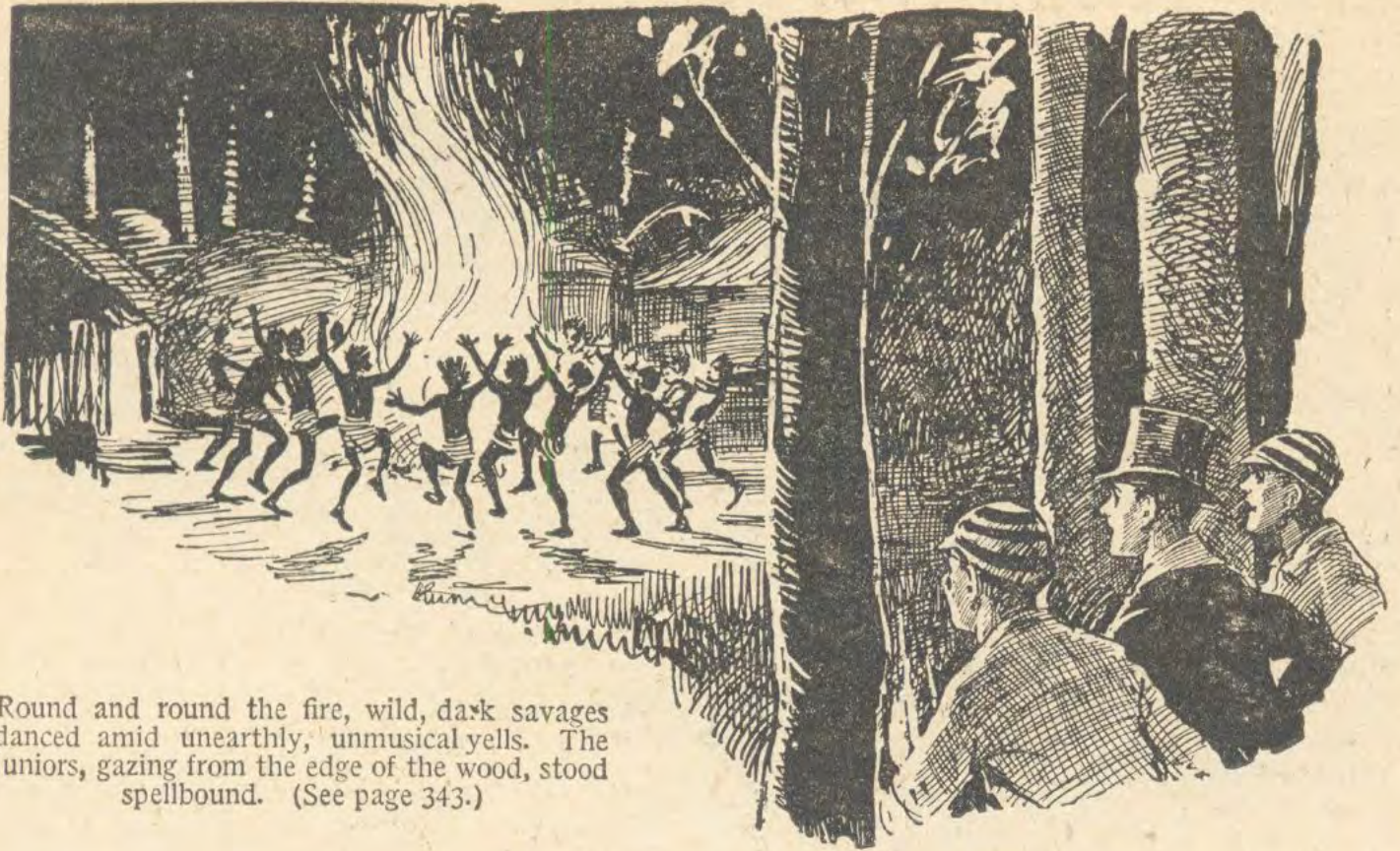
"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a good idea!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors clambered up the rocks. The rugged slopes below them did not favour a rushing attack, such as the savages were most likely to make. Among the rocks the castaways had no doubt of being able to hold their own by using their firearms, but that, of course, they were very reluctant to do. But if the savages pushed them hard, they had no other resource.

From the darkness of the beach came faint sounds, of bare feet crunching on sand, of men stumbling over stones and over the fragments of the wrecked boat.

The islanders were coming on!



Round and round the fire, wild, dark savages danced amid unearthly, unmusical yells. The juniors, gazing from the edge of the wood, stood spellbound. (See page 343.)

Suddenly the sound of advance ceased. The juniors strained their ears, but they could hear nothing.

Not a sound, not a motion from the darkness.

What did it mean? What were the islanders doing? What was the meaning of the sudden halt? The juniors strained their eyes in the darkness in vain, and listened and waited with beating hearts.

In the black sky an edge of silver appeared. The moon was about to emerge from behind the banks of clouds.

The silver glimmer danced on the sea, and threw a shimmer back from the forest. The moon came slowly out.

Suddenly, from the darkness of the shore, came a terrific uproar. A crack, crack, crack! of a revolver; wild, savage yells of pain and fury; the hoarse voice of a white man; sounds of a desperate struggle, of wrestling forms and trampling feet and crunching sand.

The juniors started, and listened in horror. What was happening there in the darkness? One word was on all lips:

“Lopez!”

Was it the Spaniard?

They could see nothing; they could hear only the sounds of wild-beast-like conflict, growing fainter now.

A sheet of silver danced on the Pacific; the moon came grandly out from the clouds, and light descended upon the scene.

The fighting, struggling forms leaped into sudden view. On the sandy shore Pablo Lopez was struggling, with failing strength, in the grasp of the savages. A dozen or more of the islanders were piling on him, and even the great strength of the dwarf was giving way.

Several of the savages showed wounds, and blood was on the face of Man Friday, whom the juniors recognised in the midst of the conflict. What had happened was very clear. The Spaniard, stealing upon the camp in the darkness, had blundered into the savages, not knowing that they were there. And the islanders had seized upon him instantly. The dwarf's struggles ceased, and he lay helpless under the shrieking savages.

Tom Merry half raised his rifle, and lowered it again.

He had no right to shoot in defence of the Spaniard. Lopez's life was of no more value than the life of any savage there.

The savages, with yells of triumph, dragged their prisoner away towards the wood. With the curious irresponsibility of the savage mind, they had forgotten or abandoned their original intention of approaching the camp. With the gasping, feebly struggling Spaniard in their midst, they swarmed away into the forest and disappeared, but for a long time their savage yells rang in the ears of the juniors.

THE THIRTIETH CHAPTER.

To the Rescue.

"**B**AI Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, breaking a long silence.
"Bai Jove, deah boys!"

Tom Merry shivered.

"It was Lopez's own fault," he said. "He came here looking for trouble—and he found it, though not the sort he was looking for."

"What will they do with him?" muttered Lowther.

"Goodness knows!"

"He wounded some of them. They may——"

"Kill him, perhaps."

Tom Merry made a restless gesture.

"He must face the music himself," said the hero of the Shell. "He's brought this upon himself; it's his own look-out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Suppose——" began Digby, and he paused.

"Well, suppose what?" said Tom Merry almost irritably.

"Suppose they're cannibals?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I don't see that we need suppose that," said Tom Merry gloomily. "They looked friendly enough at first—or Man Friday did, anyway. And they weren't going to attack us, either, this afternoon; they only wanted Gussy for an idol."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"But they attacked us afterwards," said Blake; "and that chap Friday, quiet as

he was at first, tried to stick you with a spear. You can't trust savages."

"Quite wight, Blake."

"If they're cannibals——"

"Well, I don't see what we can do," said Tom Merry. "It would be madness to risk our lives to save such a brute as Pablo Lopez—especially when he would return the favour by cutting our throats if he could."

"Well, that's right, too."

"Besides, we shouldn't have the right to shoot down those poor wretches to save such a man," said Tom Merry.

"Let him go," said Peter Raff—"let him go! If they eat him, I wish them joy of him. Do you think he would trouble his head about us?"

"Are the niggers in these parts cannibals, Peter?" asked Kerr.

The sailorman grinned.

"I guess they are," he said. "They're pretty sure to be, sir. Those black fellows will eat their prisoners as a matter of course. It's their way."

Tom Merry shuddered.

"We cannot be sure," he said.

"Ay, ay, sir; it's sure enough!"

Tom Merry did not reply. The thought of it was heavy and painful in his mind. If the islanders were savages—if they were going to murder their prisoner and devour him—could the juniors abstain from interference? The Spaniard was their bitter foe, but——

A red glare from the distance lighted up the sky, and cast a strange reflection upon the moonlit heavens. The red flamelight danced on the branches of the trees; the flare came from beyond the forest, in the direction the islanders had taken.

"What on earth's that?" Figgins exclaimed.

"The forest on fire!"

"It ain't," said Peter Raff. "It's a fire in the village—the place where those brown devils hang out."

"Some celebration, I suppose?"

The sailorman grinned.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Tom Merry sharply. "Do you think the fire has

anything to do with their having captured Lopez?"

"I'd better not say, sir."

"Tell me!"

"Well, I reckon the fire's lighted to cook him, sir," said Peter Raff. "But what matter? It was his own business; he should have kept to the felucca. He landed to murder some of us in the dark."

"Very likely; but——"

"Look here, Raff," said Blake abruptly. "I suppose you know the customs of these horrible brutes! If they eat their prisoners——"

"They do that, sir."

"Do they torture them?"

Peter Raff was silent.

"What do you say, Peter?"

"Well, sir, the man might be dead before they cook him, or—or he mightn't," said the sailorman reluctantly. "There's no telling."

Tom Merry gave a horrified start.

"Do you mean that they might roast him alive?" he cried.

"I s'pose they might."

"Gweat Scott!" muttered D'Arcy, with the perspiration running down his face. "The howwid wottahs! I—I say, Tom Mewwy, we can't stand this."

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally. "We shall have to chip in."

"We must," said Tom Merry. "If the brutes treat their prisoners like that, they ought to be shot down like mad dogs. It's all rot to say that their training doesn't teach them any better; they must know perfectly well that they are wicked beasts. If Lopez were ten times as bad as he is, I wouldn't stand by and allow that."

"Wathah not!"

"Come on."

"Hold on, sir," said Peter Raff. "There's one thing that you've forgotten, Master Tom."

"What's that?"

"There are a dozen of us," said Peter, with a troubled look. "But there may be hundreds of the cannibals, sir. And if they get the better of us, we shan't save that Spanish brute, sir; but we shall get served the same as him."

The juniors exchanged glances. The danger was terrible—the price of failure was enough to give them pause—death, perhaps the most horrible of deaths. But to the credit of the St. Jim's juniors, be it said, the pause was but momentary.

"I don't care," said Tom Merry determinedly. "I believe we shall be more than a match for them, with the firearms; anyway, we're going to try."

"Yes, rather!"

"March on, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "I suppose I had better take the lead, Tom Mewwy——"

"I suppose you hadn't," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Come on," said Tom Merry, and he started off with his rifle under his arm. And the juniors followed him fast.

The red glare in the sky was growing redder, brighter. It was evident that a tremendous fire must have been kindled at the natives' village.

The red glare lighted up the wood as the juniors plunged into it, and it guided them on their way. They had no other indication of the direction of the savages, but the glare over the trees was sufficient.

For a great distance they threaded their way through the dusky aisles of the forest. The trees gave place to a wide clearing at last—a level glade, with trees in the distance beyond the green level. In the glade was a collection of rude huts, and on the open ground outside the village a huge fire was blazing away, fed by logs and branches. Round the fire, wild, dark figures danced amid unearthly, unmusical yells.

It was a strange and terrible scene, and the juniors, gazing at it from the edge of the wood, stood spellbound.

THE THIRTY-FIRST CHAPTER

Saved From the Cannibals!

JACK BLAKE grasped Tom Merry's arm with one hand, and pointed with the other.

"Look!" he muttered.

It was the Spaniard.

Close by the fire—so close that the sweat was running down his dark skin from the heat of it—lay the dwarf.

The juniors were near enough to see his features, and to make out the play of emotion in the dark and savage face.

Lopez lay upon the ground, his hands and feet tied tightly with hide—so tightly that the bonds evidently caused him pain.

His face was deadly white through the dusk of the skin, and his black eyes gleamed with horrible fear.

It was clear that he knew that he was doomed; that he had no hope of rescue; that every nerve in his body was quivering with horror of his doom.

Ruffian as he was and merciless enemy, the juniors could not help feeling a sentiment of pity, as they watched his ghastly face, and read the fear and anguish there. For a long time the dance continued, the savages



working themselves up to a higher and higher pitch of wild, frenzied excitement.

Suddenly the dance ceased.

A rush was made for the Spaniard, and he was lifted from the ground in the arms of several of the savages. Man

Friday could be seen driving a stake into the ground close to the blaze of the fire.

The heat drove him back, sweating and panting. But it was plain what the stake was for. It was to secure the prisoner.

The Spaniard was to be roasted. There was no doubt about it. The juniors were sick with horror as they watched. The dwarf was dragged towards the fire, and one of the cannibals had looped a rope to fasten him there quickly, so that his captors could recede from the heat.

Tom Merry raised his rifle.

"Shoot!" he muttered. "Shoot at their legs; we must not kill; if it can be helped."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Spaniard was shrieking with fear. His shrieks were answered by savage yells and cries from the cannibals.

Crack-ack-ack-ack-ack!

From the wood came a sudden burst of firing.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The juniors blazed away fiercely.

They aimed low to avoid killing if possible. But it was no time to stand too much upon ceremony.

Crack! Crack!

The savages who were holding the Spaniard let him drop instantly, and he rolled on the ground. The cannibals were falling on all sides—some of them struck by the bullets, some in sheer terror.

Crack! Crack!
Crack!

"Charge!" shouted Tom Merry.

The juniors rushed towards the fire, still blazing away with the revolvers. With yells of terror the savages fled.

In a frenzied horde they went dashing into the village, and through it, and away

to the forest beyond, sending back affrighted yells.

Tom Merry stopped by the Spaniard. Lopez looked at him, dazed with astonishment. Tom opened his knife, and cut the hide that secured the Spaniard's feet.

"Come!" he muttered.

"Loose my hands," muttered Lopez.

"Your hands will do very well as they are," said Tom Merry curtly.

"But, señorito—"

"Come!"

Tom Merry dragged the Spaniard up.

"Let's get off!" he exclaimed. "They may rally, and there are hordes of them."

"We'd better be gone before they come back."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And with the rescued Spaniard in their midst, the juniors ran into the wood. They left more than a dozen savages on the ground. Some of them were wounded, some only scared to stupefaction. Whether any were dead the juniors did not stop to look; it was better not to know. But they hoped not.

At a run they plunged on through the wood, back the way they had come.

The Spaniard ran with them. He was as anxious as the juniors could be to get away from the vicinity of the cannibals.

That the cannibals would rally when their first fright was over, Tom Merry felt certain, and he was right.

Before the fugitives were half-way to the shore, they heard savage yells behind, and in the red glare that fell among the trees, dark forms could be seen moving swiftly.

"They're after us!" panted Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked back, and grasped his rifle.

"Look after Lopez," he said.

"Right-ho!"

Crack!

The nearest of the cannibals jumped into the air, with a terrible yell, as a bullet struck him in the leg. He came down with a crash, and lay groaning.

There was a howl from the others, and they gathered round the fallen man, looking at him in wonder, evidently quite at a loss to account for his fall and his wound. They did not understand yet the weapon Tom Merry carried, but they understood enough to terrify them. Leaving the wounded man where he had fallen, the horde of them bolted back towards the village.

The juniors tramped on towards the shore at a more moderate pace.

They came out into the bright moonlight there.

The Spaniard stopped, panting, white, the prey of conflicting emotions. Even his hard and wicked heart could not be wholly insensible to what the juniors had done for him.

Tom Merry looked at him sternly.

"We have saved your life, Lopez," he said.

"But you will remain a prisoner. You understand that?"

The Spaniard nodded.

"We are going to take your felucca, and leave the island. You can remain here, or come with us as a prisoner, as you prefer."

"Loose me——"

"We shall do nothing of the kind. You are too dangerous a villain to be let loose," said Tom Merry curtly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why did you save me, then?" the Spaniard exclaimed, unable to control his curiosity. "Why did you rescue me from the savages?"

"Because they were savages," said Tom Merry quietly. "We could not leave our worst enemy in their hands so long as there was a chance of saving him. But I don't suppose you would understand our motives, anyway."

"It was a case of noblesse oblige, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "We shouldn't expect you to do anythin' of the sort, but we were bound to do it."

"I am grateful," said the Spaniard. "If you loose me, I will promise——"

Tom Merry interrupted him with a gesture.

"Nonsense! We shall maroon you on this island, or take you a prisoner on board the felucca. Which do you prefer?"

Lopez gritted his teeth.

"The felucca," he said. "I do not wish to be left here to be devoured by the cannibals."

"Very well!"

"The sooner we get on board the better," said Blake. "Those black villains are certain to come prowling round again, and, if they once get over their fear of the firearms, there are enough of them to eat us."

"Yaas, wathah! Buck up, deah boys!"

"Where is your boat, Lopez?" asked Tom Merry.

The Spaniard did not reply.

"We shall take your boat, and when we get near the felucca, you will order your men to admit us on board, without any trickery," said Tom Merry sternly.

"I am willing to make terms, seniorito——"

"You are not in a position to make terms."

You will take orders, Lopez—or else you will be left here for the cannibals.”

“Better leave him!” muttered Peter Raff.

“I will obey you, *senorito*,” said Lopez, between his teeth. “The boat is by the rock here; it shall be as you say.”

“Come on, you fellows!”

In a few minutes the juniors were at the skiff. It was not large enough for all of them, and six of them went on board it with Lopez—Tom Merry, Figgins, Kerr, Lowther, Blake, and Kangaroo. They pulled out to the felucca, which lay glimmering on the bay in the moonlight.

Tom Merry’s grasp closed on Lopez’s shoulder.

“You will speak in Spanish,” he said. “But if there is a trick, you go over the side, bound as you are—on my word.”

And there was no trickery. The staring black faces looked over the side, and the Spaniard growled out an order, and the juniors were helped on board by the negroes. The black seamen stared at seeing their captain a prisoner, and the juniors were quite prepared for any attempt at a rescue, but none was made. The negroes were not armed; probably the Spaniard did not trust them with weapons; he could not have been a popular skipper, and if he had once taken the gold aboard, his life would not have been safe with an armed crew. The Spaniard was bound to the mast for security, and then the skiff was sent back with Figgins in it, to fetch the rest of the party. Ten minutes later, they were all on the deck of the felucca.

THE THIRTY-SECOND CHAPTER

Picked Up.

TOM MERRY & Co. were very wakeful that night. The exciting adventures they had passed through left them in little humour for sleep. And there was always danger of an attack from the cannibals. During the night, at intervals, they saw moving forms on the shore in the moonlight, and heard loud and savage yells. The cannibals had mustered courage to follow them as far as the bay. But they did not attempt to swim to the felucca,

and morning dawned upon the Pacific without any attack having been made. With morning the islanders disappeared from sight, streaming away through the wood.

Tom Merry rubbed his eyes.

“They’re gone,” he said. “Time we were gone, too. No need to stay here any longer, except for——”

“The treasure!” said Figgins.

“Yaas, wathah!”

“And the cocoanuts,” said Fatty Wynn. “I don’t know how this craft is provisioned, but a boatload of cocoanuts would be a good idea.”

Tom Merry laughed.

“Right you are, Fatty! And we’ll see how the water is, too—we want to take as much of that as we can.”

“I wonder what the niggers are gone for, though?” Kangaroo remarked thoughtfully. “They’ve certainly got their backs up now, and want to get at us. I doubt if even a free gift of Gussy, to be used as a tribal god, would appease them!”

“Weally Kangawoo——”

“I think I can give a guess,” said Kerr quietly. “I expect they have canoes somewhere—perhaps on the other side of the island—and they may be gone for them. If we stay here much longer, we may have a crowd of canoes about us.”

“Bai Jove!”

“Very likely,” said Tom Merry. “Most likely, in fact. We’ll get out to sea the moment we can. Let’s overhaul the felucca and see how we’re off for supplies.”

That did not take long. They found that Lopez had provisioned himself well for his voyage, and that there need be no anxiety on that score. The water was running low, but that could easily be renewed at the stream in the bay. The juniors set to work at once; and Tom Merry, finding that the black sailors understood a few words of English, gave them orders, which they obeyed cheerfully enough. Peter Raff added orders in Spanish, and by the promptness with which he was obeyed, it is probable that he added threats in that unknown tongue.

An hour or more was occupied in bringing

the water on board, and a load of cocoanuts was brought by special request of Fatty Wynn. Then it was a question of removing the treasure.

Pablo Lopez heard the juniors discussing the matter, and his black eyes gleamed and glittered as he listened. He was to sail with the gold on his felucca at last; but it was as a prisoner in the hands of his rivals, and the gold was not his. But perhaps the Spaniard had not given up hope yet.

The juniors kept a sharp look-out for the savages while they uncovered the great chest in the sand. It was taken into the little skiff, weighing it deeply down, and rowed off to the felucca. Getting it on board was a difficult task enough, but with all hands to work it was managed, and the great chest was dumped down on the deck.

The Spaniard's eyes seemed almost to start from his head as he looked at it.

"Senorito," he said huskily, "is that the treasure?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"May I see it, senorito—I beg of you."

"Very well; when we are at sea."

"Look out!"

"What is it?"

"Canoes!"

Round the point of land at the head of the bay, a canoe had appeared, with a dozen savages in it paddling. Another and another followed.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "We're only just in time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I think we could keep them off—but there won't be any need of shooting now. Up with the anchor!"

The anchor was hauled in, and the black sailors, under Peter Raff's loud orders, set the huge sails. The keen breeze caught the great expanse of canvas, and the felucca moved like a great white bird out into the bay.

There was a loud yell from the canoes. A dozen or more had come into sight in a few minutes, and the savages were paddling their hardest to cover the distance. They were trying to cut off the felucca from the open sea—but it would have gone hard with them if they had. The juniors stood with firearms

ready, in case the canoes should come too near.

But they did not.

The great lateen sails bellied out in the wind, and the felucca tore through the water. The nearest canoe was fifty yards away when the felucca passed, and swept out to sea, leaving the cannibals yelling and waving their spears in savage disappointment.

The islanders paddled after the felucca, apparently in some hope of overtaking her; but in five minutes or less the last canoe was out of sight astern. The island itself was fading down to the sea.

"Once more upon the waters," quoted Kerr. "My hat, how this craft gets along."

"She sails well, sir," said Peter Raff, "and I think I shall get on well with these niggers, sir. They know how to obey orders, and they're tame enough."

"Senoritos!"

"Hallo!"

"You promised to let me see the treasure."

"Very well," said Tom Merry.

The great chest was opened. Pablo Lopez stared with straining eyes at the great gold bars and gold ingots, the rolls and heaps of coins. A strange pallor showed through the dusk of his skin.

"Dios!" he muttered. "Dios!"

"Are you satisfied?" said Tom Merry.

"Gracias, senorito!"

"It would not be a bad idea to fill our pockets with some of that stuff, in case of accidents," said Kerr. "What about taking a handful of those big doubloons each. If anything happened to the felucca, that chest would go down like a stone."

"Jolly good idea!"

And the "jolly good idea" was carried out. The juniors filled their pockets with gold Spanish doubloons, and so, whatever happened to the treasure, they were certain of saving something. And the fate of the great chest was very dubious, for storms were sudden and violent in the Pacific, and the felucca was a small craft to traverse that wild waste of waters.

The juniors looked back towards the island; it had vanished into the blue sea and sky. Round them was the Pacific once more. The

Spaniard, stirring uneasily in his bonds, called out to Tom Merry:

"Senorito! Do you intend to keep me trussed up like this? I am cramped in every limb."

The juniors consulted on the subject. It certainly was not safe to let the Spaniard loose, yet to keep him bound to the mast throughout the voyage was impossible. There were no manacles on board the felucca.

They decided finally to release him, but to keep his hands shackled to his sides, the rope loose enough to allow him to eat, but not to untie himself. This was managed at last, and the Spaniard sullen and savage, was allowed to move about as he wished. His black looks did not trouble the juniors; as Blake said, his teeth were drawn.

Sailing the felucca did not prove a difficult task, and the black sailors obeyed Peter Raff's orders as they had obeyed the Spaniard. The day passed in perfect calmness, the felucca speeding along before a strong breeze. It was towards sunset that Kerr was observed to have his gaze fixed attentively upon a spot on the blue horizon. Tom Merry joined him.

"What are you looking at, Kerr?"

"There's something yonder," said the Scottish junior. "It might be a whale or sea-serpent, but——"

"But what?"

"It might be a boat."

Tom Merry started. The course of the felucca was changed a little to bring her directly upon the unknown object. The juniors crowded in the bows, watching. The thought that it was a boat, that it might be Lord Conway's boat, was in every mind.



The felucca ran down close beside the drifting boat. Tom Merry shouted over the side. "Ahoy there! St. Jim's to the rescue!" (See page 349.)

Tom Merry's idea had been to get to the nearest port in New Zealand, and there send vessels in search of the missing boat, for money would have been spent like water in the search for Lord Conway, and the juniors would gladly have devoted every ounce of the treasure to the task of finding him and rescuing him and his companions.

"It's a boat!" Digby exclaimed.

It was a boat, certainly. As the felucca drew nearer they could make out a ragged signal flying from the mast. The sail was in tatters; the boat had evidently been through rough usage. Tom Merry scanned it, with the binoculars, and

made out several forms in the boat, most of them lying down.

"A shipwrecked crew, anyway," he said. The felucca raced on.

In the distant boat a man was seen to jump up and wave his hand frantically. He had evidently seen the sail. Then, after a few minutes, the boat was put before the wind, and

the ragged sail bellied out, and the boat flew away from the felucca as fast as she could sail.

Tom Merry was puzzled for a moment.

"What on earth does that mean?" he exclaimed. "They are turning their backs on us."

"It means that it's Lord Conway's party," said Kerr quietly. "They recognise the felucca, and think that it's Pablo Lopez after them."

"Bai Jove!"

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Well, we shall run them down under half an hour, that's a comfort."

The felucca was tearing through the water. She sailed four lengths to the boat's one, and the race was only a matter of time. Soon the juniors could see the occupants of the boat, and Lord Conway's tall form was recognised standing by the sail. Herries could be seen lying on a rag of canvas in the stern. Mr. Dodds was at the tiller. The seamen of the Silver Scud were there, and the juniors counted them anxiously, and were relieved to count up the full number.

They shouted to the boat, but for a long time the wind carried away their voices, but suddenly Lord Conway, who was looking back towards the felucca, was observed to give a start. He had seen the juniors waving to him, and understood that matters were not as he had supposed on board the felucca.

The boat swung round.

A few minutes more and the felucca ran down close beside the drifting boat. Tom Merry shouted over the side:

"Ahoy there! St. Jim's to the rescue!"

"Thank Heaven!" said Lord Conway.

THE THIRTY-THIRD CHAPTER

Lopez's Last Blow

It did not take long for the castaways to clamber on board. They were in a terribly emaciated condition. They had not, as Lord Conway said, come to the end of their provisions yet, but they had been on short rations of both food and water, and it had told upon them. The juniors gathered round Herries, and D'Arcy offered to carry him down to the cabin. Herries glared at him.

"Do you think I can't walk?" he demanded.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"And how the dickens are you going to carry me when I'm twice as big as you are?" Herries inquired.

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort, Hewwies. You are a little fatter and clumsier, I know, but you are not tallah, and I could cawwy you quite easily."

"Ass!" said Herries.

"Weally, you chump——"

"Hallo! Rowing already?" asked Mr. Dodds.

"Oh, that's all right! That's only Gussy's way of welcoming a long-lost chum," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, you ass——"

Herries was helped down to the cabin. He was really very weak, though nothing would have induced him to admit it. Fatty Wynn, who always had a ready eye for very important matters of this sort, spread the table with every delicacy that the felucca's lazarette could muster. Herries began to eat.

The others were well looked after, too, but, naturally, Herries was the lion. Any number of grown-up people could not, of course, be considered as being of as much importance as a chap in the Fourth.

"Well, I must say that this takes the cake!" Lord Conway said, as he looked at the treasure-chest and then at the shackled Spaniard, and glanced up and down the felucca. "You seemed to have scored all along the line, you youngsters. Next time I set out on a voyage for treasure I shall ask the Head of St. Jim's to send me a junior to take command."

"Bai Jove, that wouldn't be a bad ideah," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I should be vewy pleased, Conway, deah boy."

And the juniors roared.

The rescued crew crowded the felucca somewhat, but with Lord Conway in command, and plenty of hands to do the work, the little craft was undoubtedly safer. Tom Merry willingly resigned the command to the viscount.

Lord Conway was a good navigator, and he fell into his new duties at once. Day after

day the felucca glided on with fair winds and a cheerful crew. The expedition, after so many adventures and vicissitudes, was turning out a splendid success, but the end had not yet come.

The Spaniard had fallen into a quiet sullen humour, and he moved about the ship with downcast face and silent lips. After a couple of days the man was allowed the freedom of his limbs. There were so many Englishmen on board that it was absurd to think he could attempt any desperate move for regaining possession of the felucca, and he was not allowed a chance of getting at any weapons. Disappointment and chagrin seemed to have an effect upon him, and on the fourth day he took to his bunk, and did not leave it. He lay there through the sunny hours, eating little and speaking not at all. To a sick man the juniors were disposed to be kind, even after all his villainies; but the Spaniard spoke no word to them, and refused even kindness.

"We shall be at anchor to-morrow in Hawke Bay, in the North Island," said Lord Conway, one moonlit evening, on deck, as he smoked his cigar. "There we can get the chest ashore, and, I hope, pick up a steamer. The felucca would not take us back to Europe."

"I shall be sowwy to leave her, though," D'Arcy said, glancing up at the big sails. "We have had a good time, and I think we are entitled to wegard her as a pwize."

"I suppose we shall leave her to the Spaniard?" Tom Merry remarked.

The viscount nodded.

"Yes, he can have his vessel back when we are ashore with the gold. The way things have turned out I think we can afford to forgive him his rascality."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The felucca doesn't seem to be sailing so well just now," Figgins remarked, with a puzzled look. "She seems to be dragging, and look how the bows are dipping."

Lord Conway rose, and threw away his cigar.

"That's very curious," he said.

"Bai Jove! Yaas! The cwaft is wobblin', too."

Peter Raff came up to them with an anxious expression.

"There's something wrong with the craft, sir," he said. "Looks to me as if there's a leak sprung somewhere below."

"Look at once, Raff."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Peter Raff ran down below, and the next moment his voice was heard calling hoarsely for help.

"Lopez!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

They rushed down. Water was splashing over the planks of the cabin floor, and Peter Raff was struggling in the grasp of the Spaniard. The ruffian was grasped at once and torn away from the panting sailorman.

Peter Raff staggered up.

"She's scuttled, sir!" he panted.

"Good heavens!"

Lopez, in the grasp of the seamen, turned a look of savage hate upon the Englishmen.

"Carambo! Did you think you would have the treasure, then?" he exclaimed. "Yes, I have scuttled the felucca! The treasure and all of us can go to the bottom together!"

"You hound!"

Lopez laughed exultantly.

"I have had my revenge!" he said.

The Spaniard was dragged on deck. Lord Conway made an attempt to get to the leak, but the hold was full of water.

"Fortunately, we are near the shore, and the boats will hold us all at a pinch," said Mr. Dodds.

"But the treasure——"

"We may have time to save it yet," said Lord Conway. "Lower away the boats."

The treasure-chest had been placed below in the after cabin. The door of the cabin was locked, and there was no key. They turned savagely to Lopez, and demanded the key, and the Spaniard, with an evil grin, pointed to the sea.

"The key is there," he said, "and the treasure will soon be there also, senores. That is the revenge of Pablo Lopez. Now do with me as you will."

Crash!

The felucca was heeling over, and one of the great sails dragged down into the water. The mast snapped like a match. There was a rush of water below, and the men gathered at the cabin door were driven up the ladder.

Lord Conway set his lips.

"To the boats—quick!" he shouted.

There was no time for anything else.

"Leave the Spaniard here," Peter Raff exclaimed. "Let him go down with the treasure."

The crew were in a mood to do it, too. There was no chance of saving the gold—a doubt whether they could save themselves. Black looks were cast at the Spaniard, but Mr. Dodds spoke in his quiet way.

"We cannot leave him to death," he said.

"Put him into the boat!" said the viscount shortly.

The Spaniard was tossed into a boat, roughly enough. The crew pulled away from the felucca, which was now rolling over helplessly in the trough of a sea. The great sails flapped into the water, and disappeared.

The felucca, the treasure, were gone.

The boats pulled for the shore. The Spaniard sat silent now, but with the same grin of evil triumph upon his face. He had lost the treasure, but the rivals in the quest had lost it, too, and that was consolation enough to Pablo Lopez.

A few hours later the twice-wrecked voyagers landed on Maori soil. Their voyage was over, and it remained only to get to the nearest steamer and return to England. The Spaniard was released—there was nothing else to be done with him. Of the treasure of the Pacific island all that remained was the Spanish doubloons the juniors had in their pockets, but that, at least, would suffice to show the fellows at St. Jim's that they really had found a treasure in the South Seas; and, after all, as Blake said, that was the chief consideration. And so the St. Jim's party were cheerful enough when they trod the deck of a steamer, homeward bound.

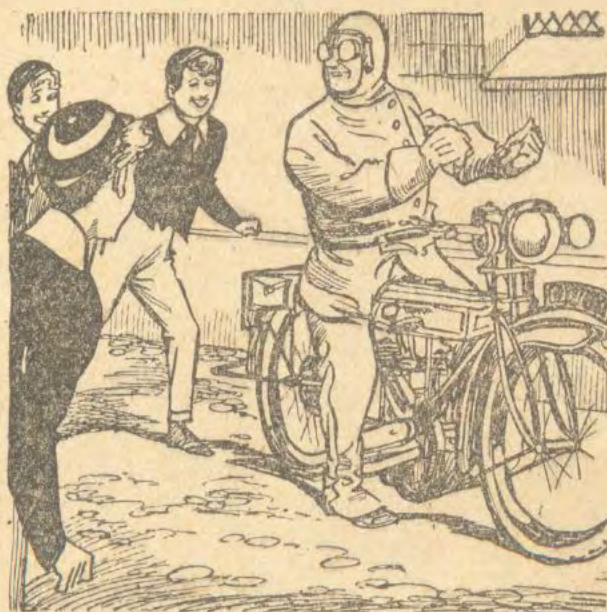
"We shall have two or three hundred pounds between us," Tom Merry remarked, "and I think we'll blue a good bit of it in a celebration at St. Jim's—what?"

And the juniors agreed that they would.

THE END.

Great Days at Greyfriars

Breaking-Up Day



Of all the days we love the best
This happy day predominates;
A day of idleness or rest
The average boy abominates.
But on this day of breaking-up,
When all are packing busily,
We have no time for bite or sup,
The hours speed by so dizzily.

Soon, very soon, we shall escape
From Quelchy's frowns and chastening;
Each boy is grinning like an ape,
And down the passage hastening
With bags and boxes, hefty trunks,
And various miscellania;
Then back into his study bunks,
Fired with the packing mania!

There's Horace Coker going off
Upon his motor-bicycle;
And while spectators stand and scoff,
His glance is like an icicle.
He freezes all the fellows there
With looks of animosity;
When he goes rushing through the air
With breathless, fierce velocity!

This truly is a day of days,
Good-bye to books and lexicons;
The fellows go their several ways
As wild and free as Mexicans!
The cabs and carriages depart,
There's not a sign of tearfulness;
For there is joy in every heart,
And songs ring out with cheerfulness!