

The

GEM 2^D

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No. 1,033. Vol. XXXII. December 3rd, 1927



**PONGO PROVES HIS WORTH
—AND SO DOES HIS MASTER!**

(See the grand school tale inside.)

A SPLendid LONG SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.—

BACKING UP-



CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Means It!

“WOTTEN!” Arthur Augustus D’Arcy said that it was “wotten,” and for once his chums agreed with him.

“Rotten’s the word!” said Tom Merry glumly. “Poor old Wally’s done it this time!”

“The young ass fairly asked for trouble,” added Blake, “and he’s got it.”

“I’m sorry for him,” said Digby. “He’s a cheeky young scamp, and as full of tricks as his blessed dog Pongo, but he’s not a bad kid.”

“After all, it was only a practical joke,” chimed in Herries. “Perhaps the Head will see that when he cools down a bit.”

“He sees it now,” grunted Tom Merry. “But—but—well, fellows aren’t supposed to play practical jokes on

governors of the school. And Wally’s been going it lately, you know. The Head really let him off lightly over that poaching affair.”

“Wally wasn’t poachin’, Tom Mewwy,” said Arthur Augustus indignantly. “He had only taken Pongo on Colonel Bland’s estate to catch wats. It was just bad luck that Pongo happened to spot a wabbit and go aftah it, Colonel Bland may be a school governor, but I considah him a cwusty old boundah, and he made a wretched fuss ovah vevy little.”

“Pongo bit him, you know!” said the captain of the Shell.

“It was a meah sewatch, deah boy,” said Arthur Augustus. “And it was the colonel’s own fault for goin’ for Wally. Natuwally, Pongo wouldn’t allow anyone to touch Wally. Pongo is a wretched little beast in many ways, and he has no respect whatever for a fellow’s twosahs. But I must say that Fe weally is vevy devoted and loyal to Wally.”

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-OF ST. JIM'S, STARRING THE HEROES OF THE THIRD FORM!

WALLY!

by MARTIN CLIFFORD



The punishment, considering the offence, had been very light. Wally had received an imposition, and Pongo had been banished from St. Jim's by order of the Head.

That order had, however, been a far more severe punishment for Wally than any other the Head could have imposed, or, at least, it would have been had the scamp of the Third bowed down to it. But though Kildare himself had superintended the "packing" of Pongo into the hamper, and had seen it off, Pongo had not been taken far away. The scamp of the Third, defying the Head's order, had coolly changed the address on the label from Eastwood House, his home, to Wayland Junction. The hamper had been put out of the guard's van at the station, where Wally had claimed it. And as yet nobody, save Wally and his friends, knew that Pongo was still in the vicinity.

Unfortunately, this had not satisfied the scapegrace. Still feeling resentful against Colonel Bland, Wally had planned to get his own back. Knowing the old gentleman's aversion to dogs, Wally had, in the colonel's name, ordered handbills to be printed and distributed in the district, advertising for dogs of all kinds and descriptions, owners to bring them to Rylcombe Manor at three o'clock that afternoon.

As the handbills had stated good prices would be given, owners had turned up in their scores at the manor, where the almost raving and astounded old martinet had had the greatest difficulty in persuading the angry, disappointed crowd that it was all a hoax. They had departed at length, however, after doing no little damage to the lawns and flower-beds, and still more damage to the colonel's temper.

By an unlucky chance for Wally, however, Dr. Holmes had chanced to be calling on Colonel Bland at the time, and while his host was escorting him part of the way home they had accidentally overheard the luckless Wally relating to a crowd just how he had worked the great "wheeze."

From that point the comedy had turned to tragedy for the scamp of the Third. Though the school in general looked upon it as a screaming joke, Dr. Holmes had taken a very serious view indeed of the matter, especially in view of Wally's recent offences. And the juniors could not help thinking of the luckless scamp in the detention-room with a very good prospect of the sack before him.

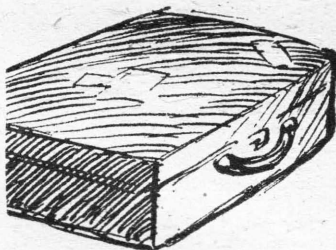
"Well, it can't be helped," said Tom at last. "Perhaps it may not mean the sack. The Head's a good sort, you know."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "But we must do somethin' to save Wally."

"Nothing we can do will make any difference," said Tom. "Anyway, let's get tea ready now, or do something, for goodness' sake!"

"It is too early for tea yet," retorted Arthur Augustus firmly. "And, in any case, I should nevah dream of tea until I have seen the Head."

"Eh? You see the Head?" exclaimed Blake. "What about?"



Sentence of expulsion has been passed on Wally D'Arcy, the ink-fingered leader of the Third. But his followers are not disposed to let him go with the shadow of disgrace on his name. They rebel, and their drastic action leads to an amazing climax.

Tom Merry could not help smiling a little.

One of the two big worries of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble existence at St. Jim's was Wally, his scapegrace of a young brother; the other was Pongo, his brother's pet mongrel. Scarcely a day passed but that Arthur Augustus found cause and reason to expound on the wickedness of both Wally and Pongo.

But now Wally D'Arcy was face to face with the prospect of the sack, and Tom Merry could understand Arthur Augustus' change of opinion.

Scamp and scapegrace as he was, the leader of the Third was made of the right stuff, and Pongo, as Arthur Augustus had said, was, despite his many faults, a plucky animal and devoted to his master.

Certainly, they had both asked for trouble on this occasion. Wally had had no right to take Pongo on Colonel Bland's estate at all in the first place, and Pongo certainly should not have interfered with the crusty old gentleman's rabbits.

"Wally, of course, deah boy. I have thought it all out, and I have come to the conclusion that the only person likely to be able to influence Dr. Holmes is myself," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "As a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Fathead!" said Blake, in alarm. "Don't do anything of the kind. You'll only put your foot in it and make matters worse instead of better."

"Wubbish! I must see the Head at once," said Gussy, looking himself over anxiously. "Is my tie stwaight, Blake?"

"You awful ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! Kindly tell me if I look all wight, as I do not wish to call upon the Head with my clobbah in a disweputable condition," explained the swell of the Fourth. "Is my tie stwaight, Tom Mewwy?"

"It's straight enough!" snorted the captain of the Shell. "But you won't be straight if you bother the Head now, you ass!"

"Wats! I am not likely to allow Wally to be sacked without makin' a vewy stwennous effort to save him! Wathah not! Howevah, if you fellows wefuse to aid me—"

Arthur Augustus broke off, and walked across to the study looking-glass. With its aid he adjusted his already perfect tie, and dusted his spotless jacket. Then, fixing his monocle more firmly in his eye, he marched out, evidently to interview the Head.

"Oh, the ass!" breathed Blake. "He'll get it hot from the Head, and only make matters worse for Wally!"

"Can't make matters much worse for Wally!" grunted Tom Merry. "Anyway, let's go and see what happens!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors hurried out after Arthur Augustus. They reached Masters' Corridor just in time to see Arthur Augustus disappearing into the Head's study.

"That's done it!" said Blake. "Oh, the burbling duffer!"

They waited for Gussy to emerge again, very much alarmed for their chum.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus was standing before the Head's desk, and Gussy himself felt a slight tremor as he met Dr. Holmes' none too amiable glance. Dr. Holmes was a very kindly old gentleman in the ordinary way, but he looked very stern and annoyed now.

"Well, D'Arcy?" he snapped. "You wish to speak to me?"

"Yaas, sir! I twust you will allow me a few minutes of youah valuable time, sir?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Proceed, D'Arcy!"

"It is in wegard to my young bwothah Wally!" exclaimed Gussy, his voice trembling a little in his agitation. "I feel bound, with all due respect to you, Dr. Holmes, to approach you in ordah to plead for leniency on his behalf, sir!"

"I do not see how anything you may say, D'Arcy major, can alter the facts!" said the Head coldly. "He has confessed his fault, and nothing now remains except for me to pronounce sentence! He has admitted having perpetrated a cruel and disgraceful hoax upon a gentleman who is not only a local resident, but a governor of the school! The fact that he did this wicked thing in a spirit of revenge only adds, in my view, to the wickedness of his offence!"

"Oh, yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "I quite agree with you that it was a wotten pwank to play on a gentleman of Colonel Bland's position and age! I considah my minah is a young wapsallion, and I vewy often find it nessawry to wepwimand him vewy severly—"

"That will do, D'Arcy!" said the Head, raising his hand and cutting D'Arcy's flow of eloquence short. "Unless you have anything to say of a practical nature that will mitigate your brother's offence, kindly leave the room!"

"Bai Jove, sir! Oh, yaas, sir! I have quite a lot to say, sir!" said Arthur Augustus hurriedly. "My object in comin' heah, sir, was to point out that, though Wally is weally a weckless young waseal, with wathah a lack of respect for his eldahs—"

"Be brief, D'Arcy!" said the Head ominously. "My time is of value, boy!"

"Oh, yaas, sir!" Arthur Augustus jumped. "My—my object is to point out to you, sir, with all due respect, that Wally is vewy young and vewy inexpwienced. His tendah yeahs—"

"Silence! Are you wasting my time in order to point out things of which I am fully aware?" snapped the Head, rising. "Leave the room, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, sir—"

"Go!"

But Arthur Augustus, though his face was pale, stood his ground.

"I wewget bein' obliged to bothah you like this, sir!"

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he exclaimed doggedly. "But I weally must do all I can for my bwothah, sir! For you to expel Wally would be unjust—"

"What?"

"Without taking into consideration his inexpwience and tendah years!" finished Arthur Augustus—fortunately. "I twust you will also allow me to point out, sir, that he did not undabstand the gwavity of his weckless action! I twust, sir—"

"D'Arcy," gasped the Head, "that is enough! Unless you leave the room this instant I shall cane you for your astounding impudence!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, sir—"

"Go!"

"Pway allow me to—"

"Go!" thundered the Head, rising to his feet in great exasperation. "D'Arcy, I can make allowances for your desire to intercede on your brother's behalf, but unless you obey me and leave this room at once I shall cane you!"

"But, weally, sir, pway listen—"

"Go!"

"Dr. Holmes— Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus did not continue. He gasped in dismay as Dr. Holmes reached for his cane, a thunderous frown on his brow.

"Hold out your hand, boy!"

Arthur Augustus held out his hand—he dare not disobey now; the look in the Head's eyes was enough. The cane came down on D'Arcy's palm, and he gave a stifled yelp.

"Yow-ow!"

"Now go!"

The Head pointed to the door, and this time Arthur Augustus went. Arthur Augustus did not want another cut like that at the moment—not even to put in a good word for his hapless minor!

CHAPTER 2.

Arthur Augustus Still Means It!

TOM MERRY & CO. tried hard to look sympathetic as the unfortunate Arthur Augustus joined them in the passage. They had heard most of what had passed within, and they had certainly heard the swishing cane and the yelp that had followed. And they realised that their chum stood in need of sympathy—whether he deserved it or not.

"Oh, you—you chump, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake, as the door closed. "Had it badly?"

"Ow! Gwooooh! Yaas! The Head seems in a feahful wax, deah boys!" groaned Arthur Augustus, tucking one hand under his other arm. "I considah Dr. Holmes is gwowin' vewy iwritable and unweasonable!"

"You were lucky to get off with that, you duffer!" said Tom Merry. "Wasn't he on the spot with old Bland, and didn't he see it all? It's no wonder he was waxy! And d'you think the Head is going to be dictated to and taught his job by a junior boy?"

"Bai Jove! I had—ow-wow!—no intention of dictatin' to Dr. Holmes, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I have too much respect for his position and his wive yeahs! I should have considahed it diswepctful in the extreme!"

"What else do you call it, then?" asked Blake.

"Weally, Blake," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "I was merely pointin' out certain facts to him that I feahed he might ovablook, and I do not wegwet havin' done so. As he wefuses to listen to me, howevah, I have no othah weseource than to visit Colonel Bland himself!"

"What?"

"Colonel Bland is a vewy cwusty old gentleman," said Arthur Augustus. "But I have ewevy hope that when I have pointed out to him Wally's extreme youth, and that he wegardad his actions as only a lark, he will withdwaw his demand for Wally's expulsion!"

"You—you hope that?" stuttered Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Aftah all, the colonel is not a school-mastah, and was a boy himself once. With a little tact and judgment on my part I fancy he will soon view the mattah in a different light."

"Oh, you—you—"

"There is no weason for your excitement, Blake. I am not askin' you to interview Colonel Bland," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I shall simply wequest the colonel to use his influence in ordah to persuade the Head to chastise Wally instead of expellin' him. The young waseal has certainly deserved a thwashin', and I shall make it clear that I do not object to that."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You—you'll make that clear, will you?" gasped Blake.

"Yaas! Howevah, there is no time to waste, deah boys. I must wash off at once," said Gussy, ceasing to nurse his

tingling palm. "You fellows may accompany me if you wish. But pway do not twy to chip in, or you will pwobably make mattahs worse for Wally."

With that Arthur Augustus hurried away, his aristocratic features firm and unyielding. Evidently his noble mind was firmly made up. His chums looked at each other.

"He must be potty!" said Blake, gasping. "Fancy calling on old Bland under what's happened—scarcely an hour ago, too! The old hunks will still be raving, and he'll scarp him."

"Especially when he finds out that Gussy is Wally's brother!" agreed Herries. "Shall we stop the ass?"

"No good trying!" growled Tom Merry. "Nothing on earth will stop Gussy once his mind is made up. We'd better go along with him, though."

"To carry him home, if necessary," said Lowther. "I expect old Bland will start in with his riding-whip!"

"We'll jolly well chip in if he does!" said Blake.

"That's right!" said Herries, shaking his head. "Chap who hates dogs can't be much good, I say! Fancy any fellow hating old Towser, for instance!"

"We can go, anyway," said Blake. "There's just a chance that even an idiot like Gussy may do some good."

Agreeing upon that, the juniors hurried to get their caps. That it was useless to attempt to stop Arthur Augustus they knew from past experience, and they did not like the idea of their obstinate chum going on his own. It was early yet for tea, in any case.

As a rule, Arthur Augustus took a very long time to prepare for a visit; but on this occasion he was very quick indeed. Scarcely had the juniors reached the quad when he came out and joined them, immaculate and elegant as ever.

"Look here, Gussy, don't be an ass!" said Blake anxiously. "You'll only—"

"I wufuse to be dissuaded fwom what I considah my duty, Blake!" said Gussy firmly. "I feel that I have been neglectin' my duties as an eldah bwothah, and now—this is the result! The shadow of the sack is hangin' ovah Wally. I considah it is to a great extent my fault, deah boys."

"But seeing that cross-grained old hunks won't do any good," said Blake. "You'll only make it worse for Wally, you—"

"I shall do nothin' of the sort, Blake!"

"And get into trouble yourself!"

"I am quite weady to wisk that, Blake, if there is a possibility of savin' Wally."

"But there isn't, you fathead! You'll only—"

"I wufuse to argue the mattah, Blake!"

"But, look here—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus pulled on his gloves, tucked his natty walking-cane under one arm, and started for the gates. His chums followed, realising more than ever the hopelessness of attempting to turn him from his purpose. The swell of St. Jim's strode down the lane, taking that route in preference to the short cut across the fields. Arthur Augustus was thinking of his elegant shoes, which were not likely to be improved by taking that path, muddy as it was with recent rains.

It was not a far cry to the manor, and, leaving his chums at the gates, Arthur Augustus started gracefully down the drive.

The sight of the trampled flower-beds, the muddied lawns, and other evidences of the crowd that afternoon, had brought vividly before Blake & Co.'s eyes the terrific risk Gussy was running. To them it was like walking into a lion's den. But Arthur Augustus did not notice the damage—or if he did he did not heed it. He marched up the steps and rang the bell calmly, and waited.

The butler answered the door, and a few moments later the juniors at the gate saw him vanish into the house.

"Now for it!" murmured Tom Merry. "I almost wish we'd stopped the ass now!"

"So do I!" grunted Blake. "Though he would have gone later, the moment our backs were turned."

In any case, it was too late now, and, with anxious faces, Gussy's chums watched the distant door.

There was no anxiety about Arthur Augustus, however—not on his own behalf, at all events. His chief feeling was one of relief that the colonel had agreed to see him, for he had feared it to be otherwise. As a matter of fact, Gussy's name had told the colonel nothing, as he had forgotten, for the moment, the name of the boy who had hoaxed him—though he had by no means forgotten the boy or the hoax!

He looked up, and gave Arthur Augustus a choleric glare as that youth was shown into the library. Arthur Augustus bowed gracefully, unheeding the unpromising look on the old gentleman's fiery countenance.

"Well?" barked the colonel. "Who are you, and what d'you want?"

"My name is D'Arcy, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus,

placing his silk hat gently on a chair, and seating himself on another. "I have walked ovah fwom St. Jim's—"

"What?" The colonel gave a jump. "What? A St. Jim's boy, hey? I thought I'd seen you before somewhere. Good gad! I believe I saw you among that confounded crowd before my house this afternoon. One of those insolent young jackanapes who were laughing at the disgraceful result of their companion's rascality. Yes, you were one of them! Don't attempt to deny it, you young scoundrel!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Yes, begad!" hooted the colonel, getting to his feet and glowering at the startled Arthur Augustus. "I recognise you now! A foppish young nincompoop, begad!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, sir—"

"Don't attempt to deny it, sir!" gasped the old gentleman. "I remember seeing you in the lane afterwards with that very young scoundrel—gloating over his scandalous accomplishment!"

"Oh, gweat Scott! Weally, sir, you are vewy much mistaken!" said Arthur Augustus hastily in dismay. "I twust I have more wespsect for my eldahs, and more wespsect for my own dignity than to laugh at what I considah a diswespsectful and thoughtless joke!"

"Joke!" gasped the old gentleman. "Good gad! You call it a joke! You call a scandalous outrage on me—a magistrate and a governor of your school—a joke! I—I—I—"

"Oh cwumbs! Pway do not misundahstand me, sir!" interrupted Arthur Augustus hastily. "I did not and do not appwove of that unfortunate hoax. Pway allow me to assuah you—"

"I refuse to bandy words with you, boy!" shouted Colonel Bland. "Out with it—what d'you want? What the deuce have you come to see me about?"

"Bai Jove! Pway calm yourself, my deah sir!" gasped Gussy in dismay. "You—you see, sir, my young bwothah—"

"Confound your young brother!" roared the old warrior. "I want to hear nothing about your confounded relations! I want to know what your business is with me!"

"Oh deah! But the business is about my bwothah, sir," said Arthur Augustus, not quite so confident now. "Weally, my deah sir, if you will only wemain calm—"

"Calm!" hooted the colonel. "How dare you say I am not calm! You—you insolent young jackanapes! I refuse to listen to your impudence! Good gad! What is St. Jim's coming to? Go! If you do not leave my house at once I will have you thrown out!"

"But—but, bai Jove! But you do not undahstand, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "My bwothah is the youngstah who was wespensible for the hoax—"

"Wha-at?"

"Yaas, sir!" said Gussy, unfortunately failing to take warning at the old gentleman's sudden explosion. "The—the fact is, sir, that as his eldah bwothah I have come to wuest you to be good enough, genewous enough, to intercede on his behalf with Dr. Holmes, so that the young scamp will not be expelled. I twust you will—"

"Good gad! What the deuce—!" The gallant old warrior fairly spluttered in great wrath and amazement. Certainly, as the colonel was the injured party, it was a rather cool request to make. At all events, the colonel evidently thought it exceedingly cool. "You young scoundrel! You—you have the astounding impudence—"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not, sir! I have no intention of bein' impudent!" gasped Gussy, as the choleric old gentleman gasped for breath. "I came to wuest your vewy kind aid in persuadin' Dr. Holmes to tweat the mattah in a wewasonable spiwit."

"Good gad!"

"I am well awah," proceeded Gussy, as the colonel glared at him speechlessly, "that you have the wputation of bein' wathah cwusty and unwasonable, my deah sir! None the less, I am quite suah that you have a vewy good heart, and that you— Bai Jove! Weally, sir, pway— Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus made a sudden jump backwards as Colonel Bland, words failing him, apparently fell back upon actions. He made a sudden grab at Gussy. Gussy suddenly noted the ferocious look in the old gentleman's eye, gave a startled gasp, and jumped round the table.

But Colonel Bland was after him in a flash. Possibly the old soldier was annoyed at learning that he had the reputation of being crusty and unreasonable—in fact, he certainly was.

"Crusty am I?" he spluttered. "You young villain! I'll—I'll lay my stick about you, my fine fellow! Stop!"

Colonel Bland bellowed the order in his best Army manner. But Arthur Augustus did not stop! He had seen the danger signals at last, and though quite ignorant of the reason for the colonel's sudden outburst, Arthur Augustus didn't want the stick. He flew!

Crash! A small table holding pen, ink, and papers and books went flying, and the colonel roared again.

"Stop!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

Gussy groaned and circumnavigated the table again, the old warrior making ineffectual grabs at him. The colonel had grabbed a ruler now, and he made a swipe at Gussy. It missed him, but smashed the electric globe, showers of glass falling around on the carpet.

Again the colonel roared, and again he dashed round the table after the alarmed swell of St. Jim's. Then, suddenly sighting the half-open french window, Gussy shot through it into the garden.

"Stop, you young scoundrel!" bellowed Colonel Bland.

Arthur Augustus, now firmly convinced that he had a madman to deal with, didn't stop a second; he went off like a flash up the garden, leaping flower-beds, dodging bushes, his eyeglass streaming behind at the end of its cord, his silk hat—which he had had the presence of mind to snatch up—jammed on his head at a rakish angle.

Luckily, the gardeners were working at the front, and the back garden was deserted. And presently the bellowing died away, and a glance back showed Gussy that he was not pursued.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he panted, dropping to a walk. "What a weally tewwible expewience! Either the old fellow is potty, or else somethin' I said offended him! I wondah what it was? He is far moah unweasonable than the Head. I'm afraid he'll be moah angwy than evah now."

And, shaking his head, Arthur Augustus hurried on through the kitchen garden, and passed through a little wicket gate into the orchard. Not for worlds would Arthur Augustus have risked going out by the front way.

He tramped on through the trees in a very glum mood indeed. Blake would undoubtedly say, "I told you so!" and his chums had certainly been right. But Gussy wasn't thinking of that, he was thinking of Wally.

"Wotten!" mused the swell of the Fourth dismally. "It is obviously useless to twy that old wottah! I must buwvy—bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus came to a sudden halt as the barking of a dog not far away struck his ears. And the sound seemed very familiar indeed to him.

"Bai Jove! That sounds like Pongo!" he murmured. "How vevy, vevy stwange!"

He listened again, and was convinced that it was indeed, Pongo's well-known bark. It came from the direction of a garden-room that was visible through the trees at the end of the orchard.

His curiosity aroused, Arthur Augustus gave a hasty glance round, and cautiously approached the building. The door was closed, but one of the casement windows was open, and the junior peered inside.

It was Pongo right enough, and there was a fresh outburst of barking as he sighted Gussy. Though he often mauled Gussy's trousers and tore his jacket and chewed his flippers, and though Gussy had often and often chased him with a cricket-stump, Pongo bore no resentment to Gussy—in fact, was rather fond of him in a cautious sort of way.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "It weally is Pongo!"

There was no doubting it. Gussy, like Tom Merry & Co., knew Pongo had not really gone home to Eastwood House, and the chums had often wondered where Wally kept him, for Wally refused to tell. And only the previous evening they had met Wally and his pals taking Pongo for a secret walk in the woods.

Yet here was Pongo now, chained to a rustic table in the garden-room on Colonel Bland's property!

It could only mean—in Gussy's view—that Colonel Bland had captured the dog again, and was keeping him a prisoner there.

"The—the wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! The cheeky wottah to keep Pongo a pwisonah heah! He has obviously nevah mentioned the wottah to the Head or anyone, for the Head still believes Pongo is at Eastwood House."

For a moment Arthur Augustus pondered the problem, and then his noble chin set; his mind was made up.

"Bai Jove, the old boundah shan't keep Pongo!" he murmured grimly. "Heah is a weal chance to do Wally a good turn, aftah all."

Finding the door unlocked, Gussy crept in and approached the excited Pongo.

"Quiet, old boy!" he breathed. "Good boy—splendid old fellow—Oh ewikey! Oh, you feahful bwute!"

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Arthur Augustus changed his tune abruptly as Pongo immediately sprang up at him and planted a pair of paws on Gussy's elegant trousers—and evidently Pongo had been out, for his paws were very muddy indeed.

But there was no help for it, and, manfully making another attempt, Gussy managed to unhook the chain. As he did so, Pongo, apparently having no further use for Gussy, tore the chain out of his hand and bolted through the open doorway.

"Oh, gweat Scott! Pongo! Here, Pongo! Good boy! Oh, you w'etched bwute!"

Pongo was gone! As he rushed out Arthur Augustus was just in time to see a small, furry form vanish through a hole in the hedge bordering the orchard.

Arthur Augustus halted in dismay. He had intended to take Pongo somewhere safe and leave him there until he could speak to Wally about him. But now he was gone—and obviously would race back to St. Jim's. His arrival there would create something of a sensation, and it would make matters very much worse for Wally. The Head was not likely to deal lightly with the scamp of the Third when he knew how his orders had been disobeyed and that Pongo had not been sent home at all.

"Oh cwumbs!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "How vevy unfortunate! I must wush aftah the wotten bwute!"

And Arthur Augustus set off at a run, diving through the hole in the hedge where he had seen Pongo vanish.

There was no sign of Pongo in the meadows beyond. And Arthur Augustus set off in the direction of the school, reaching the lane very shortly afterwards.

As he came out into the lane and glanced anxiously towards St. Jim's a rather weedy, bespectacled youth with a large head came sauntering along towards him, a bulky volume held before his eyes as he walked.

It was Herbert Skimpole of the Shell, and Gussy called to him.

"Skimpole, deah boy, have you seen anythin' of a dog?"

"A—a dog, my dear D'Arcy!"

"Yaas! A—a little shaggy tewwiah, you know," said Gussy, careful not to mention Pongo.

"Let me see," said Skimpole, placing a bony forefinger to his equally bony forehead in an effort to remember such an unimportant matter. "Yes, I certainly did see an animal such as you describe. He was dragging along a chain behind him, and for the moment I almost imagined it was that member of the canine species owned by your minor."

"Yaas! But where—"

"I remember quite well now," said Skimpole, blinking at Gussy. "It was scarcely three minutes ago. A boy—a village youth, I think—stopped the dog and took charge of him, though the animal made an attempt to escape him. I really did not notice what happened afterwards, as I merely glanced up from my book on hearing the scuffle in the lane."

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

"My dear D'Arcy!" exclaimed Skimpole. "I trust that—dear me!"

Skimpole frowned as Arthur Augustus hurried away, scarcely thanking him for his information. It was not like the polite Arthur Augustus to approach rudeness in any shape or form.

The genius of the Shell shook his head and buried himself in the ponderous volume once more, while Arthur Augustus made tracks for St. Jim's in a very disturbed frame of mind. If one of the villagers had captured Pongo, then there was no knowing what would happen to him!

Gussy came at last in sight of the Rylcombe Manor gates, and it was not until he sighted his chums still standing there waiting for him that the swell of St. Jim's remembered them again.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S

"HIDDEN NAMES" PUZZLE!

1. William George Bunter.
2. William Gosling.
3. Horace Coker.
4. Hurree Singh
5. George Wingate.
6. Mark Linley.
7. Fisher Tarleton Fish.
8. Oliver Kipps.
9. Herbert Vernon-Smith.

CHAPTER 3.

Wally's Recklessness!

"HERE he is!"

"Here's the duffer!"
Blake was the first to spot Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he gave a yell—a yell of surprise. The juniors had seen Gussy enter the mansion, and to see him calmly approaching along the lane now was certainly rather startling.

"Gussy, you ass—"

"Gussy, you idiot—"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Where the thump have you been all this time?" shouted Blake. "Keeping us waiting like this, and then calmly walking along from somewhere else! How the thump did you sneak out without us seeing you?"

"I did not sneak out, Blake," said Arthur Augustus with some dignity. "I was obliged to wotire fwom the manah in wathah a huwvy, and I went by the back way and weached the woad lower down."

"Then—then you had to run for it?" grinned Lowther. "Is that it?"

"I did vun, certainly, Lowthah. I see no weason to gwin, you fellows."

"Go hon!" "I have had a most twyin' expewience," explained Arthur Augustus. "That feahful old wuffian actually went for me with a wulah—"

"A—a whatter—"

"Wulah—a desk wulah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I weally do not know why—unless he was watty upon heavin' that I was the bwothah of the youngstah who was wespensible for the w'etched hoax."

"You did tell him that, then?"

"Oh, yaas! I weally had little chance to tell him much, howevah. I weally cannot undahstand him: I was weally most polite, and even flattewin'! I told him that, though he was genewally wogarded as wathah cwusty and iwuitable, I was quite suah he had a good heart."

"Oh, my hat! You told him that?"

"Yaas—in words to that effect, at all events. Instead of bein' flattered, howevah, it seemed to enwage him more than evah, and he wushed at me with a wulah and chased me wound the table."

"Unfortunately, I knocked ovah a table, and spilt the ink and upset his papahs ovah the floor, while when stwikin' at me the old wuffian smashed the electric light globe and shade," went on Gussy, shaking his head. "I considah it was his own fault, and was weally no weason why he should have got into such a wage. Do you fellows think so?"

"Oh, no—not at all!" said Lowther gravely, whilst his chums gurgled. "Perish the thought! He ought to have fallen on your neck and kissed you, Gussy, cut of sheer delight and gratitude. Don't you fellows think so?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Merry and the others could not help laughing. Arthur Augustus glared.

"It is no laughin' mattah, Lowthah! It is vewy sewious indeed. Somethin' else happened, howevah, of wathah a weanarkable nature, deah boys," added Gussy, suddenly remembering Pongo. "When I was wunnin' through the orchard I happened to heah Pongo barkin'."

"You—you heard whatter?" yelled Blake.

"Pongo," said Gussy rather stiffly. "Pway do not woah at me, Blake—you know how I detest bein' woahed at!"

"Go on, ass!"

"Weally, Blake! I heard Pongo barkin', and I was natuwally astonished. Then I noted that the barkin' came from a garden-woom at the far end of the orchard. I investigated the mattah and discovahed that it weally was Pongo."

"Phew! Then—"

"That old wuffian must have captuahed Pongo once again and kept him pwisonah there for some weason of his own," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy stwange indeed. How-evah, I wleased the w'etched animal fwom the chain. I was determined the colonel should not have him, whatevah his intentions."

"Then where is he?" gasped Blake.

"Unfortunately, he bwoke fwee from me and wushed away

like anythin'," explained Gussy. "I met Skimpole just aftahwards, and he informed me that a chap fwom the village had caught Pongo and taken him off—met him in the lane, you know, and taken charge of him. It is wathah wowwain'. I weally twust the villager was an honest person."

"It may save Wally after all, though," said Tom Merry. "If the chap hadn't collared him, Pongo would have raced straight for St. Jim's, and Wally would have been more in the soup than ever. The Head would rave if he got to know how Wally played that trick with the labels."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy flew desperately round a small writing-table, and in his hurry sent it crashing over. The colonel bellowed again, grabbed up a ruler, and dashed round after the now thoroughly alarmed swell of St. Jim's.

(See Chapter 2.)



"Yes, rather! But what the thump was Pongo doing fastened up on the giddy old colonel's property?"

"That is the vewy stwange thing about it, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Wally doesn't know, I'm quite suah."

"It's queer where Wally's been keeping him," said Blake. "Anyway, you seem to have mucked things up all round, Gussy—just as we expected."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake—"

"We told you how it would be," said Blake, shaking his head. "You wouldn't listen to us, and now I bet you've made things a dashed sight worse for poor young Wally."

"It certainly won't have improved matters," said Tom Merry.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus, his features going pink. "It was simply an accident."

"Accidents always do happen when you get on the high horse," snorted Blake.

"Wats! I wefuse to listen to youah wotten wemarks, Blake, and I wefuse to accompany you back to St. Jim's."

"Now look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus marched away with his head in the air. Blake stared after him a trifle uncertainly.

"Oh, let him rip!" said Herries.

"I rather wish I hadn't chipped him, though," said Blake. "After all, he's an ass, but a good ass, and he's only trying to do his best for poor Wally. Dash it all, I'd be ready to do anything for my brother if he was expectin' the sack."

"Same here," said Manners, with a nod. "I'm sorry for Wally, and I'm sorry for poor old Gussy. Let's run after him and bring him round."

"Best let him go, I think," said Tom Merry soberly. "He'll be all right by the time we get back. I am afraid."

though, that the old colonel will have something more to complain about now. Gussy will get it hot this time, if he does."

"Let's get back, anyway, for tea," said Lowther. "Thank goodness, we shan't have Gussy's trousers to think about now, and can go back by the field path. I'm hungry."

"Same here."

All the juniors were fairly hungry now, and they started back, taking the field path this time, which joined the lane higher up in the direction from which Arthur Augustus had come. They had not gone far, however, when Blake suddenly stopped and pointed along the path ahead.

"Pongo!" he gasped. "Well, I'm blowed!"

"By jingo! So it is!"

It was Pongo right enough, and he was not alone, nor was he with a village youth. He was with a young girl—rather a charming girl of eleven or thereabouts. Nor was that all. Not only was Pongo with her, but he seemed on very friendly terms indeed with her, leaping up and licking her hand which held the end of the chain.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry. "We'd better stop her, and tell her who Pongo belongs to."

And Tom Merry raised his hat as the girl came up, Pongo barking excitedly as he recognised the juniors.

"Excuse me, miss," said Tom, trying to remember where he had seen the girl before, "but do you know that dog belongs to a fellow from St. Jim's?"

The girl smiled and nodded calmly.

"Yes, he belongs to a friend of mine from St. Jim's," she said, eyeing them rather keenly.

"Is—is young Wally—Wally D'Arcy a friend of yours, miss?" gasped Blake.

"Yes. Are you friends of his?"

"Ahem! Well, we're chums of his elder brother," said Tom. "You—you see, he's only in the Third, and we're in the Fourth and Shell."

"What big, important persons you must be," said the girl, looking very serious, though Tom felt sure she was pulling his leg. "I'm glad you're friends of Wally's, though. I—I'm afraid he needs a friend rather badly just now."

"He does," said Tom grimly. "But how do you know about it? And how do you come to have Pongo?"

The girl eyed the juniors again keenly, but she seemed quite satisfied with her scrutiny, and she nodded.

"I just met a village boy taking him back to St. Jim's," she said. "He was the village boy who delivers groceries for Mr. Sands in the village, and he seemed to know Pongo."

"Grimes!" said Tom Merry. "He'd be taking him back to Wally, I expect."

"He said he knew the owner," said the girl. "He also knew me, and let me have him after I'd explained. Silly old Pongo must have got loose somehow."

"But—but I don't understand," said Tom, bewildered. "How—"

"If you're friends of Wally's, I'd better tell you, perhaps," said the girl, smiling. "I've been taking care of him for Wally. You see, I found some cruel village boys tormenting Pongo in a barn over there the other day. I was stopping them when Wally came up, and he told me how your headmaster had ordered him to send Pongo home. And, feeling very sorry for both of them, I offered to look after Pongo, letting Wally have him for a run every evening."

"Oh!" gasped Tom. "That—that was very decent of you. But how on earth did the dog come to be fastened up in a garden-room on Colonel Bland's property? That's where he was found."

"Found?"

"Yes. Wally's brother found him there and let him go."

"Oh! I—I see," said the girl, looking astonished. "So he didn't break loose of his own accord?"

"No. But—but how did you know where he was?" demanded Tom, quite dazed.

"Because I fastened him there," explained the girl. "You see, my uncle hates dogs, and I had to keep him there secretly; only the head gardener, who won't give me away, knows about him being there."

"Then—then your uncle is Colonel Bland?" gasped Blake.

"Yes. My name is Pamela." "Oh, my hat! Does—does Wally know?"

She shook her head.

"No, I wouldn't tell him who I was; he just trusted me," she said, her face suddenly clouding. "I wish I had now. It might have stopped him playing that joke on my uncle. My aunt has just told me about it. I do hope the poor boy won't get into serious trouble about it."

"I'm afraid he will," said Tom. "It—it may mean expulsion for him."

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"Oh dear! How dreadful!" said the girl in distress. "How I wish I'd told Wally who I was now. But I thought he'd refuse to allow me to have Pongo then, and I did want him so badly, not only to do the poor boy a good turn, but because I love dogs, and Pongo's such a dear. Besides, after Wally had told me all about my uncle, I didn't like to hurt his feelings by letting him know who I was."

"It is a pity you didn't, Miss Pamela," said the captain of the Shell. "He certainly wouldn't have done it then. He only thought it a joke, of course, and didn't expect it to turn out quite as it did."

"I know that. It was very funny, in a way," said Pamela. "But my uncle is dreadfully cross about it, and I'm afraid it will make matters worse for Wally if I speak to him and try to get him to let Wally off punishment. He'd do anything for me, as a rule, you know. But I'm afraid he wouldn't do that."

"The Head wouldn't let him off, in any case," said Tom; "though if your uncle did plead for him it would go a long way, of course. But he's the last person to do that for Wally."

"I'm afraid so," agreed Pamela frowning. "He's a dear, really, but he's terribly cross about this hoax."

"Aren't you running a big risk, Miss Pamela?" said Tom, eyeing the girl admiringly. "If your uncle gets to know—"

"I'm risking it," said Pamela, with a smile. "But, oh dear, it's nearly five, and I promised to meet Wally and Pongo at the old barn at five!"

"I'm afraid you won't," said Tom Merry. "Wally's locked up in the detention-room. But if you've any message for him, we'll get it to him somehow."

"Oh, how horrid! Well, you can tell him Pongo's all right, and I'll take care of him until I hear from him."

The juniors agreed to do that, and a minute later they left Miss Pamela and continued their walk back to St. Jim's.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Blake. "Who—who'd have thought of that? I say, that kid's rather plucky!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom frowning. "But I hope the colonel doesn't get to know about it. If he does—"

"Let's hope he won't," said Blake. "Anyway, we'd better hurry back and tell Wally Pongo's all right. I bet that idiot Gussy has got to him somehow, and told him Pongo's been pinched, or something like that."

"Trust Gussy!" said Herries.

And the chums quickened their steps to St. Jim's, hoping that they would be in time to stop Gussy reporting the news of Pongo's escape to Wally and so adding further to the worries of the scamp of the Third.

CHAPTER 4.

Wally's Desperate Act!

AS Blake had guessed, Arthur Augustus did go to Wally; it was the first thing he did on arriving back at St. Jim's. To communicate with a fellow in the punishment-room was a very risky proceeding—risky because it was strictly against rules, and because the punishment-room itself was situated at the end of a blind alley, a corridor leading to nowhere else but Nobody's Study, as the dreaded apartment was called.

With scarcely a glance about him the excited swell of the Fourth tiptoed along the passage and tapped gently at the door.

"Who's that?"

It was Wally's voice from within—a strained, anxious voice, not at all like the scamp of the Third's usual tones. For once Wally D'Arcy was subdued by the results of his latest escapade!

"It is I," whispered Arthur Augustus. "Come to the door, Wally."

"Right ho! What's the matter now, Gus? Don't you start acting the goat, you know! You'll get it hot if you're collared speaking to me, old bean!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Cough it up, and clear!" said Wally, through the key-hole. "What's the news?"

"It's about Pongo, deah boy!"

"Eh?" Wally's voice was startled. "What about him, Gus?"

"I have just been on a visit to that old wuffian, Colonel Bland, Wally!"

"You have?"

"Yaas!"

"You born idiot!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"What the thump have you been to him for?" snorted Wally. "About me?"

"Yaas! I have twied to make the Head see weason, Wally—"

"Oh crumbs! And got licked, I suppose?"

"Yaas; but—"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Wally, it was uttably impos for me to allow mattahs to remain as they were! My visit to that old wuffian—"

"My hat! You've changed your giddy tune since yesterday!" chuckled the scamp, beyond the door. "You were jawing me only yesterday because I called him an old idiot. Is a ruffian as good as an idiot, Gus?"

Arthur Augustus did not answer that question.

"Pway do not be fivulous, Wally!" he said earnestly. "Pway wemembah you are in a most sewious position indeed. I have done my best both in wegard to the Head and Colonel Bland. But the Head licked me and the colonel chased me out with a wotton wulah!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But, that is not why I have come to speak to you, Wally," went on the swell of St. Jim's. "I made a remarkable discovery when at the manah! I discovered Pongo fastened up in a garden-woom—a kind of summah-house—in the colonel's orchard."

"You—you what?" came in a gasp. "You—you found Pongo there?"

"Yaas!"

"Old Pongo?"

"Yaas, deah boy. He was chained up there, and I weleased him, as I was certain, of course, that that old wuffian—I mean, Colonel Bland—had impwisoned him there."

"But—but it's impossible!" gasped Wally, in great alarm. "A—a friend of mine is looking after Pongo for me."

"But it is quite twue, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"And what did you do?" said Wally anxiously. "You didn't leave him there?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! I weleased him, but unfortunately Pongo snatched the chain from my hand and washed away like anythin'!"

"Oh crikey! And where is he now—at St. Jim's? Does the Head know?"

"I weally do not know—though that is scarcely likely. You see, a youth from the village caught Pongo and took him off with him."

"Wha-at?"

"Bai Jove! Pway do not waise youah voice, Wally! I weally do twust it is not as bad as it looks, and that the youth has stolen him. Because Skimmy says he was woughly dwessed is no reason why the youth should be a wottah, is it?"

"You—you awful idiot!"

"What? Bai Jove!"

"You burbling dummy," gasped Wally, "letting a thing like that happen! Just like you, I must say! Poor old Pongo's been stolen, of course! Any chap would take a fancy to a dog like Pongo! Oh, you—you born idiot!"

"Weally, Wally, it is not my fault!"

"You should have jolly well stuck to him!" snorted Wally. "Goodness knows what's happened to poor old Pongo now! Oh, my hat! Don't I wish I could get out of here! I'd jolly soon find him, and I'd jolly well give that rotter what-for, too!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh rats!"

"Bai Jove, Wally—"

"What's Skimmy got to do with it, anyway?"

"He saw the fellow collah Pongo and take him off."

"Oh, the ass!"

"If you weally feel the mattah is sewious, I will wush out of gates and try to find him again," said Arthur Augustus with an effort.

"You needn't; you'd only muck it up again," said Wally candidly. "Clear off now, for goodness' sake and let me

think this out. I've got to get out of here somehow—sharp, too."

"Oh, bai Jove! Pway do not attempt to do anythin' wash, Wally."

"Go and eat roke!"

"Bai Jove! I am anxious to do my best for you, Wally, but weally—"

"Oh, run away and chop chips, Gussy—do!"

"Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's breathed hard. His efforts on Wally's behalf were far from being appreciated by the scamp of the Third. Arthur Augustus was almost taking his minor at his word when the sound of footsteps was heard along the passage. With a gasp Arthur Augustus flew. He had just emerged out into the main corridor when he met Mr. Selby of the Third, who was obviously on his way to the punishment-room.

He turned his sharp eyes upon the junior.



As Mr. Selby stepped into the punishment-room, a pillow-case was dropped over his head and dragged down swiftly, muffling his sudden yell. (See Chapter 4.)

"D'Arcy," he exclaimed sourly, "you have been speaking to your brother in the punishment-room!"

"Weally, sir—"

"It is useless to attempt to deny it!" snapped Mr. Selby. "I have no intention of denyin' it, Mr. Selby," said Gussy loftily.

"Very well! I shall report you to Mr. Railton, your Housemaster." And Mr. Selby rustled on.

Arthur Augustus walked on, looking very disturbed and indignant. True he had earned punishment for breaking rules, but the look of triumph on Mr. Selby's spiteful face had roused his noble ire.

The master of the Third reached the door of the punishment-room and turned the key in the lock and stepped inside the room.

As he did so a pillow-slip was dropped over his head, dragged down swiftly, pinning his hands to his sides, and muffling his sudden yelp of amazed alarm.

As he stood, half-dazed and breathless, he heard the door close, the key clicking home again in the lock.

"Goo-good gracious!" he gurgled inside the pillow slip. "That—that wretched young villain—"

Mr. Selby struggled furiously to tear off the pillow-slip. It came off at last, his sparse hair and whiskers dishevelled, his face crimson with wrath and with his exertions. And as he blinked dazedly about him he found the door closed, and a swift examination showed that it was also locked—on the outside!

Wally D'Arcy was gone, but the punishment-room still guarded a prisoner. For some moments Mr. Selby could hardly realise the dreadful truth. In a state of mind that could only be described as ferocious, Mr. Selby almost hurled himself at the door and hammered furiously upon it.

CHAPTER 5. Caught Again!

"OH, my hat! I've done it now!"
The scamp of the Third fairly gasped as he stood for a moment outside the locked door of the detention-room.

Not for one moment had Wally dreamt of playing such a trick on his Form master. Even the scapegrace of the Third, reckless as he was, did not desire to add to his offences by such a serious offence as attacking and making a prisoner of a master.

Yet he had been determined to escape from the punishment-room; the rest was rather a mistake!

The fact was that Mr. Railton had stated he would send Kildare for him later on when the Head had reached his decision as to his punishment. And when the door had opened Wally had fully expected that it was Kildare and no one else.

And being resolved to escape in order to look for Pongo, Wally had been ready. He had dragged the pillow-slip from the pillow on the bed, and he had taken up his station by the door, every nerve taut for the task before him.

The door had opened, and it was only after he had pounced upon Mr. Selby and dragged the pillow-slip on his head that he realised it was not Kildare.

It was a startling shock to Wally—but it was too late to draw back then! The thing was already half accomplished, and in Wally's view had better be finished.

In any case, the leader of the Third was determined to go after Pongo—even if it did mean the sack! The thought of his pet being stolen, and possibly ill-treated by roughs, was too much for Wally. Come what might, he was going to hunt for Pongo.

Leaving the passage, and with Mr. Selby's blows on the door in his ears, Wally hurried away and made for the stairs. He had just reached the top when he saw Knox of the Sixth coming up. Knox sighted him, and his jaw dropped.

"D'Arcy minor—what—what—"

The look on the fag's face was enough for Knox. He knew that Wally should have been in the punishment-room, and he did not stay to ask questions.

He started up the stairs, taking them three at a time.

With one leap Wally was astride the banisters and went rushing down at terrific speed.

Knox made a sudden grab at him—certainly a dangerous act—but he missed by a foot, and, overbalancing, the prefect fairly rolled down the stairs in a series of heavy bumps.

He reached the mat at the bottom almost as soon as Wally—but not quite. Wally, like the proverbial cat, fell on his feet, staggered a trifle, and then bolted at a great rate.

"Come back!" bellowed Knox.

The prefect scrambled dazedly to his feet. But by that time Wally was out of the house, speeding across the quad and making for the gates. The encounter with Knox was yet another item to add to his offences—as Wally well knew. But it was done now, and turning back or stopping would not put matters right.

The fag, his face a trifle pale, scudded for the school wall, not risking a meeting with Taggles, the porter, who would doubtless know of his detention. He reached the old tree by the wall, swarmed up it, reached the top of the wall and dropped down into the lane beyond.

Someone shouted to him—it was Tom Merry & Co., just entering the gates—but Wally ignored the shout, unfortunately! He took to his heels, unheeding a chorus of shouts, for the rest of the juniors had sighted Wally now.

"Great Scott!" gasped Blake. "The silly young fool's running away! Oh, great pip!"

"After him!" yelled the captain of the Shell. "We must stop him for his own sake, the young fool!"

And he set off after the scamp of the Third, with his chums at his heels.

But Wally had got a very good start, and very soon the juniors realised the pursuit was pretty hopeless. By the time they had reached the stile leading to the field-path there was no sign of Wally either on the lane or on the field-path. He might have gone either way.

"No good," panted Tom, as the rest dashed up breathlessly. "He's gone—goodness knows which way. He might have gone into the woods, in any case. Well, the young idiot!"

And, giving it up as a bad job, the juniors made their

way back to St. Ann's. The very fact that Wally had escaped over the school wall seemed to prove that he had indeed run away. It was astounding that a fellow like Wally had done such a thing as to escape even the sack. Wally was a youngster who usually faced the music to the bitter end.

As Tom Merry & Co. were entering the School House Trimble met them on the steps in a state of great excitement.

"I say, you fellows, what d'you think? That awful ass D'Arcy minor's bunked! It's a fact I tell you," howled Trimble, as Tom Merry ignored him. "He, he, he! I say, isn't it a scream! Fancy that kid running— Oh, crikey! Wharrer you— Whooooooop!"

Baggy's chortles were cut short as he smote the stone steps with a thud. Tom Merry & Co. apparently did not see anything "screaming" in the fact that Wally D'Arcy had run away.

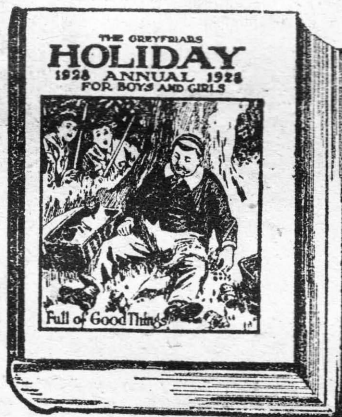
They passed on into the house, and Trimble's howls of anguish died away behind them. But it was soon evident that what Trimble had stated was generally believed. In fact, the chums soon learned that it was worse than they had supposed. They found Arthur Augustus in deep despair.

"You've heard, then?" said Blake grimly.

"Yaas. Wally must have been potty, deah boys," groaned Gussy. "He has weally done it this time. When

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Selby went for him to the punishment-room, he actually dived a pillow-slip over Selby's head, and then he washed out, lockin' the door on Selby, makin' him a pisonah inside!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

"Kildare's just found him theah," groaned Arthur Augustus. "But that is not all, unfortunately. Wally met Knox on the staircase, and fairly wolloed him downstairs. Knox is wagin'."

"The young ass!"

"But he hasn't wun away," said Arthur Augustus. "I fancy I know why he has gone."

"You do? But—"

"He has gone to hunt for that w'etched dog Pongo, the cause of all the touble," said Gussy dimly. "You see, I told him I feahed that wough might have stolen him."

"You did?" yelled Blake. "Well, my hat! I knew it! You awful idiot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You born idiot!" gasped Blake. "You've done it again—blundered again! It was Grimes, the grocer's boy, who caught Pongo, and he only collared him to bring him home, knowing it was Wally's dog. Oh, you awful ass!"

"But—but—"

"Pongo's all right," said Tom Merry quietly. "If you'd have left Wally alone we'd soon have told him that."

And Tom told the swell of St. Jim's of their meeting with Pamela. Arthur Augustus fairly groaned as he understood. But the damage was done, and they could only wait for Wally's return and hope for the best. If they had only known it, however, there was more trouble in store for the scapegrace of the Third.

CHAPTER 6. More Luck!

WALLY D'ARCY ran hard. He had already dismissed the trouble at St. Jim's from his mind, and all his thoughts were of Pongo. Despite what his major had said, Wally still cherished a hope that Pongo might have broken loose from the "rough," and in that case he would, doubtless enough, make straight for his new home with Pamela—wherever that might be—as he evidently had not made for St. Jim's.

It seemed a forlorn hope, but it buoyed the fag up a little. Wally had a tremendous belief in his pet's intelligence and abilities. How he wished now that he had insisted upon knowing Pamela's other name, and where she lived. Still, it was close on five o'clock now, and he had promised the girl to meet her by the barn at that time, as usual, for Pongo.

But would she be there, or would she have Pongo if she was there?

Wally almost trembled with anxiety. It was a mystery to him how Pongo had come to be found by Gussy in the garden-room in the colonel's orchard—a surprising place for him to be found, certainly. And yet—

A curious suspicion was forming in the fag's mind. Why hadn't the girl told him who she was and where she came from? Wally had just trusted her, but it was very strange.

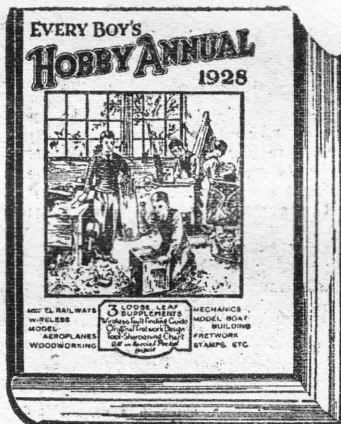
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And the girl had also said in rather significant fashion that her "uncle" hated dogs, and she would have to keep Pongo's presence at home a secret.

Was it possible that her uncle was Colonel Bland? Wally remembered now how the girl had looked when he had been calling the old colonel a crusty old beast, and many other names equally uncomplimentary. It seemed impossible, in the circumstances, and yet— Wally went crimson as he thought of it.

If she was, then, that would account for her strange secrecy, and it would also show her to be far more plucky than he had imagined. She was risking a lot for his sake, or for Pongo's sake, and Wally's eyes glistened a little at the thought. Not for one moment did he doubt the girl's kindly intentions. She had taken a fancy to Pongo certainly, but she also wanted to help him. And Wally could not forget how she had stood up to the crowd of village bullies who were pelting Pongo.

"My hat!" breathed Wally. "I believe I've hit it. What a stunning girl she is! I'll jolly soon find out, though."

He reached the old barn a few seconds later, and his heart sank as he saw no sign of his new friend. He waited for fully ten minutes in a fever of anxiety, and then he set his lips and made a beeline across the meadows for the Manor estate. Skirting the woods, he came at last to the orchard and crept through the hedge.

It was exceedingly risky, but Wally was reckless now, and he was determined to know if Pongo was safe or not.

He sighted the garden-room almost at once, and, after a hasty glance about him, hurried across to it, hoping every second to hear Pongo's welcoming bark.

But he heard nothing, and presently he was looking about the deserted room. He soon noted the dish of water, and a plate on which there was a bone, evidently the remains of Pongo's dinner. Then Wally noted several more significant things.

Books were in the room—girl's books—and needlework, also. On a peg behind the door was a panama hat—a girl's hat. Wally looked inside it, and his eyes gleamed as he saw the name in the inside—Pamela Bland!

"By jingo!" breathed Wally. "Then I was right! She's a sport, and no mistake!"

He left the garden-room hurriedly, and had he left the danger zone it would certainly have been wiser. But Wally didn't. He reflected a moment, and then, hoping to catch a glimpse of Pamela, he started cautiously down towards the distant garden.

Reaching the gate, at last, he moved cautiously into the kitchen garden beyond, and started to work his way round the greenhouses.

It was just at that point that Wally's luck failed him.

Turning the corner of the first greenhouse he heard voices just a trifle too late, and the next moment he had almost bumped into an elderly gentleman who had just emerged from the doorway of the greenhouse.

It was Colonel Bland, and behind the colonel was an under-gardener, with a couple of flower-pots in his hands.

The colonel, startled at the unexpected meeting, stepped back suddenly, colliding with the gardener, who staggered against the doorpost, banging his head, and dropping the flower-pots crashing to the stone step.

Wally gave a startled gasp and turned to fly. Unfortunately, he tripped over a rake in his great haste and went crashing down at full length.

"Good gad!" gasped the colonel, using his favourite expression. "That—that young scoundrel again! What the deuce— Stop the young rascal, Bailey! That's right. Hold him—hold him fast!"

"I got 'im, sir!" gasped Bailey.

Bailey was hefty, and he was also fairly alert. Before the hapless Wally had the chance to scramble up again he had pounced on the fag and dragged him to his feet.

"One of them young gent's from the college, sir," said Bailey. "I seen 'im before."

"And so have I seen him before!" bellowed Colonel Bland, almost choking with amazed indignation. "The— the young rascal! After—after what took place this afternoon, begad! Trespassing again! Never in my life have I known such amazing impudence! And—and Dr. Hoimes assured me that he would be dealt with very severely. I heard him myself order the young reprobate to the punishment-room. What the deuce—"

The colonel glowered at the fag, scarcely able to believe his own eyes. Wally eyed him back defiantly.

"Bring him along, Bailey!" choked the old gentleman. "Don't give him an opportunity to escape, my man! I will take the rascal back to St. Jim's at once! Good gad!"

And, with a final glare at Wally, Colonel Bland puffed away to give orders for the trap to be got out, while Wally was hustled down the garden after him, escape out of the question this time. Bailey knew that it was more than his job was worth to let the junior escape, and he saw to it that Wally did not get the chance. And ten minutes later the hapless fag was seated in the back of the trap, guarded by a watchful footman, whilst the colonel, his face still red with wrath and indignation, toiled the pony and trap towards St. Jim's. Once again Wally had come to grief, and the future was looking blacker than ever. But the thing which upset the scapegrace more than anything else was the fact that he had failed to find Pongo, or to hear news of him. And Wally's face was white with misery as he passed through the staring faces of the fellows in the quad some minutes later. Tom Merry, who was standing on the School House steps, noted it, and guessed the reason. The fact of his being brought back by Colonel Bland was bad enough, but it was unlikely to bring that look to Wally's usually cheeky face.

"Buck up, Wally!" whispered Tom. "Pongo's all right—right as rain!"

"What!" The fag stopped, though the footman dragged at his arm. "Tom Merry, you—you know—"

"It was Grimey who collared Pongo," said Tom Merry. "He's handed Pongo over to—to your friend, who look after him. Keep your pecker up, old chap! You're not done yet."

Wally nodded, his face brightening wonderfully. He almost grinned as Knox came rushing up, fury in his face, and grabbed his other arm. Pongo was all right, and little else mattered to the scapegrace of the Third as he was marched away to face the music.

CHAPTER 7.

Sentence Passed!

"HALLO! Here's the old rotter now!"

"Give him a hiss!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a buzz in the passage outside the Head's study at St. Jim's. The troubles of Wally D'Arcy had created a sensation, and fags and juniors were standing about eager to learn what was to happen to him, though scarcely a fellow imagined it could possibly be anything but the sack! Wally's offences were too many and too serious for that—serious in the eyes of the authorities, at all events.

Most of the fellows, however, who had witnessed the results of Wally's hoax on Colonel Bland looked upon it as the scream of the term. In fact, Wally's reckless escapades brought him nothing but admiration from the Lower School as a whole. He was a hero in the Third, and was idolised by his own pals.

But now Wally was to pay the price, and his admirers became sympathisers. There was no question as to the scamp's popularity in the Lower School.

On his arrival he had not been taken direct to the Head's study, but to the detention-room, whilst the colonel and Mr. Railton interviewed Dr. Holmes.

And now there was a buzz as Colonel Bland came out. And as the general opinion was that he was to blame for Wally's troubles, the groups of fags and juniors adopted Curly Gibson's suggestion and gave him a low hiss.

The colonel ignored it, however, save for a slight rising of colour in his already ruddy face. Indeed, the old gentleman looked none too comfortable in any way. There was certainly no sign of triumph or satisfaction in his face. Possibly being instrumental in getting a boy sacked was not such a pleasure to him as the St. Jim's fellows seemed to imagine.

"Chuck it!" whispered Tom Merry uneasily. "Hallo, here's Railton!"

Colonel Bland vanished towards the hall, and Mr. Railton emerged from the Head's study. He frowned on seeing the group of juniors and fags, but he said nothing and walked swiftly away. He returned some moments later with Wally, his hand resting on the fag's shoulder.

There were murmurs of sympathy as Wally walked past. He looked slightly pale, but he grinned at Curly Gibson, and he even winked at Arthur Augustus, who was far more upset than the culprit himself.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Gussy, as the door closed behind the Housemaster and his prisoner. "The—the young wascal actually winked at me. He does not seem to realise his sewious posish at all."

"He's got plenty of nerve, and no mistake," said Lother.

Wally's heart beat faster and his knees felt decidedly wobbly as he stood before the Head's desk, with the Head's grave and penetrating look fixed upon him.

"D'Arcy minor," said the Head sternly, "I sent you to the punishment-room this afternoon to await my decision as to your punishment for the disgraceful hoax played upon Colonel Bland. Less than an hour ago I had reached my decision. In view of your age, I had decided to look upon the matter as a foolish, though wicked, practical joke, and that you were not to be expelled, but to be suitably punished in other ways."

Wally did not reply; he knew what was coming only too well, and, despite his determination not to show fear, the scamp could not help a sickening feeling of dread.

"Since then, however," proceeded the Head, "you have shown by your reckless, wicked behaviour, that you do not deserve the slightest consideration or lenience. You have actually attacked a master of this school, and have defied my authority by escaping from detention and going out of gates. In addition you have assaulted a prefect who attempted to detain you."

The Head paused.

"But that is not all," he went on after a moment. "You have added to your other serious faults by trespassing once again on the Rylcombe Manor estates. I am amazed, in view of what has already taken place, that you should have had the astounding impudence and temerity to go there again. What was your object in doing so, D'Arcy?"

Wally was silent; he was determined that his lips should remain sealed on that subject. To have told about Pongo would have "given away" his loyal girl friend, and the fag would have died rather than do that. He could imagine what the choleric old colonel would think if he knew his own niece was sheltering the dog which had been the original cause of the trouble.

The fag remained doggedly silent, and the Head's brow grew sterner.

"Very well," he said at last. "It has been suggested to me that your intention was to run away from school, and

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that you went there to carry out a last act of revenge against Colonel Bland. If such is not the case I shall be glad to hear your real reason, D'Arcy minor."

No answer.

"I can only conclude that the suggestion is correct, then," snapped Dr. Holmes, after a long silence. "I am shocked—utterly dismayed to find such revengeful feelings in a junior boy of this school. There is now no question as to what my decision must be. You will be expelled from St. Jim's—a sentence you have richly deserved."

No sound came from the fag; he had been prepared for it.

Yet now it had come he stood trembling—his reckless, careless courage almost failing him.

"No other course is open to me in the circumstances," said Dr. Holmes quietly. "I am very sorry indeed that I have been obliged to come to such a grave decision—the more so because your father, Lord Eastwood, is an old friend of mine, and also a governor of this school. That, however, cannot affect my decision, and my duty is plain. You must be thankful, D'Arcy minor, that your expulsion will not be public. Kildare will escort you to your home in the morning, and I will send a letter of explanation by him to your father. If you have anything to say—"

The Head waited.

"Nothing, sir," panted Wally, striving to control his voice.

"Very well. Mr. Railton, will you be good enough to escort this boy to the detention-room, where he will remain until his time for departure in the morning? That is all."

The fag followed Mr. Railton like one in a dream. Out in the passage there was a murmur as he came out. An unspoken question framed itself on Tom Merry's lips.

Wally noted it, and nodded.

Sacked!

There was no doubting it; the fag's expression was enough for the waiting crowd. Arthur Augustus stepped up to the Housemaster. Gussy very often rushed in where angels feared to tread.

"What—what is to happen to my minah, sir?" he stammered. "If you please, sir—"

"Your brother is expelled, D'Arcy major," said Mr. Railton quietly. "Boys, disperse at once! How dare you loiter about the passage in this manner!"

And the group of scared juniors broke up, discussing the news in dismayed voices. That the scrapegrace of the Third had fairly "asked" for the sack was generally agreed. But now he had got it there was only deep sympathy and commiseration for the hapless fag.

CHAPTER 8.

Trouble!

THE affair of Wally D'Arcy had caused some mild excitement at St. Jim's, but by the following morning the Upper School, at all events, gave the matter little thought. The Fifth and Sixth had more to think about than the troubles of a fag in the Third.

Few in the Fourth and Shell, in fact, gave much attention to the matter, either, by the morning. A fag in the Third was to be sacked that morning; it was hard lines on the kid, but—

Among the few were Tom Merry & Co. They gave the matter a great deal of worry, and their faces were grave. The fact that Wally had "asked for it" did not alter their feelings in the matter. They liked the fag, scamp though he undoubtedly was, and they felt deeply sorry for him, and sorry also for Arthur Augustus, his major. The swell of St. Jim's indeed was probably far more upset than Wally himself.

"It is weally my fault, deah boys," confessed Arthur Augustus dismally to his chums in the quad after breakfast. "As Wally's eldah bwothah, I feel I should have looked aftah him bettah!"

"Rot!" said Blake gruffly. "You've chipped in far more than you need ever have done, and you've got it in the neck more than once by doing so, Gussy. It's the kid's own fault entirely, though I'm dashed sorry about it."

But, like Rachel of old, Arthur Augustus mourned, and would not be comforted. Arthur Augustus had rather an enlarged view of an elder brother's duties, and he took them very seriously indeed, despite the fact that Wally did not like being "dry-nursed," as he called it, and made his dislike clear in no uncertain manner. But Arthur Augustus overlooked that fact now, and he blamed himself for the tragedy.

Tom Merry & Co. were not Wally's only sympathisers, however. In the Third Form there was deep resentment and great excitement that morning. Wally D'Arcy was the leader and hero of the fags, and they intended to let everybody know it.

When the fags took their places in the Form-room that

morning they were seething with resentment, and ripe for any trouble.

Mr. Selby, as he entered the class-room that morning, felt instinctively that he was going to have unusual trouble with his Form.

And he was! Wally's vacant place seemed to give the cross-grained Mr. Selby great satisfaction; his eyes glittered every time they rested on that empty seat. Wally D'Arcy was due to leave by the ten o'clock train from Ryloombe; that seat would never hold him again. No more ink-soaked pellets would "accidentally" strike Mr. Selby when his back was turned. No longer would the master of the Third find his inkpot filled with glue, or frogs in his desk!

Mr. Selby smiled at the thought. And his Form noted the gloating smile, and they eyed each other grimly.

The trouble soon started. Turning abruptly from the blackboard, Mr. Selby pointed to Jameson and Reggie Manners.

"You were talking, Manners and Jameson!" he snapped. Jameson and Manners did not deny it.

"I distinctly heard you," said Mr. Selby, his eyes full of suspicion. "I distinctly heard my own name mentioned. What were you discussing concerning me, Jameson?"

Jameson did not answer.

"I insist upon knowing!" said Mr. Selby angrily. "I have no doubt it was something impudent, if not insulting. What were you discussing concerning myself? Come out here, both of you!"

The two fags exchanged glances and went out.

"Now, answer me!" snapped the master.

"We—we were discussing D'Arcy, sir," said Jameson at last.

"Oh, indeed! I trust you were commenting upon the fact that, now the young rascal has gone, the discipline of this Form will be greatly improved!" said Mr. Selby, with bitter sarcasm. "But I insist upon knowing why my name was mentioned in connection with that wretched boy!"

"If—if you really insist upon knowing, sir," began Jameson, a faint gleam in his eyes.

"I order you to tell me!"

"We—we were saying—at least, I was—that you seemed jolly glad Wally had gone!" said Jameson, taking a deep breath. "I—I said you seemed to be—be gloating over his being expelled!"

The master's face crimsoned.

"Oh, indeed!" he gasped, his eyes glinting. "You said that, did you, Jameson? So that is how you speak of your Form-master! None the less," he added, glaring round the Form, "I may say that, though your disgraceful imputation is false, Jameson, the fact of D'Arcy minor's expulsion does, indeed, give me great satisfaction."

There was a murmur round the Form. Mr. Selby almost grinned. It gave the mean-spirited master no little pleasure to make it clear to his Form his view of Wally's departure.

"The wretched boy has richly earned expulsion again and again," said Mr. Selby. "It has been a matter of amazement to me that his scandalous escapades have not met a fitting punishment long ago. Now that the Form will no longer suffer from his contamination, however, I have every hope that there will be a great improvement in the conduct of the Form."

But it was a vain hope—as he was very soon to discover. "Apparently," resumed Mr. Selby, glowering at Jameson and Manners minor, "his influence is still to be felt for the moment. It will be my one aim to remove that influence. Jameson, you have admitted using an insolent expression

in referring to me. You stated I was gloating over that young rascal's downfall."

"Yes, sir," said Jameson defiantly. "It—it was plain enough for anyone to see."

"Wha-at?"

"I don't care!" panted Jameson, amazed at his own courage. "You've always been up against Wally! And now he's gone, you—you're crowing about it!"

"What? How—how dare you!" gasped the master, his face crimsoning with wrath. "Are you aware to whom you are speaking, Jameson?"

"Yes, sir!"

If anyone, Jameson had been Wally's closest chum at St. Jim's, and he was ready for trouble with anyone on his account. It relieved his feelings, at all events, to have a row with old Selby. Moreover, the very sight of Mr. Selby's satisfaction that morning had filled him with seething, furious anger. He could not help his chum now, perhaps, but he could stand up for him still. And nearly every fellow in the room felt the same, though perhaps in a lesser degree.

"You—you impudent young scoundrel!" spluttered Mr. Selby. "You—you dare—"

"I don't care," said Jameson, raising his voice recklessly.

"It's partly through you that Wally's got into trouble, too!"

"Wha-at?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Jameson!"

There was a murmur from the Form—a deep murmur of agreement. Though Mr. Selby had had nothing to do with later events, he had been partly responsible for Wally's trouble in the first place. Because Pongo had given trouble, the master had reported Wally to the Head the very same afternoon that Colonel Bland had done so, and he, as well as the colonel, had demanded that Pongo should be sent away from St. Jim's. In the fags' view, Mr. Selby was as much to blame at the beginning as was the crusty old warrior—which was to some extent true enough.

Besides, Mr. Selby was against Wally—very much so; and his continual complaints regarding the fag had undoubtedly had their effect on the Head's final decision.

The murmur became a roar.

"Shame!"

"And now he's crowing about it?" said a voice from the rear of the class—a voice very much like Curly Gibson's.

Mr. Selby almost danced with wrath. He glared round the Form.

"Who—who said that?" he spluttered. "Stand out this moment. You hear me? I am convinced that it was you, Gibson!"

Gibson did not trouble to deny it. Jameson had shown his views publicly, and Curly Gibson was not going to be behindhand. He stood out and joined Jameson defiantly. Mr. Selby grabbed him and shook him furiously.

"You—you insolent young rascal!" he stormed. "This—is this too much! I—I—I—"

In a sudden access of rage, Mr. Selby jumped forward and boxed Curly Gibson's ears.

It was a vicious blow, and the sound rang through the Form-room. Gibson staggered back, with a sharp cry, stumbled, and fell, his head striking the iron foot of one of the desks.

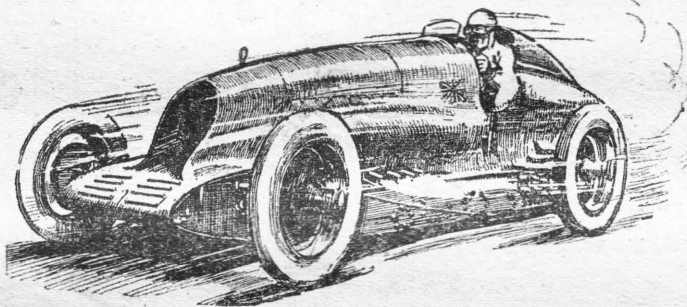
He gave another cry of pain. It was enough.

"Shame!"

It was a roar.

Mr. Selby went suddenly white. He had lost his temper, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,033.

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and he regretted the hasty, savage blow the next instant. He stooped over Curly Gibson, his intention being to lift the fag to his feet.

Unfortunately, the Form misconstrued his action. They imagined he was going to strike Gibson again—at all events, Jameson and Reggie Manners did.

They laid instant hands on the master of the Third and dragged him back. He struggled, almost stupefied with rage and amazement.

Then a book flew from somewhere and struck Mr. Selby under the chin.

It was followed the next moment by a fusillade of books and ink-pellets, rulers, inkpots, apples, and other articles too numerous to mention.

The air became thick with flying missiles. In a twinkling of an eye the excited fags were completely out of hand. Mr. Selby doubled up in terror, dodging desperately to avoid the bombardment.

"Stop!" he roared frantically. "Boys— Good heavens! Stop! Are you all mad? Groogh! Ow-ow! Help! You young villains! Yooop!"

"Go it, chaps!" roared Jameson, who had jumped out of the line of fire with Reggie Manners and Gibson. "Give the old rotter socks!"

"Down with Selby!"

"Yes, rather! Good old Wally!"

"Hurrah!"

Whizz! Crash! Whizz!

CHAPTER 9.

Mutiny!

MR. SELBY shrieked. Then, scared almost out of his wits at the sudden riot, he bolted for the door, tore it open, and fled.

"Hurrah!"

His flight was the signal for a rousing, hysterical cheer from the wildly excited fags, and the cheer was followed by laughter.

Then a sudden silence fell on the fags, and they eyed each other—aghast at what they had done.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jameson. "We've done it now, you fellows. That old cad will be along with the Head and Railton soon. Never mind, we're not letting Wally go!"

"No fear!" came the roar.

Jameson jumped on a form, his face ablaze with excited resolution.

"Look here," he yelled, "let's rebel to show the Head what we think about Wally getting sacked! We're not letting Wally go!"

"No fear!"

"Not likely!" roared Joe Frayne. "Good old Wally! Let's rescue him!"

"He'll be gone now!" shouted Curly Gibson. "I vote we go after him and rescue him from Kildare!"

"That's the weeze!" bellowed Jameson, glancing swiftly at the school-room clock. "We'll just do it! Come on!"

"Hurrah!"

Jameson led the way in a rush out into the passage. It was deserted, but from somewhere they heard Mr. Selby's voice raised in excitement. The fags ignored it and raced for the Hall. Grabbing their caps, they stampeded out into the quad in a yelling swarm.

Then they tore for the gates. Taggles, the school porter, was standing dreamily outside his lodge, leaning on a broom. He was brought suddenly back to earth as he heard the uproar and saw the crowd of fags racing towards him.

"My heye!" he gasped. "What the— Here, you young varmint, what— Whooooop!"

As Taggles jumped out before the crowd they passed over him like a tidal wave. He vanished from sight, and when the last yelling fag had passed he was left on the gravel like a stranded wreck.

"Go on!" roared Jameson. "Hurrah!"

Cheering excitedly, the fags pelted up the lane. None of them knew exactly what was to be done, but Jameson knew Wally must either be on his way or at the station by this time. And suddenly he gave a whoop as he sighted two figures on the road ahead. One carrying a bulky bag was undoubtedly Kildare, and the other was Wally D'Arcy.

"There he is!"

Kildare seemed to hear the roar of voices, and he turned round and glanced behind. He almost fell down as he sighted the swarm of yelling fags. He dropped his bag—or, rather, Wally's bag—in sheer amazement.

Wally was dumbfounded. He blinked at the advancing army, scarcely realising what it meant.

Kildare gasped.

"What—what the dickens— Here, you young villains, what—"

That was all Kildare succeeded in saying.

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He went down, with a dozen fags swarming over him. The rest grabbed the startled, stupefied Wally and rushed him away.

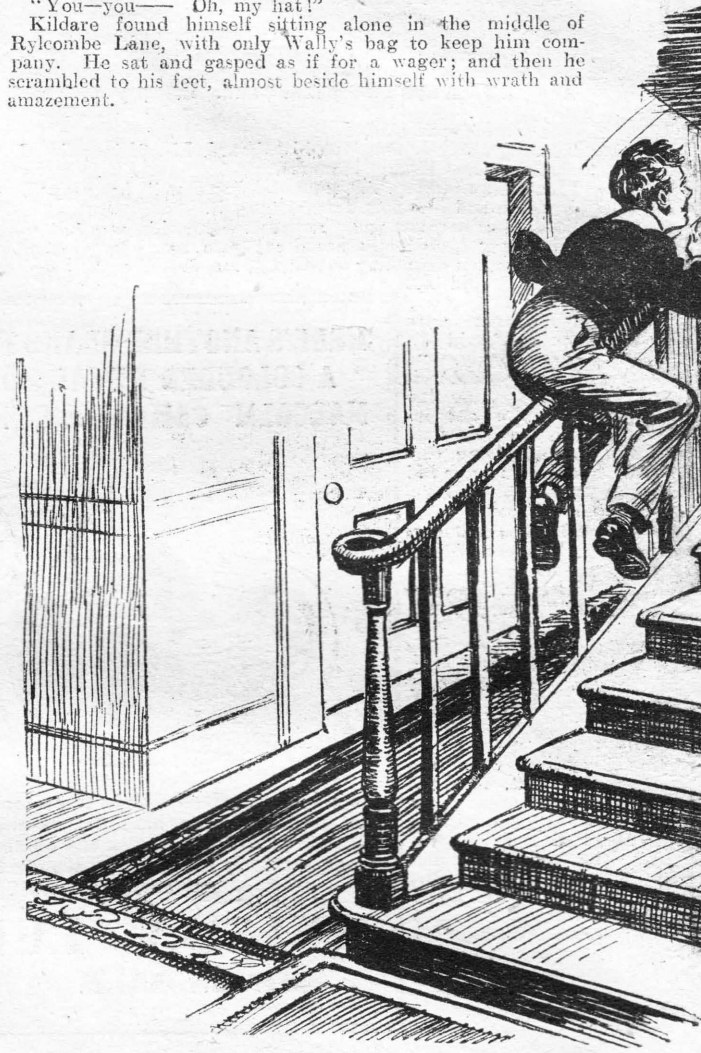
"Gerrup!" bellowed Kildare, struggling furiously to get up. "Oh, great Scott! You little fiends, what does this mean?"

"It means we're not seeing Wally sacked!" shouted Curly Gibson. "If Wally goes, we all go!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You—you— Oh, my hat!"

Kildare found himself sitting alone in the middle of Rylcombe Lane, with only Wally's bag to keep him company. He sat and gasped as if for a wager; and then he scrambled to his feet, almost beside himself with wrath and amazement.



The fags had gone—there was no sign of them to be seen.

But to his ears came a crashing in the depths of the wood which skirted the lane at that spot. The sounds soon died away, however, and Kildare realised, in utter dismay, that the fags had gone—and Wally with them.

"Well, my hat!" choked Kildare.

He turned and tottered back to St. Jim's—there was nothing else for him to do. To follow the fags was hopeless. But he was in a towering rage. The Head had made him responsible for Wally's safe arrival at Eastwood House, and he had lost him—before they were scarcely out of sight of St. Jim's.

But the rebellious fags had already forgotten Kildare. It was Curly Gibson's idea to make for the woods, for they knew the captain of the school would never give way to them if he could help it. Moreover, where could they go? The only thing to do was to retire to some quiet place and hold a council of war to discuss the situation.

They all realised by this time how serious their position was. They had burned their boats. But they were grimly determined to see it through to the finish.

They stopped in a little glade at last, panting and breathless. Wally was still looking dazed.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "Well, my only Sunday bonnet! You men have fairly done it now!"

"We meant to do it!" said Jameson.

"But—but what's the game?" gasped Wally, looking



Knox started up the stairs just as Wally leaped astride the banisters and came careering down. The prefect made a grab at the flying fag, missed by a foot, and overbalanced. With a wild yell, he went rolling down the stairs in a series of heavy bumps. (See Chapter 5.)

from one to another of his devoted chums. "Does this mean you chaps have rebelled?"

"Just that, my lad! We're not allowing you to be sacked, Wally!"

"You—you're doing it for me?" gasped Wally.

"Of course! If you go, we go—that's the programme, Wally!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was a roar, and Wally's face coloured with pleasure at the loyalty of his chums. But he grew serious at once.

"I didn't want to drag you chaps into this," he said. "You shouldn't have done it. It means the sack for some of you, and trouble all round, perhaps, now."

"Rot!"

"Bunkum!"

"Chuck it, Wally!"

"It won't jolly well come to that!" said Jameson stoutly. "It'll only perhaps come to that if we're licked!—We're not going to be licked, though."

"Rather not!"

"Anyway, that's the programme!" said Jameson grimly, scanning the excited faces about him. "If any fellow funks going the whole hog, let him back out before it's too late!"

Nobody answered, but one or two others of a faint-hearted nature looked anything but happy.

"That's all right, then," said Jameson at last. "Now,

Wally, are you going with us, or are you going to stop raising silly objections?"

Wally grinned, his old mischievous grin. He saw there was no help for it now. Indeed, such an adventure just suited his reckless nature, and only the desire to save his chums from trouble had prompted him to raise any objections at all.

"I'm on," he chuckled. "It's jolly decent of you chaps to back me up like this, and now the thing's done I'm on like a bird. What's the giddy programme?"

"Only what I've said," grinned Jameson. "We're not caving in or going back to St. Jim's until the Head sees reason and cancels your expulsion, Wally. That's the programme up to now."

"Hear, hear!"

"But in the giddy meantime," said Jameson, with a chuckle, "we've got to find a home for ourselves until he does." Jameson spoke as if he was quite certain the Head would give in. "It's only a matter of a few days at most, chaps. I've got an idea, and I think it will do a treat. What about that old cottage at the edge of the manor woods?"

"Phew! That belongs to old Bland."

"All the better," said Jameson, grinning. "It's empty, and has been for some time, though it isn't in bad condition. It'll keep the giddy rain off, anyway."

"Ripping!"

"By jingo! Just the very place, Jammy," said Wally with enthusiasm. "Well, if we're settling on the cottage we'd better go there and get dug in before the beaks send after us."

"Phew! Yes, rather!"

"Come on!" said Wally.

At a trot he led the way through the trees, trampling a route through the tangled bushes and thickets. They came out of the wood at last, crossed a couple of fields, and then plunged through a belt of trees that screened an ancient, thatched cottage on the edge of deeper woods—the Rylecombe Manor Woods.

It was only a small, four-roomed cottage, and most of the windows were smashed, and the whole place had a deserted, dilapidated look about it. Since its last tenants the cottage had fallen sadly into disrepair, and Colonel Bland had not thought it worth while repairing it apparently.

Yet it was a haven of refuge for the rebellious fags, and they cheered as they sighted it. They were only thinking of the novelty of their adventure. A hefty branch, wielded by a swarm of fags, soon snapped the door lock, and then they took possession, Wally giving his orders like an Army officer.

With branches torn from trees the fags swept out the dusty rooms, while others fetched armfuls of wood for fires.

And, meanwhile, others had not been idle. Wally realised that sooner or later they would have to defend their citadel, and he set his men to work gathering ammunition and building defences. With rusty nails torn from timber within the cottage, battens of wood were nailed securely across the lower windows; and wedges and a roughly-constructed bar fitted across the front door. The back door was left open, with another bar and more wedges ready to slip into place at a moment's notice if necessary.

Nor had Wally forgotten the question of food for the garrison.

A whip-round was made and, pooling the cash collected, Wally counted it and took charge of it.

"Well over two quid," he said, with a chuckle. "Not so bad, and will last us for a bit."

"What's going to happen after that?" said Hankey.

"We'll get those Fourth and Shell fatheads to help," said Wally confidently. "They'll help us quickly enough in a case like this. I'm pretty sure of a fiver from old Gus, anyway. If he doesn't fork out he'll jolly well know about it, anyway."

"Oh, good!"

"But we want grub for dinner to begin with," said Wally. "Jammy and Hobbs and Curly had better take on that job. Go to old Sands' in the village and get some stuff. I'll draw up a list. We'll want other things as well as grub—candles and matches, and goodness knows what else."

"Right-ho!"

Jameson, Hobbs, and Carly Gibson grinned, looking forward to the rather risky job of getting in supplies.

"It'll be safe enough yet," said Wally, scribbling on a piece of paper. "But keep your eyes peeled in case the giddy prefects have started out after us already. While you're gone I'll draw up our ultimatum."

"Our whatter?"

"Ultimatum!" said Wally witheringly. "Don't you

know what that means? It means—er—it means—well, you fellows know what it means. If you don't give in we'll dot you on the boko sort of idea. See?"

"You—you're going to threaten to dot the Head on the boko?" yelled Hobbs, who was rather dense.

"No," snorted Wally, "of course not! What I mean is— Oh, blow! If you don't know, find out! Now you three chaps clear out for the grub and things, and mind you don't get spotted or collared."

"We jolly well won't!" said Jameson, and after making sure the coast was clear they started out on their errand, leaving Wally, with an upturned box for a desk and another box for a seat, busy composing his ultimatum.

CHAPTER 10.

The Enemy Sighted!

"HOW do you spell ultimatum, you men?"

Wally asked the question anxiously after chewing his pencil for several moments.

"Goodness knows!" said Reggie Manners.

"Can't you find an easier word than that, Wally?"

"I'm going to use that, young Manners," said Wally obstinately. "It's the right word, and it's a jolly good word."

"Go ahead, then! Only don't ask me to spell it for you, 'cause I couldn't."

"Ignorant ass!" grunted Wally, and as nobody else volunteered the needed information, he started on the job himself.

Before him was a double sheet of paper torn from a pocket-book, and soon he had carefully printed across the top "ULTIMATTUM," in big capital letters.

He looked at it rather doubtfully.

"It doesn't look quite right," he muttered; "but I'll have to chance it! If it's wrong, the Head may not notice it, anyway. Now, lemme see. Would you begin, 'Reverend Sir,' or 'Respected Sir,' or just 'Sir'?"

"Respected Sir," sounds best," said Joe Frayne.

"But we don't respect him so jolly much after sacking Wally!" objected Reggie Manners. "Just put 'Sir.'"

"Respected Sir" will do," grunted Wally. "Now shut up a minute!" He scribbled away industriously for a few moments, and then he cleared his throat and started to read out what he had written. "How will this do?"

"Respected Sir,—We, the undersigned members of the Third Form at St. Jim's, having rebelled against constitutional authority—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Hankey. "Where the thump did he dig up that word?"

"It's a jolly good word!" snorted Wally. "You shut up, young Hankey. 'Constitutional authority,' he proceeded victoriously. "I hereby respectfully state that we refuse to return to St. Jim's until the unjust expulsion of Walter D'Arcy is cancelled. In our view a flogging would meet the case, and our motto is, 'If Wally D'Arcy Goes—We Go!' In addition, we respectfully demand that no expulsions whatever shall follow this rebellion. On hearing from you, sir, that you agree to our just and reasonable demands, we will immediately return peacefully to St. Jim's and resume our duties, taking whatever other punishment you wish to inflict without complaint. BUT NO EXPULSIONS!"

Wally looked up with no little satisfaction.

"How's that?" he asked. "I put that last sentence in capitals, so there won't be any mistake about it."

"Rotten!" growled Reggie Manners. "Who's willing to take any silly punishments? I'm not!"

"Funk!" snorted Wally. "Think the Head's going to crawl to us—fall on our giddy necks and kiss us, and thank us with tears in his optics for having rebelled? He's bound to go for us, and a licking won't hurt us. Anyway, that's going as it is, and the fellow who refuses to sign it will get a dot on the nose and a thick ear! Mind that!"

Wally folded up the valuable document and placed it in his pocket. To the scamp of the Third it presented a good "ultimatum," and Wally felt very proud of it.

"We'll all sign it when those other chaps come back," said Wally. "Then we'll get a village kid, or someone, to take it to— What the dickens—"

Wally broke off as a sudden commotion came from the kitchen of the cottage. Several of the fags were still busily breaking up wood for the fires, one of which was already crackling away in the hearth of the front room where Wally sat.

The fags with Wally rushed into the kitchen, and then they stared. Standing in various attitudes, with chunks of wood in their hands, and heated, excited faces, were the fags who had been breaking wood.

"What the thump is the matter?" demanded Wally.

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"Rats!" said Joe Frayne.

"Eh?"

"Two blessed rats!" grinned Joe. "We lifted them faggots out of that corner there, and two whoppin' rats dashed out of a hole in the corner!"

"I just missed one, and he bolted under the dashed door!" chimed in Hankey. "The other vanished down a hole in the floor."

"Somewhere here," said Watson, dropping on one knee by a small cranny in the flagstones of the kitchen. "I say, that's rather queer. It seems hollow under here. Must be a cellar."

"My hat!" said Wally. "What a pity old Pongo isn't here?"

"Where is Pongo?" asked Watson, eyeing Wally curiously. "Piggott swears he didn't go home, after all, Wally. Is it a fact?"

"Quite true!" grinned Wally cheerfully. "It was Pongo who chased Piggott when he was sneaking about in the old tower. You see, he didn't go home."

"But—but Kildare—"

"I spoofed Kildare nicely!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "I changed the labels, sending Pongo to Wayland only. He was shoved out by the guard at Wayland, and I slipped over and got him."

"Phew! You beggar!" breathed Hankey. "And where is he now, Wally?"

"That's telling!" said Wally. "He's not far away, and if there are rats about, I'm going to bring him here! But, I say, it's queer about that hole. And if the rat is down there we'd better have him out. We don't want rats swarming over us when we're sleeping, and we don't want 'em after the grub. If the beggar's under that flagstone we'll soon nab him."

"Good egg!"

The prospect of a bit of sport was inviting, and the fags grabbed stakes and Wally and Frank Levison examined the flagstone. It certainly seemed to be loose, and had a hollow sound when tapped.

"Jolly queer!" said Wally. "Must be a hollow under here if it isn't a cellar. Up with it, Franky!"

But it was more than either Wally or Franky could do to lift the heavy flag, loose as it undoubtedly was. But with the aid of their stakes the fags soon had the slab raised.

It revealed a yawning cavity—undoubtedly a cellar of sorts.

It smelled musty and exceedingly damp. Wally struck a match and blinked down into the gloom. It revealed a shallow apartment, about the size of the kitchen, but with a floor scarcely five feet at most below them—an earthen floor.

"Well, this beats the band!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "Fancy there being no door excepting this! I know, this cottage must have been used by a poacher, and he kept his captures down there, in case the bobbies dropped on him."

"Likely enough," said Reggie Manners. "No signs of the giddy rat, though."

"Miles away by now!" said Wally confidently. "I bet this old show's riddled with holes! Hold on! I'm going down!"

Wally dropped down cautiously, and blinked about him with the aid of the light from a match. But there was nothing to be seen save for some old rotting sacks, a heap of damp straw, and some blackened empty boxes.

He returned to his chums, helped up by eager hands.

"Anything there?"

"No, only rubbish," said Wally. "Ugh! What a rotten hole! I say— Hallo, somebody coming! Quick!"

The fags sprang to their stations in a flash. Somebody was coming undoubtedly—footsteps sounded outside—running footsteps. Wally glanced through the kitchen window, and then he grunted.

"It's those three!" he snapped. "They've got no grub, either! Oh blow! What's happened?"

He rushed to the door, and opened it as Jameson, Curly Gibson, and Hobbs came pelting up to the cottage. They were all three breathless and panting.

"Quick—they're coming!" panted Jameson.

"Who? Not—"

"Selby and the blessed prefects!" gasped Curly Gibson breathlessly. "Luckily, we spotted 'em, and turned back to warn you. They'll be here jolly soon, I expect!"

"But—but they can't know—"

"Kildare's jolly cute!" said Hobbs. "He's following up our trail—the trail of the crowd of us when we came here. All us lot couldn't come through the woods without leaving a trail behind us, you ass!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"They'll lose the giddy trail over the meadows," said Reggie Manners confidently.

"Bosh!" said Wally, looking grim. "After the rain

we've had lately the ground's absolutely soaked, and our hoofmarks would show plainly enough. Phew! I never thought of that!"

"Better get ready for 'em," grinned Jameson.

"Yes, rather!"

The fags were more or less ready for any attack. They had piled turfs and fir-cones in heaps by the windows, and, in addition, they had raided a farmer's winter store of turnips, and had cut quantities of these into hefty pieces to use as further ammunition. The cottage was not likely to be taken by any attackers without casualties.

The boards across the windows were only to prevent anyone clambering through, and there was plenty of room left for the defenders to "fire" their missiles through if necessary.

With barred doors and guarded windows the excited fags waited the coming of the enemy.

"How many of them were there, Jammy?" demanded Wally.

"All the prefects, and several more of the Sixth, not counting old Selby, who does not matter," grinned Jameson.

"The more the merrier," chuckled the scamp of the Third, his eyes dancing. "I bet—Hallo, here they come!"

From the trees screening the cottage from the meadows emerged a group of familiar figures—the foremost being Kildare, and the last being Mr. Selby of the Third. Mr. Selby was looking like a Hun, and Kildare was not looking more amiable. The rest of the Sixth looked grim and business-like.

As they emerged before the cottage Kildare pointed to the ancient chimney, evidently indicating the smoke. Then somebody sighted the grinning faces of the fags at the window. The fags made no attempt to hide. They knew it was hopeless, in any case.

Mr. Selby hesitated, and then he stepped forward and advanced to the door. He tried it, and then he rapped hard on the panels.

"Boys!" he called out. "Open this door at once!"

"Rats!" said Wally D'Arcy, looking down on him cheerfully from an upper window. "Go and eat coke, old top!"

"Wha-at?"

Mr. Selby almost fainted at being told to go and eat coke by one of his pupils, who should have shivered at his very glance.

"You—you speak to me like that, D'Arcy!" he gasped, glaring upwards. "Come down this instant and open this door, boy! You shall suffer dearly for this outrageous conduct! You hear me?"

"I hear you calling me?" chirped Wally. "Do you hear him calling me, chaps!"

"Go home, Selby bird!"

"Go and chop sticks, old nut!"

"Naughty boy! Look at the ink on his collar! Take fifty lines for being untidy, Selby!"

"You—you impudent young reprobates!" stuttered Mr. Selby, shaking his fist up at the grinning faces. "Kildare—Darrell—Knox, break down this door without delay. Those rebellious young villains must be captured and taken back for their well-merited punishment!"

"Oh, ye-es, sir!"

Kildare & Co. looked none too eager. As a matter of fact, they guessed only too well that Wally & Co. would never use such cheek unless they intended to make a fight for liberty.

"Come on, Eric!" said Jameson encouragingly to the captain of St. Jim's. "Try it Little By Little like the good boy in the story-books!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare's face flushed crimson.

"Come on, you fellows!" he gasped. "Let's have them out of that!"

"We'll jolly soon do that," said Knox, who apparently did not anticipate any trouble.

As he spoke, Knox flung all his weight on the kitchen door, making the door creak. But it did not weaken, and before he could try again a heavy turf dropped from above, right on his upturned face.

Thump!

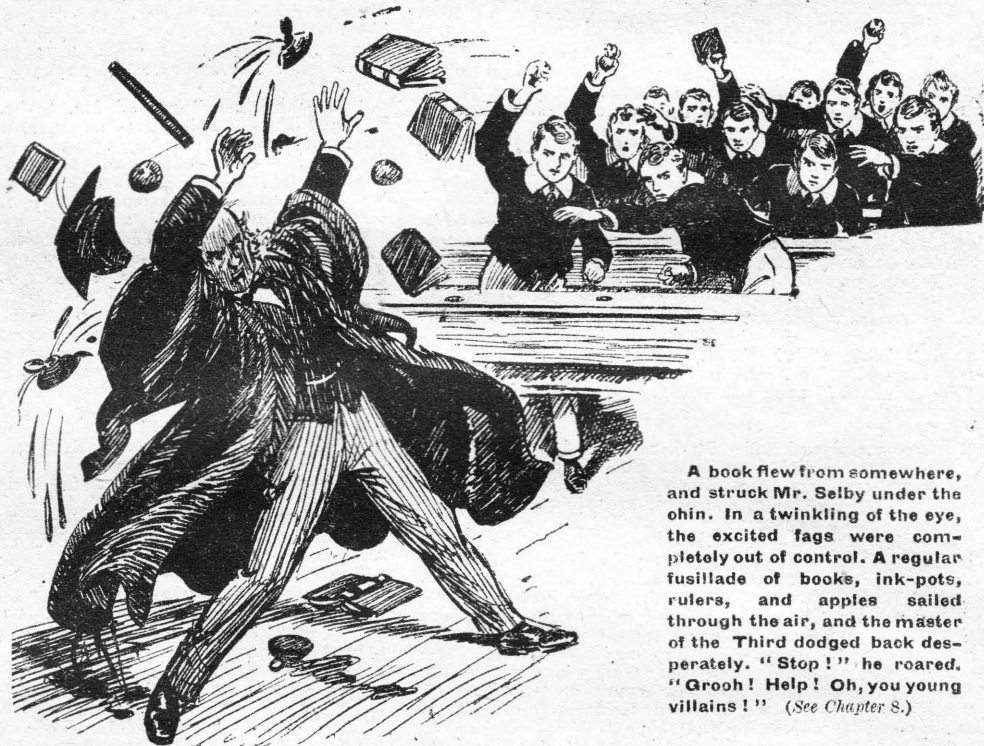
Knox sat down hard under the impact, gasping and spluttering and gouging at eyes and mouth and nose. The turf was soft and wet, and very unpleasant, and Knox got a great deal of it in his open mouth.

"G-gug-groooogh!" he choked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Next, please!" sang out Wally cheerfully. "Please don't push at the back. Plenty for all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



A book flew from somewhere, and struck Mr. Selby under the chin. In a twinkling of the eye, the excited fags were completely out of control. A regular fusillade of books, ink-pots, rulers, and apples sailed through the air, and the master of the Third dodged back desperately. "Stop!" he roared. "Grooh! Help! Oh, you young villains!" (See Chapter 8.)

CHAPTER 11.

Reinforcements!

N OBODY attempted to push at the back—or even approach the door again for the moment. The fate that had befallen the over-eager Gerald Knox had warned them to be more circumspect. The fags were obviously reckless—careless of authority or consequences. There were grim faces among the prefects. Knox, still spluttering, scrambled up, and hurriedly rejoined his fellow-prefects, a rain of fir-cones and pieces of turnip hastening his going considerably.

Out of range, he turned and shook a fist at the grinning fags.

"You—you young fiends!" he bellowed. "I'll make you squirm for that!"

There was a hurried consultation among the prefects. Mr. Selby also talked, waving his arms angrily as he did so. The master of the Third was evidently urging the prefects to the attack. Mr. Selby wasn't a bit afraid of them getting hurt so long as he was able to keep in the back-ground.

"Go on, I tell you!" he was bellowing. "They must be apprehended without delay. I order you to attack them, Kildare! What are you waiting for?"

"You, sir!" said Kildare, exasperated beyond measure. "As you are in charge of us, sir, we naturally imagined you were going to lead the attack."

"Oh, yes, sir!" added Darrell blandly. "We'll follow you like anything!"

Mr. Selby glared at them. "Kildare," he spluttered, "if I thought you were being purposely insolent, I should report this to Dr. Holmes!"

"Oh; not at all, sir!"

Mr. Selby advanced nearer to the rebels—as near as he felt was safe.

"Boys," he bawled, his voice trembling with anger, "for the last time I order you— Yoooop!"

Whizz! Flop! Thump!

Mr. Selby had believed himself out of range, but he soon discovered his mistake. A weighty turf sent his mortar-board spinning from his august head, and a chunk of turnip took him full in the waistcoat.

"Whoooooooop!"

He sat down hard.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Roaring with laughter, the reckless fags let fly at him as he sat there, with gleeful energy. It was not often that they had a chance like this, and they were determined to make the most of it.

Mr. Selby sat and roared.

"Come on, you chaps!" gasped Kildare. "Half round the back and half of us at the front. We can't go back without the dashed kids!"

As he spoke Kildare made a desperate rush for the door, Darrell and North and Monteith and several others following him. The rest hurried round to the back of the cottage, full of hope that the sudden rush would take the defenders by surprise.

They soon found that the rear was defended as efficiently as the front of the cottage.

What followed was swift and short and exciting, especially for the attacking force.

Kildare reeled back under a fusillade of missiles—whizzing turfs, fir cones, and chunks of turnips, not to mention scraps of rubbish picked up round the deserted cottage.

The next moment the rest of the attacking force got it.

The air was rent with howls and yells of pain and wrath and with cheers and cat-calls from the defenders of the cottage.

Thud! Whizz, whizz! Thud!

"Yaroooop! Yow! Oh, great Scott!"

"Go it, chaps!" sang out Wally. "No surrender!"

"No fear!"

"Hurrah!"

Kildare turned and fled. Flesh and blood couldn't stand it. Darrell and North reached the back door, but the stuff flung down on them from above soon persuaded them to leave it. They broke and fled, their attempt to break down the door scarcely begun.

"Hurrah!"

It was victory. The fags had won the first round, at all events. The prefects, gasping, panting, and dishevelled, gathered together at the front. Mr. Selby, who had long ago scrambled out of range, hurried over to them, his sour features red with rage, save for sundry muddy patches.

"Kildare!" he gasped. "Try again. Attack them again! They cannot hold out much longer. Their ammunition is bound to give out sooner or later."

"And what about us?" panted Kildare, glowering at him. "We'll be wrecks by that time."

"Rubbish! I order you, as a master of the school, to attack that cottage again!" raved Mr. Selby. "That cottage must be stormed, and those wretched, rebellious young scoundrels brought to submission."

"Try doing it yourself, then, sir."

"What!"

"I'm fed-up!" said Kildare bluntly, clawing mud from his heated features. "I've had enough!"

"Same here!" snorted Darrell.

Before the master of the Third could find a suitable reply a new voice was heard—a deep, angry voice.

"Good gad! What—what— Good gad! What the deuce—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "Here's the colonel! Now for fireworks! Stand by to repel the British Army! Good old dug-out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Colonel Bland—for it was indeed the peppery old soldier—stood and glowered at the scene, two startled keepers at his elbows. The colonel had first sighted smoke coming from the cottage chimney, and on investigation had heard the uproar from afar.

The sight of the crowd of cheeky, grinning faces at the broken windows of his cottage, the muddy, raging seniors, and the gesticulating master almost took his breath away.

"What the deuce!" he began again, shaking the riding-whip he carried up at the fags. "What the deuce are you doing there, you young scamps? Good gad! You, there," he went on, addressing Mr. Selby, "what's this mean, hey?"

Mr. Selby went pink. He was not used to being

addressed like that, even by school governors and magistrates.

"Sir," he stuttered. "I—I am a master from St. Jim's. I—I—"

"Do you imagine I cannot see that?" snorted Colonel Bland. "What the deuce does this confounded business mean? My cottage taken possession of by a horde of young hooligans! I won't have it; sir. Order the young rascals out of that at once, sir! You hear me?"

"I—I— Colonel Bland, you—you forget yourself—"

"I don't forget anything!" bellowed the colonel. "I only know that unless you order those young scoundrels off my property I shall take the law into my own hands and clear the confounded place with my whip! My cottage! Good gad! They'll be setting fire to the place before they've finished!"

"Sir."

"What's it mean?" roared the old gentleman.

"Go it, old son!" called Wally cheerfully. "Give him socks, colonel!"

"Good gad!"

The colonel jumped. He glared up at the window, and then he recognised Wally.

"What! You again?" he roared. "You—you insolent young jackanapes! I might have known it. Selby—if that's your name—order those young scamps out of my house!"

"Colonel Bland," gasped Mr. Selby, "pray calm yourself and I will explain this unfortunate affair. That—that boy," he went on, pointing up at the grinning Wally, "has incited his Form-fellows to mutiny. He was being escorted to the station this morning after being expelled."

when his companions assaulted his guard and rescued him. They—they have defied authority, have rebelled against masters and prefects. They have taken up their position in that cottage and refuse to be apprehended."

"Good gad!" gasped the colonel. "So that's it, hey?"

"That is the position, sir," said Mr. Selby, calming himself with an effort. "If you, sir, can dislodge the young scoundrels I will certainly take charge of them, and see that they are taken back to receive their punishments, which will be very severe indeed."

"But can't you fellows root them out?" snorted the colonel, looking over the group of seniors. "Good gad! There's enough of you!"

"We've tried, sir," grunted Kildare. "Look at us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell of laughter from the windows of the cottage.

"Good gad!" spluttered Colonel Bland. "What utter nonsense! Can't clear out a rabble of youngsters! Bah! Thompson—Brent!"

"Yessir," said both keepers together, looking at each other glumly, as if they knew what was coming.

"Attack that door!" said the colonel briefly. "Break it down and kick those confounded trespassers off my property!"

"Suttinly, sir!"

The keepers advanced gingerly towards the door with uneasy glances at the crowded windows. They soon discovered that their apprehensions were not misplaced.

They reached to within twenty yards of the cottage door, and then Wally's voice rang out:

"Fire!"

CHAPTER 12.

A Mysterious Disappearance!

WHIZZ, whizz, whizz!

Thump, thump! Thud! Squelch!

From the window came a hurricane of hurtling missiles, and the hapless keepers gasped, wilted under the thudding turfs and turnips, and then they turned and bolted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrah!"

It was a very brief battle, indeed.

But it was long enough—too long for the unfortunate keepers.

"It ain't no good, sir," panted Thompson, stopping before his glowering, stupefied master. "It's more'n flesh and blood can stand to face them young rips."

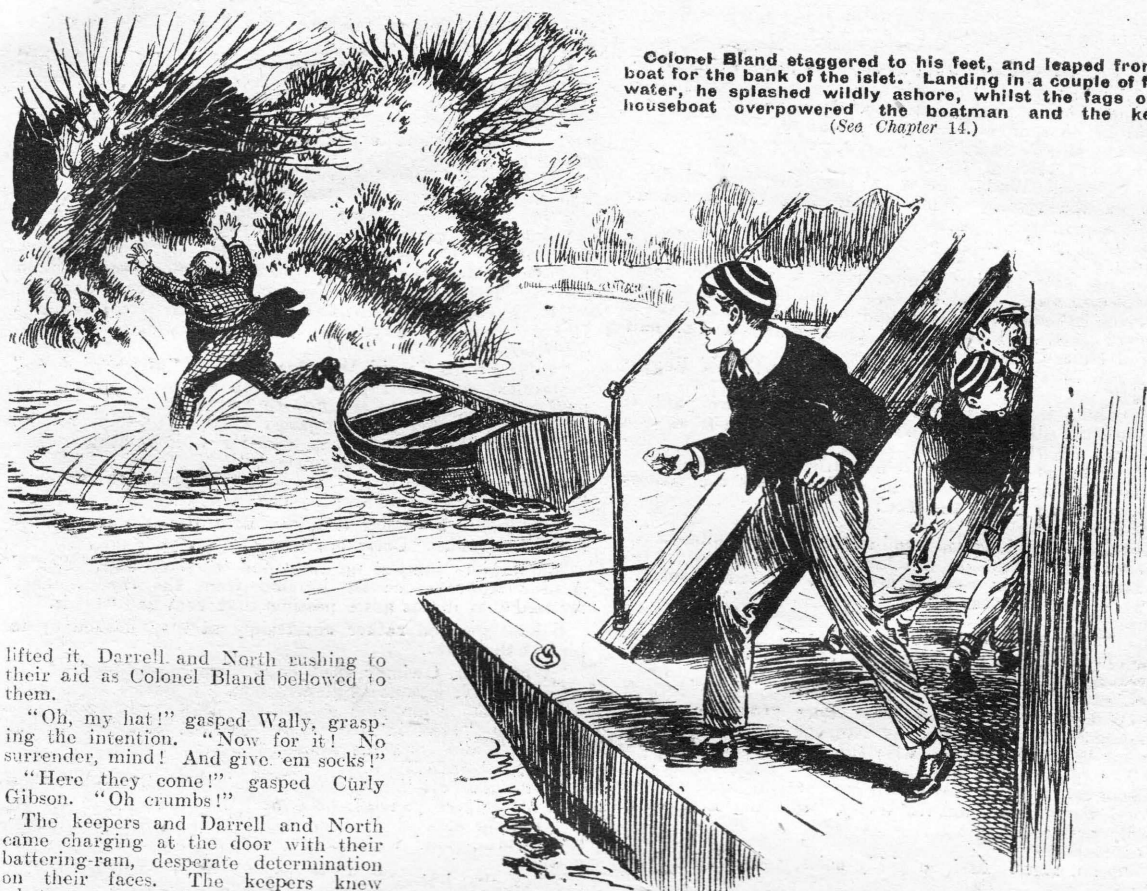
"You dolts!" bellowed the colonel. "Here, I'll take charge of this affair. There's a tree-trunk there," said the colonel, pointing to a felled sapling on the ground. "You, Thompson and Brent, use it as a battering-ram on that confounded door. The rest of you break up into two parties and attack at front and back. You understand?"

he added, turning on the seniors.

"Yes, sir," said Kildare.

"Right! I'll show 'em!"

Under the colonel's directions the two keepers—though they obviously didn't relish the job—grasped the trunk and



Colonel Bland staggered to his feet, and leaped from the boat for the bank of the islet. Landing in a couple of feet of water, he splashed wildly ashore, whilst the fags on the houseboat overpowered the boatman and the keeper.
(See Chapter 14.)

lifted it, Darrell and North rushing to their aid as Colonel Bland bellowed to them.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wally, grasping the intention. "Now for it! No surrender, mind! And give 'em socks!"

"Here they come!" gasped Curly Gibson. "Oh crumbs!"

The keepers and Darrell and North came charging at the door with their battering-ram, desperate determination on their faces. The keepers knew what to expect from their choleric master if they failed a second time. And their determination, and the colonel's scathing shouts, roused the St. Jim's seniors also.

With Kildare leading them, the rest of the attackers made a simultaneous assault at the back of the cottage.

"Let 'em have it!" yelled Wally desperately. "Stick at the chaps with the trunk, never mind the rest!"

The keepers and Darrell and North swayed and wilted for a moment before the swarm of missiles hurled at them, and then a yell from Darrell urged them on again. The next moment, despite all the efforts of the fags, they had reached the door.

Crash!

The door shook and splintered, while the cottage resounded with the sound of the blow.

"Again!" yelled Darrell. "It's going!"

It was. The door splintered again under the next charge of the ram. Wally raced downstairs, calling his chums upstairs to follow him. A glance below had shown him that another such charge would soon account for the rickety old door.

"Come on—quick!" he roared. "This way!"

The fags, desperate now, followed him in a swarm as he dashed into the kitchen.

"Down there!" gasped Wally, pointing hurriedly to the gap in the floor. "Quick! We'll spoof 'em yet. Down you go!"

"Oh, good!"

Grasping his leader's desperate idea, Curly Gibson dropped swiftly through the hole in the floor, and his chums followed in turn just as swiftly, those below leaping aside as they dropped through to allow the others to pass.

Wally came last, just as a resounding crash and a yell of triumph came from the front door.

"Quick, you chaps!"

Wally had already dragged one of the boxes under the trapdoor, and, together with Jameson and Reggie Manners, he struggled frantically with the flagstone above.

It dropped into place at last with a dull thud, and blackness fell upon the defenders in the cellar.

The next instant the trampling of feet was heard faintly above them.

"Quiet!" breathed Wally.

In deep darkness, with just a chink of light showing through the hole in the flagstone above, the scared fags scarcely breathed.

Would the attacking force "tumble" to the trick?

They heard voices above, and then the tramp of feet on stairs. Then came a yell of utter amazement.

"Gone! By James, they've gone—clean vanished!"

The fags grinned gleefully. It was Kildare's astounded voice. It was followed by a bellow from the colonel.

"What? Good gad! What the deuce— You careless fools, you've let them slip away!"

"Oh crumbs!" choked Wally.

Above the tramping of feet on the flagstones over their heads came the colonel's voice raised in anger, and then suddenly the tramp of feet died away and silence reigned.

"They've gone!" grinned Curly Gibson.

"Wait a bit," chuckled Wally. "We're taking no risks!"

He waited for another three minutes before he gave the word. Then, while he held a lighted match aloft, the fags lifted the flagstone. It fell over with a dull thud, and daylight streamed down upon them from the kitchen above. Wally listened a moment, and then he clambered out, giving a hand to the fellows behind, and soon all were out of the dismal, musty cellar.

"Quiet!" breathed Wally. "I can hear 'em yet!"

He slipped to the kitchen window and blinked cautiously out. Across the glade, by the edge of the deep woods, he caught sight of the colonel, his two keepers, Mr. Selby, and the seniors.

"I tell you you must have done!" came Colonel Bland's angry bellow. "You dunderheads at the back allowed the young villains to slip through your confounded fingers! Bah!"

With that he stamped away, followed by his keepers. The trio vanished into the wood.

Mr. Selby and the seniors tramped away in the opposite direction, the Third Form master obviously in a bitter rage.

"Oh, what a scream!" gasped Wally, as the last of the procession vanished from sight. "A hearty vote of thanks to that giddy rat! He's saved our giddy bacon, and no mistake!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the game's up here," said Wally, shaking his head at last, soberly. "We can't defend this rotten show, after all, that's plain! We can't be always dodging into that

blessed cellar, and they'd soon tumble if it happened again. We've got to move, you men!"

"But where?"

"That's the question," said Wally, his brow wrinkled in thought. "There's old Pepper's barn, but that's liable to be bashed in with a battering-ram, too. If only——"

He broke off suddenly, his eyes gleaming.

"I've got it, you men!"

"You have? Where, then?"

"Look!" said Wally, pointing through the window. "Look on the river. What about that old houseboat there?"

"Oh, by jingo!"

"Ripping!"

From the cottage the shining river was visible, some little distance away. And tethered to the nearest bank was an ancient houseboat. It belonged to Colonel Bland, as a matter of fact, and more than once Wally & Co. had ventured aboard it for a lark.

"But can we keep 'em off any better there?" said Reggie Manners.

"Not where it is," snapped Wally. "But if we yank it across to that island there we'll jolly soon make it as safe as houses. With water all round they'll find it jolly difficult to board us. When we're settled in we'll sneak to the boathouse and pinch all the oars, so that the seniors can't row up and attack us. See?"

"My hat!"

"And there's a giddy old hand-engine and hosepipe in the boathouse, too," went on the leader of the Third. "It's been shoved there in case of fire. We've used it before! How about getting that along?"

"Top hole!"

"Then let's get ready to move," said Wally briskly. "Some of you keep a sharp look-out, though! Those beggars may return, for all we know!"

"Yes, rather!"

But Wally's fears on that score were groundless. The fags made their preparations undisturbed. The sacks from the cellar below were filled with the ammunition that was left. The fellows who had snatched their coats on leaving the school found these also useful for carrying ammunition.

"We'll want it all," warned Wally, "so bring as much as you jolly well can."

"Yes, rather!"

"Come on, then! And no giddy noise, and mind nobody spots us."

After making certain that the coast was clear, the fags started out, keeping close in to the woods, which ran almost down to the edge of the Rhyll at that point. Then they hurried along the towing-path, and soon reached the ancient houseboat.

Pulling it inshore by the mooring ropes, the rebels boarded the boat, and soon they were at work again. The first job was to get the unwieldy craft across to the island in the centre of the stream, and it was not an easy job by any means.

But there were long sweeps aboard, and with the aid of these they managed at last to get it out into the stream, where the swift current did the rest.

The houseboat drifted down towards the island, and suddenly it grounded with a jar and shock that almost flung every fellow aboard off his feet.

There was a rowing-boat tethered to the stern—a craft as ancient as the houseboat itself—and in this Wally and Jameson pulled ashore across the intervening few yards, and tied up the mooring ropes to trees on the islet.

"Now we're right!" grinned Wally, as they gained the houseboat again. "Jingo, this old Noah's Ark hasn't been used for donkey's years! Never mind, we'll make it comfy somehow! Now, bust open the door of that giddy saloon, you men. We'll be able to feed and sleep in that nicely."

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll get settled in first," went on Wally, "and then see about getting food supplies in. It'll be time for dinner soon, and there ain't any for us unless we manage that job! After that there's that engine and hose to be collared from the boathouse, and anything else we can lay our hands on, too."

"What-ho!"

And Wally and his men got busy!

CHAPTER 13.

Nothing Doing!

ST. JIM'S was in a buzz of excitement over the mutiny of the fags. It had been so utterly unexpected that most of the fellows could scarcely believe it yet. In the Form-rooms that morning the juniors had heard the row proceeding from the Third Form room, but they had scarcely dreamed of the truth. It was only during morning break that they had heard the news.

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Tea was just over in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's, where the Terrible Three of the Shell had joined Blake & Co. to discuss the startling news.

It had astounded and alarmed Tom Merry & Co., who had many friends among the fags, while Manners and Arthur Augustus, of course, had their minors.

Then, later on, had come the astounding news of the result of the seniors' expedition in search of the rebellious youngsters.

Few of the fellows believed it in fact, until Tom Merry had managed to get details from the fuming Kildare.

There was no doubting it then.

"But where the thump can they be?" said the captain of the Shell. "The prefects have been out again searching—they've tackled Pepper's barn, and lots of places, without success. The giddy earth seems to have swallowed 'em up."

"It is certainly remarkable," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glumly. "I vote we go out and search ourselves, deah boys."

"Good wheeze!" said Manners eagerly. "If we tried——"

Manners was interrupted by a tap at the door, and the next moment Clive of the Fourth looked in.

"You're wanted at the gates, Gussy," he said briefly. "That kid from Sands', the grocer's—Grimey it is. He's asking for you—says it's important."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus in surprise. But Tom Merry's face was looking excited as Clive vanished.

"My hat! I wonder if it can be a message from those kids!" he said. "Come on, Gussy!"

The juniors jumped up from the tea-table and followed Arthur Augustus as he hurried from the room. They realised that it was quite possible that Tom had "hit it."

Grimes grinned rather uncertainly as they dashed up to him at the gates.

"What is it, Gwimey, deah boy?" demanded Gussy.

Grimes gave a cautious glance about him before answering.

"It's from your young brother, Master D'Arcy," he whispered. "He's in that there 'ouseboat belongin' to old Colonel Bland from the Manor."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Him and all 'is pals are there," said Grimes. "They told me to give you this note, and that I wasn't to give it to anybody else. I just happened to be passin' along the towin' path, goin' with some groceries to the lock-keeper's cottage."

"Yes, yes, but——"

"Mum's the word!" muttered Grimes. "Wally seed me and rowed over to me and asked me to hand you that. He said this other note was for the Head."

And Grimes handed another note over, addressed to Dr. Holmes.

"They've taken charge of that there 'ouseboat," grinned Grimes. "Took it out inter the middle of the river, they have. There'll be a fine old row when old Bland gets to know. They've bin and got a lot of groceries from my boss, and I bet they means to stay there."

And after receiving the thanks of the juniors Grimes got on his tradesman's bike and rode away, grinning.

"Well, my only hat!" breathed Tom. "So that's where they are. Give me that note for the Head, Gussy. I'm going to see that he doesn't get it."

"Weally——"

"It's bound to be full of impudence," said Tom grimly, "and will only make matters worse. I'm risking it, anyway. It's a blessed ultimatum, I suppose. Anyway, we'd better rush off there. What does Wally say, Gussy?"

"He wants some money, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, reading his note again. "He's asking for a fivah, and he wants me to have a whip wound among you fellows."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Cheek!"

"We'll have to help the kids, though," grunted Tom. "Let's buck up and get off!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors got their caps and coats, and hurried out of gates en route for the river. They knew there was little hope of making the reckless fags see reason, but they meant to do their best.

They soon reached the bank opposite the houseboat. A thin spiral of smoke came from the saloon chimney of the houseboat, but there was no sign of movement on the craft, until presently they spotted grinning faces at the windows of the saloon; and the next moment Wally appeared on deck, followed by Jameson and several other fags.

The leader of the fags and his lieutenant dropped down into the rowing-boat by the stern, and, pushing off, they pulled over to the bank where the juniors were standing. With Jameson pulling at the oars to keep the boat from drifting in the strong current, Wally stood up and grinned at the juniors.

"Cheerio, chaps!" he called cheerfully. "You got my note, then, Gussy?"

"Yaas, you young—"
 "Got the fiver, Gus?" demanded Wally anxiously. "I knew you should have had one from home this morning, old bean. Cough it up—sharp!"
 "Bai Jove! You cheeky young wapsallion!" gasped Arthur Augustus.
 "Now, Gussy, what about that fiver?" asked Wally. "Hand it over and no larks! Pull in, young Jameson!"
 "We have no intention of playin' any larks, Wally," said Arthur Augustus.
 Jameson grinned and pulled in, keeping a wary eye on the juniors as he did so. The boat touched the grassy bank, and Jameson clutched a jutting pile. Wally held out an eager hand for the fiver.
 "One moment!" said Arthur Augustus, eyeing his minor with great disapproval. "Befoah I hand ovah this fivah I wish to give you a word of advice—to point out to you the weekless path you are pursuin', Wally."
 "Oh, choke him off and let's get back!" groaned Jameson. "It isn't worth the blessed fiver to have to listen to his jaw to get it!"
 "You shut up, young Jameson!" snorted Wally. "We've got to have cash, haven't we? Isn't it worth listening to Gussy's chin-wag to get a fiver?"
 "Bai Jove! Weally, Wally—"
 "Oh, don't begin again, Gus! Where's the cash? We've got to have it!"
 "Hold on, Wally!" said Tom Merry, stepping to the water's edge. "For goodness' sake, listen to us for a minute, you reckless young ass! We've not only come to help you in that way, but to give you good advice. If you'll take it—"
 "My dear chap, did anything good ever come out of the Shell?" inquired Wally. "Keep your advice to yourselves, old scouts! When we're anxious to make a real muck of things we'll come to you chaps for advice."
 "You—you cheeky little scamps—"
 "I'm getting fed-up with this!" said Jameson, looking about him anxiously. "If anyone comes along—"
 "You cheese it, Jameson!" snorted Wally. "Look here, we can't hang about here listening to sermons and listening to Gus and you gassing! If you've brought the dibs, hand it over. If you haven't, go and eat coke, and leave us alone!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "If it's a case of us having to listen to the sermons, or go without the cash," said Wally warmly, "then buck up

and make 'ent short, for goodness' sake! But hand over the cash first, in case somebody comes along!"
 "Oh, my hat!"
 "I'm blessed if I'd have bothered about you old fogies if—"
 "Wally was beginning warmly, when a warning whistle came from the houseboat.
 They very soon saw the reason. As they looked quickly out on to the river they saw a small rowing-boat just rounding the bend at a good speed. Seated in the stern was a well-known, rather pompous figure. It was Colonel Bland.
 "Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That's done it! Now for trouble!"

CHAPTER 14.
 Marooned!

THE colonel glared towards the houseboat; he seemed to have no eyes for the juniors on the bank. It was only too clear that he knew—or suspected—that the missing fags were on his houseboat.
 Since the encounter that morning Colonel Bland and his men had searched the woods thoroughly. But he had seen no sign of the rebels until less than twenty minutes ago. Then, from the wooded hill above, he had seen the thin spiral of smoke rising from the houseboat.
 Wally & Co. had lit the galley fire to cook their dinner, and they had also lit the small stove in the saloon, letting the galley fire out afterwards.
 But it had given them away. The colonel, his suspicions aroused, had decided to investigate the remarkable occurrence. He had taken one of the keepers, and, hiring one of the lock-keepers with his boat, had started upstream.
 The sight of the fags in the rowing-boat, talking with the juniors on the bank—though he could not recognise the fags from that distance—showed him that his suspicion was correct, after all.
 It was Curly Gibson, on the look-out on the houseboat, who had spotted the approaching rowing-boat first.
 "Oh, great pip!" gasped Wally, forgetting all about the "fiver" then. "Pull back, Jammy, for goodness' sake!"
 Jameson bent to the sculls and sent the boat surging towards the houseboat. At the same moment a bellow came from the other craft.
 "There they are, the young rascals! Good gad! Commandering my dashed houseboat now! Stop!"
 Jameson did not stop. He pulled with all his might, and

(Continued overleaf.)

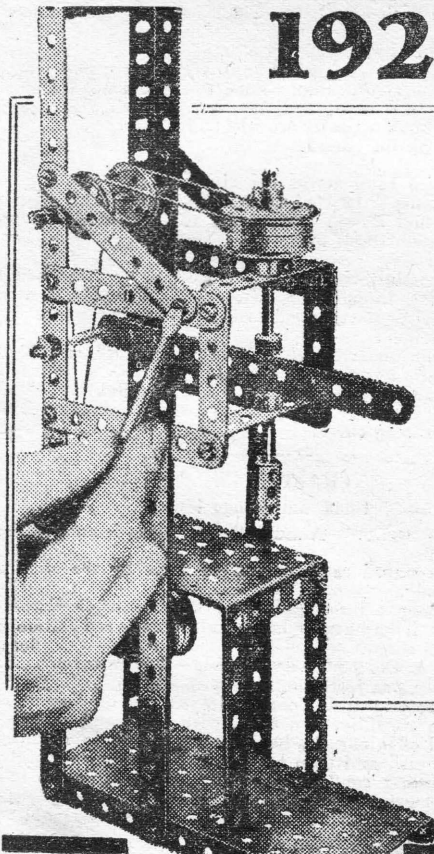
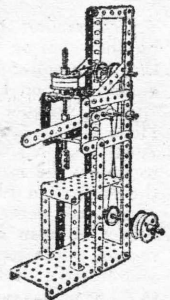
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in a few brief seconds the boat was bumping against the sides of the houseboat. Jameson hurriedly tied up, and followed Wally as the leader of the Third was helped hastily aboard by curly Gibson and several other eager helpers.

"Buck up!" gasped Wally. "Get ready to repel boarders! Hold on, though! My hat! I've got a wheeze, chaps! Let 'em board us!"

"What?"

"We'll capture 'em and hold 'em as hostages!" grinned Wally. "Prisoners of war, you know! Then we'll threaten to keep the old chap until he promises to use his giddy influence with the Head to get us off—or get what we want, anyway."

"Well, you potty ass!" snorted Jameson. "Why— Oh, my hat! Here they come!"

With a splash of oars the boat bore down swiftly on the houseboat, Colonel Bland bawling orders in the stern. The boat bumped against the sides, and after that there was no time to argue with Wally about his wonderful wheeze.

"Now we've got them!" roared Colonel Bland, grabbing at a rope trailing overside and holding on. "Out you get, Thompson! And you also, Benson! Go on! Look lively, confound you!"

"Look out, chaps!" roared Jameson.

There was a rush of fags on the deck. Thompson knew better than to refuse to obey the command, and Benson followed him. Both scrambled up on to the deck of the houseboat, the fags hesitating whether to collar them or to drive them overboard.

"Collar them!" roared Wally.

"What-ho!"

It was more than enough for the rebels.

They swarmed over Thompson and Benson, and those hapless worthies vanished beneath the swarm, struggling desperately but vainly.

"Capture them at all costs!" roared Colonel Bland.

It was rather a tall order for Thompson and Benson; but, in any case, they did not hear it—they were too busily engaged to hear anything just then. And the colonel, who was not by any means wanting in pluck, immediately started to scramble to his men's aid.

But a push from Wally sent him sprawling back into the boat again. Wally had intended to capture the colonel also, but he saw a better idea now.

As the colonel sprawled in the bottom of the boat, gasping and bellowing, Wally sprang down after him, and, grabbing the sculls, he flung them one after the other on to the deck of the houseboat. Then Wally scrambled up after them.

As he reached the deck, Wally snatched up one of the oars, and pushed the rowing boat off with a vicious push that sent it dancing away on the waters.

As the houseboat was broadside on to the island at that side, the rowing-boat rocked gently away, and, taken in the grip of the stream, grounded on the sand of the islet.

The colonel scrambled up, panting and startled, and as he felt the rocking boat sliding off the sand and shingle again, he gave a gasp.

He knew that the boat would get in the grip of the current and soon be swept out into deep water, and he made a sudden, desperate leap for the bank of the islet—as Wally had expected.

Woodfull's Lead.

GEM readers out in Australia are legion, and their number goes on rolling up year by year. It is certain that thousands of them will be keenly interested in a communication I have received from Mr. W. H. Rose, who is National Secretary of the Australian Band of Hope Union, 430, Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Mr. Rose is asking all young Australians to follow the lead of Woodfull—the match winner of the Australian Eleven. Woodfull in all his cricketing career has never touched intoxicating liquors, as he thinks no man can tamper with them for long and remain at the top of his form. The Union asks those who feel Woodfull is right, to send in a written promise to act as he has done, and they will receive the handsome card of the Union. Full name, address, and date of birthday should be sent along with stamp. I put this matter before my myriads of Australian supporters as I know they will be interested. Many of them will already have given their support to a movement which has sportsmen and sportsmanship behind it.

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Landing in a couple of feet of water, he splashed ashore. Then he turned and shook a furious fist at the grinning fags.

By this time the boatman and the keeper had been overpowered by the gleeful young scamps, and as they saw the colonel's predicament, there was a roar of laughter

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young scoundrels!" bawled the old gentleman furiously. "Bring that confounded boat here, and take me off this moment! You hear me! G-good gad! You shall suffer dearly for this outrage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Robinson Crusoe!"

The colonel fairly danced with wrath. Unless he could walk the mooring-ropes like a tightrope walker, or swim the distance, he was certainly marooned on the island. Wally stopped laughing and looked a trifle thoughtful as he saw the towering rage on the old gentleman's face. Somehow, the wheeze didn't seem so good now. It struck him there were many flaws in it. None the less, he meant to see it through now.

"My hat!" said Jameson, with a chuckle. "We've done it now, Wally!"

"Well, what else was there to do?" said Wally. "We couldn't very well go for the old chap, could we? He's a dear old chap, and I shouldn't like to have to handle him like you chaps handled these other merchants."

Oyer on the bank, Tom Merry & Co. had watched the proceedings in amazed alarm, but as they saw how Wally had marooned the old martinet they gasped.

"They've done it now!" groaned Arthur Augustus dismally. "Bai Jove, those young wascals must have taken leave of their senses!"

"They never had any!" grunted Blake. "What's Wally's game, anyway?"

Wally himself was not at all sure about that now. He blinked thoughtfully across at the marooned colonel, his chums grinning. But a sudden sound coming from the Manor estate side of the river caused Wally to whirl round suddenly.

Along the towing-path a girl was tripping, and she had a dog with her, leaping up at her and barking excitedly. The girl was undoubtedly Pamela, and the dog was Pongo!

"Oh, my only hat!" murmured Wally, dreading the possibility of the girl sighting the scene—and especially her uncle. "It—it's—"

"Miss Pamela!" breathed Jameson, who had been let into the secret by Wally at last. "And Pongo, by jingo!"

But the barking dog had attracted the attention of someone else—Colonel Bland. He stared and stared—amazed at sight of Pongo with his niece. Then his voice boomed over the river:

"Pam! Girl! Pamela!"

The girl gave a sudden start, and then she stopped and looked across the river. She seemed to sight Tom Merry & Co. on the far bank first, and then her startled glance fell upon the houseboat, with its crowd of fags, and then on her uncle standing on the island.

"Uncle!"

Her clear voice rang across the river.

"Go to the house!" bawled Colonel Bland. "Send all the men you can find there! Tell them to telephone for the police! You understand me?"

"I can't hear!"

The colonel's spluttering, raging voice was far from being clear to the girl, though her own voice was easily heard. As if to hear better she stepped to the edge of the bank.

Then it happened!

The high bank, undermined by the swollen river, crumbled abruptly beneath her weight. She gave a cry as she felt herself going, and the next instant, in the twinkling of an eye, she was in the river, being swept away helplessly downstream by the racing current.

CHAPTER 15.

Good old Pongo!

"GOOD heavens!" A ferrible cry came from Colonel Bland. He stared as if turned to stone by the sudden tragedy.

On the houseboat the fags stared thunderstruck—hardly able to believe it had really happened. From the far bank came a startled shout.

Tom Merry & Co. could do nothing—they were too far away. But help was forthcoming—swift and eager help.

Scarcely a second did Pongo gaze as his new mistress disappeared so abruptly, and then, with a curious, whining yelp, he pelted off along the bank, stopped a little ahead of the struggling girl, and then he was in, swimming strongly.

Wally's bragging confidence in his pet's intelligence had always brought grins to the faces of his hearers. But Pongo was proving that his master's confidence in him was not an empty boast.

"Good old Pongo!" shrieked Wally, awakening suddenly to the terrible danger. "Go it, old boy, stick it!"

The next instant a mad leap had taken Wally D'Arcy into the boat alongside. He tore the rope free, grabbed the sculls, and pulled madly down-stream.

It was only a matter of seconds before he caught up with the drowning girl, and then, flinging the sculls aside, Wally dived over the side.

Splash!

A few swift strokes, and his eager arm was round the girl.

Pongo's white teeth had taken a grip of her coat, and he was striving desperately, frantically to hold her up; but it was an impossible task for such a scrap of wiry courage.

The girl's face was white as chalk, and Wally's limbs were growing numb in the icy water as he fought to keep the girl's head above water.

"All right, Pongo, old boy!" he panted. "I've got her!"

There was a splashing of oars as Benson's boat—with Benson and Thompson, hurriedly released—pulling strongly, came speeding along, and the waterman was alongside in a flash.

"All right!" gasped Wally chokingly. "Pongo—see to Pongo! I've got her!"

But strong hands were gripping both now. Thompson and Benson soon had Wally, Pamela, and the shivering Pongo in the boat. Then it turned and made for the houseboat.

Colonel Bland, up to his knees in water, waded his way to the houseboat, and willing hands helped him aboard, all differences forgotten in that moment of anxiety.

The old gentleman's face was working strangely.

"Is—she all right?" he stammered huskily.

"Right as rain, I think, sir!" said Benson, who was kneeling on the deck with the girl's head on his knees. "Best get her home at once, though, sir."

"Yes, yes! The boy—he had better come, too," said the colonel, his face clearing wonderfully after an anxious glance at his niece's face. "That—that gallant dog! Where—Ah, he is here!"

Pongo came trotting up, wheezing a trifle, and shaking a shower of water over everyone within reach. He immediately licked the girl's white face, and then he licked Wally's. Wally tried to rise to a sitting position.

"I—I'm all right!" he gasped feebly. "I—I'm—"

He fell back again, exhausted. There was a big bruise on his temple where his head had struck the boat.

"He's about done, poor youngster!" said Thompson.

"Hold up, young sir!"

"Get them ashore!" snapped the colonel. "Take them to the manor without delay!"

"Yes, sir!"

Wally and his girl chum were carefully lowered into the boat by the two men, eagerly aided by the fags and the colonel. The boat—with the colonel aboard—pulled for the shore.

The boat vanished round the bend in the river, and Pongo's excited barking died away.

"Well," breathed Jameson—"well, this is a go, and no mistake! What the dickens is going to happen now?"

"Mucks up everything!" groaned Reggie Manners. "We—we'll have to go back and give in now, you fellows! Nothing else for it!"

"Perhaps Wally yanking that girl out may help matters," said Reggie Manners hopefully. "Anyway, let's get it over! Come on!"

They dropped into the other rowing-boat, which had been recovered after Wally had gone to the rescue, and went across in parties, until all were standing on the bank.

Mr. Railton, for whom the colonel had phoned, eyed them grimly.

"I am glad, at least," he said quietly, "that you have the good sense at last to obey authority. Let there be no more of this! D'Arcy minor, I understand, has been taken to the manor. I trust he is not seriously ill—"

"No, sir—at least, I think not," said Jameson glumly. "He struck his head, or something. There's a big bruise there, and he seemed half-stunned!"

"Very well! You will return with me now to St. Jim's, and you will take your usual places in the school. But on no account are any of you to leave the school on any pretext whatever! You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come, then!"

And Mr. Railton started off, the dismayed fags trailing behind and Tom Merry & Co. bringing up the rear.

The rebellion was over. Authority had won—everybody had known that it must win! But there were many sympathetic glances for the fags as they trailed indoors.

St. Jim's was in a buzz of excitement. Mr. Railton had left the fags to their own devices, and for the next hour they waited in trembling anxiety for the summons from the Head—a summons they knew must come sooner or later.

But it did not come.

(Continued on page 27.)

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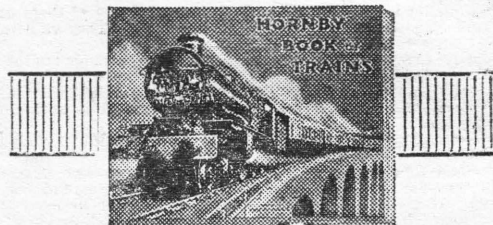


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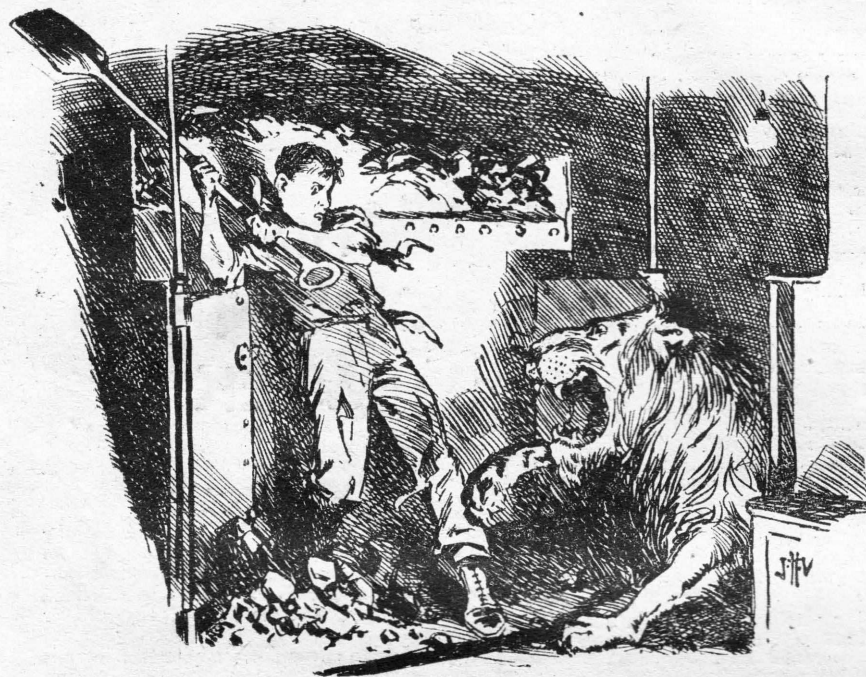
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whose popular yarns of the railway, introducing Mick and his gang, appear regularly in *The Boys' Realm*, on sale every Wednesday.

CHAPTER I.

The Circus Special!

"GOSH, hark at 'em roaring!" exclaimed Mick Kennedy. "If you shut your eyes you can imagine you're in the middle of the jungle! They're wild, all right, and—there they go again!"

As he spoke the quiet of Millington Junction was shattered by the vibrant, affrighting roar of the lions in the train which stood in a siding almost opposite.

"*A-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!*" The coughing, menacing bellow seemed to shake the night air. Mick's mates grinned uneasily at one another as they heard it.

"Shan't be sorry when that lot shifts on!" one of them grunted. "Wonder what's making 'em all roar like that? They've been doing it ever since they stopped there."

Nobody answered, and they all stood staring out across the tangle of railway lines which separated them from the halted train. The group was formed by Mick's gang of cleaners. They were all boys, like himself, and they were the most daring youngsters in the junction running shed.

Just now they were waiting for the famous midnight mail to pull in. When it arrived they would swarm over the engine and do what they could to smarten up the big loco during its two minute halt. While they did that Mick would hand two cans of steaming tea, which now he carried in his hand, to the driver and the fireman, then he would race round the engine, oiling up with the high-pressure, pistol-type oiler that now nestled in his pocket.

The midnight mail was the Midland Line's most famous train and, until he was pensioned off, Mick's father had driven the flyer. It was Mick's ambition to stand where his father had stood on the foot-plate of the giant locomotive.

He was lean and sinewy, with the clear-looking grey eyes of his father—a born railwayman. From where he stood he could make out the lettering of a long banner which ran half the length of the train in the siding. It read:

BARCLAY'S MAMMOTH CIRCUS AND MENAGERIE.

The circus special was waiting for the midnight mail to go through. A little way outside the junction and level with the main line was a cattle train, also waiting for the mail. Everything on the whole of the Midland line had to take second place to the great flyer.

"I wouldn't half like to see those lions perform!" a cleaner grunted to Mick. "The chap what trains 'em must have a nerve! There's a poster about it on the wall there."

He pointed to a small hoarding at the end of the near-by platform. A poster had been pasted there, and it announced:

BARCLAY'S MAMMOTH MENAGERIE AND CIRCUS!

Opening performance at the Drill Hall, Beckton, on Saturday, December 3rd, at 6.30 p.m.

FIVE LIVE LIONS!

These man-eaters from the African veld are the fiercest in captivity!

SACCO SLUSKA

and his corps of Cobras.

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DICK TURPIN'S RIDE TO YORK!

"Gosh! That sounds all right!" gasped Mick as he read it. "What about going, you chaps? It's to-morrow!"

"Yes, an' to-morrow we're playing the works team!" a boy reminded him.

"We could put that game off until mid-week!" Mick answered. "There's a Cup-tie at Beckton—they're playing the Argyle in the second round of the Cup! We could see that match and then go to the circus afterwards. It'll be a chance to see some good football, and, besides, if we put the works game off until Wednesday afternoon we'll have all that new kit to play in!"

There were no protests. They could play the works team any old day, but they couldn't see a Cup-tie and a circus on the same Saturday very often. While they were talking about it the midnight mail was signalled—dead on time.

The new football kit to which Mick referred had been purchased with the money collected by grateful passengers when Mick and his mates had defeated a gang of bandits who had tried to hold up the mail. The kit now lay in the cloak-room at the junction, having arrived only that night. It consisted of new shirts, knickers, boots, goal-posts, nets, and even corner flags—because, so far, the cleaners' team had been playing only in borrowed or makeshift things.

"Hallo, there's one of the circus men going along to try an' quieten the lions!" a boy exclaimed. "It's about time, too!"

He pointed to a shadowy figure moving in front of the long, closed wagon in which the man-eaters were being transported.

"It's all right so long as he don't let 'em loose!" a cleaner exclaimed nervously. "They'd cause some excitement, wouldn't they?"

"That'd be just the sort of trick old Seammell would get up to!" another observed. "Still, I don't suppose even that rotter would have the nerve to let those lions out!"

Seammell was an engine driver who had been sacked for negligence. He had caused a terrific smash, and the man seemed to be absorbed by the one idea of revenging himself on the line. Three or four times he had tried to hold up the midnight mail, but he had always been thwarted.

Mick glanced down the line. In the distance he could make out the headlights of the express as she rolled swiftly towards the junction. It was as he looked towards the express that he saw a man walking down the slope of the platform as though to cross the line. In one hand he carried a bucket of water.

"Just a minute!" Mick called as he stepped towards him. "Better wait until the mail's in if you want to cross the line!"

"I want to get to the menagerie train," the man said, and as he approached Mick saw that he was a big fellow in a check suit. He had a good-natured face, and he smiled down at Mick. "My name's Barclay, and I've just slipped across to get a bucket of water for one of our zebras—he's a bit off colour."

"It'd be better if you got a gag for some o' those lions!" Mick grinned. "What makes them roar like that?"

"They're raging hungry," the showman answered. "We keep them like that, otherwise they get fat and lazy. They can smell the animals in the cattle-truck along there, and that's what has set them off."

"Somebody's got out of the train to try an' quieten them," a cleaner said.

"Somebody's got—" The showman broke off as he stood staring towards his train. "I don't know who that is—it doesn't look like one of my men!"

Mick strained his eyes to gaze at the shadowy figure. He saw it suddenly jump away from the side of the lions' wagon, and there was something familiar about the man as he ducked and dived beneath a coupling, vanishing on the far side of the train.

Mick heard the Midnight Mail thundering into the junction, his brain busy with the problem of the familiarity of the now vanished figure. It was just as the great engine of the express rolled up that he realised who the man was. It was Scammell!

He felt certain of it. Scammell—at the lions' wagon! As the realisation came to him Mick heard one of his mates suddenly yell above the rumbling thunder of the approaching locomotive. Mick glimpsed the boy, bent forward and pointing to the circus train.

The big flap door of the distant wagon was dropping open. It flapped clear. An instant after and a lithe, tawny shape leaped down to the line. Another came and another, then two leaped out together!

The roaring had ceased now. The raging man-eaters were loose on the line!

CHAPTER 2. Lions on the Line!

THE little group of cleaners stood as though they were frozen to the spot. Four of the lions were crouching on the tracks, heads lifted and waving as they stared about them.

One of them roared suddenly, a throaty challenge, and then they went slinking across the lines—crouching, stalking shapes, making for the cattle-trucks just outside the junction!

Mick saw the fifth animal move away from the others, its lean body hugging the ground as it made towards the far side of the junction. It disappeared behind the dark length of a local platform.

"What about my tea, Mick!" The yelling voice of the driver of the Midnight Mail brought Mick wheeling round. He started towards the halted express engine, and then the driver saw for himself the shapes at which they were all staring. "What the dickens is—Good heavens, lions! Four o' 'em!"

He hung out of his cab, the colour fading from his face as another terrific roar sounded. The man-eaters were stalking beneath the red and green lights of a signal-gantry, and they saw one of them crouch level with the cattle-trucks.

The lion's hindquarters settled down between the lines, like a cat shaping to spring. Then it launched itself forward, its tawny shape enormous as it stretched out in mid-air. Distinctly, they heard the thud of its pads and the tearing rasp of its murderous claws on the side of the cattle-truck, then it dropped back.

One after another, the others leaped in the same way, only to drop to the line, sink in a half-circle, and leap again.

The cattle-trucks had solid sides and they were covered. Only the heads of the cattle showed above the stout iron bars at the tops of the wagons.

Mr. Barclay stood with the bucket of water in his hand, staring at the animals, his jaw dropped and his eyes almost starting from his head. Mick moved to the engine, passed up the cans of tea mechanically, and then started going round the big engine with his oiler—one eye on the lions, and one eye on the job. It didn't matter if fifty lions were on the line, the big loco had got to be oiled up so that she could continue her way.

Two of the cleaners stood staring at the animals, the other two went running towards the platform, carrying the alarm. As he worked, Mick saw one of the lions leap high, cling to one of the bars for a moment as it thrust a paw through them and dabbled viciously at the animals beyond. Then the lion dropped back. It squatted beside the truck, licking its paw.

In what seemed to be no time at all, Mick found that he had been right round the engine. The home signal dropped to green, giving the Midnight Mail the road. At the end of the platform, railway officials were grouped, with the two cleaners who had fetched them, all staring fearfully at the scene. Behind them, hardly a passenger had left the express, although the windows were crowded with heads.

Down the platform, more railwaymen stood handy to open the doors of waiting-rooms. In the running shed, cleaners were clambering on to footplates to be out of the way if the animals came in that direction. Up in the signal-box, the signalman bolted his door and went on with his work.

On the menagerie train, none of the circus people seemed to have realised what had happened.

The rear guard's whistle shrilled down the platform, and his lamp waved steadily.

"They're right on my line!" the driver of the express yelled down to Mick. "If they don't get out o' the way, I'll run over them!"

Mr. Barclay heard his words. He dropped the bucket of water with a crash as he woke from his semi-stupor and leaped towards the driver.

"Don't do that—don't run over them!" he gasped. "They won't move for you, it's the cattle that's attracting 'em. They're valuable, those lions, they're the big attraction at my show. Don't run over them, for goodness' sake!"

"We've got to run to schedule," the driver yelled back. "How long will it take you to capture them?"

"I don't know. All our gear is stowed in the vans," the circus owner answered. "The nets and things are in there. But I'll get them out!" He turned to where the railway officials stood. "Keep everybody away. Those animals are man-eaters—every one of them! They'll stop there by the cattle if they're not distracted. I'll get my people off the train!"

"Where's the other lion gone to?" asked Mick. "There were five came out of the wagon, but there's only four on the line!"

Mr. Barclay eyed the animals.

"That'll be old Sabre!" he said. "He isn't there because he's got no sense of smell. Look out for him, he'll maul anybody at sight. Driver, give me a chance to get—"

"You can't go ahead and run over them!" The station-master came running towards the engine. "Those animals are valuable, and the company will have to pay for them, if they're injured. Hold up the Mail until the line is cleared!"

"He'll take a week to clear it!" the driver roared. "I'll be as quick as I can!" the circus owner gasped. Then he went running quickly across the lines toward his train.

Mick stood with his cleaners, looking from the lions to the Mail. The Midnight flyer was being held up—his train was stuck there, losing precious minutes. The express that always ran to schedule was stopped indefinitely. It was impossible to tell how long it would take the menagerie people to recapture the man-eaters.

Mick stood thinking. Suddenly he faced his mates. "Boys, I've got an idea. Joe and Bill, you go into the cloak-room and get our new football nets; there's four of 'em there altogether, with the two we are going to make a present of to the works team! Sammy, hop over to the goods yard and get three or four shunters' poles. And you, Ted—you know those refrigerator vans on No. 4 siding? Open one of 'em and get out a side o' beef! Don't argue about it—do it! It'll be all right! Bring all the stuff to the snow-plough as quick as you can. We'll settle those blessed man-eaters!"

CHAPTER 3. The Fight on the Footplate!

THE little gang shot off in various directions. They all knew Mick, and if he'd got some idea they guessed it would be a good one.

Mick himself raced towards the running shed. There was a smaller shed at one side of this, and here stood two engines for the care of which Mick and his gang were responsible. One was a gargantuan locomotive known as the old Experimental No. 8. The other was the new snow-plough.

This was a huge, powerful engine with a great, armoured front and armour-plated sides, designed to clear the line of snow. She had been standing with steam up all day, because there had been a real December snowstorm fifty miles up the line, and it had been expected to travel south: in which case, Mick would have had to get the plough out to clear the line for the Mail.

As it happened, the snow had not travelled so far south, but the giant plough still stood ready in her shed.

In a matter of seconds, Mick sighted the plough, her grim shape gleaming in the light of the big arc-lamp hissing high above the front of the shed. The shielded doors stood open and he leaped agilely up the tread-plates, then jumped into the cab—and stopped dead!

Stretched out on the warm plating was the fifth lion—old Sabre!

He was a huge, fierce-looking brute with a tremendous mane. He was the lion whose sense of smell had been destroyed, that was why he had not followed the others in search of meat. But, in this quiet corner of the running shed he had found a warm spot, more than welcome after the iciness of the box in which the animals had been travelling.

Just for the fraction of a second, Mick stood staring aghast at the animal lying before the hot fire-box. Then, without an instant of warning, old Sabre sprang!

Mick had a glimpse of a red cavern of a mouth, white fangs gleaming in the light from the firebox. He saw two enormous paws, with claws unsheathed—like curved steel, tinted red in the light.

He tried to duck away. He felt something smash against his chest, and then he was flat on his back, head half out of the cab. Above was the head of the forest-bred lion, one paw crushed down on his chest, claws in his overalls, slitting the fabric like knives.

He saw the small ears laid flat back, then the animal flung back its head and from his mighty throat there sounded the throbbing, snarling roar of a lion with his kill.

Mick had his left hand free, and he clutched at the paw that held him down. The mighty muscles were like steel cables under his fingers, and at his movement, the animal lifted its other paw.

The long talons struck out from the pads, awful in their menace, as the paw poised to slash down and maul him. Then the animal saw something moving beyond Mick, and it checked, with paw up-raised, as it roared challengingly.

In that instant of respite, Mick felt something pressing into his left side, and he remembered, at the back of his mind, that it was the pistol-type oiler in his pocket. With his hand, he felt down for it. The thing was half out and lying free against the footplate.

Desperately he lifted the oiler, brought it round, and pressed the trigger.

A stinging jet of oil shot from the muzzle, full between the brute's eyes. Dick felt the pressure on his chest relax, as the animal drew half back. He pressed the trigger again, and another jet sizzled full between the gaping jaws, then he plugged oil again into the brute's eyes.

As it went, he twisted sideways, just missing a fierce slash from a tense paw. He found himself in the corner by the tender now, and he pressed the oiler again and again, squirting the yellow fluid over the animal's muzzle, blinding it by the stinging jets.

The lion backed away. Its hind-quarters rammed against the burning door of the firebox, and it backed off it with a jump and a start. Again Mick squirted oil, driving the lion towards the opposite door of the cab. One hind leg suddenly slid off the edge of the footplate, clawing desperately for a hold while the lion roared madly, and shook its maned head in an effort to get rid of the oil.

Mick pumped away, as the lion struggled to keep in the cab. Then, suddenly, the jet grew feeble, and he knew that the oiler was empty. He dropped it, and reached for the fireman's shovel. He raised it, then brought the flat of it crashing down on the brute's head.

Once—twice—three times he slammed the shovel home with all his strength. At the third time, the lion dropped headlong backwards out of the cab.

Mick saw it sprawl full-length. It rolled over and came to its feet. It staggered a pace or two, then dropped inert by the iron shape of a big sand-bin at the entrance to the shed. As it fell, a cleaner came running round the corner of the shed, carrying the four shunters' poles for which Mick had sent him.

He almost dropped the poles, as he saw the prostrate figure of the huli-unconscious lion on its side. Then he looked up to where Mick showed in the cab, the shovel in his hand.

"My hat, you've—you—have you knocked him out with that?" he gasped. "Here, roll him in the bin!"

Mick hardly heard his words. His head was reeling, and he could feel his chest hurting where the lion's paw had clawed him. But he caught the sense of what his mate said, and he came dropping shakily from the cab.

"What's happened?" the cleaner gasped the words as he stared at Mick. "You're in a state!"

"Give me—a pole!" Mick half choked over the words, as he reached for one of the hooked poles. "Quick now—before he—comes round!"

He thrust the pole under the animal's side and heaved. His mate grabbed a pole, and did the same. From the back of the snow-plough another white-faced cleaner came cautiously, saw what they were doing, and overcame his fear of the animal enough to give them a hand: it was this boy, who, approaching the engine, had been seen by the lion, distracting its attention when it was about to maul Mick.

The doors of the sandbin were open. How they got the animal in, Mick hardly knew, but they managed it somehow, and he seemed to roll pretty easily when they turned him over on his back. The distance was barely a couple of yards, anyway. Then the iron doors were slammed to, and the hasp flung across, and made secure by the strong staple.

"Bet he doesn't—get out of—that in a hurry!" Mick grunted. Then his knees went a little weak, and things seemed to spin round him. He staggered to the side of the snow-plough, and hung on, his teeth gritted as he fought against the faintness that was sweeping over him.

CHAPTER 4.

Mick Takes a Risk!

MICK had four long scratches down his chest, and his clothing was torn to ribbons. But the scratches weren't deep, and they didn't bleed much. His mates brought him water from a tank outside the shed, and inside a couple of minutes some of the colour was coming back to his face.

All the gang were there by that time, with the football nets and the side of beef, as well as the poles.

"Next time you want a side o' beef, you can fetch it yourself, Mick!" Ted snorted, as he dropped the thing to the ground. "It weighs about four tons an' it's like ice! What's the big idea, anyway?"

"We're going to hang it over the front of the plough," Mick said. "Then we'll drive up to those lions and catch 'em in the goal nets when they go for the beef!"

The gang stared at him.

"Not likely!" one of them growled. "Not after what that lion in the sandbin did to you!"

"Well, if we don't do it, somebody else might get mauled a long sight worse," Mick said quietly. "Besides, until they're cleared out of the way, the Mail can't move. They won't be able to get at us, because the cab doors on the plough shut right up. This is the way we'll work it!"

He explained to them what he wanted to do. It sounded risky, but Mick was the one who would be taking most of the chances.

One minute later, the snow-plough clanked out of its shed, taking a line which brought it to the points ahead of the standing Mail. On top of the engine, kneeling precariously on the hot boiler, was Mick. He held a long shunting-pole in his hands, and from the hook at the end, hung one of the new goal nets. It ran along the length of the engine, to where another boy leaned out of the cab; he also had a pole in his hand, with the other end of the net hooked to it.

Mick could see the circus people busy at one of the vans, dragging stuff out to the line. At the end of the main-line platform, the situation seemed to be about the same as before his fight with old Sabre.

Two of the lions were squatting on their haunches. Two others were still leaping at the trucks, and down the side of three of the wagons showed enormous scarrings, made by the lions' claws in the woodwork. One of the iron bars was bent, too, showing the tremendous strength of the animals.

At the front of Mick, securely tied to the smoke-stack, was the side of beef—the bait! It hung down to one side of the armoured snow-scoop, and the nearest lion seemed to sniff it as the plough ran up.

Mick saw the animal rise and stand staring towards the strange locomotive, then it moved towards it at a slow trot, its head raised as it sniffed on the air.

"One coming!" Mick yelled. "Stand by with the net!"

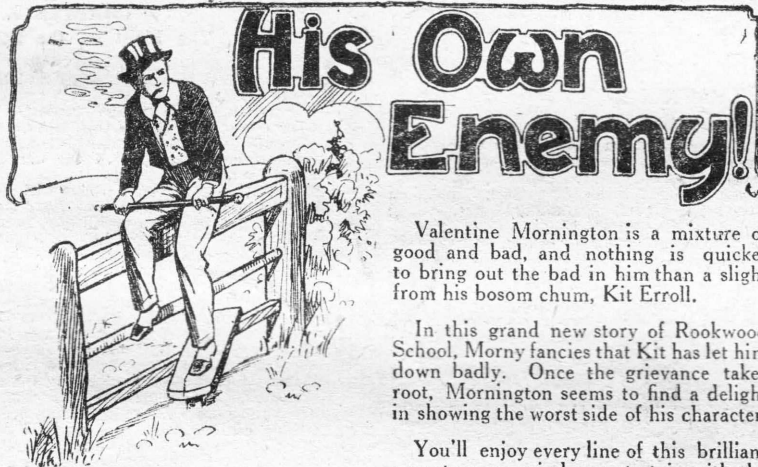
The lion was at one side of the track, and now he stood waiting for the loco to come level. He crouched, settling to spring.

"Ready with the brake!" Mick yelled.

He bent, watching the animal keenly. They were nearly up to it now, and it seemed to hug the ground still further.

"Right!" Mick roared.

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BEGINS NEXT WEEK, BOYS!

The boy in the cab thrust his pole out, twisting it to loose the net. In the same moment, Mick jerked with his own pole, and the net hissed forward, its folds spreading on the air as it dropped, full in front of the lion, as he sprang!

He hit the net headfirst, while the brakes went on, and the slow-moving engine stopped in less than half a dozen feet. Mick saw the lion fall short, pitch to the rails, and go rolling off them, tangled in the net—a rolling, bouncing struggling ball.

Then, to Mick's astonishment, the lion grew still and lay quiescent with the tangle of netting all around it.

"Next, please!" he yelled exultantly, and the end of a net came sailing out of the cab, just as the second lion came towards the engine.

They netted him in the same way—and then the other two hunger-maddened animals sighted the beef at the same time, and leaped for it together, long before Mick could set a third net ready.

The lions jumped for the front of the engine. One great paw slashed at the bait, and the cords with which it was tied, snapped as though they had been cotton. The engine checked as Mick yelled for the brake, and he saw the two animals snarling and struggling in the centre of the line, the beef between them.

He shouted for another net, caught it, and climbed until he was above the armoured plough, and in front of the smoke-stack. From this position, he shook out the goal net, then dropped it neatly over the struggling animals.

It tangled them up, but they still fought over the beef. Mick shouted for a second net, and pitched that over the pair, too. One of them tripped up, then the other fell. Inside a couple of seconds they were crumpled in the folds, and their struggles grew still.

All Mick could hear was the growling snarl that came from their mighty jaws, as they gnawed, one on either side of the beef.

"Got 'em!" he shouted back to the cleaners in the cab. "We've done it! Whistle for the circus people, quick, before

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they break the nets—an' get away "

But already Barclay himself was racing across the line. When he reached the first mass of netted lion, he paused, and stared blankly, then he turned and yelled wildly towards his train.

A string of circus hands came running across, bringing with them tent canvases, poles, ropes, and tarpaulins. In no time at all the trussed lions were rolled up harmlessly in the canvases and tarpaulins. Mick and his mates climbed cautiously down from the engine, and railwaymen came running out from the junction—and the driver of the Midnight Mail whistled impatiently for the road!

"Our lion nets were right at the bottom of everything!" Mr. Barclay told Mick. "We ain't got 'em out yet. The lions go quiet as soon as they feel a net round 'em, because they know from experience that it's no good to struggle. If they had fought against it, them nets o' yours would ha' been broken easily."

Mick said nothing, he was beginning to feel shaky again. He turned back to the snow-plough, and ran the engine the way it had come, clearing the line for the Mail. It started up and rolled past. He saw the driver leaning out of the cab, shouting something and grinning.

Then the station-master and the running-shed foreman came aboard, as Mick stopped the plough. They helped him down, and half carried him to a waiting-room, to find out just how much he was hurt.

Mick wondered if he should say anything about Scammell, but he decided not to. There was no chance of catching the man now, and everybody would think that the lions must have worked their truck fastenings loose by their leaping.

"Not much more than scratches on your chest, Mick," the station-master said thankfully. "You'll never have a nearer squeak than that, boy! You must have some pluck, anyway! I'm glad it's no worse. They've mauled four of the cattle in those wagons, but not too badly, because they couldn't get at them. I'll get a cab or something now, and send you off home."

"I don't want a cab," Mick answered. "I'm all right! D'you think that the Mail will run in to schedule, sir?"

"Yes, they'll make the time up somehow!" the station-master answered. "The Mail hasn't been held up so long, after all. The driver'll do it, to let you know he appreciates what you've done."

"I reckon the circus people ought to show their appreciation, too!" the shed foreman said, and he grinned as he spoke. "The least they can do is to give you boys free tickets for the show to-morrow!"

"I shan't go if they do," said Mick, and he spoke as though he meant it. "I've seen enough of those lions!"

DO YOU WANT TO READ ANOTHER ROUSING TALE OF "MICK O' THE MIDNIGHT MAIL"? This week's issue of "THE BOYS' REALM" contains one of these topping railway stories by Alfred Edgar. Get a copy TO-DAY. Price 2d.

"BACKING UP WALLY!"

(Continued from page 23.)

Just before prep a trap bowled into the quad, and out of it stepped Wally D'Arcy, a bandage over his head. He was accompanied by Mr. Railton—who had been sent over by the Head—and last, but not least, Colonel Bland. The Housemaster led the way to the Head's study, and all three vanished inside.

A swarm of fellows waited in the passage. They discussed the affair breathlessly—wholesale sackings amongst the fags being the general view.

Then the Head's door opened, and Wally came out. His face was still white, but his eyes were shining curiously.

"Well?" gasped Tom Merry eagerly. "Wally—"

"Hallo, old bean!" said Wally coolly.

"Wally!" panted Arthur Augustus, squeezing his way to the front. "Is—is it the sack again?"

"Eh? The sack? Oh, no! Why should I be sacked?" asked Wally airily. "Old Bland's quite a decent old bird, after all—a brick, in fact. He's begged me off!"

"Wha-at?"

"Fact!" grinned Wally. "The giddy Head hummed and ha'd, and all the rest of it; but the old colonel fairly wiped the floor with him! And he doesn't hate dogs now, you fellows—fancy that! He's going to buy old Pongo a new collar—g silver one with a blessed inscription on it!"

"But—but," stammered Jameson, almost breathless, "what about us?"

"Eh? Nothing about you!" said Wally cheerfully. "The Head gassed about lickings and floggings and detentions;

but it all ended in smoke. You see, the old bird couldn't very well let me off and punish you, could he?"

And the fags agreed with him there.

It all turned out to be true enough. Colonel Bland—proving himself not such a bad chap at heart, after all—had pleaded for Wally and his fellow mutineers—and for Pongo! No longer was the gallant old soldier either a boy-hater or a dog-hater. That rescue in the river had brought about the change, for the colonel was devoted to his niece—which was not surprising.

And, luckily, the old gentleman never learnt who had sheltered Pongo, nor where he had been sheltered. He would have been a very astounded—and, possibly, annoyed—gentleman, indeed, had he discovered that. But Wally saw to it that he didn't. Nor did the Head; though, of course, he had to know how Wally had changed the labels, and thus defied his order.

Fortunately for Wally, that matter came under the list of offences expiated.

And, luckily, Miss Pamela emerged none the worse for her terrible experience in the river, and for the remainder of her stay with her uncle she shared the gallant Pongo—as she certainly deserved to do, for her plucky part in Backing Up Wally!

THE END.

(There will be another rattling fine story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "LEVISON'S RETURN!" As this is the yarn you've all been anxiously awaiting I strongly advise you one and all to order your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!

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