# "SHIP AHOY!"

## A Yarn in Thirty-six Cable Lengths

TWENTY-FIFTH CABLE LENGTH.

HOW MR. TUDGE WAS TEMPTED.

"Mr. Tudge, miss."

"Size him in, Samuel," said May.

There was a great deal of shoe-rubbing on the mat outside, and then entered Mr. Tudge, very spruce, his hair curled—he had spent an hour at a hair-dresser's on his way; his tail-coat of peculiar cut, buttoned tight across his chest; and a general gain aspect about him, largely increased by his carrying an immense bouquet in his hand.

"How are you Mr. Tudge?" said May, advancing, with a sad smile, to shake hands.

"Like a man coming into sunshine, my darling," said Tudge, taking her hand and kissing it. "Ah, my dear, once upon a time, when you were little, it used to be your hand."

"And it used not now, dear Mr. Tudge," said May, offering her cheek to the old man, who kissed it tenderly, and then sat down on the couch beside her, retaining her hand, and, after laying down the bouquet carefully by his side, patting and stroking it tenderly.

"Rose you, my dear," he said, with tears in his eyes—"God bless you! And you have grown such a beautiful young woman, too. Sich I always said you would; didn't I now, my dear—didn't I always say you would?"

"You always spoiled me, Mr. Tudge," said May, laughing.

"Not I," said Tudge, jestonly. "But May, my dear, I have some news to tell you. Don't you remember the cheese-cakes, the almond rock, and the plums.

"Oh yes," said May, smiling sadly. "I remember it all, Mr. Tudge.

"To be sure you do, my sweet; and I always said you'd grow up a beauty. But, you see, I'm a man old fogy at a loiterer; but I know what's what. See here—there's a posy for you!"

Any body else the flowers he held out with such pride—for he had gone to get a simple bouquet at first, and had, by purchasing the choicest bouquet of exotics he could find.

"I have very kind of you, Mr. Tudge, and they are very sweet."

"Not so sweet as her they're meant for," said Tudge, beaming at the poor plump face. "And look how I've neglected to send you any thing lately, my dear! All business, though," he added, gloomily—"all business."

"That's what I asked you to come for, dear Mr. Tudge. You've often told me you looked upon me as a daughter."

"To be sure—to be sure. Why, didn't you use to laugh and call me old Uncle Tudge in the old days, eh? To be sure you did; and ah! what fun we used to have!" His face was all smiles now, and leaning over her, he softly stroked down, as he each side, her bright, glossy hair. "But stop," he said seriously—"business. Why did you send for me?"

The old man faced round, serious as a judge, with his cane between his knees, and held up impressively.

"I never bring the business outside the office, my dear.

"But it is for your papa's good I want to know," said May; "it may be all the my confidence."

"Confidence, my darling!" said Tudge; "why, he's offered me to be partner six times—six times, think of that! Said I'd half the business, and drawer to boot."

"And why were you not, Mr. Tudge?"

"Why not, my dear? Why should I have been I might where I was. Why was I to have taken my place if I had been partner? No; as I said, I did save a few hundreds, and go on my own way, I didn't want to change. But if I'd known what I know now, I would have been."

"Why?" said May, anxiously.

"Why?" To shut the wheel going down hill—to set a check and stop the rot. Where is he to-night?"

"Gone to dine at Mr. Longdale's!" cried the old man, starting up, and stamping about the room—forgetting, too, in his wrath, his reticence about the office. "I beg your pardon, my child—I ask your pardon, I'm sure, but as soon as I hear his name or—his name," he exclaimed, choking himself, "I get mad about my old business I'm going to the dev—old Harry."

"Then things are very wrong, Mr. Tudge?" exclaimed May.

"Wrong, my darling, they're—

Slap!

Mr. Tudge administered a smart tap to his mouth to close it, and then took a good look at May's astonished face.

"If you only knew how anxious I am about your peace," said May, pleadingly, "I'm sure you'd tell me."

"Can't," said Tudge. "No business out of the office."

"But I'm so anxious," said May.

"So am I," said Tudge.

"And I do so long to know."

"Can't help it, my dear."

"Do tell me, Mr. Tudge, fearfully.

"Would it I could—if I can't, how can I?" said Tudge, sternly.

"Do tell—for poor papa's sake!"

"Now, don't tempt me, my dear."

"I may tell him, Mr. Tudge, pleadingly, "I'm sure you'd tell him."

"Not believed about saints being tempted before now," said the old man, addressing the ceiling—"but I do believe it, and give in. What do you want to know?"

"About dear papa's affairs, and why he is so dispirited."

"Well, I'll tell you," he said, tenderly, as May nestled up to him—"I'll tell you, darling, for you've his own flesh and blood, and I don't know that I'm doing wrong, after all."

"Are things so bad, then?" said May, alarmed at his serious tone.

"Very, very, very bad, my darling," said the old man, sadly. "But don't you be alarmed, my dear—for, as I said, I've saved five thousand pounds—nearly six—and it's all there, every shilling, though I did mean to help him. You sha'n't come to poverty, my darling, while Tudge has a pound to the good, my dear."

"But why, why would you not let pape have it if he wanted it?" said May.

"Why, my dear? Because I was losing himself. He's forsaking my advice, which never failed him, and going by what that Longdale says."

"But Mr. Longdale advises him well."

"To lose every penny he has, and to make his name stink like carrion!" cried Tudge, angrily. "Mr. Longdale ought to be hung—hung!—hung!—there, I believe I'd do it myself—I'd hang him."

"Oh, Mr. Tudge!"

"Well, don't he deserve it? And as for his partner—that Merritt—

"Oh!"

"Just like me. I might have known that I should do it. Serve me right for talking of business matters before people, and out of office."

"It was nothing," said May recovering herself; "the business of Mr. Tudge, don't say anything about Mr. Merritt. You forget that I am engaged to be married to him."

"Oh no, no, my poor child—I don't say that. I did hope that was all off."

"Papa wishes it," said May coldly.

"But you—you never fell in love with him," said Tudge, earnestly.

May shook her head sadly.

"Then you sha'n't marry him," said Tudge.

"Papa wishes it," said May; "and he tells me these reports are false about Mr. Merritt."

"Ah, my child," said the old man, "I did hope things would have turned out different to this. I did hope to have lived to see you and John Anderson man and wife, and to have kissed and blessed your little ones before I cast up my last accounts and gave in my balance-sheet to the God who made me, and said, 'That's the best I could make of it, and I wish the returns were better.' But now all seems to be going wrong; and if you marry that Merritt—Then, my pretty one, don't," he cried excitedly. "I'll go down on my knees and beg you not to, if you like—don't marry him; be an old bachelor like me—no, I don't mean that, I mean an old, old—dear, dear, the accounts muddled—I mean be an old maid—anything but Philip Merritt's wife."

"Dear Mr. Tudge," said May, sadly, "papa believes in Mr. Merritt. He has promised him, and we have been long engaged. I must marry him. And, besides, he assures me that there is no truth in those reports."

"And Mr. Longdale backs him up," said Tudge.

"Yes," said May, simply.

"God help you, my child!" said Tudge, fervently; and, without any attempt at concealment, he drew out a great bandanna and wiped his eyes. "I don't know, though," he added, "that I need mind; for three was but one man in the world, and he's"—gulp—"dead."

There was a pause of a few moments' duration, and then May said, softly,

"Are papa's affairs in a very bad state?"

"Horrible," said Tudge, rustily. "It's heart-breaking, my dear. Loss after loss. The poor May goes—your namesake; and he so infatuated that he's making advances to those people, Rutherford and Co., though I did see that the money loss isn't all, but his name is being so mixed up with Rutherford's that he's gone—blown on with Lloyd's. Our house was the finest name in the City of London, and now—for very weak of my my child," said the old man, wiping his eyes; "but it's heart-breaking to see one's life labour spoiled by villains."

"And—if it is true—has Mr. Longdale much interest with your brother?"

"My dear, it's once to this; he's twined himself about your father like a snake, and fascinated him; and your poor father can't shake him off. There, I won't say no more."

May pressed him to stay and have some tea, but he refused; and, though she asked him other questions, the old man would not break his vow—he would say no more, and soon after he took his leave.

TWENTY-SIXTH CABLE LENGTH.

MR. MERRITT'S ADVICE TO MAY "YES."

"And do you really wish it, papa?" said May, laying her hand caliss arm.

"Yes—yes, my child, I do indeed. Poor Philip has been begging very hard, and I promised him that I would do all I could."

"Depends upon it possible that the Victor or brother men have been saved?"

"Now, my dear child, why rake that up? You know she was lost, and poor Anderson with her. It's too bad of you," he added, weakly—"it is, indeed, knowing as you do how I am mixed up now with Rutherdy's, to go raking up those wretched stories about the ships."

"I was not raking up old stories, papa," said May. "I only wanted to be sure that—that the Victrix had sank."

"Sank? yes," said the old man bitterly; "and so did the Mercy May. It's horrible how unlucky I've been of late! But we are going to do wonders, and Providence, you shall have such a fortune, my child. Mr. Longdale tells me that we shall."

"Does papa, do you think, Mr. Longdale is to be trusted?"

"Now, my dear child, how can you be so willful, so absurd? What can be more nonsensical than for you!! to meddle with anything connected with City affairs! It's disloyal in the the extreme."

May was silent.

"But about the wedding. Merritt wants it to come off at Christmas. What do you say?"

May sat silent and dreamy.

"My dear, this wedding. What do you say?"

Again there was a pause, and then May laid her hands upon the old man's shoulders, and looked into his dim eyes, his livid face, and shivered as she saw the alteration made in a few months.

"Papa, dear," she said, "suppose I were to tell Mr. Merritt that I would not marry him?"

"What?"

"Suppose I repeated May, in a clear, cold, cutting voice,"I were to tell Mr. Merritt that I would not marry him—what then?"

"May—May!" gasped the old man, trembling with anxiety and passion, "you've been plotting with somebody. That accursed Tudge has been here, I know he has. I heard so, and he has urged you to this disobedience. I—"

"No one has had any influence on my part in this," said May, calmly. "I only ask you, before I give my consent to marry Mr. Merritt, what effect it would have upon you if I were to refuse."

"It would be bankrupt."

"Bankrupt?"

"Yes, ruined. I can't help it, my child, but I've gone wrongkonwhow; and this will set me right. In spite of all that has passed, I believe Philip Merritt to be an honorable gentleman, and I would not believe to be contrary to his word, and come back from the dead to tell me they were not."

"Then, papa, papa," said May, in a hard, cold voice, "that my wedding would save you from ruin?"

"Yes, my child. It must be you or the other May. But one is lost, and the other is alive. May, my May, would you sacrifice your old father diahonoured?"

"No," said May, kissing him gently on the forehead.

"And I may tell Philip that he may have you?"

"Yes," said May sadly; and she laid her hand upon a bow of crape at her bosom.

"And in the old Christmas time?"

"Yes, father," said May, in a cold, stony way.

"Bless you, my child—bless you!" murmured the old man, folding her in his arms, and kissing her forehead.

"Stop," said May, suddenly. "Perhaps I will give you my answer to-morrow."

"Eh, my child—why?"

"I will give you my answer to-morrow, papa. I ask one poor twenty-four hours' grace.

The old man muttered some objection, and then left the room, for May, who, as soon as he was gone, had a cab fetched, and went to Mrs. Rowell's.

She staid with her an hour, and then went on to Mrs. Anderson's, to find the old lady sitting very cheerfully in the sun, one of her room; and here, too, she staid an hour.

Dinner was just over at Canonbury, and May had risen to go to her drawing-room.

"May, my child," said Mrs. Tudge, "you will not trifle with me? I have told Mr. Merritt that he shall have your answer to-morrow?"

"Mr. Merritt could have had it to-night, if he wished," said May, sadly.

"And—and—

"Silence, Tudge!" cried Mr. Halley, angrily; and Tudge turned to the book.

"I will not, though I am down, have my domestic arrangements called into question. Let people talk; all the same, Merritt is a fine young fellow, and Longdale a gentleman. And now about meeting those engagements for them. When are they due?"

"Three months, and upwards," said Tudge, shortly.

"Let them be met," said Mr. Halley.

"But it will leave us without a hundred pounds to go on with."

"Let them be," said Mr. Halley; "let them be met. I promised, and I'll keep my word."

Tudge grumbled as he made an entry in a memorandum-book, and then sat back in his chair.

"Any thing more?" he said.

"There's no hope, I suppose, about the poor Rutherfords?"

Tudge shook his head sadly.

"Good heavens! how dreadful!" groaned the old man. "Tudge," he exclaimed, "I can't bear to see any one belonging to me over. I couldn't bear it in my present state."

"You used to face it out like a man, Mr. Halley," said Tudge. "Think what people will say if you don't."

"But four vessels in nine months, Tudge—it's fearful! It will make them think horrible things."

"You never used to have such fancies in that, Mr. Halley," said Tudge. "See what comes of mixing with Rothesdy's."

"But I don't believe anything of the kind of them," cried Mr. Halley, sharply. "You're twisting against me, Tudge, in my troubles. I didn't think it of you. But, there—go, and let me be quiet."

"There, I won't be savage with you," said Tudge. "You don't mean what you say."

"Yes, yes, I do," cried Mr. Halley, passionately as a child.

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"You shall give me full powers to pull you through."

"Yes, yes; only I will have all engagements met."

"Well, yes, that's right. Rutherdy's bills shall be met—we must do that. Halley's wife must be kept comfortable, and Philip proudly.

Mr. Halley groaned.

"Then I'll be off," said Tudge, "and do the best I can; but, old friend, you'll come to your senses before the end."

"Tudge," said Mr. Halley, clinging to his old clerk's hand, with the tears running down his cheeks, "I'm ill and weak, and this affair is killing me. Pay every body, and if I have any money left, be satisfied May is provided for. Merritt will take care of her, and I believe in him. But I've done wrong, Tudge, and I feel it—I feel it—I feel the slanders that attach to him have come on me too. I didn't see that before."

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"Don't," replied Mr. Halley, shaking hands with him earnestly; "and come up to-morrow."

Tudge nodded shortly, gathered up his papers, closed his bag with a snap, and went out of the room.

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Long went the ruler on the desk.

"Now about money matters. Awful, four fine vessels going like that. It would cripple any house if the loss fall on them as it does on us; but things will out up better when the crops, even when those accounts have put their bills met. Of course they'll pay up again! Don't we wish we may get it?

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"Who's that?—eh? How and I" exclaimed Longdale. "How things do vary, to be sure. Four vessels in nine months! Why, Mr. Tudge, you'll have those cowardly slanderers attacking your house next—same as they have attacked ill-found ships, and that sort of thing."

"Yes," said Tudge, shortly. "No doubt."

"Pray tell Mr. Halley how sorry I am. I'm in trouble myself, you see, about my poor dear May. By-the-way, Tudge, come and dine with me some evening—friendly, you know, just you and me. I've a glass of a curious old wine I should like you to taste. And, by-the-way, don't say I was little enough to say anything about those bills. Good-bye, Tudge, good-bye. We shall be seeing each other every day, I hope."

Mr. Longdale had no sooner been shown out than the clerks started, for Mr. Tudge's ruler came down upon the table with the fiercest bang ever heard by his subordinates.

"My word, the old chap's in a wax!" said one.

"Yes," said another, "and well he may be."

Meanwhile, Mr. Longdale walked hurriedly into Cornhill, and made his way into one of the shop-boxes, where Merritt was waiting his arrival.

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"Well, why the dence don't you go on? What are you thinking about?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said Longdale, with a fictitious start of surprise. "I was thinking."

"Well, I know you were; but what about?"

"Of Mr. May Halley."

"I'm much obliged, but perhaps you'll let me do all the thinking about her!"

"Why, what's the matter? Thinking under her altered circumstances, her twain will prove cousins; and if he does not, whether she would smile on an adorer who does not wear my mother's diamonds?"

"Philip Merritt leaped up angrily, scowled at his partner for a moment, and then hurried into the street, and made his way to where he was expected—namely, to Mr. Tudge's private room; for he was this day received in ordinary desk.

"Mr. Merritt, sir," said the clerk.

"Show him in," said Tudge; and the clerk did so, and the young man was ever ace to face.

"How do, Tudge?" said Merritt, with-out offering to make hands or receive hands; as he sat down upon some loose papers on the table, while Tudge, where he began to wring his wrist crook to rest.

"What the devil are you going on like that for?" cried Tudge, indignantly. "Who ever said the wrist's well-bound slip?"

"Yes, I suppose they will," said Tudge, sharply. "They'll say anything, I know, that you're so linked in with Rutherdy that you're trying their game."

"Why, what's the matter, Tudge, pray," said Mr. Halley, pistfully—"don't hit me when I'm down."

"I must," said Tudge; "I can't help it. It's all for you good, too; for you would do the same, I advise you—beg of you—pray of you not."

"Yes, you, Tudge—you did," said Mr. Halley, hard and bitterly.

"And you would do it," cried Tudge. "As I wish I had my arm here."

"It was merely to keep down on the bed, not to punish the old ship-owner; and Tudge rolled up the sleeve of his and gesticulated and struck the bed with that.

"Yes, Tudge," sighed the old man, with a last despairing plaice for comfort as the figures in the ledger, but finding none—"yes, Tudge, I was very obstinate; and now I am more cursed than Job."

"No, you're not," said Tudge. "Job had his children killed, while you are trying to kill your one."

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"Yes, you, Tudge—you did," said Mr. Halley, hard and bitterly.

"And you would do it," cried Tudge. "As I wish I had my arm here."

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"Yes, Tudge," sighed the old man, with a last despairing plaice for comfort as the figures in the ledger, but finding none—"yes, Tudge, I was very obstinate; and now I am more cursed than Job."

"No, you're not," said Tudge. "Job had his children killed, while you are trying to kill your one."

"Silence, Tudge!" cried Mr. Halley, angrily; and Tudge turned to the book.

"I will not, though I am down, have my domestic arrangements called into question. Let people talk; all the same, Merritt is a fine young fellow, and Longdale a gentleman. And now about meeting those engagements for them. When are they due?"

"Three months, and upwards," said Tudge, shortly.

"Let them be met," said Mr. Halley.

"But it will leave us without a hundred pounds to go on with."

"Let them be," said Mr. Halley; "let them be met. I promised, and I'll keep my word."

Tudge grumbled as he made an entry in a memorandum-book, and then sat back in his chair.

"Any thing more?" he said.

"There's no hope, I suppose, about the poor Rutherfords?"

Tudge shook his head sadly.

"Good heavens! how dreadful!" groaned the old man. "Tudge," he exclaimed, "I can't bear to see any one belonging to me over. I couldn't bear it in my present state."

"You used to face it out like a man, Mr. Halley," said Tudge. "Think what people will say if you don't."

"But four vessels in nine months, Tudge—it's fearful! It will make them think horrible things."

"You never used to have such fancies in that, Mr. Halley," said Tudge. "See what comes of mixing with Rothesdy's."

"But I don't believe anything of the kind of them," cried Mr. Halley, sharply. "You're twisting against me, Tudge, in my troubles. I didn't think it of you. But, there—go, and let me be quiet."

"There, I won't be savage with you," said Tudge. "You don't mean what you say."

"Yes, yes, I do," cried Mr. Halley, passionately as a child.

"No, you don't," said Tudge; "so I shan't go. I know you don't. I don't blame leave you when you're like this."

"No, you won't, Tudge, will you?" cried the old man, piteously.

"But I shall make stipulations," said Tudge, firmly.

"Oh," groaned Mr. Halley.

"You shall give me full powers to pull you through."

"Yes, yes; only I will have all engagements met."

"Well, yes, that's right. Rutherdy's bills shall be met—we must do that. Halley's wife must be kept comfortable, and Philip proudly.

Mr. Halley groaned.

"Then I'll be off," said Tudge, "and do the best I can; but, old friend, you'll come to your senses before the end."

"Tudge," said Mr. Halley, clinging to his old clerk's hand, with the tears running down his cheeks, "I'm ill and weak, and this affair is killing me. Pay every body, and if I have any money left, be satisfied May is provided for. Merritt will take care of her, and I believe in him. But I've done wrong, Tudge, and I feel it—I feel it—I feel the slanders that attach to him have come on me too. I didn't see that before."

"Now, cheer up, old boy," said Tudge; "I'm kicking meagain, now I'm down, my lad."

"Ring for a Bible, Tudge!" cried Mr. Halley, suddenly.

"Well, I won't say any more," said Tudge.

"Don't," replied Mr. Halley, shaking hands with him earnestly; "and come up to-morrow."

Tudge nodded shortly, gathered up his papers, closed his bag with a snap, and went out of the room.

TWENTY-EIGHTH CABLE LENGTH.

HOW MR. TUDGE SOLILOQUIZED, AND HAD TWO VISITORS.

An hour after, Mr. Tudge was in his private room fleetfooting his cabin at Cannon over matters.

"Poor old Halley will take care of May, will he? —of my darling!" he said to himself. "He won't—no, he won't! That will work by itself, I'll swear, without a word more. But it is death, I think! I can manage it. Let me see—begin at the beginning. Master Phil Merritt, Jack; my darling, quiz—my poor dear, you know. Mr. Halley—Merritt's partner, King of Jacks, King Jack—Rutherdy and Tudge, counting old fox in his way—bolds the sea. Where are we now?"

Long went the ruler on the desk.

"Now about money matters. Awful, four fine vessels going like that. It would cripple any house if the loss fall on them as it does on us; but things will out up better when the crops, even when those accounts have put their bills met. Of course they'll pay up again! Don't we wish we may get it?

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"No; I won't give him a true state of the affairs—nor anybody else, not yet. Not for worlds. Yes, it is. He's not fit to stand to his affairs, and he's depending on me, and I'm working for him and my darling. Shady? Perhaps it is; but if you've got shady customers to deal with, why you must fight 'em with their own weapons.

"Let me see; what comes next? Well, it strikes me that Rutherdy's course is over. I couldn't bear it in my present state."

"Can I see Mr. Tudge, sir, as far as I can hear, every word of it."

"Who's that? How and I" exclaimed Longdale. "How things do vary, to be sure. Four vessels in nine months! Why, Mr. Tudge, you'll have those cowardly slanderers attacking your house next—same as they have attacked ill-found ships, and that sort of thing."

"Yes," said Tudge, shortly. "No doubt."

"Pray tell Mr. Halley how sorry I am. I'm in trouble myself, you see, about my poor dear May. By-the-way, Tudge, come and dine with me some evening—friendly, you know, just you and me. I've a glass of a curious old wine I should like you to taste. And, by-the-way, don't say I was little enough to say anything about those bills. Good-bye, Tudge, good-bye. We shall be seeing each other every day, I hope."

Mr. Longdale had no sooner been shown out than the clerks started, for Mr. Tudge's ruler came down upon the table with the fiercest bang ever heard by his subordinates.

"My word, the old chap's in a wax!" said one.

"Yes," said another, "and well he may be."

Meanwhile, Mr. Longdale walked hurriedly into Cornhill, and made his way into one of the shop-boxes, where Merritt was waiting his arrival.

"Well?" said Merritt.

"Game's up there, I think," said Longdale. "Baited for the old fellow with a half-promise that we would be glad to have his services, and he rose at the fly."

"But about those bills?"

"They'll be met. The old fellow will pay every one to the last shilling; and when that is done, I should think—"

He stopped short, and sat tapping the table, without a word.

"Well, why the dence don't you go on? What are you thinking about?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said Longdale, with a fictitious start of surprise. "I was thinking."

"I know you were; but what about?"

"Of Mr. May Halley."

"I'm much obliged, but perhaps you'll let me do all the thinking about her!"

"Why, what's the matter? Thinking under her altered circumstances, her twain will prove cousins; and if he does not, whether she would smile on an adorer who does not wear my mother's diamonds?"

Philip Merritt leaped up angrily, scowled at his partner for a moment, and then hurried into the street, and made his way to where he was expected—namely, to Mr. Tudge's private room; for he was this day received in ordinary desk.

"Mr. Merritt, sir," said the clerk.

"Show him in," said Tudge; and the clerk did so, and the young man was ever ace to face.

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