

# WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER



# WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

BY

GRACE PETTMAN

Author of "Tom Trescoe's Treasure,"  
"The Forgotten Son," etc.



LONDON:

PICKERING & INGLIS LTD.

14 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.4

Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Liverpool

LONDON - 14 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.4  
 GLASGOW - 229 BOTHWELL STREET, C.2  
 MANCHESTER - 135 DEANS GATE, 3  
 EDINBURGH - 29 GEORGE IV BRIDGE, 1  
 LIVERPOOL - 5 HOPE WAY, 8  
 NEW YORK - LOIZEAUX BROS., 19 WEST 21st St.  
 TORONTO - HOME EVANGEL, 418 CHURCH St., 2

# The Honour Series

## OF TALES OF ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE

5	RUTH CAREY'S HUNDREDFOLD.....	ALICE JANE HOME
9	NELLA.....	J. C. COOPER
14	RUTH'S ROSES.....	L. A. BARTER SNOW
15	BRINY'S BOY .....	LILY WATSON
16	PENLUNE .....	S. E. BURROW
18	AUTUMN GOLD .....	GRACE PETTMAN
19	THE LONG PURSUIT.....	D. M. BARTER SNOW
20	THE BREATH OF TO-MORROW.....	JANIE LANGFORD
22	HIS MOTHER'S BOOK.....	E. EVERETT GREEN
25	FRANK USHER .....	HUMPHREY FILEY
28	THE QUEENSGATE MYSTERY.....	GRACE PETTMAN
27	THE KEEPER OF THE VINEYARD.....	WINIFRED RAWLINGS
28	SUNSHINE COUNTRY .....	CRISTINA ROY
29	UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.....	H. BEECHER STOWE
30	THE FACE IN THE CROWD.....	GRACE PETTMAN
32	SALOME'S BURDEN .....	E. H. STOOKE
33	WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER.....	GRACE PETTMAN
34	ANTHEA'S AMBITION .....	BETH J. C. HARRIS
35	SNOW BLOSSOM.....	GRACE PETTMAN
36	THE HOUSE ON THE ISLAND.....	GRACE PETTMAN
37	WHAT MAURICE FOUND.....	L. A. BARTER SNOW
38	THE SUNSHINERS.....	ISABEL PLATT
39	DADDY'S SWORD .....	AMY LE FEUVRE
40	THE GLENDEVON MYSTERY.....	SPENCER DEANE
41	BEAUTY FOR ASHES.....	MARGT. P. NEILL



A GREAT TAWNY BODY HURLED ITSELF UPWARDS AND FORWARDS  
TOWARDS PETER, AND THEN—— (Page 40)

# Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. "GREAT NEWS," .. .. .	9
II. THE TWILIGHT TRAIL, .. .. .	19
III. THE JOKE THAT DIDN'T PAY, .. .. .	27
IV. A LION IN THE WAY, .. .. .	38
V. "MAN OVERBOARD," .. .. .	49
VI. "TAME ISN'T THE WORD," .. .. .	60
VII. "NOT HALF BAD, AFTER ALL," .. .. .	73
VIII. A FIND, .. .. .	83
IX. AN INVITATION TO OVERCLIFFE, .. .. .	94
X. WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER, .. .. .	102
XI. JUST IN TIME, .. .. .	118
XII. TWO MEN AND A BOAT, .. .. .	126
XIII. "I ARREST YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LAW,"	132
XIV. ARRESTED, .. .. .	140
XV. TRACKED, .. .. .	148
XVI. A CRY IN THE NIGHT, .. .. .	157
XVII. FORGIVEN IS FORGOTTEN, .. .. .	168

## Illustrations

A GREAT TAWNY BODY HURLED ITSELF  
UPWARDS AND FORWARDS TOWARDS  
PETER, AND THEN— - - - *Frontispiece*

"THIS'LL DO!" PETER SAID, AS HE PAGE  
STEPPED GINGERLY UP THE PLANK," 80

THEN MR. SMITH BACKED HIS CAR SUFFICIENTLY TO TURN—SUFFICIENTLY,  
TOO, FOR PETER TO SEE THE NUMBER, 144



## CHAPTER I

### “Great News”

“I SAY, Peter, there’s great news! Guess!” Peter Merrion, was standing in the wide shady verandah of the bungalow. After all, there was always a lot to be seen, and a great deal more to be imagined, from that vantage point.

Crimson and purple creepers festooned the verandah, framing a view of banana and fruit gardens, coffee plantations, dense forests, and beyond, great valleys bounded by rolling hills, rising steeply range after range. Forty miles or more away in the far background, there gleamed the dazzling whiteness of that wonder of wonders—the great mountain tops covered with the eternal snows that never melt—even in the heart of Equatorial Africa.

But Peter Merrion didn’t care a bit about scenery. He left that for Andrew, his

## 10      WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

younger brother. All Peter wanted was to leave the safe shelter of the comfortable bungalow, and penetrate into the depths of the jungle which looked so tantalising at a distance.

What secrets were hidden in those valleys where the streams rushed down from the mountains? What wonderful adventures, dear to the heart of a boy, might be met with in the depths of that distant forest—so dense and dark that it was never any lighter than twilight because of the interlacing tops of trees, which were anything from a hundred to two hundred feet high. There were tales of lions, panthers, snakes. What more could the heart of an adventurous boy desire?

Peter and Andrew had lived in Africa all their lives. Major Merrion was British Commissioner in one or other of the districts. At first their home had been nearer the coast of the Indian Ocean. Then the Major had been moved into the far interior, while the two boys were sent to a school for European children in Kenya Colony.

But now the time had come for changes.

Equatorial Africa could not give two English boys the training and teaching they would receive at a great Public School at home.

An old "Cliffdownian" himself, the Major had put down the names of his sons for admission while they were quite small boys. He had been notified that there would be vacancies for them in that school in the autumn "half," provided they could pass the entrance examination.

So Peter and Andrew had said good-bye to the Kenya school. There had been the long-standing promise of a real holiday up-country with their parents, before they left for England. Then, first of all, there was to be some coaching and cramming for the new school.

The boys thought it the finest thing out, that the Major should have been transferred to a station so far inland, right in the heart of Central Africa, and off the beaten track. But, as often happens, it wasn't all plain sailing.

Mrs. Merrion had been counting on having a jolly time with her boys before

## 12 WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

the inevitable long separation between European parents and their children.

However, these plans were soon upset. Some little time before their stay at the bungalow was up, a message summoned Mrs. Merrion to the coast. Her sister, the wife of an English merchant, was very ill at Mombasa.

Much as she hated leaving the boys in a lonely hill station bungalow hundreds of miles off, she had no alternative. The Major was not too busy just now to give part of his time to the boys, and they had some faithful native servants who could be trusted.

The boys had been alone with their father for a week or two now, enjoying every minute of it all. But in his heart of hearts, Peter was far from satisfied.

His father had placed everything beyond the bungalow grounds as "out of bounds" for the boys. He knew what might lie beyond. They did not. That was just it—Peter wanted to find out, too. "So near, and yet so far" was tempting.

Besides, he and Andrew were due for

banishment from all the exciting possibilities offered by Central Africa, in a very short time.

According to all accounts, life in England was a tame sort of an affair—a country where nothing happened. At least, there could not be any adventures to speak of, in the quiet corner of North Norfolk, where the boys were going to stay with an elderly aunt, and get some coaching from the local rector.

“Tame isn’t in it!” Peter had said to himself again that very morning, for the prospect did not attract him in the least. He would have liked nothing better than to stay here, in the heart of Africa, with its enormous lakes and jungles, broad rivers and high mountains, forests where the lions roared, and monkeys chattered.

Oh dear! He could actually see miles and miles of it all from the verandah—and yet beyond the gardens everything was out of bounds.

Then Andrew, who had been with the Major in his office, came bounding along the verandah.

14      WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

"I say, Peter, there's great news! Guess?"

"Not good at guessing!" said Peter, "the only great news I'd like would be to hear that we could cut out this bungalow life for a bit, and get right out into the forest—over there!"

Peter pointed to the plantations beyond the garden, where a broad trail branched off from the wonderful modern road.

"Roads are all very well when one wants civilisation and cars, and all that. But think of going on trek as the old johnnies did who first came out here—Stanley and Livingstone, and all that lot. That trail now—it might lead anywhere. I want to go and find out."

"Well, you're going. So am I. That's the great news."

Peter's face was a study. It sounded too good to be true.

"You're kidding, man."

"It's true as—as the pigmies that live in some of those forests," said Andrew.

"Father's got to visit some old Chief, a

long way off. There’s only a trail—no road, so we can’t go by car.”

“We? He’s going to take us? I say!”

Peter vented a war-whoop of delight. Then he sprinted along the verandah to find his father.

“I say, father, is it really true?”

Major Merrion looked up from the table, which was covered with official papers, and nodded.

“Yes, there’s no alternative, worse luck!”

“Worse luck?” Peter stared aghast.

“Yes, you don’t suppose I want to take two boys of your ages through those forests?”

“Shall we be away long, father?”

The Major gathered up his papers, put them in a case and locked it. There was a shadow of anxiety on his face.

“I hope not more than a couple of days. It depends on the conditions I find there. Part of the country that’s in my charge has no roads worth mentioning, so it’s impossible to take the car, and it’ll be a march on forest trails. But since mother’s

had to go to her sister I don't care to leave you two boys alone here, while I'm away. Besides, it'll give you a glimpse of what's left of the real old Central Africa—as it was not many years ago. Until about sixty years ago no white man had ever seen the real Central Africa.”

“Any lions, dad?” Peter's dark eyes literally danced with excitement.

“I hope not, indeed!” said Major Merriion fervently, “it'll be quite enough to keep you two out of mischief, and warn you of the dangers we shall be sure to meet, without talking of lions. We are not going on Safari—big game hunting. As it is, your only safety will be in doing exactly what you are told—above all, standing still instantly, the moment you are told to stop.”

“All right, dad,” said Peter with a gay laugh, “I for one say—as we are told Queen Victoria did—‘I will be good.’”

“I hope so, indeed! Remember you are the sons of the Acting-Commissioner of this neighbourhood, and it's up to you to help uphold British prestige,” said

Major Merrion, smiling, “but things are moving at such express speed, that I’d like you to get a glimpse of real Africa in the raw, before you go home for years at school.”

“Home! It won’t seem like home to us. It’s home where you and mother are.”

Andrew had followed hard on Peter’s heels, but it was the first time he had spoken. He was a year younger than Peter, but as different from his brother as two boys could be. Yet they were chums and comrades all the time, and as a rule inseparable.

“That’s a very nice way of putting it, my boy,” said Major Merrion, heartily, “but England is home—always, all the time—to Englishmen and women. You’ll find that out, when you live there and settle down.”

“It doesn’t sound very thrilling,” sighed Peter, who loved the stirring life and movement and colour of Africa. “You say Silverholt is just flat marshland and Aunt Eunice an old lady——”

“One of the wonderful women of the world, Peter,” said his father quietly. “Never forget that for a moment. She’s lived there all her life, and though she was the devoted companion of her parents she found time to be a second mother to me, when I was left an orphan. Yet she was full of spirit and daring, loving nothing better than to gallop at top speed along the wide sands of the Wash. Then, when her parents died, and I was entering the Army, she was left free. She might have travelled — explored — done any of the things that fearless women were just beginning to do in those days. Instead, she has spent the rest of her life on an invalid’s couch, only moving about on crutches. But she’s as bright and merry as a bird — you won’t be worth calling my sons, if you don’t love her!”

“How—how did she get hurt?” asked Andrew.

“Saving the life of a small girl on a runaway pony,” said the Major, “there’s no time for details now. Get to bed; we shall make an early start.”

CHAPTER II

The Twilight Trail

“I’D like to go on like this for ever!”  
So announced Peter, thrilled to the marrow with excitement.

Certainly there was a good deal to be said for the great adventure of following this lone trail in the heart of Africa.

Waking in the darkness, for a substantial breakfast and a start before dawn, then soon afterwards the plunge into the unknown.

Of course some of the natives knew the way, so did Major Merrion, who had had occasion to have an official palaver with this particular Chief before.

The trail led through typical Central African country. More or less open at first with wide spaces and views of distant mountains. Then the high grass jungle—which might, or might not—be a fear-

some place, according to how one looked at it.

What lay behind? What kind of big game made a home in this almost impenetrable mass of grass—grass with sharp-pointed blades that seemed to have been made to hurt the unwary.

Perhaps the creatures of the wild were sleeping, unaware that some of the human big game they sometimes coveted was passing through the jungle in single file.

A trusty native guide led the way, Major Merrion followed, carrying his gun. Then came the two boys, and afterwards the African porters and guard.

Even Peter was glad when the high grass jungle came to an end in a patch of the outlying tangle of the forest itself. Magnificent flowers, tree ferns and creepers abounded, while monkeys screamed and chattered among the leaves of great trees a hundred feet and more in height.

“Keep quite still!” The words came in low sharp tones from Major Merrion’s lips. The native who was leading had

given him a sign, and everybody drew up sharply, and stood motionless.

“Look! down there!”

A gap in the thick vegetation of the forest revealed a sudden dip, and then down in the valley one of the big “water holes” that are more precious in equatorial climes than even the coveted African gold!

“Oh, father! Elephants—and—and—”

“Rhinos,” said the Major.

“Yes, giraffes,” whispered Andrew.

“Zebras! Can’t we stay and watch them?” pleaded Peter.

So Major Merrion gave the signal for a halt for a welcome meal, just within the screen of the forest trees, where the boys could watch the animals at the water-hole—seeing, without being seen.

“Not many there to-day,” whispered the Major, “there are other water-holes within reach, and a beautiful stream not very far away. But sometimes, the thirsty animals have to come forty miles or more to get a drink. Even then, the others wait until the mighty elephant has had all he wants first. He’s monarch, apparently.”

## 22      WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

“Why, yes, the others are waiting. Poor things,” said Andrew, “they must be just as thirsty.”

Not till the elephants had drunk their fill did the few rhinoceros there have their turn—then the graceful giraffes.

“Two yards of swallow at a time,” said Peter, “and—and—two yards of sore throat if they get ill. What necks!”

Then came the pretty, elusive zebras, and smaller creatures of the forest.

“They may have come a distance, and are parched. We’ll stay here till they’ve finished. If we move we shall scare them off still thirsty. Besides, some of them are not very nice to meet at too close quarters.”

The boys asked for nothing better. Glorious it was to be in trail in the heart of the wild game country—they had had a long walk, and there was still a good way to go.

So they waited till the animals had left the water-hole. Coming out into the open, the little party skirted round the pool, where the muddy edges bore traces of the footprints of the herds.

Afterwards came a glimpse of the real forest—untouched, almost unvisited, save by parties of natives, who now and then followed the narrow winding tracks they themselves had made from place to place.

The last clearing left behind, and they were in the dim recesses of the primeval forest.

“Why, it’s dark!”

Peter, following close behind his father, brought up suddenly, blinded by the sudden change from the burning rays of an almost vertical sun, into the deep gloom beneath the trees.

“But—how cool! It’s lovely!” said Andrew, who always felt the heat more than his elder brother.

“I planned out our time so that we should spend the part of the day when the sun is unbearable, in the cool shades of this forest. A walk through even this small corner of it is a thing to be remembered. Look at these trees! They must be nearly two hundred feet high. Their higher branches are interlacing, so that

they form a perpetual sun-screen overhead."

"Where do the Pigmies live?" said Peter, who seemed rather overawed by the grimness of the shadows, which hid so much stupendous beauty.

"Further in the forest—which extends for thousands of square miles. I'd like you to get a glimpse of those little people. Some of them are only four feet high—just dwarfs. They can climb trees if they like, and run along the branches in wonderful fashion. Now, just look round you, boys. You may never see such a sight as this again in your lives."

They stopped short at a spot where a shaft of sunlight had managed to penetrate the dense darkness underneath the trees. The reason for this was not far to seek. A tropical storm had swept over the forest at some time or another, and one or two of the oldest trees had crashed down, bringing with it a great mass of tangled creepers, which hung like ropes from the trunks and branches. But the fall of some trees had let in the sunlight, and

overhead there was a glimpse of the brazen-blue of the equatorial sky.

But the downfall of the trees, letting in the sunlight meant that Nature had made a Paradise of it, such as would be a botanist's dream. Festoons of orchids, rich and rare, ferns, flowers, and shrubs—Kew Gardens was left far behind for the wonder of it all.

"Take care where you tread, boys. There are snakes about—whatever you do don't touch what looks like a harmless green twig. There is a snake which looks like that—exactly. Now, go ahead."

Once more they plunged into the twilight of the trail. By this time the boys' eyes had become accustomed to the gloom. They could see far better than they expected.

"Another half-hour's walk, and we ought to be clear of this part of the forest. The Chief I want to see lives on a delightful open hillside, above all this."

Suddenly it seemed as if they reached a point where the gloom of the forest was intensified into the utter blackness of night.

26      WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

It was then that Peter bethought himself of something, and stood still.

“Look!” he said in an awed whisper.  
“Up there!”

Directly afterwards, from somewhere above their heads, there came first a loud cry, then the words:

“Help! Help! I’m falling!”

## CHAPTER III

## The Joke that Didn't Pay

PETER himself was little prepared for what followed. The guide who led the way, brought up with a shout of alarm—the native porters behind, who knew no English, dropped their loads, and scuttled off to right and left.

Major Merrion shouted a command, and they stopped, but were evidently reluctant to return. He himself was standing under the tree, trying to pierce the darkness.

“Who are you? What are you up to? How did you get there?”

It was then that Peter burst out laughing. But Andrew, as his brother afterwards declared, gave the show away.

“Stop it, Peter!” he said, indignantly, “Can't you see the chaps are scared stiff?”

Major Merrion turned round angrily.

"What do you mean? What trick is this?"

By this time he had pulled out his powerful flashlight, and sent the rays dancing up and down the tree in penetrating fashion.

"Peter!" he cried in bewilderment, "What on earth——"

"Tell him, Peter," urged Andrew, "it's not fair to scare these black chaps."

By this time Peter was regretting his joke, and he said sullenly,

"It's nothing, father. Only a Yankee chap came to our school and did all sorts of tricks. Then he threw his voice about, and afterwards—well, I found I could do it a bit. It was only a joke, that's all."

"All!"

Major Merrion turned on his elder son indignantly. "Don't you dare do such a thing again out here among these people. Wait!"

He called the terrified natives, and spoke to them rapidly in their own tongue, pointing to his son meanwhile.

But it was evident that they were only half satisfied. Although they came back

and picked up their loads they looked at Peter with suspicion and terror, and kept at a distance from him.

“Now you can see for yourself,” said the Major, sternly, “what a mad impulse you obeyed. Ventriloquism may be a clever stunt, gift, or trick—whichever you choose to call it. But don't play practical jokes in Africa. Some of these fellows are Mission boys, and most of them do not practise the awful dark customs of heathenism to which they were brought up. But they are still hide-bound by a good many superstitions that we Britishers can hardly understand. Do you know that they probably think you are possessed by an evil spirit? Nothing I can say will ever convince them to the contrary, I am afraid. Don't play practical jokes in the heart of Africa, my son. A few years ago you might have paid the price with your life.”

Peter was considerably subdued after that. Andrew was always content to remain a back number, if needs be, not so his elder brother.

Peter loved the limelight, and he had

## 30      WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

hailed with glee the accidental discovery that he could to some extent, follow the American ventriloquist's example, and throw his voice about.

So far, the knowledge of his power had been limited to his brother, and a few admiring school fellows in Kenya. If truth were told, Peter had been making up his mind to choose some dramatic opportunity of showing off.

Well, he had succeeded, but in fashion that made him wish he hadn't. Suppose the natives who had dropped their loads in terror had fled back through the forest, leaving them in the lurch? Only the fact that they were used to obeying Major Merrion implicitly had brought them back at his command. His explanation had in one way made matters worse, for the natives now looked askance at Peter, and avoided him, as one of whom they were mortally afraid.

This was not at all to Peter's liking. He was always anxious to be popular, and had hoped a good deal from showing off his cleverness to-day.

Instead,—well, Master Peter was swallowing a bit of humble pie, and it did not taste very nice. He knew his father was right, that was the worst of it. These black folk had been brought up amid the terrors of “taboos,” fetishes, and the most appalling and cruel customs imposed on them by the heathen witch doctors. Even if they had learned a little better now-a-days, many of the old superstitions were ingrained in their natures. A boy who could throw his voice about, and cry like some one in peril of falling from a tree top, was to be avoided at all costs.

Peter hated being sent to Coventry. He was very proud of his trick, and—well—he and Andrew would soon be going to England, and then he would not be hampered by the presence of these African natives.

He would show the people in Norfolk a thing or two, as well as the chaps at that big school his father talked about so much.

Peter was quite thankful when at last they came out of the gloomy forest, and found themselves in a delightful valley,

with a clear stream running through.

"There's the village, and the Chief's house," said Major Merrion, pointing to some grass huts on the opposite hillside.

"Now, Peter, remember, no more tricks. The people here are absolute heathens, steeped in superstition. To play pranks might very well mean losing your life—and mine. Halloa——!"

Major Merrion stopped short, and whipped out his field glasses.

"What's up, dad?"

"I can see a tent—a genuine honest-to-British tent, by the look of it. Yes, I thought as much—there's a white man coming to meet us."

Peter and Andrew took the glasses in turn. All they could see was a tall, well-knit figure in white drill and pith helmet, such as the Major himself was wearing.

"A white man! Who is he, and what is he doing here? A trader?"

"I don't think so. They hardly ever come to this particular part. Ah, yes! I have hoped it might be! *It is!*" The Major took another look through his

glasses. Then a smile of genuine pleasure lit up his face.

“Boys, you are going to meet one of the finest men who has ever set foot in Africa—Dr. Arthur Compton!”

“A doctor, father?”

“Yes. A Medical Missionary. He's still quite a young man, but he's spent some years in the far interior—hundreds of miles through the forest, where no white man but himself has ever been. The natives pretty well worship him. His skill in healing them has paved the way for his Mission. The whole place where he lives has been changed since his coming—there is a Christian Church in the spot where the tribe used to hold their horrid cannibal feasts. He could have been at the top of the tree in the medical profession at home, if he liked. He carried off medals, honours and what not at his University and Hospital, and was looked upon as a coming Specialist. Instead, Arthur Compton is one of Africa's heroes.”

Peter merely looked curious, but Andrew was frankly interested. He was more

thoughtful than his brother, and had read a great deal.

Peter had no use even for compulsory school books. Beyond that, he read with avidity only things of the hectic and adventurous type.

Peter was inclined to think contemptuously of a man who had thrown away the chance of fame and wealth, for the sake of helping blacks in mid-Africa. But Andrew, watching the coming of Dr. Compton, saw in him something very far more. Andrew had read of Livingstone and Bishop Hannington. He had been thrilled when he learned that they had been the first white men to open up part of his father's district long years ago.

Now here before them was the successor of those men, a living hero of modern days. One who had given up everything in order to penetrate still farther into those dim recesses of darkest Africa.

The white man came down the hill on the opposite side. They met him at the shallow pond, where some big stones made an easy crossing by the river.

The two Englishmen saluted each other in friendly fashion; the Major and the Medical Missionary had met more than once before.

“An unexpected pleasure, doctor,” said the Major heartily. “These are my boys—I brought them with me to visit the Chief, as my wife is at Mombasa.”

The boys were greeted in friendly fashion, while the Major added: “They’re having a holiday, and their last glimpse of the country—for a time at least. They are going home to England to begin work at Cliffdown, my own old school.”

“I’m a Cliffdown man, too!” said the Doctor heartily, “when are they sailing?”

“Their passages are booked on the ‘Royal Africa,’ when she leaves Mombasa.”

Dr. Compton’s face lit up.

“Well, now, I call that just splendid. I’m on my way home for my first furlough—and my passage is booked on the ‘Royal Africa’ too.”

“You don’t mean it?” said the Major heartily, “well, I could ask for nothing better than that these boys of mine should

36      WHAT HAPPENED TO PETER

be under your eye. That is, if it isn't asking too much."

"Too much? What could a lonely man in a liner ask for better than the company of a couple of boys who are actually going back to start at his old school? You and I were not there at the same time, but I daresay I can give them a few points you have forgotten to tell them. What about the cricket match that was still talked of long after you left?—that six you hit out of the ground, and won the match against such a team as Marlborough?"

"And, incidentally, the ball demolished the Head's cucumber frame in the kitchen garden," laughed the Major. "Do you remember?"

Of course, that started another story. The young doctor turned and walked up the hill beside the Major, talking of old times and new ones, while the boys listened with interest to the man who would be their companion on board ship before very long.

"These meetings don't happen by chance," said Dr. Compton quietly, as

they reached the native village. "I had not the least idea you were coming to visit the Chief, until I arrived here yesterday. Yet, here I am, on my way home—by the same ship as your boys. Who knows what may come of it? It is some part of God's plan."

Peter looked at his brother and frowned. He had little use for that sort of thing. Was this a type of what lay ahead of them on the homeward voyage in Dr. Compton's company?

## CHAPTER IV

## A Lion in the Way

“I SAY, Andrew! It’s a jolly shame, we’ve never seen a lion, and it’s our last chance, at least, for years.”

Peter Merrion’s whisper registered a great many notes of disappointment. It was night, and the two boys were supposed to be asleep in a mud-floored guest hut, carefully shielded by mosquito netting from those dangerous pests of the night. The Major was already fast asleep on the other side of the hut.

The trail through the forest path had been tiring, perhaps a bit too tiring for the boys. Anyway, neither of them found themselves inclined to doze off to sleep very easily.

“But there are lions!” whispered Andrew.

“How do you know?” Peter was wider awake than ever in an instant.

“Hush! Don’t wake father. But, look through the door. We don’t have a great fire outside at our station. Besides, didn’t you see there was a stockade—great thorny bushes and things, all round this Chief’s village? It must mean lions. Hark, what’s that?”

The deep stillness of a black moonless night was suddenly rent in twain. The sound came from somewhere far away. Just a low murmur at first, like the rumble of distant thunder, increasing by a long crescendo to a terrific roar which gradually died away. Once more all was still.

“A lion!” whispered Peter, who was trembling with excitement. “I say, if only we could get up and go out.”

“And meet the lion—or at least, have the lion meeting us before we knew where we were,” said Andrew. “No, thanks. I’d rather stay here. They won’t come near that blazing fire, anyway.”

“I only wish they would,” murmured Peter. “But what made you sure there were lions? Just seeing the stockade of thorns?”

“Not only that. I heard our boy Bwanga talking to one of the Chief’s boys, who said he’d been on Safari—big game hunting with some great man from Europe, and was proud of showing off his little bit of English. He’d been somewhere up in the forest, and seen footprints of lions—spoor they call it.”

“Well, he was right. They’re out there somewhere. If only——”

But Peter’s sentence ended in a sigh. There was no reply from Andrew; he was already drifting into dreamland as quickly as he could.

Morning came, and since Major Merrion had a great deal of business to transact with the Chief and his subordinate officials, he told the two boys they were to keep Bwanga with them wherever they went, and in any case not to go very far. Dr. Compton had packed up his camp and gone on. He had several stations to visit before he sailed.

“No chance of seeing a lion,” sighed Peter, “let’s go down in that hollow. I can see a stream. If we follow it, with any

luck, we may see some of the other animals coming to drink."

Peter started off, with Bwanga in close attendance. He had had strict orders from the Major not to let the two white boys out of his sight.

Bwanga interpreted this to mean that he was to keep at their heels every moment. Andrew followed his brother and caught him up.

"Don't let's go far, man," he said uneasily, glancing back at the cluster of huts which formed the native village. He had not forgotten that terrifying roar in the night.

"I don't think father meant us to get out of sight of the huts."

"Nonsense! As long as Bwanga is with us, he won't worry. Halloo!"

Swiftly running downhill came one of the Chief's boys carrying a long native spear. He overtook Bwanga, and walked alongside, chattering in voluble, excited tones, but this time in a native dialect the boys had never heard.

Had Peter and Andrew only noticed it,

both the Africans looked a trifle uneasy, as the white boys took the trail leading downhill from the village, through the banana gardens and on to the spot where a delightful stream wandered through the valley below. It was a lovely place: luxuriant trees fringed the river, which just here was shallow enough for wading. There was no sign of any lurking danger in the water, or on the bank, and the boys paddled about in sheer enjoyment.

Peter waded across to the opposite bank where the undergrowth was thickest. Apparently there was the beginning of another forest trail.

"I say! Let's go up here a bit," cried Peter, climbing the bank. Slipping on his shoes he headed directly for the trail.

There was a shout of alarm. Bwanga and the Chief's boy rushed pell-mell across the stream.

"No, no!" cried Bwanga, "he bad bush—lion!"

"A lion!"

Peter stood still irresolute. A real live lion lurking in those thickets, just ahead?

If only his father had not been so strict concerning the observance of the British game laws, and so determined in his refusal to let school-boys carry guns.

“Come, come,” cried Bwanga, who felt himself responsible for the welfare of his charges. He, too, had heard that far-off roar in the night. So had the Chief’s lad.

They had exchanged confidences on that very point, coming down from the native village, which was now out of sight. Both of them had been horrified to see Peter wade across the stream, and plunge boldly into that trail leading into the wilds beyond.

Torn between discretion and desire, Peter hesitated. He had gone a few yards up the path. Now he turned round.

“Peter, come back!” cried Andrew. “If there’s a lion—and these chaps may be right—what chance would you have unarmed? Come back!”

But Peter still lingered. The idea of getting a glimpse of a lion was tempting indeed. Should he retreat?

All was quiet save for the chattering

birds and monkeys in the trees. Suddenly with a shrill scream, Bwanga snatched the great sharp-pointed spear from the hand of the Chief's servant. Like a flash, the faithful native had flung himself forward gasping:

“Run! run!”

Just as he did so there was a crashing among the bushes within a few feet of him. A roar that seemed to rend the very air, shook the ground beneath Peter's feet. A great tawny body hurled itself upwards and forwards towards him, and then——

Peter did run, heedless of what was happening to the native boy.

With a few great springs he reached the river bank, nor did he turn round, until he stood in safety on the other side.

It was Andrew who saw it all—all that he would never be able to forget till the last day of his life.

The huge lion crashed forward from behind to seize Peter, as he turned backwards to return. With a great spring Bwanga poised the spear he had snatched, and flung it at the lion.

There was a roar, and a scuffle. For a moment man and beast seemed to be linked together, in a deadly combat. And death won. But Bwanga the brave black was the victor. It was the lion who died. Braving the fierce onslaught of the lion, Bwanga had met its spring with the thrust of that deadly spear. He knew just where to hold it poised to meet that onslaught—the sharp point entered the tawny beast, and by its own fierce spring the spear was carried deep into the lion's body, piercing its heart. The huge monster rolled over—dead.

Bwanga extricated himself from the prostrate body, and withdrawing his spear fled in hot haste down the trail and across the river.

“Quick—lioness, she come!”

Even Peter needed no urging. He had seen enough—and more than enough.

Not until they were well away to safety did they pause even for breath.

Then, just as they reached the plantations outside the native village, they saw Major Merrion rushing towards them—

followed by the Chief, and a crowd of natives.

Sitting in the hut, intent on the business in hand, Major Merrion had heard that awful roar—and it sounded far too close for safety.

The boys, where were they? A sharp inquiry brought the answer that startled him—he rushed out, in time to meet them, and his cheeks paled under the tan.

The boys were trembling. Peter's face was pale—the spear which the faithful Bwanga carried, told its own tale to the officer who knew. In broken incoherent fashion, both boys told the rest.

“Father, the lion—he sprang, and Bwanga killed it with his spear!”

The Major asked a few rapid questions, and when he had put himself in possession of the facts, he shuddered.

“It's there—the lion,” said Peter. “Can't you send and fetch it? Mother would like the skin——”

“I doubt it, my son, if she knew what a marvellous escape you have had, through your own reckless folly. To be brave is

one thing; to endanger other people's lives as well as your own, is recklessness—and a crime. Not one African in a thousand could have made such a spear thrust and saved not even your life, but his own. Thank God!”

Peter for the moment was utterly subdued. The adventure had been dangerous and desperate enough to satisfy any boy—but the terror of that moment when the lion crashed through the thicket, had been too real for comfort. As for Bwanga, he was the hero of the hour.

“I ought not to have brought you boys on this trip,” said the Major sternly, “but I thought you might get into worse mischief if I left you at our bungalow—Peter especially; he seems to have a knack for getting into scrapes. Mercifully, my business with this Chief is almost finished—I have got through it more quickly than I hoped. We shall be able to return to my station to-morrow. I feel as if, after this, I shall never know a minute's peace, until you boys are safely on board the 'Royal Africa,' *en route* for England.”

That night Peter and Andrew were once more wakeful, listening in the darkness for a terrific roar—which never came.

Their father's African servants had found the body of the fallen lion. The Chief had sent out men who had tracked and accounted for its mate. So there was little to fear.

Yet it seemed to Peter that once again he heard that roar close beside him in the forest—that crash through the bushes and——

“I say, Peter!” Andrew's whisper pierced the darkness and echoed his brother's own secret thoughts. “I say, I was just wondering! Suppose—suppose Bwanga hadn't done what he did, and you—— What then?”

But Peter did not answer. He, too, was “just wondering.”

## CHAPTER V

## “Man Overboard”

THE boys were standing together on the deck of the “Royal Africa,” looking out across the dark water of the Bay of Biscay—for once hushed into unusual calm. They had enjoyed every minute of the voyage, and both of them were sorry that another two or three days would see them landing in England. Then work—an entrance examination to face—and school.

Andrew had enjoyed the voyage from Mombasa more than his brother, if truth were told. Both of them had entered into deck games with zest, and enjoyed to the full the chances given of seeing fresh places at the ship’s ports of call.

But for Peter there had been one fly in the ointment. Indeed, it was too big to be called a mere fly, it was more of the

size of an irritating wasp. This was the fact that they were in the company of Dr. Compton a good deal more than Peter cared about. It had taken a load off Major Merrion's mind, when the Doctor offered to keep an eye on the two boys during the voyage. Dr. Compton showed, too, that he meant to fulfil his promise. He secured seats for them at the same table as himself, and gave them many needful hints as to how to get the most enjoyment out of life aboard ship.

One of the ship's officers sat at the same table, and he was good natured and not at all averse to talking "shop," to interest the passengers. So the boys gained a good deal of sea lore, looking with wholesome respect on an officer who, in response to a question from Dr. Compton, replied that during the Great War he had been torpedoed five times. Yet he spoke of it casually, as if in his opinion it was all part of a sailor's work!

But besides all this, there had been walks and talks on deck together under the stars, and more than once these chats had

drifted into matters into which Peter had no desire to go.

This was always Andrew's fault, Peter told himself. Andrew seemed to like to hear about the Doctor's Medical Mission, to listen to stories of changed lives. Black men with blacker hearts had been transformed by the power of the Living God; and lives so wholly transfigured that they became witnesses to the One

“Who breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
And sets the prisoner free.”

Peter did not care to hear about it at all. The sting of it was that he knew Dr. Compton was right. Only a little time before, there had been a moment in Peter's life that he could never forget. He had been within an inch of an awful death; only the matchless courage and swift resource of his father's faithful African servant, Bwanga, had saved his life.

Try as he would, Peter couldn't forget that question his brother had asked him in the darkness of the hut the following night. Suppose—suppose the black man's

spear-thrust had not been in time? What then?

Peter had shuddered many times. He could neither forget that moment's awful experience when the lion sprang out—nor could he forget the unanswered question.

Carefree and careless, out for a good time with as much mischief crowded into life as was possible with keeping out of scrapes, Peter had no use whatever for Missions, or the sort of things that were talked about by Missionaries.

So when Dr. Compton joined them that evening, bent on a last stroll round the decks, Peter lingered by the bulwark, murmuring something about having promised to wait for another chap.

"All right, Peter," said Dr. Compton, and laying his hand on Andrew's arm, the two moved away towards the bows, where the ship's sharp prow was cleaving through the water a passage that gleamed white in the darkness.

Dr. Compton was not sorry for this chance of a talk with Andrew alone. He had speedily sensed the difference between

the two boys, and having heard of the lion adventure, guessed a good deal what was going on in Peter's mind just now. For the moment, he knew better than to interfere.

“Well, Andrew; I suppose a couple more days will see us saying good-bye. Glad as I am to be going home to see my people once more, I've enjoyed every minute of the voyage. The fresh sea air is glorious after Central Africa. Yet I long to be back there at work again.”

“Yes,” said Andrew quietly, “I'm sure you feel—just like that. Even round father's station some of the black fellows seem to get horribly ill, and there aren't many doctors.”

“None at all, except myself, for scores of thousands of people where I live,” said Dr. Compton, “and after all, their chief need is for the Great Physician to heal the soul—not only the body. But, Andrew, you and I need Him, though we are not black. What about you? You've only one life to live, my boy—God's gift. How better can it be spent than by giving

yourself wholly to Him? How are you going to face the temptations of Public School life—alone? You need Him, Andrew—Saviour first of all, then Master and Guide and Keeper.”

“I know!” Andrew’s voice was very low. “I want Him!”

“Then tell Him so,” answered Dr. Compton, “here and now—just where we are; we can talk to Him right here. He says to you ‘Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.’ That’s the one and only place of beginning—accepting His invitation to meet Him at the Cross of Calvary, where His shed blood made atonement for your sin. Will you tell Him that you do indeed ‘Come,’ as He invites—here and now?”

There was a long silence, then at last Andrew spoke.

“Yes, I have been telling Him just that!”

“You have taken Him at His word, and told Him you come to Him? Has he turned you out?—no? Well, why not?”

“He wouldn’t after telling me to come.”

“Exactly! And since the Lord of the Cross of Calvary is the King of Glory, His invitation is not only an invitation, it is a Royal Command. Now, Andrew, since you have obeyed—He will fulfil His part. Be very sure of that. He says, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ *In no wise*, not on any account. Then what has He done?”

“Why, taken me!”

“Yes. You are His, and He is yours for ever. To-night for you is the beginning of a new life—in Him, and for Him.”

“Peter!” faltered Andrew, “he—he doesn’t like to talk of these things. I wish——”

“We can turn our wishes for Peter into prayers, all the time,” said Dr. Compton, “‘If two of you shall agree’—you know the promise? Well, you and I are going to ‘agree’ to pray for Peter, until God saves him, too! Halloo——?”

There was the sound of commotion not far off along the port side of the ship.

“Man overboard!” The cry came sud-

denly—not from the strollers on deck first of all, but oddly enough from down below the vessel's side, echoing up from the dark waters of the sea.

“Man overboard!” This was taken up from lip to lip.

“Who was it? Where did he fall! Did you see him go over?” The whistles blew, bells clanged. It seemed as if in a moment the great liner was pulling up in her tracks and slowing down.

Orders were given—officers and seamen were hurrying to and fro. Dr. Compton and Andrew strode forward, to where a little group of terrified people were leaning over the vessel's side.

“Who is it?” “Who's missing?”  
“Who saw him fall?”

But nobody seemed able to answer that question.

A luminous buoy was flung overboard—its light trailed towards the stern of the ship, which was still under way, though with engines stopped. A boat was being prepared for lowering.

Suddenly, Andrew caught sight of his

brother, and an older youth with whom Peter had chummed up on board—a lad to whom Andrew had taken an instinctive dislike. They were standing just where the glare of an electric light shone on Peter’s face. Something in his expression caught Andrew’s eye.

He strode across without noticing that Dr. Compton was close behind him.

“Peter!” cried Andrew, “it wasn’t you? You haven’t dared!”

Peter laughed—but it was a laugh that had a good deal of fear in it—a laugh that sounded horribly out of place in that moment of tense excitement.

It was Dr. Compton who put his hand on Peter’s shoulder saying sternly, “Your trick again, Peter? You see—I heard of your folly in the forest! The truth now——!”

“Yes!” said Peter sullenly. “I—I never guessed there’d be all this fuss.”

“Fuss! When you deliberately made every one believe it was a case of a man’s life! Stop a minute, sir!”

One of the ship’s officers was hurrying

by. He shook his head. The cry "Man overboard" means much at sea.

"There's no man overboard, sir! It was the trick of a stupid boy, who is a bit of a ventriloquist. Own up, Peter Merrion!"

Much against his will, Peter was thrust forward.

"You admit it? Is it true?" said the officer in exasperation.

Peter nodded, and muttered something about "only a joke."

"You'll soon find its something very much more than a joke!" said the officer sternly. "Now to prove to me that it was a trick on your part and not a real man overboard—just stand by the bulwark, and do it again."

Peter was compelled to obey, much against his will. He loved applause and admiration; to-night he got neither. Indeed, as he made the cry of "Man overboard" float up once more from the dark ocean, he heard murmurs of "Shame!"

"Now, then," said the officer, convinced that it was Peter and none other, "you

must be taught that to stop a liner at full speed is no light matter. You will just come with me to the captain.”

Peter had no choice in the matter. He was to learn that the captain of a great ship, responsible as he is for the lives of hundreds of men and women, is not a person to be trifled with. The power of the master of a vessel on the high seas is as a king upon a throne—he can be more of an autocrat upon the liner’s bridge, than a monarch in his kingdom.

What the captain said to Peter, the boy never repeated to anyone. He came away from that interview more ashamed of himself than he had ever been in his life.

What was the use of being able to do what other people couldn’t do, if it only got him into trouble?

## CHAPTER VI

## “Tame Isn’t the Word”

“TAME isn’t the word!” Peter’s dark eyes looked still darker with sheer boredom. Not even the novelty of a train journey through England—to them an utterly unknown country—could compensate Andrew and his brother Peter for all that they had left behind.

Born and brought up in East Africa, at a school with other European young folk and English teachers, Peter especially was inclined to feel very much aggrieved at the blow fate had dealt them. Of course the big school for white children was in a safe part of East Africa. It was only during the last three months when they had been staying with their parents at their father’s new station far up in the Bush, that they had learned what a big game country could really be like.

There was certainly something to be said for their feelings. Two disgruntled boys who had left real lions and snakes behind were now looking out of the window of a railway carriage at the great Norfolk landscape. Well, it might have been pretty passable under other conditions, but just now, the actual landscape was missing. The train crawled from station to station on a branch line, where the platforms seemed deserted. In between they caught a glimpse of fields, more fields, and still more fields. If there was any rising ground beyond, they could not see it—for a mist was driving in from the North Sea, and blotting out the hills.

Peter shivered, and rubbed the window with his sleeve, trying to make the view a little clearer. The effort was vain, for a fresh gust of wind brought the rain teeming in sheets against the glass, to stream not only down the pane, but force its way in through the cracks in the woodwork.

The train stopped at a tiny station where there was no village in sight. Andrew let down the carriage window for a glimpse

of the outside world. Just beyond the diminutive platform lay the road, and a dozen children came running along on their way home from some unseen school.

The boys exchanged glances, and Peter shrugged his shoulders.

“Say, Andrew, wouldn’t you just like to go and talk to that bunch out there, and ask them if they’ve ever seen a lion face to face?”

Andrew laughed, then he shuddered. The memory of that day on the forest path was still too real and keen to be exactly pleasant.

“They’d say, tall story, I expect, if we said we’d lived near lions, and panthers, and monkeys for weeks; not to speak of black men who ran away when they heard the bad spirit crying out in the trees above their heads.”

Peter grinned, for the memory of his exploit was still a delight. Nor could he resist his love of a joke even now. The train was at a standstill; the guard was exchanging notes with the station-master-cum-clerk-cum-everything-else, farther

down the platform. There were so few trains in the day, that the children heedless of the downpour, came to the railings beside the road, and stared at the two boys. Apparently they were almost the only passengers at that end of the train, which was just on the move again.

Suddenly Peter stood up, and thrust his head out of the window.

“Look out! A lion! a lion!”

The children gave a cry of fear in unison, and stared upwards, for the warning cry had come from above their heads. Indeed, it seemed as if the alarm had been shouted by somebody in the corner of the little booking-office roof. Just then the train ambled on its way, and the last glimpse the boys had was of a group of frightened children glancing in terror first up the road and down, and then, with one accord, they took to their heels and fled.

Peter shut up the window, for it was raining harder than ever. Then he collapsed in the corner seat, helpless with laughter. Andrew, however, did not look quite satisfied.

“I say, man! That was a bit too bad; those kids’ll never understand what happened. They’ll go home and set a scare going—or else get a licking from their parents for telling whoppers.”

“Let them!” said Peter, far too proud of being able to cause a mild sensation so easily, to trouble. “If they do grow wits as well as parsnips up in these lonely fields, they’d know there were no such things as lions in North Norfolk.”

“But there are zoos and things,” said Andrew, rather vaguely. “I suppose they do escape sometimes. We—we don’t really know any more about England, than those kids do about Africa and lions.”

This was unanswerable since it happened to be true. So Peter promptly changed the subject.

“People over here must be awfully fond of parsnips. I hope Aunt Eunice won’t expect us to eat them at every meal. Look, more fields of them.”

“That great farm wagon is jolly!” said Andrew, his nose glued to the window pane, “light red and blue, and three huge

horses. I wonder what Mika and Bwanga would say to that outfit."

"Are they parsnips in those fields?" said Andrew cautious as ever. "I remember once when dad and I motored over to the experimental station, the man said something about Norfolk sugar-beet. Perhaps——"

The sentence was never finished. The line of goods trucks in the siding revolved itself into some buffer steps beside a platform, and the name of another station appeared.

"Silverholt! Why, this is where we get off!" cried Peter.

The boys tumbled out, and looked about them. A solitary looking individual in uniform was at the far end of the platform, speaking to the guard and incidentally dumping out a couple of substantial trunks. No one else was in sight, and the boys picked up their hand luggage, and walked along to claim their belongings.

Andrew stopped still suddenly.

"I say, Peter, I can see the sea!"

"Where?"

Peter's tone said volumes.

The rain had ceased, and as the boys looked towards the North East, a vast expanse seemed suddenly to unroll itself, while a band of bright blue sky parted the cloud banks above.

But the expanse was not sea—at least, first of all. There were marshes, miles of them to right and left, purple with masses of sea lavender, intersected with dykes that gleamed like silver when a ray of sunlight shot through the clouds. Beyond a mile of slaty greyness—a mixture of mud and water, and beyond that a shining bar of gold, and a fringe of white and grey.

“If that's the sea, it'll take all day to get there to bathe, and then home!” said Peter, still clinging to the memory of the mighty Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the deeps of the Bay of Biscay.

“Oh, dry up and don't be a wet blanket,” said Andrew, punning unconsciously, “Who knows but what Aunt Eunice lives in a jolly show. ‘Seaways’ sounds good enough for me. Let's ask!”

But there was no need. As they passed

the door of the little booking office an elderly country man stepped forward.

“Be ’ee the two young gents for Miss Merrion?”

“Yes,” they answered, “we are!”

Peter pulled up abruptly. “Have you a car? We’ve got a tidy bit of stuff.” He nodded in the direction of the truck which was now being wheeled in their direction.

The man pushed back his cap, scratched his head, apparently taking stock first of the boys, then of their luggage.

“Bit o’ a squeeze, but we’ll manage, ’tain’t so far as makes no matter.”

With which cryptic saying, he jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the road, and went forward to help in dealing with the trunks.

The boys went outside. There stood a waggonette of a type rarely seen save in the very loneliest places of the English countryside. Peter and Andrew, used to both the ancient and modern methods of travel in Africa, had never seen a conveyance of the kind.

“Anything for a change!” said Peter, as

he slung up his suit-case into the shabby vehicle, and climbed up after it. "Some dud show this!" he added in accents of disgust. "I wonder if this is the only turn-out the old girl possesses?"

"I say, Pete! Don't let it get to her ears that you call her that. Don't forget how good she was to dad when he was a kid."

"It needed a lot of goodness to make up for living in such a place," said Peter, "look, miles of mud flats. We should sink up to our necks trying to reach the sea itself."

"Not a bit of it," said Andrew cheerily.

Just at that moment too, the watery clouds hanging over the distant Wash suddenly parted, to release a ray of bright sunshine which made a golden path across the water, and revealed the low, dark line of the Lincolnshire Coast. The sun shone on the pools and wet surface of a cart-track, leaving the main road at a little distance from the station, and making a bee-line for the sea.

"Dad sent over enough money to buy

bikes," said Andrew, "what more can you want?"

The elderly factotum appeared at that moment, along with a porter. In a moment the boys' belongings were stowed away in the trap, the driver climbed up, and uttered the customary sounds which send an English horse on his way.

Just beyond the station the road wound round under a belt of trees, and a wall which screened a huge, dismal-looking mansion.

"Is that 'Seaways'?" said Peter anxiously.

"Not on your life," panted the man. "That's t' parson's house."

Andrew and Peter exchanged startled glances. Used as they were to seeing the trim little missionary bungalows in Africa, they wondered if the average English clergyman was accustomed to live in such a huge gloomy palace as this.

"What a great place," ventured Andrew, "he must be a rich man."

"Not he," grunted the driver as the horse ambled on, "What with this 'ere

'pression or whatsoever they calls it, they say as how he hardly knows where to lay his hands on a bean. Nearly all one end of the house is shut up, and they say he gets young gents to school-teach, if he can."

The boys exchanged glances. It was not for them to reveal just now the fact that they were two "young gents" who had come to Norfolk for the express purpose that he might "school-teach" them.

It was the boys' first sight of an English village; Silverholt was one long straggling street with cottages and one or two shops in juxtaposition, the hoary old Norman Church and tree-hidden Vicarage at one end of it.

The trap bowled on, the old horse being allowed to take his own leisurely pace, while the driver exchanged a nod with the few people they passed, one and all staring hard at the two boys.

Suddenly, without any guidance on the driver's part, the horse drew out across the road, and made for a side turning leading to a farm.

"Whoa! No, yer don't, not yet. 'Tain't toime for 'ee to go whoam."

Restored by a pull on the reins, to take the way he should go, the driver kept one eye on the animal, while he half turned round to the boys.

"Gets lazy, now he don't do no reg'lar work. Allers wants to knock off almost fore he's begun, like some folks."

"He doesn't belong to Miss Merrion, then?" ventured Peter, devoutly hoping that the whole of this turn-out did not represent things as they were at Seaways.

"No, nor wouldn't never have belonged to her. She knew a good 'orse when she saw 'un, Miss Merrion did! Rode with best of them, too, in her time—till she took a toss too many, poor soul. But that were trying to stop a pony that had bolted with a little girl. She saved the child—but she's never walked proper since. This trap is her'n—it stops in t'stable year in year out, and when we wants it, we just hires Farmer Gubbins' old 'orse 'ere. This 'ere's the road to Seaways."

The boys leaned over the side of the

waggonette eagerly, the end of their many thousand miles journey was actually in sight at last.

A narrow lane going northwards continued seawards for a mile. Then a wide-open gate gave entrance to grounds with trees, shrubs, and luxuriant borders filled with autumn flowers. The front of the house was hidden from the road; it faced towards the open marshlands and the sea. As the waggonette drew up before the wide open door, the boys caught a glimpse of a kindly face framed in silver hair.

Aunt Eunice had for once left the lounge in the window where most of her days were passed, and now stood on the threshold, balancing herself on her crutches, and holding out her right hand in greeting.

“Welcome, boys, welcome to Old England and to Norfolk! I hope you are going to be very happy here.”

CHAPTER VII

“Not Half Bad, After All”

“WELL, it’s not half bad, really. Much better than I expected, at first anyway.”

For Peter, this was saying a good deal. He was never too enthusiastic at the best of times, unless things were absolutely buzzing with adventure.

“Not half bad? I should just think not, indeed.”

Andrew squared his shoulders, and facing seawards, held up his face to catch the breeze which ruffled his brown hair. Of the two boys, Andrew had settled down more kindly to English life, and enjoyed every minute of freedom in the open air, after work was done. Work it was, though, with a capital W. The rector of Silverholt was a capital coach, and many a fellow doing well at Public School, or in a good appointment, had reason to be

thankful that Dr. Setterfield's great twenty-five roomed rectory would have been nothing more than a useless white elephant to him, while his small stipend had made it needful he should do something to make ends meet.

The great house that looked so bare and cheerless from the road, was a cheerful enough place within. True, many of the rooms were empty, but others were used by the Doctor's family, and the half-dozen resident pupils. Andrew and Peter were the only two who cycled over in the morning, returning to Seaways when the day's work was done. They had done fairly well at the European School in Africa, as far as opportunities had gone. But there was a great deal of leeway to be made up, if they were to find themselves abreast of other fellows of their own age, when they entered Cliffdown, their father's old Public School, for the Autumn term.

"It's jolly tame, here, though," said Peter, "after hearing lions roar and tales of rogue elephants. Besides, after that day with Bwanga——"

“I’d rather miss another day like that,” said Andrew. “A chap can at least sleep in peace here, without the beastly buzzing of mosquitoes outside the net; waiting for a chance to bite. Besides, though we were born there, I reckon we’re English somehow. I’m glad enough to give a vertical sun a miss, and be able to swim without sharks or crocodiles! Fancy standing on the shore here at midday with a fresh breeze blowing in from the sea. Here goes!”

Andrew had been flinging off his blazer and shorts as he spoke. Now he stood revealed in swimming costume, a lithe clean-limbed specimen of boyhood. With a dash he was off across the quarter mile of golden sand, and plunging into the sparkling shallow waters of the sea, while Peter followed suit.

The tide was out, and the boys had to wade a good bit before they could find water to swim in. Then they splashed and raced each other to their hearts’ content. Satisfied for the time being they sprinted back to the spot where they had

left their clothes and bicycles, and lay down at full length on the dry, hot sand.

“Some sun-bath this, the best we’ve had,” said Peter. “Say, Andrew, we seem to have found out a lucky spot for ourselves—we’ll come here again.”

“Sure thing! I say, man, Aunt Eunice is some brick. Just the opposite to what I expected an old lady would be. She told us to come here. Can’t you imagine her galloping along those sands on that horse she was so fond of?”

“It seems a shame she can’t move about nowadays,” said Peter, “though her hair’s white, and she was grown-up when dad was a boy, she doesn’t seem a bit old, really. Well, it’s jolly good of her to tell us to come here to Widemarsh, and pack us up a lunch, too.”

“Lunch man, that’s the style. Here goes!”

Peter made a dive for the lunch.

The two boys revelling in the sun after their swim were soon making a mass attack on the sandwiches, pasties, cake, and

fruit, for the “nose-bag” had been packed by cook’s generous hand.

This important matter in the background, the boys dressed again, and mounting their cycles, rode along the narrow track that bordered the sandhills.

It was one of the weirdest and loneliest spots on all the North Norfolk coast, which is saying a good deal.

A great stretch of mainland extended for more than a mile between the sandhills, and the coast road along which the boys had come from Silverholt. The marsh was intersected with deep dykes, most of them filled to the brim at each successive high tide, the whole place under water in seasons of rain and storm. As a proof of this, the track of the rough shore lane was marked by conspicuous white posts to guide the unwary in times of flood, from coming to grief in the deep ditches that bordered the road to right and left.

Far away inland, there were fields—and presumably farms hidden somewhere among the scanty clumps of trees. But as far

as the boys could see, only one solitary house was in sight. It stood well back from the lonely lane that led to the beach—hidden behind a rugged mass of stunted trees. The boys had noted the neglected gardens as they passed, not surprised to find that nobody apparently cared to live in such a lonely place.

Besides this, there was only one break in the monotony of the whole marsh. At the head of one of the deepest dykes stood an old rotting hulk. Once it had been a seaworthy barge of some usefulness, and considerable pretensions. Carried shorewards on some well-nigh forgotten night of tempest long ago, the barge had drifted helplessly before such a North Easterly gale as even the Wash itself had scarcely ever known.

As often happens, a great high tide had accompanied the storm. Then a tidal wave, flooding the broad stretch of Widemarsh, had carried the barge far inland, and deposited it at the head of the creek, never to return to the sea from whence it came.

The tide had gone down and out, leaving the boat behind. To move her into a deeper water channel was impossible. So there she stayed.

“Let’s sprint across and have a look at her!” said Peter.

Andrew was nothing loath, and the two left their bikes among the sand-hills and started to make a bee-line for the hulk.

But a bee-line on these marshes is an impossibility, as every one knows. They had to cross and recross narrow ditches, wade wide ones, only evading altogether a broad channel of soft mud and water by making a long detour.

At last they stood under the stern of the derelict. Every bit of iron was rusty; every scrap of paint was gone. The rotting stern-post had almost disappeared; a few decayed splinters were all that remained of what had once been the rudder.

Did that explain the tragedy? Losing her rudder on a wild night of storm, the craft must have wallowed helplessly in the waves to crash ashore at the head of the

creek. There the turn of the tide had left her to this day.

"I wonder what her name was? The board's torn off," said Andrew, "she must have been here ages."

"Let's go aboard!"

It was Peter who squelched his way gingerly up the muddy track that led to the stern, and came up abreast of the low starboard bulwark.

"I say, there's a middling hole here, and a bit of board resting beside it. What price a scramble? Better than trying that bit of trailing rope hanging over further forward."

"I should say so," said Andrew, always a bit more cautious, "if that rope is as old as the wreck, it'll part with a touch."

"Here goes, then!" Peter seized the plank, rested one end on the sodden grass below the ship's side, and gently eased the top along till several inches of it could go through the gap.

"This'll do!" Peter said, as he stepped gingerly up the plank, and poked his head through the space.



"THIS'LL DO!" PETER SAID, AS HE STEPPED GINGERLY UP  
THE PLANK (Page 80)

"Some hidey-hole!" he said in disgust. "Wait a minute, I can't see much here; it's too dark."

Peter jerked his head this way and that, holding on to the broken planks each side of the hole. Then, as his eyes grew more accustomed to the sudden change from bright sunshine without, he withdrew his head, and turned to Andrew.

"Hold the plank steady, man. I'm going in, I can see the floor. It's a sort of cabin."

Peter floundered through the hole, and dropped to the floor. His voice sounded oddly indistinct as he called out:

"Come on; it's all right."

Andrew was nothing loath. He swarmed up the plank, and was soon standing by his brother's side. "I say, what a place!"

Once, it might have served as a cabin for men who expected nothing better than the rough and tumble life of a sailing barge. Now, it was just a black space of emptiness save where the light filtered through the hole by which the boys had entered. The damp and winds of years were rotting the

woodwork; after the hot sunshine outside it was little wonder the boys shivered.

Suddenly Peter uttered a startled exclamation, and his hand darted down to the floor.

“What have you got now?” laughed Andrew.

“I say, look at this! However did it get here?”

It was a half-crown!

CHAPTER VIII

A Find

“I SAY, how on earth——” Both boys instinctively drew nearer to the hole by which they had entered the hulk.

“A half-crown, and a brand new one! Somebody’s been here not long ago, then.”

Andrew was examining the coin carefully. Then he turned it over.

“It looks new—but it’s not this year’s mint! It’s—why, Peter, it’s dated fifteen years ago!”

Peter shrugged his shoulders.

“What matters, a half-crown is a half-crown, and finding’s keeping for such a small amount, I suppose. No use to tell the police, for they’d never be able to trace who had lost it.”

“I suppose not,” said Andrew thoughtfully, “but it’s a queer find in this dark place.”

"I shan't spend it," said Peter, "I'll just keep it and see what turns up."

"Do you think any more money is likely to turn up?" laughed Andrew.

"No! I expect it's been in this old hulk all the time one of the men lost it, and it's just rolled out of some odd corner—rats unearthed it, perhaps."

Andrew, fond of weighing the pros and cons, shook his head.

"This hulk must have been here more than fifteen years, Peter. The look of her proves that. Besides, if it had been hidden anywhere in this reeking hole, it would have been pretty well tarnished. As it is, it's just like new. It's a mystery."

Peter did not reply. He was more interested at the moment in going round the deserted cabin, tapping the woodwork.

"Suppose there were shelves and things behind some of these panels," he said, dubiously.

"Well, don't try to slide them back, even if they do open! They're probably alive with rats and things. Look, there's

the remains of the companion ladder, can we climb up on the deck?"

Peter's first spring up the steps proved too much for the decayed structure. It gave way with a crash, leaving Peter floundering amid mouldy splinters, and ruefully rubbing a bruised ankle.

Andrew had already retreated towards the gap that yawned in the side.

"I've had enough of it," he said, "come along out. I want a bit of fresh air after this mouldy show."

"So do I—and another bathe and a sunbath," echoed Peter.

Sliding down the plank to the muddy bank of the creek was easier by far than scrambling up. For some reason he could not have explained to himself, Andrew lingered a moment to withdraw the plank from the hole, and lean it against the side of the hulk, just as they had found it.

Then they sprinted back to their bikes, and once more down to the shore.

The tide was rising fast—coming in like a mill-race across the broad stretch of sands. It was the work of a moment now

to splash their way into water deep enough for a dip.

The sun was beginning to sink towards the West, over the long low coastline on the opposite shore.

"Time we went!" said Andrew, after they had left the water, and enjoyed a few minutes stretch on the hot sand.

"Aunt Eunice said high-tea, and you know what a jolly spread old Anne gets for us."

Dressing in haste, the boys raced each other at good speed along the track leading to the shore road.

"Never should have supposed there was such a lonely spot in England," said Peter, "why, with all the millions crowded into this one little island, we might have expected to find only standing-room, and people pushing each other, and falling off the edges of the cliff into the sea. Instead——"

But Peter's next sentence was not destined to be finished. At that moment they were passing the one and only house that stood in desolate isolation beside the

marsh. A strip of grass and a dyke parted it from the lane, and a forlorn looking carriage drive had been carried over a culvert to a dilapidated wooden entrance gate.

A low stone wall enclosed the neglected garden, where shrubs and trees had grown at a great rate at their own sweet will, almost completely hiding the house.

Once it might have been the home of a farmer who found the surrounding acres prosperous—but not now. Only one or two of the windows could be seen from the road and these were uncurtained. The whole place had apparently been deserted for years, and yet——

Peter back-pedalled, and looked over his shoulder. Then he raced on and caught up with Andrew who had sprinted ahead.

“I say!”

Peter’s voice contained a good many shades of mystery as he caught up with his brother.

“I say, there’s somebody there!”

“Somebody where?” Andrew was vaguely mystified.

“In that old house that looks empty. I saw a man’s face at the upstairs window. He was standing there, looking closely at something in his hand. Then he looked up, and when he saw me—well, he just faded out of the picture—that was all.”

Andrew laughed outright. Not once nor twice in the two boys’ life story, had Peter’s imagination played him false, and he had seen things which did not actually exist.

“Fact!” said Peter stoutly, “there’s somebody there, and he doesn’t want anybody to know it.”

Andrew sprinted ahead.

“Oh, well, I suppose somebody owns the old place, and comes there sometimes. If he doesn’t—well, there’s nothing to prevent somebody else sneaking in, if they want to. Who’s to know? There isn’t another house anywhere.”

“Hadn’t need be,” growled Peter, “still I mean to ask old Setwork about it, anyway.”

Andrew laughed as he always did, though

he never used the nickname himself. Dr. Setterfield, the rector of Silverholt, was nothing if not conscientious, as any indolent pupils of his knew to their cost. He told the boys plainly the first day they commenced their studies with him, that he expected them to work—and work hard.

He soon found that they were well abreast of others in general knowledge—indeed, much ahead of them in some ways since few boys have watched a real encounter with a lion in the African bush, or enjoyed a voyage on a modern liner.

But they were a good deal below the standard that would be expected of them in one of the Public Schools—hence the need for work, with a capital W, too—if they were to pass a good entrance exam. at Cliffdown where their names had been put down long ago.

Still, Mr. "Setwork" was wise enough and human enough, to take an interest in things outside the four walls of his study. On the Monday following, when lessons were over for the day, Peter lingered.

"We cycled to Widemarsh on Saturday, sir. Jolly place!"

"Very jolly—in summer," said the rector with a grim smile, "those larger creeks are ideal for boating and the shore for bathing. But in winter! I took duty over there once or twice in the worst December we've ever had, so I know."

"There's only just one old house, standing buried in trees, standing back from the lane leading from the main road down to the sand-hills, and the shore."

"I know it." The Rector nodded. "An eccentric old gentleman used to live there. Nobody has occupied it since he died."

"But there was somebody in the house on Saturday, sir," protested Peter, "a man was at one of the upstairs windows. He bolted back when he saw me."

"No reason why he should, if it was the owner," said Dr. Setterfield, "I believe the place went to some distant relative of the old gentleman's. He never lives there, but it would be reasonable to suppose that he comes down now and then to

look at his property. Now then, Peter, about that Virgil——”

Peter, compelled to pay attention to his slackness in his homework, was nevertheless by no means convinced.

He approached Miss Merrion on the matter, but she could throw little or no light on it.

“I heard the old house went to a man named Smith, living in London,” she said smiling; “you boys only passed through London on your way here. Even so you must have got an idea of the vast size of the biggest city in the world. I forget how many whole pages in the London Directory are given up to the addresses of people named Smith. Anyway the particular Mr. Smith in question has never made himself known in our neighbourhood. Widemarsh House, I believe that deserted place is called. I don’t suppose he could sell it, if he tried. The floods are up to the house, and inside it, in the worst seasons. It was considered hardly habitable even when the old gentleman died.”

"How long has that old hulk been there, Aunt Eunice?"

"More years than an old lady cares to count," she said laughing, "and I remember the great storm—the high tide was followed by a tidal wave which drove the barge across the marsh. She was left stranded when the tide went down, and has been there ever since. You'd better not try to explore it boys, the timbers must be rotten."

"They are!" said Peter, taking a sudden resolve to tell her. "There's a hole, and we crawled inside. Somebody had been there before us and dropped a half-crown."

He held it up as he spoke.

"It wasn't lost when the barge was wrecked, that's certain!" he added. "It's only dated fifteen years ago."

Miss Merrion's light eyes twinkled. "The Mystery of the Half-crown!" she said smiling. "I used to love trying to write stories when I was young, but it was too much trouble trying to make the plots work out properly, and 'come down on all fours,' as we say. I wonder how Sherlock

Holmes and his imitators would have solved this particular problem?

"Anyway," she added, "Anne has solved one problem for us—a good dinner for hungry boys. I hear the gong—give me my crutch, Andrew, it has slipped beyond my reach."

The subject dropped, but the boys did not forget.

Peter put the coin carefully away. He had no present intention of spending it. After all, the mystery of its presence in the old barge might be capable of a very simple solution; as simple as Aunt Eunice's explanation of the appearance of "Mr. Smith" at one of the windows of Widemarsh House. It never occurred to the boys that there was any connection between these two things.

But there was.

## CHAPTER IX

## An Invitation to Overcliffe

“I SAY, Peter, look at this.” Andrew’s voice registered several notes of delight and surprise.

He held an open letter in his hand and a dainty little folder dropped out.

“Where’s Overcliffe? Dr. Compton’s there. He wants us to go over to-morrow.”

“Compton? Oh—I don’t know.” Peter sounded decidedly non-committal. “No, thanks! I rather think I had enough of him on board the ‘Royal Africa’. Bit of a spoil-sport, if you ask me. Tried to make you a muff like himself.”

Andrew flushed. He knew the taunt was ill-deserved.

“He never wants anybody to be a muff,” said Andrew, “it’s the other way about. He—he’s like one of those old knights they used to have—you know, the johnnies

we read of in history. I only wish I were like him, that's all. Why, one of the chaps on board told me he was a 'Blue' at Cambridge."

Peter was duly impressed, as any other boy would have been. Nevertheless, the memory of the young Medico's bright face, and quiet stirring words had left him untouched.

"I haven't any use for Missionaries," he said doggedly, "go over and see him if you want to: I'm not going."

"It'll have to be to-morrow, Saturday, I suppose," said Andrew thoughtfully.

"Yes, old 'Setwork' isn't likely to give you a day's holiday. He says we're too weak in Classics and Maths to waste an hour if we want to get into Cliffdown College next half."

"But next Saturday we were planning another day over at Widemarsh," said Andrew, torn betwixt a longing to see Dr. Compton again, yet anxious not to leave Peter in the lurch.

"Well, I can go by myself, I suppose. What time does he want you?"

“Lunch and early tea he says—oh, I see there’s a postscript, overleaf. It’s about twelve miles from Silverholt to Overcliffe—a straight coast road more or less all the way.”

“Well, that’s nothing on a bike,” added Andrew, who was daily growing stronger and more muscular, thanks to the splendid Norfolk air, and sea-bathing, “and the evenings are long clear now.”

“I shall have a prowl round Widemarsh again by myself,” said Peter.

“Anyway, don’t go coin-hunting in that old hulk alone. If you took a toss in the dark through those rotted timbers, well, you’d be in a hole, literally; you’ll be sick of the marshes all alone. Come along to Overcliffe if you change your mind. Anyway, come and meet me.”

“Perhaps I will,” said Peter, “we’ll leave it at that.”

So it was settled. Next morning the two boys started off in good time. The Overcliffe coast road skirted Widemarsh a good way inland, so the boys rode to-

gether as far as the lane that led to the shore.

“Wonder if that queer bird is down for another look at his house?” said Andrew, “keep a look out as you pass for Mr. Smith, of London.”

With a light laugh the two boys parted—little thinking under what strange circumstances they would meet again.

In one sense, Andrew’s day was more or less uneventful. Waving good-bye to Peter where the bye-road branched off, he sprinted ahead at a great rate towards Overcliffe. It was a glorious day; the wind was in his favour, and there was not a great deal of traffic about. Of course, he slowed down a bit through the villages he passed, looking about him with a good deal of interest.

By and by the muddy flats laid bare at low tide on the shores of the Wash gave way to water of a darker blue where the shore shelved sharply and steeply into deep sea.

“He who England’s shores would win,  
Must at Weybourne Deeps begin.”

Andrew found himself murmuring the quaint old couplet. Aunt Eunice had told the boys just how much the almost-forgotten rhyme had come to mean, to the dwellers on the North Norfolk coast, even as recently as the days of the Great War.

The couplet proved that in the almost legendary days of invasion by foreign hordes from across the North Sea, it had been realised that there was nothing to prevent enemy boats, packed with invaders, and landing on the beach at Weybourne, from creeping across the wide open mouth of the Wash where there was deep water close to shore.

During those stirring Great War days, the dwellers on that bit of coast had been living again in one of the most likely landing places from a foe. Precautions had in consequence been taken, which had turned that part of the coast into what was well-nigh an armed camp, with defences and observation posts not unlike those used on actual warfare on the fighting front.

Together with this, that bit of coast

had received a good deal of attention from the enemy aircraft. But God had said, "Thus far shall thou go, and no further," and not a foot of an enemy invader had ever stepped upon British soil!

It was quite an old story, now, but Andrew found a good deal of interest in the places he passed. Then, as the flat coastline gave place to rising ground, and a range of cliffs, Andrew glanced at his watch and found he had plenty of time to dismount and walk in leisurely fashion up hill.

He found Dr. Compton installed in a house on the sea front, with his mother, and a younger brother and sister. Like himself, they were not here merely for the purpose of a much-needed holiday, but were helping in enthusiastic fashion, some children's services held every morning on the beach.

"Wish you could have come over and stopped a few days for some of the work. We're having great times," said Dr. Compton, "but we've not a spare inch of room in our digs, and then I know you're

hard at work with your coach—you had your holiday in Africa, and a pretty exciting one by all accounts. How is Peter? Still striking the same attitude?”

Andrew nodded. “I don’t say anything. I find it’s like water on a duck’s back.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Compton, “your brother is, if I may say so, well oiled with the oil of indifference. To try to interest him in spiritual things is far more difficult than it would be to interest one of these dear old Overcliffe fishermen in the archæology of Abyssinia! But God can rouse Peter’s sleeping soul—we can go on praying, and you can go on quietly witnessing. ‘Andrew first findeth his brother Peter,’ you know, and what a find Peter was! To my mind the greatest of all the apostles, in many respects—though perhaps the humblest of them all. Somebody once said, ‘Andrew was only a small and almost unknown taper, but he lit a great lamp.’”

Andrew’s face glowed.

“I think I must be only the taper then—I can’t do many things half as well as Peter

does them, although he's older. But if only God would let me be the 'taper' to 'light' him—Peter would be a great lamp some day."

"Well, let's pray for him. What's he doing? Why didn't he come, too?"

"He—he just wouldn't, that's all. He's gone for the day to Widemarsh."

"I've heard of it—the most desolate bit of coast all along here, and then some!" said Dr. Compton. "Well, if he wouldn't come, it may mean God is working in his soul. We'll talk to the Lord about him now, shall we?"

They were standing together on the cliff top, looking over the dancing blue waters of the sea, and as they stood there they prayed for Peter—alone, farther along upon the desolate shore.

What was happening to him?

## CHAPTER X

## What Happened to Peter

LOOKING backward in after days, it seemed to Peter Merrion that enough happened to him that day to fill a book. Yet it all began quite tamely.

A casual parting with Andrew at the point where the sea lane to Widemarsh branched off, and Peter slowed down a bit as he went towards the shore.

It was a glorious day of August sunshine, and Peter was very hot, for the boys had raced each other most of the way from Silverholt, knowing that Andrew was expected at Overcliffe in good time for lunch.

Now there was not the slightest need for haste, and Peter had too much sense to plunge straight into the sea when overheated after a ride. He had the whole day before him, and on the back of his cycle, a case well filled with substantial sandwiches, fruit, and a thermos flask.

Andrew would not be home until the evening, and Aunt Eunice, had arranged for dinner to wait the boys arrival.

Peter was quite ready by this time to acknowledge how utterly he had been out of his reckonings when he had declared life would be as dull as a marshland ditch, living with an old maiden aunt, who had been an invalid for years.

What could she know of the likes and dislikes of a pair of lively school boys? How could she enter into their interests the least little bit? But she did.

Miss Merrion, denied an active body for long years had used her fertile brain to some purpose.

Peter and Andrew were utterly amazed to find that she was abreast of all the latest knowledge, and just as keenly interested as they were in all that went on in the great outside world beyond the very small corner of her home. She had a powerful radio, she read the newest books, though she banned every volume that was not in good taste. The latest papers found their way to Seaways.

The coming of the boys had added zest to her life. She was keenly interested in their life in Africa, and never tired of laughing at the stories they had to tell, though there were moments when she shook her head a trifle gravely realising that peril had been very near. As for Peter's odd attempts to use his ventriloquist gifts, they delighted her. But she soon exacted from him a solemn promise never to use it for a mere practical joke, if harm was likely to result, or frighten anyone.

The bewilderment of Pet Poll, Aunt Eunice's cockatoo, was too funny for anything. To hear a voice challenging him from the roof of his cage, or from the top of the window curtain—when the only people in sight were across the room, left him the most amazed bird in the country.

As for cook and the village housemaid, well, they were scared of Peter's efforts, regarding them as something "whisht" and uncanny. So Peter had to include a promise never to startle or play tricks on them, since, as their mistress declared,

“Good servants are scarce, and these have served me for years.”

Then, too, Miss Merrion was as keen on their studies as on their sports. Instead of finding her a Victorian back number in education, she had gained a working knowledge of languages and maths, that won from the boys a wholesome respect. Indeed, they were frankly glad to avail themselves of her help, when they got stuck as they often did, over Dr. Setterfield's rather abstruse examples.

But Peter had left all thoughts of work behind him for to-day. Sufficient unto the five days of the week were the lessons they brought. Saturday was enshrined as a day apart—wherein work was to be forgotten.

Cycling leisurely down the long land to the shore, Peter by and by drew near Widemarsh House, standing apparently deserted among the trees. Remembering his previous experience, he glanced at the bare windows of the place, but no face appeared.

He slowed down to a crawl, darting

quick glances here, there, and everywhere, as he passed, though Peter himself would have found it very hard to tell exactly why he found the lonely building so full of interest. The trees and shrubs were so overgrown, that scarcely a glimpse of the lower part of the house could be obtained through the branches.

Once, no doubt, there had been a well-kept carriage drive—now it was just a messy roadway overgrown with weeds, while the wide wooden gate——

Suddenly Peter caught sight of something, and stiffened. He even jumped off his bike to make sure he had not been mistaken.

When they passed the house the first time, the ricketty looking gate had been fastened with a rusty chain. Now the chain hung loosely on the gate post, and the gate itself was a tiny bit ajar.

There was something more. There had been heavy rain the day before. Pools of standing water shone in the sunlight on the rough road leading to the sea. One puddle of mud and water lay directly in front of the dilapidated gate of Widemarsh

House, and extended for a foot or two inside the neglected drive.

Right across the mud was the track of a motor-car tyre, and the marks curved round to the crown of the road. Yes, as he peered over the handle-bars of his machine, Peter could trace the tyre-marks more or less distinctly, in the mud of the lane in front of his wheel.

Here was mystery indeed! It was none of Peter's business, and the explanation of the marks was probably absurdly simple. Mere boyish curiosity accounted for Peter's interest—and something more. Life in Africa, his own share of adventures in the Bush, and contact with the natives, had taught him the value of observation.

Had not Bwanga an almost uncanny gift of tracking the creatures of the wild, merely by observing the "spoor" impressions left as they passed? Such a gift is natural to the African of the Bush—but even a European boy can pick up a good deal of nature-lore and knowledge—and Peter's quick brain was not long in supplying the rest.

As for the present problem, it was far more simple than tracking the trail of a lion or marauding elephant. The track of a tyre meant a car. Traces of the marks beyond the gate, meant that the motor had entered the grounds of Widemarsh House—and the entrance had been left unfastened. To see if the car was still in the garden was impossible. A few yards inside the grounds, the drive swept round in a curve, and tangled masses of shrubs and undergrowth hid everything behind: there might be a hiding place for half a dozen cars. There did not seem to be a second set of tyre marks: as far as Peter could see the car was still there.

Well, what mattered? For the life of him Peter could not have told just why he was so keen to make a mystery of what might very well be no mystery at all. If Mr. Smith, of London, just one of the scores and thousands of gentlemen of that same name in that city, chose to visit the derelict property bestowed on him by his uncle, well it was nobody's business but his own.

He might think of selling the place—though who would elect to live in such a forlorn building Peter could not imagine. Still, there was no accounting for taste, and there might be some would-be recluse, out at elbows with the world, who would like to live a long way away from his fellows, and be willing to spend the large sum of money that would be required to repair the dilapidated old house, and put it in order.

If so, an agent might have given the keys to a prospective buyer, though no notice board implied that it was for sale.

Suddenly, Peter had an odd instinct that his own keen curiosity might not be well received. The uncanny silence of the deserted house might not mean it was empty at the moment, after all. So he re-mounted his bicycle, and rode seawards. Thoroughly cooled down now, he secreted his machine among the sand-hills. The tide was out, so he had a long run across the wet sand before he waded into the sea, and at last reached water deep enough to swim in.

Here he revelled to his heart's content, grousing a bit at Andrew's absence. There was precious little fun in splashing oneself, and any chance of a race was ruled out.

At long last he came out of the water, sprinted at top speed over the half mile or more of shore left uncovered by the tide, and then lay down on the hot sand for a sun-bath. Lunch?—Well, Peter was more than ready for it, and time was getting on. He munched sandwiches and tartlets with gusto, wondering how it fared with Andrew.

“Posh lunch with strangers,” Peter sniffed contemptuously “and Dr. Compton thrown into the bargain. Well, I could do with their lunch, if it's top-hole, but I had enough of Dr. Compton on board the liner, coming home. Andrew has rather taken a liking for that sort of thing, but he's none the worse a chap for it, so far. He reads his Bible a bit, and all that, but he knows better than to pile up that sort of talk to me.”

Lunch over, Peter stretched himself luxuriously on the sand-hills, and pulled

a flat packet out of his blazer pocket. Before opening it, he spent some time watching a little yacht, which seemed to be tacking out to sea. She manœuvred to and fro, as if hovering about, waiting for something. He grew tired of watching her at last. She seemed to have anchored. Peter was utterly alone among the sand-hills, nor was there anyone in sight on the long, lone miles of sea-shore.

Yet Peter glanced to right and left, behind and in front of him, before he unfolded the paper.

Certainly this seemed a very odd thing to do. Nor was the reason for all this desire for secrecy very apparent, for the paper only revealed a small thin book from which the outer covers had been torn, so that neither title or author's name was visible.

Peter lay down on his face, dug his elbows into the sand, and was soon absorbed in what he read.

What a chance Andrew's absence had given him. While he was away at Overcliffe, listening to Dr. Compton's "pi-

jaw," Peter had got the opportunity of reading—well, just what had been surreptitiously hidden for some days, waiting for just such a chance as this.

When the two boys came to Silverholt, there had been a couple of older fellows residing at the rectory for coaching. One of them, a big boy named Crow, was due to leave about the same time as Peter and Andrew, but as a matter of fact, the good rector had sent him off in peremptory fashion a few days before. Only the boy's parents knew the real reason—and the letter good Dr. Setterfield wrote to them concerning their son's conduct, well-nigh broke their hearts. No details as to why Crow had been expelled had been allowed to leak out among the other pupils. But as far as Peter Merrion was concerned, the reason was not very far to seek.

Perhaps guessing that his possessions would be carefully gone through, either before he left the rectory or when he arrived at home—perhaps both, Crow had resolved to rid himself of some of the contents of his trunk and desk, before he left.

Peter had, to his own loss, been rather attracted to him. Crow was only a couple of years older, but in worldly wisdom of the worst kind, he was very much grown up indeed.

So Crow had beaten an ignominious retreat from the rectory, stung to the quick by the stern righteous anger of the rector who, having found him out, had no choice but to expel him before he could try to cast an influence over the others.

But at the last moment, Crow found a book at the bottom of his desk, and hastily thrust it into Peter's hands, whispering, "Shove this out of sight—read it if you like. But don't let a soul see it, not on your life; or there'll be some row, I tell you. I shan't have a chance to get rid of it, and——"

At that very moment the rector appeared to summon the erring boy. A car was waiting to take him to the station.

Peter Merrion had only just time to slip the book between a Latin grammar and an atlas. As soon as the coast was clear, he thrust the book down to the very

bottom of his satchel, and once back at Seaways, he carefully sought out a place of concealment, till he should have time to read it. But before he wrapped it up in paper, Peter took a glance at the contents. The fact that discretion had led Crow to tear off both covers and title page had been enough to rouse his curiosity to white heat. One glance was enough to convince him that there had probably been very good reason why Crow had been expelled.

But instead of destroying it then and there, Peter was foolish enough to resolve to have just another look, so he had put the book away, guessing the scornful indignation which would fill Andrew's eyes, if he saw his elder brother reading what he himself would not touch—except with the tongs.

Well, here was his opportunity, and Peter determined to make the most of it. Yet, as he read, it seemed to him there was uncovered before his boyish soul, an abyss of iniquity from which all the clean, young budding manhood in him revolted.

Still he read on—half fascinated, half appalled. Apparently there had been much in Crow's worldly wisdom which was knowledge he would have been far better without.

Peter's conscience pricked—all that was good in him was repelled, and yet he read on, and on, until the last page was turned.

Then suddenly, how was it? Peter himself never knew. But loathing possessed him, and a fierce resentment that anything so vile should have been written, much less printed.

Peter realised that what he had done could never be undone. He had read, and so taken into his mind and memory, ideas he could never rid himself of, as long as life should last. Perhaps Peter dimly realised the truth, that a poisonous book is to the soul, what a draught of poison is to the body—something to pervade and destroy unless it can be got rid of.

But how? Memory is one of the strangest wonders of the human mind. It has been said, perhaps with a good deal of truth, that we never actually forget.

Yet, even as Peter read the last page—and wished he hadn't—there came a longing to forget—to blot out for ever the memory of what he had read.

Impossible! Peter knew it, and with the knowledge came the remembrance of his mother's face, his father's eyes, clear, kindly, but too truth-loving to be anything but stern against him.

Peter sprang up—and flung the offending book far from him. It fell into a tide pool. No! That wasn't enough. Some other lad passing that way, might pick it up, read those pages which would pollute his soul.

He sprang up. He was still in his bathing costume, having lay down to dry in the hot sunshine.

He picked up the offending book, and held it at arm's length as he ran across the sands. The tide had turned, and part of the distance had been covered by the advancing waves.

Peter tore the book into such tiny shreds that there was no possibility of anyone even piecing them together once again.

Then he waded out into the sea, and flung the scraps far and wide, into the ocean—the great tidal cleanser of the land.

“Crow by name, and crow by nature!” cried Peter in fierce disgust. “What’s he going to grow up like, if he enjoys such—such filth as that? and tries to poison others. I feel as if I shall never be clean again.”

Peter plunged into deeper water, and swam till he was tired. Wading out he sought the sand-hills once more, and flung himself down, burying his face in his hands.

“Oh, God, help me to *forget!*”

There was a sob of shame and pain in the cry which was wrung from him as a prayer. Perhaps the first real prayer Peter had ever uttered.

How was he to know, that at that very moment, on the sea front at Overcliffe, his brother, and the young Missionary from the heart of Africa, were praying for him?

## CHAPTER XI

## Just in Time

“WHY—whatever!” Peter sat up suddenly shivering. What had happened? He was cold, perishingly cold, even as he sprang to his feet his teeth chattered and he shivered.

No wonder! He must have fallen asleep on the dry hot sand-hills, and slept on without waking, while things changed around and about him, and changed with a vengeance, too.

The sun disappeared gradually behind a brownish-grey bank that crept up slowly from the sea, and across the distant Lincolnshire coast.

By and by, the cloud bank seemed to trail long clammy fingers earthwards and meet others, just as clammy, which had come sweeping across the surface of the sea in ghostly fashion.

Then as distance lessened, and density thinned out, the fog became a white cloud—enwrapping the horizon, creeping across the long yellow sand-banks of the Wash, now being rapidly covered by the rising tide.

For the mist to come in on top of the rising tide—indeed, faster than the advancing waves, was merely a matter of time.

So, by and by, even the once sunlit golden sands began to look dull and sodden yellow, and then the white fog stretched out chilly fingers, and touched the boy who lay stretched at full length on his face—still in his thin swimming suit.

Perhaps it was the deadly clutch of the damp that eventually woke him up. Anyhow, he was chilled to the bone—a boy who until recently had spent all his life in tropical Africa with the vertical sun above his head, and the equator itself not very far away.

He flung on his clothes hastily, still half-bewildered by that sudden awakening. Peter was utterly at a loss to imagine

however he came to fall asleep. He did not realise—how should he, just then, that that afternoon upon the sand-hills had marked a crisis in his young life.

He had gone on reading the book against the forbidding of his conscience. He had nevertheless persisted, though inwardly, his whole nature was rebelling at the wrong he knew he was doing—to himself. When he finished reading, his first impulse had been to hide the book as before, and seek another opportunity of reading it again. But better thoughts had prevailed. The memory of all his father stood for, among European and natives alike, in honour, justice and purity of conduct—the remembrance of his mother, and of Andrew, who resembled her so strongly, though his brother was every inch as manly a boy as any chap need to be, these had helped him to win a victory which would influence his character and conduct as long as life should last.

The crisis had been far greater, and far more important than he knew. He had not the least idea, when he tore the

offending pages into useless shreds and plunged into the sea with them, scattering them far and wide upon the tide, that Andrew and Dr. Compton were standing together on the cliffs a few miles off, praying for him.

Peter did not know his Bible very well. Andrew read it carefully and regularly. To Peter it was as yet merely something he heard about in Church, or used as a lesson book in School.

Peter would not have remembered that these words were spoken by Divine lips, and written for all time by an Inspired Pen:

“If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven.”

Once again those Holy Words were being proved true. That was all. All? In Peter's case it was to mean everything.

But when the crisis had passed, the strain of victory had been greater than Peter knew. He had flung himself down—yes, and sobbed, tears of which he had no need to be ashamed. Quite uncon-

sciously, he had fallen asleep. The awakening had come—and now?

He was still shivering after he had dressed. His flannels and blazer had been lying on the sand, and were damp—the fog must have crept over long ago.

How long? That was the question. Peter had no means of finding out. His wrist watch was out of order—and he had left it at home, thinking that a glance at the sun on a long summer's day would be enough. Besides, the soft and beautiful twilight would give ample warning of the coming of darkness. Not yet was Peter used to the wonder and loveliness of England's twilight—a thing unknown in equatorial lands.

But the sun had gone. The mist was so thick that Peter could not see many feet in front of him. The soft murmur of the sea told him plainly that the tide was almost in. Since "Seaways," Miss Merriion's house, faced the shore, Peter had learned by this time just how long a time was taken by the rising, and the falling of the tide.

It must be late. No use thinking of going to meet Andrew. His brother was probably at home long ago, and would be coming back along the road in search of him. How hungry he was after a long day upon the lonely shores of Widemarsh, with a couple of good swims thrown in. Lunch seemed a long, long way in the background of his day. Peter could hardly believe those empty papers had meant substantial sandwiches and tarts. What he longed for most of all just now, though, was a steaming hot cup of tea—no, not just one cup, but three or four.

Well, they could be had for the asking, once he had sprinted along the road back to his home.

But the road, where was it? He had come a good distance along the sand-hills, before he left his bicycle and went upon his first swim. He had noticed that there was a track behind the sand-hills; the going there was easier for him, pushing his machine, than on the loose sand of the immediate foreshore. Indeed, it was quite possible that this track led more directly

into the sea road, so cutting off a considerable corner, and anything that lessened distance was to be welcomed, by a boy who was hungry and thirsty and cold!

“Well, here goes.”

Peter buttoned his blazer as closely as he could, thrust the untidy sandwich papers into a hole in the sand and covered them up neatly, then he wheeled his bicycle away from the direction of the sea, and in a moment or two hit the track behind the sandhills.

The going was a good deal better than he thought. Perhaps the path had been used in the days of coastguards, or by the few marshmen and fishermen who lived in the little hamlets far away beyond the creek.

So Peter promptly mounted his bicycle, and rode steadily forward, glad to notice that the moaning of the sea sounded a little farther off. He had been right then, imagining that this track was a short cut from the shore to the road. If only he could see, all would have been easy enough. But he could not possibly be making any

mistake, for the lane must lie ahead, and he was leaving the sea on the right to get back to it, since he had approached it from the left.

Then as he groped his way through the wet mist, the sandhills came unexpectedly to an end, and the track led across rough coarse grass.

“Why, it cuts over the marshland—I shall hit the lane half way to the main road. Hooray! If only I could see. But the mist seems denser——”

Suddenly Peter, who had been riding very slowly, jammed on his brakes for all they were worth and jumped off.

Just in time!

## CHAPTER XII

## Two Men and a Boat

ONLY just in time! Peter almost flung himself off his bicycle and stood aghast at his narrow escape.

The track he had been following came abruptly to an end on the edge of a steep bank above deep water, where a strong current was running inland. The muddy track itself had slithered away into the creek; the path ended on a sharp ledge, and another moment he would have ridden into water of unknown depth.

Peter could dimly see across to the other side of the channel, which was evidently one of the wider waterways intersecting the lonely wastes of Widemarsh. On the opposite bank, a rotting stump loomed through the mist; and there seemed to be some semblance of the continuation of the path, too. No doubt, at one time, there

had been a rough and ready plank-bridge across the ditch. But who would make sufficient use of it to warrant its upkeep? It had come to grief and nobody had thought it worth while having it replaced; no wonder.

But Peter was not concerned just now with the why and wherefore of the destination of the bridge. He was far more anxious about his own position. He had felt so sure that the track was a short cut to the road, that even in the mist, he had had no fear of losing his way. And now?

He stood still, considering. It would mean turning right-about-face and returning to the seashore by the way he had come. True, Peter had passed a good many criss-cross tracks as he cycled along, but he had taken them to be runs—made by the rabbits who had turned part of the sand-hills into a warren.

They could be avoided, easily. He was hungry and thirsty, and annoyed beyond measure because his imaginary short cut to the main road had nearly led him to plunge into a muddy ditch, filled almost

to the brim by the incoming tide. It must be pretty well high water, too, and that gave Peter furiously to think—it meant it was growing late. Darkness would be coming on, and he would be hopelessly lost.

Well, there was nothing for it but to stand motionless and listen for all he was worth. Once he was certain that the sea was directly behind him, he would have no difficulty, except to grow more and more impatient with the delay. Once back on the shore, he had only to keep the open sea on his right hand side, and make his way back to where the lane leading inland ran down to the shore. There was no fear of missing that, anyway.

So Peter stood still listening. The murmur of the sea seemed a good way off; where could he have got to? Then, just as he was remounting his bicycle to turn back along the path Peter heard another sound.

It was the regular muffled splash of oars. Peter stopped, wildly delighted. Here was help at hand. In some inex-

plicable reason a fisherman from one of the neighbouring "Staithes," must be coming up the creek with the tide. He would be able to tell Peter if there were a nearer cut to the road than by returning to the beach.

The mist was still too thick for Peter to see the boat. But the muffled splash of the oars drew nearer. Another moment, and the man would be rowing past the spot where he was standing. Peter laid down his bicycle, and was just on the point of calling "Hullo!" when, to his amazement, he heard some one speaking. The voice came in uncanny fashion through the concealing blanket of mist.

"Good hide that old hulk, Mr. Smith, eh? Lot of snide ready?"

"S—sh—shut up, Hans. It's too risky for a whisper in the open. Hurry—the stuff must be lifted before the tide turns. Then I must get back to London in my car."

The words were hissed rather than spoken. Some instinct made Peter suddenly drop down on the ground, and flatten himself beside his bicycle. The

men in the boat could not see him—they were a little below his level.

“The old hulk . . . snide . . . risky . . . stuff lifted . . . before the tide turns.”

Peter had read a good many books of adventure. His young head had been well filled with yarns of pirates, smugglers, coiners, and what-not. Was it possible he was on the track of people who were actually using that old hulk for purposes that would not bear even the possible revelation made by a whisper on a mist-bound marsh?

Peter's immediate acquaintance with adventure stories left him little room for doubt. He had no difficulty in putting two and two together, and guessing what was going on.

Mr. Smith getting back to London! Well, there were hundreds of thousands of men of that name. But it certainly was odd that Widemarsh House—supposed to be shut up and deserted belonged to a Mr. Smith of London, and that there were fresh tyre-marks and a gate ajar—when Peter passed by this morning.

Possibly part of the lonely marsh was his property, including the derelict hulk driven inland at the head of the creek long ago. Of course he had a perfect right to do what he liked with his own property, and to come here as often as he liked. But—what was the “stuff” that was obviously hidden in the old hulk? What was going on there? What did it all mean?

## CHAPTER XIII

“I Arrest You in the Name of  
the Law.”

“SNIDE!” Peter had a vague remembrance of having come across that word in an exciting tale he had read not long before, but for the moment its meaning escaped him. But this was not the time to think, it was the time to act. Whatever was going on under the cover of the loneliness and secrecy of the marsh, aided, at the present moment, by a dense, impenetrable sea-mist—something must be done about it, and at once, that was certain.

Peter forgot he was hungry and thirsty—forgot that Seaways was as far off as ever, and that if he left the path by which he had come across from the sand-hills, he would be utterly lost upon the dyke-ridden marsh.

What mattered? Only one thing mattered, to a boy of Peter's temperament. There was mischief afoot, and it was up to him to find out what it was.

He did not raise his head till the boat had passed him. Then he cautiously looked up—and saw—what he told himself he ought to have expected to see—not one of the sturdy stout boats used by the local fishermen—this was a dinghy, though painted very dark, and bearing no name.

The boat-man was a swarthy man, very different from the honest Norfolk folk who earned a hard living at the nearest Staithe, or fishing quay. This man might have come from anywhere in the world, seen anything, and done anything worth doing—or otherwise. Hans—well, the name had an alien sound, and come to think of it, Peter remembered the man had spoken English with an accent . . . had he come from that little yacht which had been hovering out in the Wash? Had she not been tacking about aimlessly, waiting—for what?

Peter felt it was up to him to see the

thing through. To the question of any possible risk to himself he gave not a thought. That was not Peter's way.

Fortunately for Peter, the other occupant of the boat was sitting in the stern, and at the moment his head was turned away from the boy. One glance at him convinced Peter that this was no local fisherman. He had on a smart leather coat, buttoned closely round his neck, and a tweed golfing cap pulled down well over his eyes, so that nothing could be seen of his face from where Peter lay flat, hidden in the grass. It was "Mr. Smith of London" obviously. The boy dropped down again, for fear the men should turn in his direction, until the splash of oars grew fainter, and the boat was swallowed up in the mist.

Then, lifting his head he discovered himself alone, with nothing but the fog round about him.

He stood up and stretched himself, still shivering, though he was far too keenly interested in what was going on to realise how cold he was.

This broad dyke, full of water now, must be the same one he and Andrew had discovered when it was merely a muddy ditch, left empty by the outgoing tide. And at the head of it?—Why, of course, the solution of that part of the mystery was no mystery at all.

The few words that had floated to his ears through the mist proved that. The old hulk was their objective. It was a good hiding place . . . the man had asked if there was a lot of snide ready.

Snide! Like a flash it suddenly came back to Peter in what connection he had read the word. Snide was the slang for counterfeit coin used by the coiners themselves.

When he and his brother had nosed their way into the interior of the old hulk after the fashion of two inquiring boys, he himself had actually picked up a half-crown which, though it looked practically new, was dated several years back. What a good thing he had put the coin carefully away, and not spent it.

Spent it? Well, he had not been very

long in England, it is true, but he guessed that British law would be pretty strict, where passing bad money was concerned. He might have been arrested—put in prison.

Peter's ideas on the subject were vague enough to set him shivering more than ever.

Well, what was to be done next? Peter had no other idea in his mind but to see it through. If only the mist would hold long enough for him to follow in the wake of that boat and get an idea of what happened next!

Peter picked up his bicycle, and pushed it slowly along the bank of the broad dyke. There had once been some semblance of a track apparently, and the coarse grass was not too long for comfort.

Besides, Peter knew he was not losing any time.

If the two men in the boat were really leading him in the direction of the old hulk, he could trust to his sense of direction to discover the track by which he and Andrew had reached the derelict from the sea lane. So he walked ahead

cautiously, stopping every now and then to listen. But no sound floated through the fog, save the cry of the sea birds on the marsh. Even the splash of the oars had died away in the distance or ceased.

Perhaps the men had reached their objective, wherever it was. If so there was no time to be lost, for a glance at the brimming dyke, showed Peter that while the course of the stream was still upward, the swirl of the current was not nearly so strong. That meant it was practically high water, and “Mr. Smith, of London,” had said something about the “stuff being lifted before the turn of the tide,” after which he intended to return to London.

So Peter went ahead cautiously his eyes smarting as he peered through the dense sea fog.

Suddenly, he brought himself up short with a jerk, moved noiselessly backwards, and lowering his bicycle dropped in the grass, beside it. A big tussock of coarse grass screened him effectually, he hoped. Yet, peering round it, he could see without being seen.

Directly ahead, the big black hull of the wrecked barge loomed through the blanket of fog. There below it, rocking in the current, was the little boat in which the two conspirators had come upstream. It was drawn close under the rotten aperture by which the boys had entered.

From the gloomy interior of the hulk came muffled sounds. Then the men appeared for a moment at the opening. Mr. Smith was showing to the other some object he held in his hand. Peter heard a muttered "Goot, ver goot! better than——"

The rest was lost, for the men disappeared into the darkness behind them again. Then Hans scrambled through the hole and dropped neatly into the boat.

Smith appeared with a canvas bag in either hand. The other man took them, holding them in fashion that proved their weight, lifted up the stern seat of the boat, and dropped them into a cavity underneath. Leaving it open, the man reached up towards the hole again. Smith reappeared, holding a similar couple of bags in his hand. But before he could

hand them through the aperture to his companion, something happened. Peter, taking care to remain unseen, and still peeping through the long grass on the top of the hummock, raised himself a little on his elbows so that his body was lifted above the ground. At the same moment, from some unseen spot on the rolling deck of the hulk above the men's heads, came a voice, crying loudly:

“Stop! I arrest you in the name of the Law!”

CHAPTER XIV

Arrested

“STOP! I arrest you in the name of the Law!” Twice the words boomed clearly through the fog above the men’s heads.

Peter himself, dropping flat upon the grass, was hardly prepared for what followed.

Smith dropped the bags in haste, before the startled man in the boat was ready to take them from him. One bag crashed upon the seat. The other hit the rowlock and toppling over, vanished into the muddy creek with a splash.

But apparently the men scarcely noticed their loss. The man in the boat uttered a hoarse cry of rage, whipped something out of his pocket, and pointing it to the spot from which the voice had come, fired a couple of shots in rapid succession.

“Whew!”

Peter had no fear of shots—he had heard a good many in East Africa. But this was something quite different. He bobbed down flatter than ever on the ground.

If they had known—if they had guessed that the two bright eyes of a boy were watching them, and that the voice arresting them was merely the trick of his unusual gift, well, the shots would have come in the opposite direction, that was all.

Peter kept very still. He just managed to glue one eye to a peephole between the long grasses. The man in the boat had whipped something else out of his pocket. There was the flash of steel, as he poised a knife above his head, to cut the rope that held the boat to the opening in the hulk.

But a hand came through that opening, and seized the fingers that held the knife. With that, Smith himself came wriggling through the hole in ignominious fashion, and dropped down besides Hans. Then he released his hold on the man's hand and nodded.

A sharp cut, and the rope parted. Apparently the tide had turned, for the men, each seizing an oar, paddled at an alarming rate, and the boat simply shot down stream and out of sight.

Once or twice the men glanced at the deck of the hulk—then their boat was swallowed up in the fog.

“So, that’s that!”

Peter was almost helpless with laughter for a moment. His ruse had succeeded beyond his wildest hopes.

Then his face grew grave. All danger was not over yet, by a very long way. Mr. Smith and Hans might guess they had been tricked and come back. Hearing no further sound, nor discovering anybody about, they might very well imagine the alarm was a hoax. If they summoned courage to return, and discovered only a schoolboy, instead of the minions of the Law—well, that boy would have little or no chance of looking out for himself.

Peter drew himself up, picked up his bicycle, and with a backward glance every few yards, made for the sea lane. Once

past the hulk, he had no difficulty in forging directly ahead, knowing he would strike a track before very long. He was not mistaken. Before very long he had covered the same ground as he had done when Andrew was with him, and found himself on the sea lane.

The mist appeared to be thinning a bit, Peter was rather perturbed. What if the blanket of fog rolled completely away from Widemarsh, revealing a solitary boy on a bicycle, instead of a posse of policemen?

It was more than possible that the two men were lurking in one of the many small runnels that led off the main dyke, waiting to see what happened.

So Peter rode fast hoping to gain the main road before the mist rolled away.

Then he back pedalled for all he was worth, as the sound of the starting of a car met his ears. The fog still shrouded the trees round Widemarsh House, but Peter knew it could not be far ahead. Indeed, almost as he ran his machine to the side of the lane, and jumped off noiselessly on the soft grass, he caught sight of

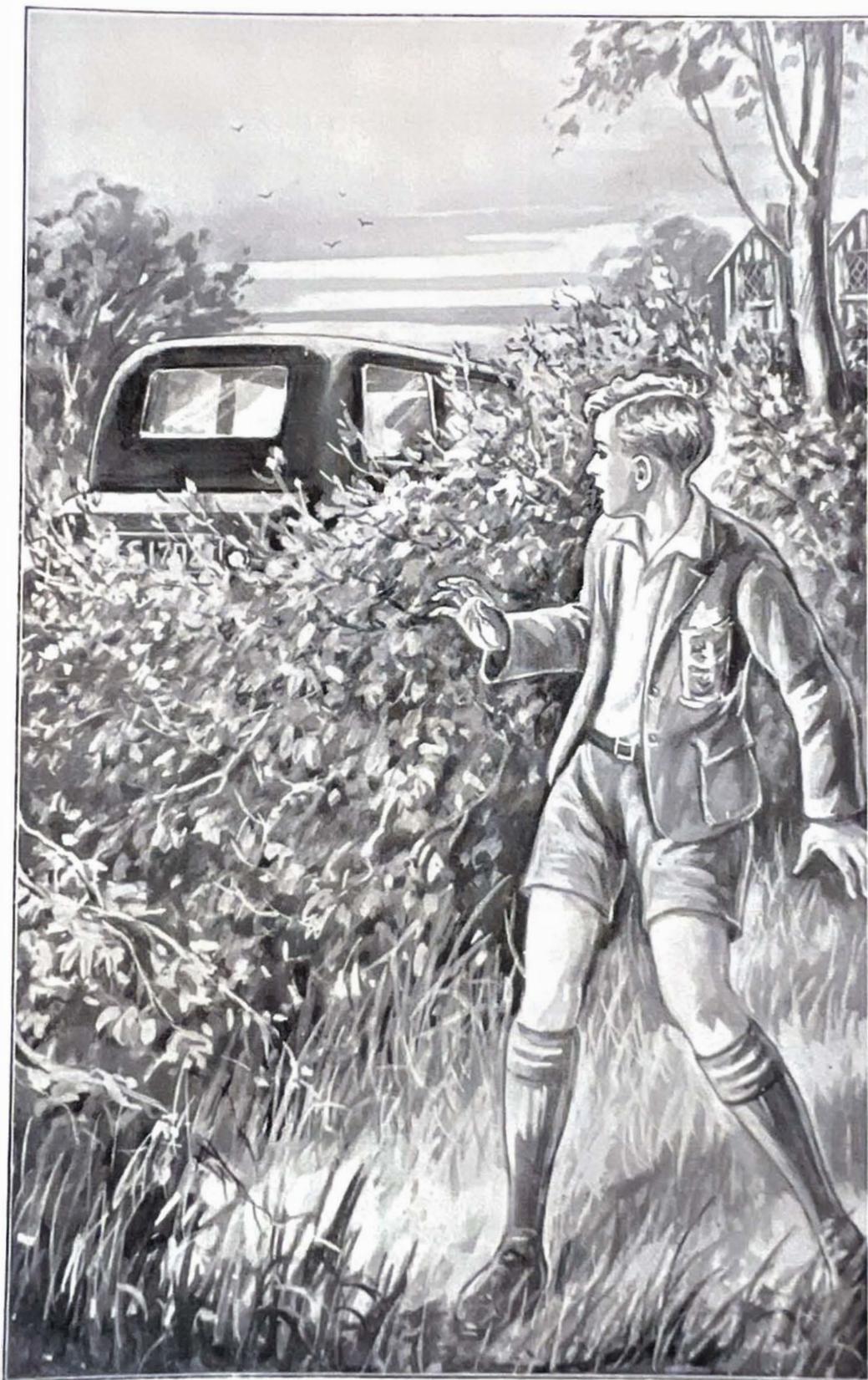
the tangle of shrubs that hung over the low wall, and entrance gate.

It was wide open, and that fact sent Peter to cover on the instant. There was a clump of hazel well overgrown with bramble, on one side of the road. It proved an excellent screen, and Peter whisked to cover in a second.

He had not long to wait. The car backed out of the gate. The man at the wheel was Mr. Smith of London, and no other. He jumped out, closed the gate and fastened the padlock more quickly than Peter would have thought possible. Then he sprang into his car, backed it sufficiently to turn—sufficiently, too, for Peter to see the number! He gave one backward glance over his shoulder—a glance that fortunately did not include Peter behind the bushes. Then Smith shot ahead as if all the Norfolk Constabulary were in his wake.

“Arrested!”

Peter smiled as he pulled out a stub of pencil, and a scrap of paper, to jot down the car number.



THEN MR. SMITH BACKED HIS CAR SUFFICIENTLY TO TURN —  
SUFFICIENTLY, TOO, FOR PETER TO SEE THE NUMBER! (Page 144)

*To face page 144*

“Yes, it was quite true, and no kidding. “I *did* ‘arrest’ them in the name of the Law. Odd I should have thought of those words just then—I read them in a jolly yarn the other day. They were arrested then and there, in one sense—their attempt to carry off their bags was arrested—no doubt they were full of counterfeit coins. Well, the arrest of the men themselves will follow if——”

“If”—yes, that was the point. What was he going to do about it, anyway? Peter himself was not quite sure. Love of adventure and curiosity would have led him to go back to the hulk and have a look round. But while the tide was still fairly high, and the dyke pretty full, he could not enter the hole into the hull. Nor would it be safe, the risk was too great. Besides, though the mist was thinning, it was obviously growing late, and Peter had no idea of the time. He had no desire to be out here when darkness closed in.

So, only waiting until the noise of the car died away in the distance, Peter cycled up the lane. When he reached the main

road, there was no sign of Smith. Peter swung round the turn at a good pace, and began to cover the intervening miles to Seaways. He had reached the scattered village street of Silverholt, and felt quite glad to see one or two people about. Here, at least, he was not alone. When he reached the bye-road leading to Miss Merrion's house, he almost collided with Andrew, sprinting towards the main road at a great rate.

Both boys jumped off, and Andrew gasped with relief:

"Man, we thought you must be drowned. Aunt Eunice is ever so worried."

"I've been worried, too, some!" Peter said grimly. "I've got as queer a yarn to tell as any fellow had. I say—where's the nearest police station? I don't mean just one local copper—this job'll take a lot, with cars, and motor boats."

Andrew looked at his brother anxiously, wondering if a belated touch of sunstroke had stricken him, after all.

"No, I'm not kidding," said Peter, who had seen the look, "you remember that

half-crown I picked up? Well, it was counterfeit—'Snide', the coiners call it. I read it in a yarn in a boy's magazine. Well—there's heaps of it—or was—unless they've come back down in that hulk."

"Don't let's talk here," said Andrew hastily, "here come some of the labourers going into the 'Ass and Goat.' No knowing how much they'll hear. Let's tell Aunt Eunice—she'll know what to do. There's the phone!"

"Right!" said Peter, springing on to his machine, "I never thought of the 'phone at Seaways—that'll do."

## CHAPTER XV

## Tracked !

“WELL, Peter! I expect you thought you were coming to a very tame old England. But I’m sure you’ve had adventures enough to satisfy any boy, for one day.”

Thus said Aunt Eunice, when the two boys burst into the room where she lay as usual upon her sofa, anxiously waiting for news of Peter. In a few breathless sentences, his strange story was told.

“Give me my crutch,” she said, excitedly. “This is too big an affair for our local constable to tackle alone. But I know the Superintendent at Wellmarsh, our nearest town. I’ll ask to speak to him.”

In an incredibly short time the call was put through. A few answers to official questions, and Miss Merrion turned round.

"Come here, Peter! He wants to speak to you himself."

So Peter found himself giving his story again—chiefly by answers to short, direct questions.

At last he hung up the receiver.

"He's going to set the wires going, he says, and then he's coming over here to see me. The Superintendent says I'm to stay right here," added the boy with a laugh. "I certainly don't feel like moving very far, after the day I've had, Aunt Eunice; I'm so hungry, I could nearly eat Andrew."

Miss Merrion's merry laugh rang out. This change from serious happenings, to a healthy hungry schoolboy was delicious.

"No need for cannibalism—it's dead as the dodo, I hope," she said, "here Anne has been fussing and fuming for the last hour, because dinner will be spoiled."

"Nothing can be too spoiled for me," said Peter following Miss Merrion to the well-spread table.

"Now, make a good meal, Peter. Mark my word, the Superintendent at Well-

marsh is even now treading on the gas to some purpose, on the way here to take down your statement."

"That sounds dreadful," said Peter, "the sort of thing one reads in the papers. Anyway, he can't blame me."

"Quite the reverse I should imagine," said Miss Merrion. "Now, no more talking, Peter; you must have a real good dinner."

So Peter munched contentedly, and his brother kept him company. Andrew had returned from Overcliffe quite early in the evening, and when the hour fixed for dinner had long passed, and there was still no sign of Peter, he had offered to cycle back along the main road and see if he could meet his brother.

"Finished at last Peter?" said Miss Merrion rising from her seat at the head of the table, "just in time, I fancy. I can hear a car coming up the drive. I will interview him myself first and explain matters," and she touched the bell, and went out into the hall.

"Show Superintendent Cromer into the

drawing-room, Susan," she said to the maid.

A moment later, Miss Merrion and Norfolk officialdom were left alone together.

"I expect you thought when I spoke to you over the 'phone, that my nephew had got hold of a mare's nest," she said smiling, "but I am sure there is something in it."

"There's a very great deal in it, Madam, and the young man is to be congratulated on saving us a lot of trouble, in finding out just where the lair was. We have had notice for a long time past that false silver was being foisted on the country, chiefly the big seaports. Sailors with foreign coins are glad to exchange them for English money to spend ashore. But that's only one of many ways of disposing of it. A trim little cruising yacht would not arouse very much suspicion, especially as she would not be likely to be carrying contraband from one English port to another and the trick could be worked in so many different places."

"So I suppose. It is rather odd, however,

that my nephew should have come up against it. He and his brother have only been in England a few weeks. They were born and brought up in Africa, where my nephew—their father, is a Government official. They are my great-nephews, really. Their father spent part of his boyhood with me here, and sent the boys over to read with the rector for a Public School entrance examination.”

“He said something over the 'phone about scaring the men off. I couldn't make it out?”

Miss Merrion nodded. “Peter has the odd gift of ventriloquism. He saw them loading heavy bags into the waiting boat, presumably to be taken out to the yacht, which would put off to sea at once. From boys' books and papers, he's picked up some idea of the law—possibly, too, from his father's dealings with the natives; I don't know. But that part he'd better tell you himself.”

So Peter came in and found himself facing a very tall, stern-looking man, whose first words, however, put him at his ease.

"I'm not sure we haven't to thank you," he said, "but I must have the whole story—all of it, mind. Don't leave out any detail. It may not seem important to you, though it might to me. Don't hurry—I want to hear everything."

"But the men—and the yacht."

"You gave me the first man's car number—smart bit of work that, to notice it, I must say. He must have landed from the boat further down the creek, dashed back to the house by a short cut, and escaped. But not for very long, I hope. I set everything in motion before I came over here, and once I have got your statement in full, I'm off again myself. Now, please!"

So Peter began the yarn all over again, forgetting nothing. Andrew passed by on the terrace outside just then, and Peter called him in, to corroborate his account of their first visit to the derelict old hulk on Widemarsh creek.

"I say, Peter, you've got that coin still—shall I fetch it?"

"Sure thing! It's in the carved box in my room."

Andrew returned in a moment. The Superintendent examined the coin carefully, comparing it with a half crown he took from his pocket.

"I must keep this, of course," he said, "I hope by this time some of my men are on the way to the place where they'll find the rest."

"I'm afraid I made a hash of things, now I come to think it over," said Peter disgustedly, as he finished his statement. "You see I felt I wanted to make them drop the game, and give them a good scare. Perhaps I'd better have waited, and then slipped back home and given the alarm."

"And in the meantime, one man would have had the stuff safely aboard the yacht, and the other been well on his way back to London. They'd have left no more traces of their presence than you found in the wreck—not even another tell-tale half-crown."

"You did the right thing to scare them off," added the Superintendent, "but now, I want to know exactly how you did it?"

Peter was standing in front of the officer,

away from the open French window. But suddenly, from the Terrace outside, came a startling cry:

“Stop! I arrest you in the name of the Law!”

Every one started, even Miss Merrion and Andrew, used as they were to the boy's love of displaying his trick.

Peter repeated the words. It was impossible to believe that it did not come from somebody just outside the window.

“Well, I never!”

Peter burst out laughing.

“That wasn't what they said! One of them whisked out a revolver and fired shots into the fog up to the place on the deck above their heads where the voice came from.”

The officer rose.

“Armed too, and you laid them low and kept still? Well, I think you're about as plucky as they make them. Perhaps you've seen a thing or two out in Africa? I'd like to hear about it—but not now.”

“I shan't have to come?”

“You? No! We may not even want

your evidence when we catch them. They're desperate men—and that's our job, not yours. You've done enough. If that bag of silver is still in the dyke, our men will soon fish it up. There'll be no peace for this quiet corner until we've got them laid by the heels. You can leave that to us; it's our job. Anyway, later on, if we do want you, you must hold yourself at our disposal."

CHAPTER XVI

A Cry in the Night

**B**UT, as it happened, Peter was not to be at the disposal of the Superintendent or anybody else for the next few days.

Peter and Andrew shared a big room overlooking the Silverholt Marshes and the sea. As a rule, both boys slept like the proverbial top, but that night it was impossible.

Peter's day, at least, had been crammed more full of excitement than is good for anybody. When they went to bed, neither of them had the least desire for sleep. Peter was full of his adventures, and there were still a lot of questions Andrew wanted to ask.

But even Andrew's curiosity palled at last. After his long ride to and from Overcliffe, he was healthily tired, and by and by he actually dropped asleep, while Peter was answering one of his questions.

It was some time before Peter discovered the fact that he was talking to no purpose to a slumbering boy.

But he himself was wide awake, burning hot, then cold, and decidedly uncomfortable altogether. Dawn was breaking before Peter at last fell asleep. Even then, he tossed and moaned in restless style quite unusual for him.

Needless to say, he woke even more tired than when he went to bed. It was late, too—even for Sunday morning when there was no need for haste.

Andrew was up and dressed already, looking out of the window. It was dreary enough—as unlike an August morning as could be. As often happens, the fog had turned to rain. It was coming down with that steady persistence which generally betokens a wet day.

Peter couldn't hurry. He was like a piece of elastic with all the spunk gone out of it, though it never occurred to him why it was he felt so unusually out of sorts.

Andrew turned away from the window,

and went downstairs. A moment later he was back again.

“Hurry up, Peter. Anne’s just bringing in the tray. It smells just scrumptious!”

He vanished once more, and Peter went on dressing. But this morning the process was a slow one, for he was feeling decidedly limp and washed out. It was the custom for the two boys to have breakfast by themselves; on week days they had to hurry off to lessons at the rectory. Miss Merrion, in spite of her plucky fight against the results of her accident, was too much of an invalid to have strength for a very long day. She did not appear downstairs at breakfast, or she would certainly have noticed that Peter was not himself, this morning, and that something more ailed him, besides the natural reaction after yesterday’s excitement.

“I don’t want anything to eat!” said Peter, feverishly drinking a cup of tea, and pouring out another.

“Not anything to eat?” Andrew stared aghast, for Peter was a capital trencherman as a rule.

"Why, Anne has excelled herself this morning. Sausages and bacon, toast—and your favourite hot rolls. I think Aunt Eunice must have told her something. You are the hero of the hour, and as far as Anne is concerned, I'm getting a share of it. It's late, buck up, man."

But Peter couldn't buck up. It was impossible this morning. Even Anne's bounteous spread did not tempt him. He split a delicious hot roll, buttered it generously, and took a few mouthfuls. Then he pushed his plate aside, and got up.

"Some weather!" he said in tones of disgust, as he crossed to the window, and after one glance turned away. "Anyway, I'm glad, ever so glad!"

"Glad it's raining? Why, Peter, what do you mean? It'll be a wet walk to church."

"Let it rain; all the better. I'm not going to Church. For one thing I have enough of old "Setwork" all the week, without having to listen to him on Sunday. For another—I've got a horrid headache."

With that, Peter turned away and went out of the room.

Seeking his brother later on, Andrew ran him to earth in the study, a small room that the boys used for their homework. Here there were books in plenty, of all descriptions, grave and gay.

Here was Peter, lying full length on the lounge. A book had fallen from his hand; he was fast asleep.

"Never knew old Peter to do such a thing before," said Andrew in puzzled fashion, "he must have been dead beat yesterday."

So Andrew trudged off alone through the rain, to make just one more in the great empty church, for only a little handful of people had braved the weather.

It was not until Miss Merrion found Peter's place was empty at lunch-time, that she knew there was anything at all amiss.

"Why, Andrew, where's Peter?"

"He was fast asleep in the library when I went out, Aunt Eunice, and still asleep when I came in."

"Asleep? Peter?"

Miss Merrion could hardly believe that she had heard aright.

"He must have been awfully tired yesterday, and he didn't want any breakfast," said Andrew. "I woke him up just now, he won't be long."

With that, Peter himself appeared, a murmured apology on his lips.

Miss Merrion looked at him keenly. Was it merely the reaction after the thrilling adventure of yesterday, that had made Peter's eyes heavy, and brought a flush to his cheek? He had not been home long enough from Africa to display a real healthy English colour.

"Fancy you sleeping in the morning, Peter! Did you have a bad night?"

"I—we talked a bit," he said listlessly. "When Andrew dropped off, I couldn't sleep—properly. I kept dreaming of dykes—and the man with the pistol. Oh, please, Aunt Eunice"—as she gave him his usual large helping—"I, I only want ever such a little bit. I don't feel like anything."

"Why, Peter! Your favourite dinner, too—roast chicken, cauliflower, and browned potatoes."

But Peter shook his head. When she

had given him a very much smaller helping, he only took a few mouthfuls, and Anne's delicious chocolate pudding he refused altogether.

He shivered as he rose from the table. Miss Merrion saw this, and said kindly:

"I'm afraid you got a chill yesterday, Peter."

"I did feel chilly. I must have dropped asleep on the hot sand, in my bathing togs, and when I woke up, the fog was as cold as cold."

"I should just think so; and though it's summer by the calendar it's as cold as cold as you say, in fog or in rainy kind of weather like to-day. Ring the bell, Andrew, I'm going to ask Susan to light us a good fire in the drawing-room. I could do with a bit of warmth myself. Then we'll try and forget it's August, and imagine it's November."

So, before many minutes had passed, Miss Merrion was resting on her couch as usual. Peter was snugly esconced in a huge armchair beside a roaring fire, while Andrew settled down with a book. His

brother seemed too tired to read, and from time to time Miss Merrion glanced at him rather anxiously.

A boy straight home from the tropics dropping asleep on the shore in a damp bathing suit, and waking to find himself shivering in a cold fog? Then, on the top of it all, he had lingered on the wet marshes, watching the antics of a couple of desperate men, and ridden home at top speed, bursting with excitement.

No wonder! Peter had had adventures to satisfy the most exacting lover of thrills. Was he going to pay the price?

After tea, Miss Merrion summoned kindly old Anne to conference, and Peter was despatched to bed at an unearthly hour fortified with lemon, an aspirin, and even a hot water bottle.

"If he's no better in the morning," confided Miss Merrion to her faithful maid, "I shall not allow him to go for coaching at the rectory. I shall send for the doctor."

"Deed, ma'am, and you can't do no less, him coming home an' all from them

heathenish places where they roast you alive in the sun before you're dead. Nice young gentlemen, they are, too. I hope's Master Peter'll be better in the morning."

But long before morning it was quite evident that Peter was not better, but worse.

Andrew woke up with a start in the middle of the night, hearing unwonted sounds from the other side of the room.

The rain had ceased, and through the uncurtained window, the light of the full moon was reflected on a boyish figure sitting upright in bed with outstretched arms.

Andrew hurried across to his brother.

"I say, what's up? Anything I can get you?"

But Peter had no idea of Andrew's presence.

"Tear them up, let them float away—away! Catch those men—oh, it's cold! Help me to forget, help me to forget!—false coin—but not a false heart, please God!"

Andrew stood still, completely bewildered. What did this strange jumble mean?

What was the connection between false coin—a false heart—and something that was to be “Torn up, to float away . . . help me to forget . . . not a false heart, please God?”

Peter praying; was it possible? It seemed so. Were Peter’s troubled dreams an echo of his thoughts, or a repetition of some experiences he had had in waking hours?

The murmured words were repeated.

Andrew could make neither head nor tail of it all. But there was one thing to be done, and one only.

He touched Peter’s hand, and shrank back—it was like touching a bit of metal that had been exposed for hours to the blistering heat and scorching rays of the equatorial sun.

“I say, Peter!”

Andrew took up the half-finished glass of lemon, and held it to his brother’s lips. The boy roused up sufficiently to drink it

feverishly, and then gasped, "More! no, water!"

So Andrew let him drink as much as he liked, before he spoke to him again.

"What's up, man? Worrying about those barge chaps? You did your bit—it was grand! The bobbies will see to the rest. Go to sleep again."

Peter did not answer, but much to Andrew's relief, he snuggled down comfortably on his pillow, apparently dropping off into a quiet sleep.

His brother stood watching him, wondering. Was Peter's mind actually turning towards prayer? If so—well, there was only one thing to be done, and Andrew did it. He knelt down in the moonlight beside the sleeping boy. Then Andrew was very still for a long time.

Peter had dropped any childhood habit of saying prayers a long time ago. But now it seemed as if he had at last begun to pray—a prayer about some trouble that persisted even in his dreams. Andrew himself had no idea what the trouble was.

But God knew!

## CHAPTER XVII

## Forgiven is Forgotten

“**D**OCTOR to see you, Master Peter.  
He’s a fresh one!”

“Oh, well, thanks Anne! Show him in.”

Peter, lying on the study lounge in the warm sunshine, did not trouble to lift his head. Indeed, it was too much fag, and the doctor would not expect it.

A new doctor? Well, he had a vague idea the Widemarsh medico had said something about going away for a holiday, but Peter had not gathered he was off quite so soon. Well, what mattered? Probably the one who had been attending him had told the new one the whole sorry tale—how he, a lithe and fearless school boy, had been laid low by a miserable chill.

Indeed, Peter had narrowly escaped pneumonia, and was downstairs to-day for

the first time, feeling as much unlike his real self as possible.

It was a gloriously warm summer morning—just the day for a cycle run, and a swim. But Peter felt at the moment that it would be a very long time before he had the slightest inclination for either.

He was alone at the moment. Anne—“Attentive Anne” as he had gratefully learned to call her during his illness—had brought him in some delicious chicken broth. When she fetched the empty cup, she announced the visitor.

“Well, Peter, this has been a pretty kettle of fish, I must say!”

Peter jerked his head round sharply. This was surely not the greeting of a strange locum, approaching an unknown patient.

There was no formality, or professional bedside manner; indeed, there seemed something familiar in the voice.

“Why, Dr. Compton!”

“The very same,” he said, sitting down where he could see Peter’s face.

“I say, I’m sorry,” stammered the boy,

"but Andrew's out—up at the Rectory with our coach."

"So I expected. I came over to see you. First of all, congratulations."

Peter flushed.

"You heard, then?"

"Who hasn't? I tell you, it's been a rare scoop for the Norfolk papers. I wonder that the 'Daily Scream' hasn't sent a photo-reporter chap to get an interview and a portrait."

"I've been ill," said Peter grimly. "Some chap did come. Aunt Eunice and Andrew choked him off between them." The boy grinned at Andrew's description of the interview, and the chagrin of the disappointed reporter.

"He made the most of what they told him, then," laughed Dr. Compton. "You won't recognise yourself when you're well enough to read it all in the papers. 'Young hero ill. Suffers for his bravery,' and all that."

"Rot," said Peter flushing, "I suppose I wasn't used to the climate after Africa. I came out of the sea and had a sunbathe to

dry. I must have gone to sleep and got a chill with the fog. The rest—oh, well, I was shivering before I watched those two beauties, and their bags of counterfeit silver. I'm glad they got them, though."

"Thanks to you and the Super's prompt action, the gang is broken up—here and abroad. The two men you saw were caught, and are in prison as well as some of the others. It was a neat job—the police did not lose a moment."

"Smith was traced to his lair in London, wasn't he? He'd used Widemarsh House to hide the stuff till the yacht fetched it," said Peter. "They followed him about till they spotted an old empty workshop where they actually made the stuff. Then a radio was sent in time to arrest the yacht and take her into an English harbour with some of the silver hidden on board. The police found the bag they dropped, too, in the creek when the tide went down."

"A strange set of happenings for a boy of your age to be mixed up with," said Dr. Compton, "you were very plucky, Peter, to lie low and make no sound,

when they were shooting wildly into the fog. That old trick of yours again."

Peter was silent. He was beginning to feel there had been a bit too much fuss made about it all. Besides, he had not forgotten Dr. Compton's attitude to him on board the "Royal Africa."

"A voice from the unseen," said Dr. Compton, quietly, "others besides those two criminals have had the same kind of shock. Sometimes, too, the speaker has not been just a boy with an unusual gift, nor have the words been heard by human ear—but in the inward listening of the conscience. Have you ever heard that Voice of God, Peter, and 'listened in'?"

Peter's white cheeks flushed, then paled again. He turned to his questioner abruptly,

"How did you know?"

It was Dr. Compton's turn to be surprised.

"Know what? I don't understand!"

"He did speak to me—that day on the beach. I—I didn't understand then: I do now. I've had a lot of time to think

since I've been ill. Anyway, I knew it was wrong, and it'll never happen again—never. Only I can't forget."

"It's easier to do than to undo; forgetting is part of the undoing. But God is equal to anything. Have you been to Him, about it?"

"Yes," said Peter, "but that isn't forgetting. It—it was something I read that's all. I—I don't want to tell you any more; it would seem like—like trying to bring it back to memory instead of forgetting."

"Exactly!" said the young doctor heartily, "the very last thing I want, is for you to bring back to your remembrance what you feel you ought to forget—by telling me about it. I'm human—in the sight of God a sinner like yourself, though, thank God, a sinner saved by His grace, and the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. Of course, it does help us sometimes to ask somebody's advice, when we are not sure about how best to make a stand against wrong. But that's not confessing your sins to me—or I mine, to

somebody else. No human being can forgive another's sin—'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' and that's enough. Whatever you read—and many things that are published now-a-days are just rank poison to the mind and soul—well, it's done with. You've been to God about it. He has not only forgiven—He has forgotten."

"How can I be sure?"

"Because He says so—and His Word is the surest thing that is. Look at this!" He pulled out his little pocket Bible, and pointed to the words: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and *will not remember thy sins.*"

"When a thing is 'blotted out,' what happens? When you pass a sponge over a slate—when the sun rises in all its power over a mist—what is left?"

"Nothing—it's gone."

"Exactly! Look again. Here it is, 'I have blotted out thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins!' Isn't that enough? Why has He done it? Because

'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.' Take out the 'our,' Peter, in that verse, and put in 'my.' 'He was wounded for *my* transgressions.' Isn't that enough to cover everything?"

The boy was silent, and the silence was a prayer.

When at last Dr. Compton came away, something more had happened to Peter—something infinitely greater and far more important than anything that had happened up till now.

God had forgiven. God had forgotten. It was up to Peter to forget—in the strength of that forgiving God.

It was some time longer before Peter was able to go to and fro with Andrew, to resume his interrupted studies.

But he had been learning still greater lessons, and his brother was not long before he found it out. They were more than brothers now.

At last the great day came. Both of them had managed to get through the

entrance exam. to Cliffdown College, and on a golden Autumn morning they exchanged the silent marshes of Silverholt, for the big, bustling world of a great school at a city in the west.

They expected no letters to be waiting for them, of course, when they arrived—just two “freshers” to public school life, feeling strangely out of it all at first.

But each of them found a small packet, addressed to himself. Both contained a few lines from Dr. Compton, and a dainty vest pocket Testament.

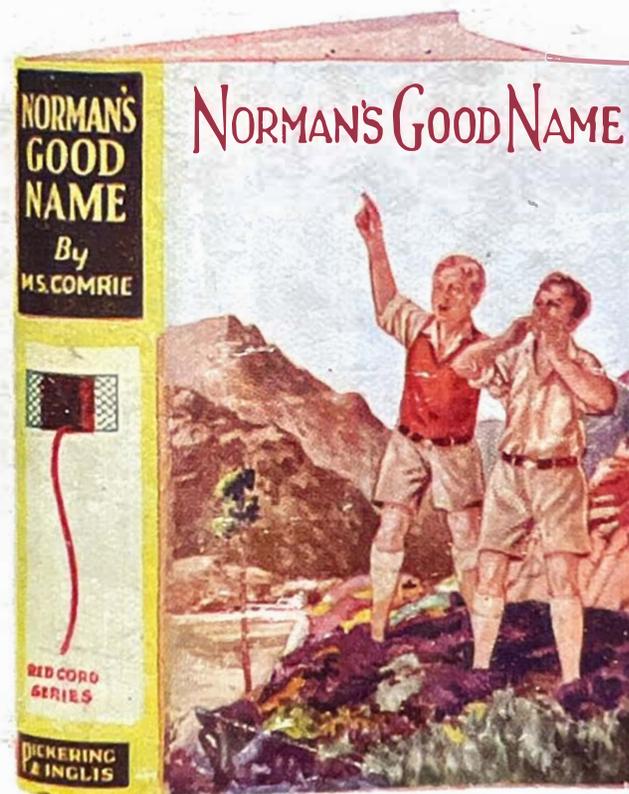
Peter found himself looking at the words upon the flyleaf:

“Thine ears shall hear a Word behind thee, saying, ‘This is the Way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’”

Peter was very thoughtful for a moment. Then he whispered:

“That’s the Prize I mean to win, too!”

# Story Books for Boys



CROWN 8VO  
SIZE  
ILLUSTRATED

**2/** NET  
2/5 post free

WOPS THE WAIF.....	SYDNEY WATSON
FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT.....	H. F. ELLISON
TOM TRESCOE'S TREASURE.....	GRACE PETTMAN
NORMAN'S GOOD NAME.....	MARGT. S. COMRIE
YOUNG ISHMAEL CONWAY.....	E. A. BLAND
THE MISSIONARY'S CHARM.....	K. M. MACLEOD
THE HAND ON THE BRIDLE.....	K. M. MACLEOD
ONLY US THREE.....	E. A. BLAND
CABIN AND CASTLE.....	E. A. BLAND
ROBERT LAWS, OF LIVINGSTONIA.....	JAMES JOHNSTON
WILLIAM CAREY, OF INDIA.....	PERCY H. JONES
JAMES CHALMERS, OF NEW GUINEA.....	WILLIAM ROBSON
ROBERT MOFFAT, OF KURUMAN.....	D. J. DEANE
GEORGE MULLER OF BRISTOL.....	FREDK. G. WARNE
JAMES HANNINGTON OF AFRICA.....	C. D. MICHAEL
ROBERT MORRISON OF CHINA.....	D. J. TOWNSEND

**DICKERING & INGLIS**  
LTD