

"WALLY THE RUNAWAY!"

THRILLING SCHOOLBOY
ADVENTURE YARN WITHIN!

CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS -
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



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WALLY *the* RUNAWAY!



When young Wally D'Arcy does anything he does it well—so when he decides to run away he leads his pursuers a pretty dance before they find him!

CHAPTER 1. An Unfortunate Goal!

TOM MERRY came out of the School House at St. Jim's with a football under his arm. Manners and Lowther followed him, with their hands in their pockets.

"Beastly misty!" grumbled Lowther.

It was a chilly November morning, and a grey mist hung over the quadrangle and the ancient roofs of St. Jim's. Through the mist the leafless elms loomed up like spectres.

"Well, it's not as clear as it might be," Tom Merry remarked cheerily; "but we can have a punt about to warm us before breakfast. Come on!"

"Gr-r-r!" said Manners. "It's cold!"

"Oh, come on! On the ball!"

Tom Merry dropped the ball and kicked it as it rose—a beautiful kick that sent the leather half-way across to the New House. The chums of the Shell rushed after it, but before they could reach it three figures loomed up in the mist.

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"On the ball!" roared the voice of Figgins of the New House.

"Look out!" cried Tom Merry. "New House rotters!"

The School House chums put on speed, but Figgins & Co. were "on the ball." Figgins dribbled it away towards the New House, and passed it to Kerr as Tom Merry overtook him, and Kerr, in turn, passed to Fatty Wynn. Tom Merry cut across as Fatty Wynn kicked, and headed the ball, sending it whizzing back into School House territory.

"Buck up, School House!" he shouted.

The chums of the Shell rushed the ball away, but it was rather dangerous business in the mist that hung thickly over the quadrangle. There was a sudden yell as they dashed right into a youth who was crossing the quad, and sent him spinning.

"Sorry!" gasped Tom Merry; and he was off like the wind, without even looking to see whom it was he had bowled over.

Manners and Lowther dashed off with him, and D'Arcy minor, of the Third Form at St. Jim's, sat up in the muddy quad, and stared after the Terrible Three.

By Martin Clifford.

"My only aunt!" gasped Wally D'Arcy. "The—the cheeky beggars! I— Oh—oh!"

Figgins came tearing out of the mist, and fell right over the Third-Former.

"What—what's that?" gasped Figgins, as he plumped down on Wally. "Wh—what—"

"You howling ass!" shrieked Wally. "Can't you see where you're going?"

"It's young D'Arcy!" grinned Kerr. "These fags are always getting in the way. Give him a thick ear and come on."

Figgins jumped up, and dashed on after the Terrible Three without giving Wally the thick ear, and Kerr and Wynn followed him.

Wally D'Arcy rose slowly to his feet, and rubbed his aching bones.

"My only Aunt Jane! I— Hallo, here they are again!"

The juniors were rushing along again with the ball. Figgins had captured it once more, but Tom Merry was after him. Wally dodged out of the way. Tom Merry came up with Figgins, and shouldered him off the ball, and Figgy sat down in the quad. Tom heeled the ball back, and swung round to kick.

But a diminutive active figure rushed in, and the ball bounded away from the toe of D'Arcy minor.

"Here, young shaver!" shouted Tom Merry, in amazement at the nerve of the Third Form fag. "Bring that ball back!"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry gasped.

"Rats! I'll rats you! You cheeky young scallawag."

"Where's the ball?" gasped Monty Lowther, speeding up, and nearly running into Tom Merry. "Where is it?"

"Young Wally has collared it!"

"Cheeky young imp!" growled Lowther.

The chums of the Shell and Figgins & Co., equally exasperated by this unexampled cheek on the part of a Third Form fag, dashed in hot pursuit.

But Wally, fag though he was, was blessed with considerable running powers, and the mist favoured him. He kept ahead, and doubled, with the ball still at his feet, and twice or thrice the juniors missed him in the mist. The fag was chuckling gleefully. The Third Form at St. Jim's was held to be of little account by the Fourth and the Shell, who disrespectfully alluded to its denizens as the "infants"; but since Wally had come to St. Jim's it had been his aim to change all that, and certainly in more ways than one he had made things hum.

"Where is that young scallawag?" gasped Tom Merry at last, stopping, baffled by the mist.

"There he is!" suddenly shouted Figgins.

He had caught a glimpse of the fag in the mist, making for the School House. He dashed away in pursuit, followed by the rest. Wally streaked off at top speed, but the long legs of Figgins covered the ground like lightning.

Wally cast a quick glance over his shoulder.

Figgins was only a few paces behind, and reducing the interval at every stride.

Wally set his teeth. He was determined that Figgins should not capture the ball.

The School House portal loomed up before him in the mist. Wally dribbled the ball towards it, and just as Figgins was about to grasp him, he kicked for goal.

It was a true kick, and the leather, rising in the air, sailed gracefully into the open doorway of the School House, and landed a splendid goal, full upon the nose of Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form!

Mr. Selby was looking out into the quadrangle for a sniff of morning air before breakfast, and in the mist Wally had not seen him until too late.

The moment the ball had left his foot, Wally saw the Form master, and he stood quite still in dismay, waiting for the catastrophe.

It came in a second.

Mr. Selby gave a startled yelp, and staggered back into

the House, and sat down violently upon the mat. The muddy football dropped on his knees.

"My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Figgins. "You've done it now!"

"Oh, don't cackle—"

"What's the matter?" panted Tom Merry, coming up.

"Where's that ball?"

"Wally has landed a goal on Selby's proboscis!"

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Selby was on his feet now, gazing out into the quadrangle. The master of the Third was a very irritable gentleman, but the crash of the football upon his nose might have exasperated the best-tempered man in the world.

"Come here!" he shouted. "Whoever kicked that ball, come here!"

Wally hesitated for a moment. He had not been recognised yet, and it would have been easy to cut off into the mist. But the football was there, and it could easily be identified, and that would mean trouble for Tom Merry. Wally was always ready to face the music, and pay the penalty for his recklessness. He hesitated only a moment, and then he walked up the steps of the School House, and lifted his cap politely to the incensed Form master.

"If you please, sir—"

"Ah, it is you, D'Arcy minor! You kicked the football at me."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"You—you had the audacity to kick a football at your Form master!"

"I—I didn't see you, sir—"

"Don't tell me an untruth, boy!" almost shouted Mr. Selby. "You will not escape the punishment of your insolence by that means, sir."

Wally's face set obstinately. He had his faults, but untruthfulness was not one of them, and the accusation made his blood boil.

"I am not telling an untruth!" he broke out angrily.

"And—"

"Silence, boy!"

"But I tell you—"

"Not another word!"

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry diffidently, "I think it was an accident. I—"

"Did you see D'Arcy minor kick the ball, Merry?"

"No, sir; but—"

"Then you can know nothing about the matter. You may go!"

"I saw him, sir," said Figgins, "and I think—"

"You need not acquaint me with what you think, Figgins."

"But, sir—"

"Silence! D'Arcy minor, you will come into my study after morning lessons. I shall inflict the most exemplary punishment upon you for this outrage!"

"It was an accident—"

"Silence! I detest an untruthful boy—I shall punish you severely. I cannot deal with you now. Come into my study after morning lessons. Not another word! Be gone!"

And Mr. Selby, holding his hand to his injured nose, went away to clean off the traces of the muddy football from his face, still crimson with rage.

CHAPTER 2.

Wally is Forbidden to Cut!

"G US!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form turned round as his name was called. First lessons were over, and the juniors were free for twenty minutes. The Fourth Form were coming out, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, was talking football with Blake, Herries, and Digby, when he heard the voice of his younger brother.

D'Arcy major put up his eyeglass and surveyed D'Arcy minor critically.

"Oh, is that you, Wally?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Wally cheerfully.

"That is scarcely a respectful way of weplyin', Wally. I noticed that you are lookin' as disweputable as usual."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Wally, I shall exahcise the pwivilege of an eldah wbothah, and give you a feahful twwashin'," said D'Arcy severely. "I have seweral times lately thought of doing so, for your own good. You are a disweputable little wuffian. You have the great advantage of havin' the best-dwessed fellow in the School House

for your eldah bwotah, and yet you go about like a young wagamuffin."

"Oh, don't you begin speechifying, Gus! I want—"

"You want a wash," said D'Arcy major. "You want a clean collah, also. You have ink on your beastlay fingahs, too. Your jacket is shiny at the ends of your sleeves. Bai Jove, you are shiny in a dozen places! Pway don't go away, Blake, deah boy. I am comin' out with you as soon as I have finished talkin' to Wally."

"That's the trouble with you," said Blake. "You never have finished talking."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And we can't stay here all the time you're reading lectures to that little scallawag of a brother of yours."

"My word!" said Digby. "I should say not! If you tell him all his faults it will take till the Christmas holidays."

And the chums of Study No. 6 walked out of the School House, leaving Arthur Augustus alone to deal with his troublesome younger brother. D'Arcy was assuming an air of paternal severity.

Wally was a thorn in his side in many ways. It was a great trial for the dandy of the School House to have an inky-fingered little waster, as he would have expressed it, claiming relationship with him in the Third Form. Arthur Augustus was a conscientious youth, and he would have made great sacrifices to make Wally realise the importance of being well dressed. But Wally never would see eye to eye with the swell of St. Jim's.

"Look here, Gus—"

"I'm lookin' at you, deah boy," said D'Arcy, regarding the Third-Former through his monocle. "I wegard—"

"I tell you, don't begin—"

"It is necessary for me to give you some instructions at times," said D'Arcy. "The matiah particularly impressed upon me to look aftah you—"

"Let me catch you looking after me!" said Wally.

"You young wascal, I—"

"Look here, Gus, I want some tin."

"That is nothin' new, deah boy! I nevah heah you when you don't want some tin. I would wathah heah somethin' original."

"Can you lend me a pound or two?"

Arthur Augustus stared at him.

"Well, I must say that I wegard that as cool," he said. "Not a shillin' or two—a pound or two! I wathah think I cannot."

"I want it for a special purpose," said Wally, who had a rather strained look on his face, which Arthur Augustus did not notice. "I must have some tin this morning."

"Why this morning, deah boy?"

"I want it specially. If you haven't it—"

"I have the remains of a fivah the governah sent me last week," said D'Arcy. "I think I have either two or three pounds left. But, weally, Wally, before I give them to you, I must know what you want so much money for?"

"I can't tell you."

"Then I am afraid I must make it half-a-crown."

"Don't be an ass, Gus."

"What did you say, Wally?" asked D'Arcy, with slow emphasis. "Did you ventuah to chawactewise me as an ass?"

"I say, don't be an ass! I must have some tin this morning, and you shall have it back, honour bright!"

"I am afraid that it's not quite good enough, Wally," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "It looks to me as if you have some wotten scheme on—somethin' of which I should pwobably not approve."

"Look here, come into the quad and I'll tell you," said Wally abruptly.

"Vevy well, I shall be pleased to heah you, deah boy. If you are in any difficulty, I am just the fellow to tell you what's the pwopah thing to do."

Wally led the way from the School House, and halted under an elm. The mist of the morning had cleared off, and the sun was shining in the quadrangle. It rang with the shouts of the boys released from lessons for the short morning recess. Arthur Augustus polished his eyeglass.

"I am waitin', Wally," he remarked. "Pway go ahead, as it is weally necessary for me to wejoin my fiwends."

"I'm in a fix," said Wally.

"That's nothin' new, eithah!"

"I'm in a row with Selby—our Form master, you know."

"Yaas, I wemembah now Tom Mewwy told me you had biffed a football on his nose, or somethin' of the sort—a vevy weekless thing to do. I hope you apologised hand-somely for the accident."

Wally grinned.

"He didn't give me a chance, Gus. He was awfully waxy, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,291.

and he said I was telling an untruth when I told him it was an accident."

Arthur Augustus coloured with indignation.

"Is it poss? He chawactewised your explanation as an untwuth?"

"Yes, and—"

"Then you have done quite wight in comin' to me," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "I will go and see Mr. Selby at once, and explain to him that it is quite impos for my young bwotah to tell an untwuth! The ideah!"

"Don't be an ass, Gus!"

"Eh?"

"You needn't do anything of the sort. I tried to explain, and he wouldn't listen. I'm not going to be called a liar. He spoke about it again in class this morning, and told me I had uttered an untruth before all the fellows. You know I've licked a lot of the Third since I came here. They all cackled. I'll lick 'em all again some time. I'm to go to Selby after morning lessons, and take a licking."

"I pwesume that a D'Arcy is not afraid of a lickin'?"

"Rats! I'm not afraid of it, but he impressed upon me, before all the class, that the licking was not for biffing him with the football, but for telling an untruth about it afterwards."

"Vevy inconsiderate of him! I will wemonstwat—"

"And I'm not going to take the licking."

"You—you are what?"

"I'm not going to take the licking," said Wally, setting his teeth. "I'd take a dozen if it was for biffing him with the footer, but I won't be called a liar and be licked for that. I won't stand it."

"I weally do not see how you can avoid it, deah boy."

"I'm going to cut."

"Eh?"

"Deaf?" said Wally pleasantly. "I'm going to cut!"

"I suppose you do not mean that you are goin' to wun away?" said D'Arcy, staring at his younger brother in blank amazement.

D'Arcy minor nodded.

"Is there any other way of getting out of the licking, ass?"

"Pwobably not; but pway undahstand, Wally, that I uttahly wefuse to allow a Third Form fag to chawactewise me as an ass."

"That's what I want the cash for," went on Wally, un-heeding. "I'm going to cut."

"I wefuse to allow you to do anythin' of the sort."

Wally grunted expressively. The permission of Arthur Augustus was not essential in the eyes of the independent fag.

"As for the cash," said D'Arcy, "undah the circs I shall not wefuse to lend it to you. You can have two pounds, deah boy; but I expressively forbid you to wun away fwom coll. Mind, I wegard you as a young ass, and I exhacise my authowity as your eldah bwotah in this case. I expressively forbid you to wun away, so wemembah!"

"Oh, I'll remember, as far as that goes," said Wally, placing the two pound notes in his jacket pocket. "Thank you vevy much, Gus. It's rather up against a fellow to have a brother in the Fourth, but I admit you come in useful sometimes."

"Weally, Wally!"

Wally nodded and walked away. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went to look for his chums, with a thoughtful shade on his brow. He was thinking so deeply that he ran into the Terrible Three in the quadrangle without seeing them. Tom Merry gave him a hearty smack on the shoulder that brought him to himself, and nearly made him jump off the ground.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wish you would not be so vevy wuff!"

"Don't tread on my favourite corns, then," said Tom Merry severely. "What's the matter with you? Are you composing a new verse for the 'Ode to a Lovely Gal'?"

"No, I am thinkin'—"

"With what?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I wegard that question as fwivolous, not to say wude. But, as a matiah of fact, I am wathah twoubled in my mind. I have been insulted."

"Horrid!" said Tom Merry solemnly.

"Yaas, wathah! As you vevy pwopahly wemarked, it is howwid!"

"But who has dared to insult the one and only Augustus?" said Monty Lowther, looking puzzled. "Is he slain yet, or does the slaying remain to be done?"

"It's a case of coffee and pistols for two behind the chapel before breakfast," said Manners solemnly. "Is it a second you are looking for, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mannahs!"

"We'll all be your seconds," said Tom Merry. "Can we rest patiently while the one and only Gus is insulted? Perish the thought!"

"Pway don't wot, Tom Mewwy!"
 "But who is the rascally insulter? Tell us his name before you strew the hungry churchyard with his bones."
 "It is Mr. Selby."
 "The Third Form beak! How has he had the misfortune to tread upon your august toes?"
 "I weally wish you would not put it in such a widiculous mannah, Tom Mewwy. It was not exactly myself whom Mr. Selby insulted, but my youngah bwothah; but, of course, to hint that a D'Arcy could possibly tell an untwuth is as gweat an insult to me as to young Wally."
 "Yes, rather," said Tom Merry. "I shouldn't stand it!"
 "I believe you are wottin', you wottah; but I don't intend to stand it. The question is, shall I complain to the Head, or shall I wemonstwate with Mr. Selby?"
 "Neither, unless you are looking for a lickin'."
 "The thought of a lickin' would not deter me fwom doin' "

"Gussy! This way, Gussy! Pass that ball!"
 A football was flying through the air near D'Arcy. The chums of Study No. 6 were enjoying a punt about to warm themselves in the cold November morning. D'Arcy let the ball pass him, shaking his head at Blake.
 "I am sowwy, deah boy, but I am wathah busy now!" he replied.
 The ball was captured by a New House junior, who dribbled it away. Herries and Digby dashed off on his track, and Jack Blake stopped for a minute to glare at D'Arcy and to say things to him.
 "You shrieking duffer!" he said, in measured tones. "Why didn't you stop that ball?"
 "I am sowwy, but I have no time for puntin' a ball about now," said D'Arcy. "I have been insulted, and I am goin' to wemonstwate with Mr. Selby."



Wally dribbled the ball towards the School House portal and kicked for goal. It was a true kick, and the leather sailed gracefully into the open doorway and landed a splendid goal full upon the nose of Mr. Selby, the Third Form master!
 "My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally.

the pwopah thing, Tom Mewwy. It is imposs to allow such an insult to pass unnoticed."
 "My dear ass—"
 "I wefuse to be called an ass! I wegard the term as oppwobwious and diswepctful. Unless you immediately withdraw that expwession, Tom Mewwy, I shall have no wewource but to administrah a feahful thwashin'."
 Tom Merry looked very much alarmed.
 "Oh, I say, duffer—"
 "I wefuse to be called a duffah! I shall stwike you, unless—"
 "Run for your lives!" gasped Tom Merry.
 And the Terrible Three, clasping one another's hands, dashed off across the quad at top speed, leaving D'Arcy staring after them, the picture of astonishment.

CHAPTER 3.

Arthur Augustus Remonstrates!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sniffed expressively. He knew perfectly well that the sudden terror of the Terrible Three was feigned, and that they were only "rotting."
 He sniffed and turned away towards the School House. Blake yelled to him across the quad.

"Eh?" said Blake, staring at him. "What are you talking about?"
 "Mr. Selby has accused my youngah bwothah of utterwin' an untwuth, and exposed him to the contempt of the class. Wally is quite incapable of such extwemely ungentlemanly conduct, and I am goin' to wemonstwate with Mr. Selby."
 "You utter ass!"
 "Do you think it would be bettah to complain to the Head? I weally do not want to get Mr. Selby into a wow, but—"
 "Follow me, duffer—come and kick the ball, and keep off the grass," said Blake. "Selby will snatch you baldheaded."
 And Jack Blake ran after his chums.
 Arthur Augustus regarded him through his monocle for a moment, and then walked off to the School House. When the swell of St. Jim's had an idea in his head, it was not easy for anyone to get it out again.
 Jameson and Curly Gibson, Wally's chums in the Third, were talking in the Hall, and they came eagerly towards D'Arcy as he entered.
 "I say, have you seen young Wally?" asked Jameson. "I haven't been able to spot him since we came out of the class-room, but somebody said he was talking to you."

"Yaas, wathah! He is somewhere about, I dare say. Do you know where Mr. Selby is?"

"What the dickens do you want with our Form master?" asked Jameson.

"I wish to wemonstwate with him."

"Ha, ha, ha! He's in his study. Come on, Curly, let's go and look for young Wally. I'm getting anxious about him. I knew he had some idea in his head—"

"It's all wight, Jameson," said D'Arcy. "He was thinkin' of wunnin' away fwom St. Jim's, but I have forbidden him to do so."

"Fat lot of difference that would make to Wally!" murmured Jameson, as D'Arcy walked away towards Mr. Selby's study.

Arthur Augustus tapped at Mr. Selby's door, and the Form master's somewhat acid voice bade him enter. Mr. Selby was preparing some work for the Third Form on the resumption of lessons, and he did not look pleased at being interrupted.

"Who is it? D'Arcy, what do you want?"

Arthur Augustus came into the study in his leisurely way. He regarded the irritable Form master with a calmness that was not likely to soothe his irritation.

"I twust I am not intewwuptin' you, sir?"

"But you are interrupting me," said Mr. Selby. "If you have anything to say to me, say it and be gone."

It was not an encouraging reception, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not disconcerted. He had a gift of self-possession—sometimes regarded as cheek—all his own.

"I am extwemely sowwy to intewwupt you, Mr. Selby—"

"What do you want?"

"But the mattah is important."

Mr. Selby breathed hard through his nose.

"Will you tell me what you want?" he said.

"I do not, as a mattah of fact, want anythin'," said D'Arcy. "I have come here on the pwesent occasion to wemonstwate."

"To— to what?"

"To wemonstwate, Mr. Selby. There was an unfortunate accident this mornin', and a football bified you on your nose—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir. Now, this was quite an accident—"

"It was nothing of the sort!"

"Pway pardon me, sir, but—"

"Did you see it, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir; I was not there."

"Then you cannot possibly know anything about the matter. You may go!"

"Yaas, sir; but first I should like to explain—"

"You may go!"

"Thank you, sir. I should like to explain that the culpwit in the pwesent case bein' my youngah bwothah, it is imposs to doubt his word, when he assures you that it was an accident, as young Wally is quite incapable of—"

"Leave my study!"

"Pway be patient, sir. Young Wally is quite incapable of a falsehood, and I wegard it as an insult to me to chawactewise him as an untwuthful person—I will not say liah, as liah is an unpleasant word to uttah—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir! It now bein' established that it was an accident, you can do nothing less than apologise to my young bwothah—"

Mr. Selby looked dazed. He stared at the swell of the School House, his breath coming in short, jerky gasps.

"I twust I have satisfied you, sir, that you are bound, as a gentleman, to—"

"D'Arcy!"

"As it was an accident—"

"Listen to me!" said Mr. Selby, finding his voice. "This unparalleled insolence—"

"Insolence, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, starting.

"Weally, sir—"

"I presume you have come here with the idea of begging off your younger brother's punishment. This insolence will not serve your purpose."

"Weally, Mr. Selby—"

"I could forgive the outrage of which I was a victim," said Mr. Selby, though he did not look very forgiving just then, "but I will never allow a boy in my Form to tell me an untruth. It is for that I am going to punish D'Arcy minor severely."

"Weally, sir, if you will allow me—"

"I will allow you to leave my study!" thundered Mr. Selby. "You have only made matters worse for D'Arcy minor. It is evident that insolence and untruthfulness runs in his family, and that his elder brother has a full share of them."

It was not a speech that a master should have made, but Mr. Selby was too angry to weigh his words.

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put up his eyeglass, and surveyed the irritable master.

"Weally, Mr. Selby! I wegard that wemark as also callin' for an apology. I cannot but chawactewise it as incowwect and ungentlemanly."

The Third Form master gasped.

"D'Arcy! Boy!"

"I came here," said D'Arcy, with dignity, "to wemonstwate. You have weceived me in an unfriendly spiwit. My young bwothah is quite incapable of tellin' an untwuth. I wegard the mere suggestion as an insult to him and to me. I considah you as owin' both him and me an apology."

Mr. Selby sprang to his feet, and grasped a cane.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy!" he thundered.

"Weally, Mr. Selby—"

"Will you hold out your hand?"

"You are not my Form mastah, and I weally considah that— Ow!"

The Third Form master, losing all patience, brought the cane down with a sounding thwack across the shoulders of Arthur Augustus. The swell of the School House gave a fendish yell. The cane rose again, and D'Arcy skipped to the door. There he paused to look back at the incensed master of the Third.

"I came here to wemonstwate—"

The Third Form master came quickly towards him, and D'Arcy skipped out into the passage. There, however, he paused to finish his remark:

"I came here to wemonstwate, Mr. Selby. I wegard you as havin' weceived me in a wude and ungentlemanly mannah, and I shall considah whethah to cawwy my wemonstwance to highah quartahs!"

And D'Arcy retired—rather hastily, for the cane was swishing once more, and it missed him only by an inch.

CHAPTER 4.

The Disappearance of D'Arcy Minor!

MR. SELBY was looking very pink and disturbed when he came into the Third Form room again.

The Third Form knew the danger-signal in their instructor's face, and they were particularly on the alert to give him no cause for offence. Mr. Selby was not an unjust man, but he had an irritable temper that frequently led him into injustice. When he was in what the Third Form—among themselves, of course—called his "tantrums," they knew that they had to be careful. Not that carefulness always saved them. When he was irritable, the Form master was certain to pick upon somebody, innocent or guilty—and there was often a good deal of speculation as to whom the delinquent would be, and whether he would have done anything meriting the punishment he was sure to receive.

On the present occasion the Third-Formers felt, upon the whole, pretty safe. Wally D'Arcy had received the special attention of the Form master during first and second lesson, and it was known that he was terribly in the master's black books. With Wally as a general scapegoat, the class breathed more freely for themselves. And, as a matter of fact, the moment Mr. Selby entered the class-room his glance went towards the spot where Wally should have been.

The place was empty!

Mr. Selby stared at it, and then ran his eyes along the forms. He could scarcely believe them when he saw that D'Arcy minor was not in the class at all.

"D'Arcy! D'Arcy minor!"

There was no reply.

The Form master snapped his teeth a little.

"Jameson, do you know where D'Arcy minor is?"

"No, sir," said Jameson, who was looking a little worried and scared.

He had no idea where Wally was, but it was pretty clear that he was cutting the rest of morning lessons. Perhaps, as he was already "in for it," Wally thought he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. At all events, he had not turned up in the class-room after the recess at eleven o'clock.

"Does anyone know where D'Arcy minor is?" said Mr. Selby, glancing over the class.

The Form master waited for a reply, but received none, and marked down D'Arcy minor's name as absent.

When the class was dismissed after morning lessons the Third-Formers went out in a buzz of comment upon the conduct of D'Arcy minor.

The nerve he had shown in cutting lessons amazed them. He was a reckless youngster at the best of times, but the boldest spirit in the Third Form would have stopped short of that.

"There'll be a fearful row," said Curly Gibson. "Selby'll skin him!"

"Well, he is a young ass!" Stuart remarked. "It's going too far."

Jameson looked worried.

"Blessed if I know what to make of it!" he exclaimed.

"There's no sign of young Wally about here. Looks to me as if he's hooked it."

"Phew!"

"Better look for him," said Gibson. "I dare say we shall find him about here somewhere. If he's hooked it, it may be an expelling matter for him."

"He wouldn't stop to think of that."

The Third-Formers looked round for Wally. He was not to be seen, and Jameson decided to seek D'Arcy major in quest of information. The chums of Study No. 6 were coming out of the School House, and Jameson cut across to intercept them.

"He told me so, deah boy. He asked me to lend him a couple of pounds, as he had decided to wun away fwm the coll."

"You utter ass! And you never said anything about it!"

"I forbade him to wun away!"

"You—you—ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! I——"

"Still, if he was short of money, and you didn't give him any, he won't be able to get far," said Blake. "We may be able to——"

"But I did give him some, deah boy!"

"You shrieking duffer! You gave him money?"

"I should not be likely to wefuse a loan to my youngah bwthah. I expwessly forbade him to wun away fwm the coll, and I lent him the couple of pounds he wanted as a sort of compensation for havin' to obey my expwess ordahs."



Tom Merry grasped Blake and waltzed him down the passage. "Hurrah!" gasped Blake. "Hip, hip, hip!" yelled Tom Merry. Mr. Selby's door opened, and the juniors waltzed into the master as he came out. Mr. Selby gasped and sat down!

"Have you seen anything of young Wally?" he asked.

"Hallo, is he in trouble again?" asked Jack Blake. "Where have you mislaid him? It's not ten minutes since morning lessons."

"He cut the last lesson."

"Eh? Cut the last lesson?"

"Yes. He didn't come back into the class-room. He was awfully wild about Selby calling him a liar before his class," said Jameson anxiously. "I can't help thinking that he may have hooked it."

"Phew!"

"Imposs, my deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with a decided shake of the head. "He was thinkin' of doin' so, but——"

"How do you know?" asked Blake.

"Catch him obeying them!"

"He would hardly tweek his eldah bwthah with such gwoss diswespact as to——"

"You howling ass!" said Digby. "Of course he's gone now!"

"I wefuse to cwedit your statement, Dig. I do not believe that he is gone. Aftah I expwessly forbade him to entahtain the ideah——"

"And he's been gone an hour and a half," said Blake. "Gone an hour and a half, with a couple of pounds in his pocket. Oh, you prize ass!"

"I wefuse to believe that he has gone. Besides, if he has, it is all Mr. Selby's fault. The wottah chawactewised him as

an untwuthful person, and that's got young Wally's monkey up. He wasn't goin' to stand for that."

"The young ass will get into a fearful row," said Blake anxiously. "Is that what you call looking after your young brother?"

"I expwessly forbade him to wun away!"

"Oh, seat! Let's make sure that he has gone! Jameson, have you looked everywhere?"

"Yes, everywhere I can think of."

"Then look again, and set all your Form looking. If Wally's gone, we'll go after him, but we don't want to go on a wild-goose chase."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right you are, Blake!"

Jameson hurried off. Jack Blake had little doubt in his mind that Wally was gone. He wrinkled his brow in thought, trying to think out what was best to be done, and his chums waited for him to speak.

"Hallo! Why that pensive brow?" asked Tom Merry, coming by with a football under his arm. "Have you lost a tanner and found twopence, Blake?"

"Rats! Gussy's young brother has bolted."

"What!"

"It's a fact! Of course, it doesn't matter to us what happens among a set of inky fags, but I shouldn't like Gussy's brother to be expelled."

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!"

Tom Merry whistled.

"My hat, it's a serious matter if he's bolted! If he hasn't gone far, though, we might be able to fetch him back again!"

"That's what I was thinking. Hallo, Jameson, have you seen anything of him?"

"No," said Jameson, coming up gasping. "I've asked Taggles, and he says Wally went out of the gates when we were going into the class-room again. Taggles thought he was going on a message to the village."

"That settles it," said Tom Merry. Blake was already striding away. "Where are you off to, Blake?"

"I'm going to get out my jigger. I suppose the young scallawag's gone off by train, but there may be a chance of recapturing him in Rylcombe. The trains are awfully slow, and he may have had to wait a long time."

"Good; I'm with you!"

"Yaas, wathah; and I also! Mind, I don't believe that Wally has left the pwecinots of St. Jim's, aftah I expwessly forbade him—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I wufuse to wing off! I tell you—"

Blake and Tom Merry wheeled their machines out, and D'Arcy, finding that he was not listened to, followed their example.

The three juniors mounted and pedalled away towards Rylcombe. If Wally had indeed bolted, he must have made for this point first, and there was a faint chance of catching him there.

The Fourth-Formers realised much more clearly than an "infant" of the Third Form, how serious a matter it might turn out for anybody who "bolted" from school, whatever his reason might be for doing so. Mr. Selby was certainly to blame, but such a breach of discipline could not fail to be visited with exemplary punishment—perhaps even expulsion.

And Arthur Augustus, as he thought of what his mater would say, became very serious. He was anxious for Wally, too. Dissimilar as they were, the brothers were really very much attached, though they seldom gave a visible sign of it. D'Arcy, too, had an ineradicable impression that almost anybody was bound to get into trouble unless he was there to help. He was anxious about Wally for that reason, as much as any other.

It was a hard and fast ride to Rylcombe. The juniors made at once for the railway station, where they well knew the one and only porter. If Wally had taken the train, the Rylcombe porter would be sure to know of it. The little station was never crowded, except at the opening and closing of the term at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry jumped off his machine, bumped it against the red pillar-box that stood outside the station, and ran in. The porter was sitting on a truck, slowly and thoughtfully pulling at a pipe. He was the only person visible in the station, and the fact that the booking-office was shut down, showed that no more trains were expected in just yet.

"Hallo, Freddy!" said Tom Merry, tapping the porter on the shoulder. His name was not Freddy, but he grinned good-temperedly at the hero of the Shell. "Has one of our chaps been down here this morning?"

"Yes Master Merry."

"Bai Jove, it begins to look as if young Wally has weally

bolted off, you know, although I wufused him my permish in the plainest mannah poss!"

"Was it D'Arcy minor?" asked Tom Merry. "You know him—the chap who stuck a needle into your leg when you were carrying a box one day."

"Young chap with inky fingers and a dirty collar," said Blake.

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

"Like this chap in features, but not looking half such an ass," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Yes, Master Merry, he's the chap. He went off in the twelve o'clock up."

"Then he's been gone nearly an hour," said Tom Merry. "Do you know where he took his ticket for, Freddy?"

"As I was a-standin' beside him at the time, Master Merry, I think I does," said the porter, without, however, volunteering the information.

Tom Merry smiled, and laid a shilling on the handle of the truck beside the porter. It disappeared under the latter's horny hand.

"Which I remembers, Master Merry, that he took his ticket for Winchester."

"Bai Jove, the young wascal's goin' home, then!"

"He wanted to know if he could take a ticket for East-thorpe," said the porter. "He couldn't. He'll have to take another at Winchester."

"Easthorpe is the station for Eastwood," said Arthur Augustus. "That is my govnerah's wescidence, you know. Wally has gone home."

"Well, it's some comfort to know that the young ass has gone home," said Tom Merry. "He might have made a break in any direction."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose the best thing we can do is to get back to the school and report the matter to Mr. Railton," said Blake thoughtfully.

"I suppose so. Come on."

"When does the next twain leave for Winchester?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Twenty minutes, sir," said the porter. "Change at Wayland."

"Good! I will wemain here, deah boys!"

"What the dickens for?" asked Tom Merry.

"I weward it as a duty to go aftah young Wally. My matah particulahly impressed upon me to take care of him, you know."

"Yes, but—"

"I weward it as my duty," said D'Arcy firmly. "You fellows can go back and acquaint Mr. Wailton with the circs, and I will go aftah young Wally."

"But he will be all right at home, surely, with his father and mother—"

"My pawents are in the South of Fwance at the pwsent moment, and there is no tellin' what mischief that young scallawag might get up to. I weward it as my duty. My matah particulahly impressed upon me to—"

"Oh, all right! I suppose Railton will excuse you, as you're going after the other ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We'll stay and see you off," said Blake. "After all, it's not a bad idea. And when you find that young rascal, take my advice and give him a good hiding."

"I have already been considewin' the advisability of givin' him a feaful thwashin', deah boy."

Arthur Augustus took his ticket, and the juniors proceeded to the platform. The train came in, and D'Arcy stepped into a first-class carriage.

"Pway do not omit to make my apologies to Mr. Wailton," he said. "It is wathah wude boltin' off like this without mentionin' the matah to him, but the twain would be gone before I could get back, if I returned to St. Jim's to apologise first."

Tom Merry laughed.

"We'll apologise for you," he said reassuringly.

"Vewy good! There is nothin' else to return for, as I am fortunately weawin' my silk hat. It was wathah thoughtful of me to put one on in case I should be suddenly called away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anythin' to cackle at in that wemark, Tom Mewwy! I suppose I could not return home in a cap?" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "Pway do not forget—"

"Stand back there!"

Tom Merry slammed the carriage door, and stepped back with Blake. D'Arcy leaned out of the window, waving a gloved hand excitedly.

"Tom Mewwy, pway—"

"What is it?" asked Tom, running along the platform and keeping pace with the moving train. "Have you forgotten anything?"

"Oh, no; but I wanted to impress upon you—"
 "Quick—what is it?"
 "Don't forget to apologise for me to Mr. Wailton for takin' Fwench leave in this vevy sudden mannah—"
 "You utter ass!"
 "I wefuse to be—"
 The rest of D'Arcy's words were drowned in the clatter of the train as it disappeared out of the station.

CHAPTER 5.

Wally Returns Home!

A DUSTY figure came up the drive at Eastwood, and John James Walker, butler to Lord Eastwood, who happened to be looking out of the window, uttered an exclamation of surprise.
 "If it ain't Master Walter!"

"Oh!"
 "Now, Walker, don't keep on saying 'Oh!' like a giddy parrot!" said Wally, in a tone of mild remonstrance. "See about getting me some grub, there's a good fellow. I suppose the governor is still away?"
 "Lord Eastwood is still abroad," said Mr. Walker, with dignity.
 "Good! I expect there would have been a row if he had been here!" chuckled Wally. "I don't quite know what I'm going to do—I shall have to think it out. First and most important is to have some grub. I suppose there's something, eh?"
 "I will have some lunch laid in the dining-room—"
 "No, you won't!" said Wally, with a shudder, as the thought of lurching alone in that great apartment, where the furniture had—as he irreverent expressed it—its nightgowns on during the absence of the family. "Let



"A thick ear!" murmured 'Arry 'Arding. "A young swell like you give me a thick ear! My 'at! Ho, ho! Kim on!" Wally came on. He started with a right-hander that came clear through 'Arry 'Arding's guard and caught him under the nose. "My 'at!" gasped 'Arry.

Wally it was—very dusty and tired. He caught sight of the old butler standing at the window, and grinned cheerfully at him, however. Fatigue, or anything else, could never very much damp the spirits of Wally.
 Mr. Walker, still looking very amazed, went to the door to admit the youngest scion of the house of D'Arcy. Wally came in, with a gasp of relief, and leaving a track of dust wherever he trod.
 "Here we are again!" he said cheerfully.
 "Master Walter—"
 "Surprised to see me?" grinned Wally.
 "Yes, Master Walter," said the butler, with stately dignity. "I am surprised!"
 "Well, you look rather flabbergasted," said Wally. "I've got a holiday."
 "Oh!"
 "Given myself one!" exclaimed Wally. "I'm hungry. I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast, and I'm simply famished."

them bring me something up into my room; I shall be snugger there."
 "Very well, Master Walter; but—"
 "Don't but, Walker! Don't I keep telling you I'm hungry?"
 "You've run away from school, Master Walter!" said the butler, shaking a fat forefinger at the hopeful son of Lord Eastwood.
 "Rats!" said Wally. "Let's have that grub, I tell you!"
 And he mounted the stairs to go to his own room. He was in want of a wash and brush up after his long journey, and he had walked from the station to save money. He had little besides the two pounds he had borrowed from Arthur Augustus, and his fare had made a big hole in that. He did not know what he was going to do, but whatever his next proceeding he would require money. He was determined not to go back to St. Jim's, but he required time to think over his plans.

A substantial lunch was brought up to Master Walter in his room, and while he was eating it Mr. Walker was discussing the surprising occurrence with the housekeeper. They agreed that it was certain that Master Walter had run away from school, and debated what was best to be done under the circumstances.

"P'raps I'd better send a wire to his lordship," Mr. Walker remarked. "His lordship is the proper person to deal with the case. I don't know how to handle Master Walter. Between you and me, Mrs. Duff, he's a young rip!"

"He is that, Mr. Walker."

"If he was mine," said Mr. Walker reflectively, "I'd take the strap to him; I would, really, Mrs. Duff. But being as he's his lordship's son, his lordship can have the dealing with him. I'll wire to his lordship."

And a servant was forthwith dispatched with the wire.

After it was sent Mr. Walker felt a little more at ease in his mind. He went up to Master Walter's room, to ascertain, if he could, what the youth intended to do. If he meant to remain at Eastwood, all was well till his lordship's answer came. But if he meant to depart, Mr. Walker and Mrs. Duff had agreed that he must be detained somehow.

Wally was getting to the end of an excellent cold lunch. He looked up and grinned genially at the imposing figure of Mr. Walker.

"I feel better now," he announced. "Sit down. Don't stand on ceremony, you know. Do you know, I'm glad to see your chivvy again. It seems like old times."

"Really, Master Walter—"

"Do you remember the time I tied Pongo's collar to your coat-tails with some twine?" said Wally. "Wasn't it a lark?"

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"I did not regard it as a lark, Master Walter!"

"It was a ripping lark, all the same, Walker."

"I 'ope, Master Walter—"

"Oh, that's all right! Pongo isn't with me now," said Wally regretfully. "I hadn't any chance of getting him out before I left St. Jim's."

"You've run away from school, Master Walter."

"Well, suppose I have?" said Master Walter. "You're not going to send me back, are you, Walker?"

"It may be my dooty—"

"Then you'd better not try it," said Wally, getting up and making a few passes in a playful manner at the stout butler's startled face. "It's all right," he went on, as Mr. Walker started back in alarm. "I'm not going to hurt you. But I tell you I can lick anybody in the Third Form at St. Jim's, and if you start sending me back to school, Walker, you'll want a new set of features!"

"Master Walter!"

"I'm not going back, unless Selby comes down off his perch."

"But, Master Walter—"

"I suppose I can do as I like?" said Wally.

"Yes, of course, Master Walter. But—but do you intend to remain here, or—"

Wally shook his head.

"Oh, no! The Head'll send here for me first thing, I expect, and I tell you I'm not going to be taken back to St. Jim's. Catch me going back and taking a licking from Selby! No fear!"

"Are you thinking of leaving the 'ouse, then, Master Walter?" asked Mr. Walker, in honeyed tones.

"Yes, rather."

"I suppose you'll stay the night, though?"

"I suppose I shan't," said Wally. "I'm off as soon as I've finished this feed and had a bit of a rest. I'm not going to have the beaks come and collar me and take me back to St. Jim's on my neck. Not much!"

"But really, Master Walter—"

"I shall be gone in an hour or two," said Wally. "I'm going to get together a few things here. It's hard cheese that I had to leave Pongo behind. You can lend me some money if you like, Walker. Have you a fiver to spare?"

"I'm sorry that I haven't, Master Walter."

"Oh, don't be mean, Walker! You can get it back from the governor, as you know jolly well. A fiver would do me down all right."

"What a hexpression to use!" gasped the butler. "If his lordship could 'ear you—"

"Well, he can't," said Wally; "and we can't all keep up to your level of dignity, Walker. You ought to have been a giddy emperor, you know. What the dickens are you doing with that lock, Walker?"

The butler was fumbling with the lock on the door. As a matter of fact, he was changing the key to the outside of the lock.

"Eh? Er—nothing!" he stammered.

"Then leave off," said Wally, too busy with a cold chicken to care what the butler was doing. "Hallo! Are you going?"

"I have my duties to attend to, Master Walter."

"Good! Then go and attend to them," said Wally. "I'm going to have a snooze for a bit, and then bunk."

"What hexpressions for his lordship's son!" gasped the butler.

"So-long, and don't let me be disturbed for an hour," said Wally. "Then you can come up, and bring me a time-table. Be good!"

Mr. Walker retired, closing the door. There was a lurking grin on his fat face as he silently turned the key, and then extracted it and placed it in his pocket.

Wally, all unconscious of the fact, was a prisoner in his room.

CHAPTER 6.

A Prisoner.

"**B**AI Jove, I'm here at last!" It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who uttered the words, as he stepped from a taxi at the door of Eastwood House.

The swell of St. Jim's was home again, on the track of the fugitive Wally.

He paid the driver, with a shilling over his legal fare, and rang a mighty peal on the bell. It was John James Walker himself who admitted him, and the butler's amazement was great.

"Bless my soul, Master Augustus! You, too!"

"Yaas, wathah! You see, I have returned wathah suddenly," said D'Arcy. "How do you do, Walkah?"

"I—I really— Have you run away from school, too, Master Augustus?"

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and looked reprovingly at the butler.

"Weally, Walkah, I twust I have not the reputation of bein' the kind of scallawag to wun away fwom school!" he said.

"But—but Master Wally—"

"Has that young wascal come home?"

"Certainly, sir! He's in his room now."

"Bai Jove, I'm glad of that! I was afraid he might have dodged me, you know," said Arthur Augustus, flicking a speck of dust from his trousers. "I am weally vewy glad to hear that he has awvived and is still here. As a mattah of fact, Walkah, I have followed the young wapscaillon, for the expwss purpos of takin' him back to St. Jim's."

"Oh! I have wired to his lordship—"

"That was quite wight. Have you had a weply?"

"Not yet, sir. It takes a long time."

"Vewy good. You are suah that young Wally is quite safe in his quartahs?"

The butler grinned.

"Oh, yes, Master Augustus! I took the liberty of locking his door on the outside, sir, so that he could not get away until I had his lordship's reply to the telegram I sent to his lordship."

"H'm! It was wathah a cheek on your part, Walkah, to lock my young bwothah's door; but I suppose it is best to keep him safe," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "What is the young wascal doin'?"

"He said he was going to lie down, sir, after his lunch. Really, sir, he said he was going to take a snooze, if I might repeat the vulgar expression he used."

"Vewy well, Walkah," said Arthur Augustus languidly. "As young Wally is quite safe for the pwsent I can't do bettah than have some lunch myself. I have missed my dinnah, and the waylay journey was a vewy long one. Pway see to it immediately."

"Certainly, Master Augustus."

"I won't have it served in the dinin'-woom," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "You may have it taken up to my own quartahs. I shall also be able to keep an eye on the door of young Wally's woom, in case of accidents."

"Yes, sir."

Arthur Augustus ascended to his own quarters. He had two very pleasant and airy rooms at Eastwood, the windows overlooking the park. The door of one of them was on the same landing as Wally's door, facing it, so that D'Arcy was easily able to keep an eye on Wally's quarters.

Having carefully removed all stains of travel from his immaculate garb, D'Arcy sat down to lunch, and did it full justice.

He had barely finished when there was a sound in the passage without that attracted his attention at once. It was the sound of a turning handle, and of someone trying to open a locked door.

Arthur Augustus rose from the table. Mr. Walker presented himself at the door with an opened telegram in his hand.

"I have had a reply from his lordship, Master Augustus," he said. "Would you care to see it?"

"You may hand it ovah, Walkah, thank you! I think young Wally is twyin' to get out of his woom, isn't he?"

"I think so, sir."

There was not much doubt on the point. Wally, having found the door locked, was kicking at it vigorously.

Arthur Augustus glanced over the telegram from Lord Eastwood. It was brief, but to the point.

"Detain him, and wire St. Jim's.—EASTWOOD."

"Vewy good," said Arthur Augustus. "There is no need to wiah St. Jim's, as they know there where the young wapscaillon is gone; but you had bettah do so, all the same, as his lordship diwects you. I have already sent a wiah to Mr. Waitton from the station, and you had bettah send anothah to the Head. Meanwhile, we will detain the young wascal."

Bump, bump, bump!

"Open this door!" roared Wally.

Arthur Augustus went out of the room, crossed the wide lanc'ng, and tapped at his younger brother's door. The hammering within ceased abruptly.

"Is that you, Walker, you old rascal?"

"Bless my soul!" chuckled Walker, as he went downstairs. "What hexpressions!"

"Weally, Wally—"

There was the sound of a surprised whistle inside the room.

"Hallo! Is that you, Gus?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How did you get here? You don't mean to say that you had the cheek to follow me?"

"You young wascal! You left St. Jim's although I had expwssly forbidden you to do so, and, of course, I followed you immediately to bwing you back."

Wally chuckled.

"Do you think you are going to take me back, Gus?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, come off! Who locked this door?"

"Walkah locked the door. He has wiahed to the govannah, and the govannah has wiahed back that he is to wiah to St. Jim's, and detain you heah."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"It was like old Walker's cheek to wire! And like his confounded impudence to lock my door!"

"Yaas, I wegard that statement as quite cowwect. It was like his shockin' cheek! But he really did it for the best, as it was necessary to detain you."

"I won't be detained!"

"My deah Wally—"

"Get the key, Gus, like a good chap, and open the door."

"Will you pwomise to come back quietly to St. Jim's if I open the beastlay door, deah boy?"

"Of course I won't!"

"I should wegwet to have to wemove you by violence, Wally—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd better make your will before you start, Gus!"

"A scene of violence would be infwah dig," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I shall not begin anythin' of the sort. If you wefuse to weturn with me to St. Jim's I shall keep you locked up in your woom till you are sent for."

"Now, don't be a cad, Gus! Open the door, like a good chap!"

"If I open the door, what will you do?"

"Bunk!"

"Weally, Wally, I wegard that as an absolutely disgustin' expwssion. I suppose you have picked that up in the Third Form at St. Jim's."

"I'll pick you up when I get out of this room!" yelled Wally, through the keyhole. "Isn't it bad enough to be ragged by old Selby without having a duffer like you preaching at a fellow through a beastly locked door?"

"I wefuse to allow you to chawactewise me as a duffer, Wally! The expwssion is uttahly lackin' in the pwopah respect due to your eldah bwothah!"

"Are you going to open that door?"

"Certainly not! Walkah is gone to wiah to St. Jim's, and I expect the Head will send a pwefect to bwing you back."

"Open the door!"

"You will go back on your neck, Wally. It would be much bettah for you to come back with me, and much more dignified."

"Rats! Open this door!"

"As for Mr. Selby, I have already wemonstwated with him, and I pwomise you that if you come back quietly I will cawwy the mattah before the Head himself."

"Open this rotten door!"

"You were quite wight to be indignat at bein' chawactewised as a fibbah by Mr. Selby. But I expwssly forbade you to wun away fwom school—"

"Are you going to let me out?"

"Certainly not! I have no doubt that when I have satisfactorily explained mattahs to the Head all will be set wight, and so I weally advise you to come back quietly to St. Jim's, like a good little boy."

Wally snorted. For the terror of the Third Form at St. Jim's to be called a good little boy was a deadly insult.

"Just you wait till I get at you, Gus!" he roared. "I'll alter the shape of your features, you howling image!"

"I shall uttahly wefuse to have the shape of my featuahs altahed, Wally, and I have before remarked that I object to your bein' those oppwobwious expwssions—"

"Oh, you horrid ass! Will you get that door opened?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then—then you look out when there isn't a door between us next time!" said Wally ferociously, and, bestowing a final kick on the door, Wally gave it up.

Arthur Augustus returned to his own room, satisfied that his troublesome young brother was safe for the time. He did not yet know Wally.

D'Arcy minor had no intention of remaining in the room till a prefect came from St. Jim's to take him back to the school. That would have been an altogether too inglorious ending to his escapade. He shook his fist at the door, and then dragged the bedclothes from his bed, and began twisting them into a rope.

The November dusk was falling on the countryside, and it would soon be dark. Wally's window looked out on the gardens, from whence escape to the road was easy. He had finished making the improvised rope by the time darkness had fairly set in. He cautiously opened the window and looked out.

In the dim dusk there was little chance of being observed. He knotted one end of his rope to a leg of the bedstead, and let the other fall into the garden. Then, climbing out of the

window with the agility of a monkey, he slid down the rope and vanished in the gloom.

Ten minutes later Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped at his brother's door. There was no reply, and he tapped again. Still silence. Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Obstinate young wascal! I say, Wally, are you weedy to come back to St. Jim's yet?"

But there was no reply, and D'Arcy gave it up. He little dreamed that at that moment Wally was speeding through the November evening towards the railway station, with the world before him.

CHAPTER 7.

Arthur Augustus Apologises!

MR. RAILTON was looking somewhat worried. Wally's absence had been reported to him, and it was pretty clear that the Third-Former had run away from St. Jim's.

Blake, D'Arcy, and Tom Merry had been absent, too, at dinner-time, but Digby had informed the Housemaster that they had only gone to look for Wally.

Mr. Railton gave instructions that they were to come to his study the moment they returned. He was waiting for them rather anxiously. If they did not bring the fugitive back with them the matter would have to be reported to the headmaster—a step from which Mr. Railton naturally shrank, if it could possibly be avoided.

It was not to the credit of a Housemaster for a boy belonging to his House to "bolt." It was not unknown for a junior to take "French leave," and to get a severe caning for it; but this was a more serious case. It looked as if D'Arcy minor had not taken French leave for a little excursion, but had actually run away from school, and the Housemaster was naturally worried. He mentally promised the hopeful youngest son of Lord Eastwood a record licking when he should be brought back safely to St. Jim's.

A tap at the door interrupted the Housemaster's meditations, and Tom Merry and Blake entered his study. Mr. Railton nodded to them.

"Digby says you wanted us to come here, sir—" began Tom Merry.

"Quite correct, Merry."

"We hope you will excuse us missing dinner, sir," said Jack Blake. "We thought we had better go after the young ass—ahem—I mean, after D'Arcy minor!"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Certainly, Blake! You did quite right, and I have directed the housekeeper to keep dinner warm for you and Merry and D'Arcy major."

"Thank you very much, sir!" said Blake, greatly relieved.

"But D'Arcy major does not appear to be with you," said Mr. Railton. "Has he not returned with you?"

"No, sir. He thought he ought to go after young Wally."

"Then you have not caught D'Arcy minor?"

"No, sir. We've found out that he's gone home to Eastwood," said Tom Merry. "D'Arcy has gone there after him, and he wished us to make his excuses to you. He thought he had better go by the next train, as he thinks he will be able to induce D'Arcy minor to return when he sees him at home."

"Very good!" said Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy major has done right. It is much better for the boy to be brought back quietly, if possible, without any scene. I hope to see

them both in the afternoon. Meanwhile, are either of you acquainted with D'Arcy's motive for this extravagant freak? He must surely have had some powerful reason for this unheard-of action!"

The juniors coloured.

"Come, come!" said the Housemaster. "You must surely know that this is a serious matter. It can only mean a flogging for D'Arcy minor, if he is not expelled. I shall have to acquaint Dr. Holmes with the matter. If you have anything to tell in favour of D'Arcy minor, you had better tell me."

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry. "The fact is—"

"The fact is—" began Blake, as Tom Merry paused.

"Well, go on, Merry."

"The fact is, sir, that young Wally thought he—he had cause to be aggrieved. His Form master called him a liar!"

"Indeed!"

"Young Wally buffed a footer in his chivvy!" explained Blake. "I—I mean, he kicked a football into his face, you know."

"Is it possible?"

"It was an accident, sir," said Tom Merry hastily. "We were punting a footer about this morning, and you remember how misty it was, sir. Figgins was after young Wally, and he kicked the footer into the School House door to save it from being collared by a New House rotter—I mean, a New House fellow, sir. He didn't see Mr. Selby standing there till he had kicked the footer."

"How do you know, Merry?"

"He says so, sir," said Tom Merry simply.

"And you rely on his word?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Wally's a young scallawag—I mean, a young rascal, sir, but he wouldn't tell a lie. There's nothing mean about him."

"It was a very reckless action, even if he did not see Mr. Selby there," said the Housemaster. "Anybody might have been coming out of the School House at that moment—myself, for instance, or the Head."

"Oh, yes, sir, he's a reckless young rascal, and he ought to be licked!" said Tom Merry candidly. "Only—only Mr. Selby refused to believe his explanation and told him before all the class that he was telling an untruth. That was what got his back up—I mean, made him wild, sir."

Mr. Railton pursed his lips.

"It is a very unfortunate matter," he said. "I will see what is to be done. You may go, my boys. The House dame will give you your dinner."

"Thank you, sir!"

The juniors left the study.

"Good sort, Railton!" said Blake, as they went down the corridor. "Very thoughtful of him to have our dinners kept warm. Just like him, too."

"Yes, rather! I'm glad we put in a word for young Wally, too," Tom Merry remarked reflectively. "He'll get a licking, but Railton can see that it was more than half Mr. Selby's fault. He oughtn't to have called Wally a fibber."

The two juniors enjoyed their dinner all the more for having it late. They went into the class-room with the rest of the juniors, all of whom were curious as to what had become of Wally. The disappearance of D'Arcy minor was the one topic of the school now.

During afternoon lessons Wally and his adventures were probably more thought of than the work 'n hand—at least, in the Third Form. The "break" Wally had made rendered him somewhat of a hero in the eyes of the Third, though

Potts, the Office Boy!



none of them envied him the reckoning that would come when he was brought back to St. Jim's.

All expected to see him arrive in the course of the afternoon, but all were disappointed. Mr. Railton, who was taking the Sixth, was the recipient of a telegram during the afternoon, which was brought to him in the class-room. The Housemaster opened it, not doubting that it was from Arthur Augustus to announce that he was returning with the truant.

It certainly was from Arthur Augustus, but it had been sent before he reached Eastwood. It ran as follows:

"Handed in at Winchester. Pray accept sincere apologies for departure without leave.

"D'ARCY."

Mr. Railton stared at the wire. For the moment he thought that it was from Wally, but he remembered what he knew of the little ways of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Fearing that Tom Merry and Blake might not sufficiently express his regrets to the Housemaster, D'Arcy had wired them as soon as he left the train at Winchester. Mr. Railton smiled in spite of himself.

"No answer," he said.

When afternoon lessons were over, the Housemaster went to the Head. He had already acquainted Dr. Holmes with the disappearance of D'Arcy minor. The Head had a telegram in his hand.

"Ah, I am glad to see you, Mr. Railton!" he said. "I have just had a telegram from Eastwood. D'Arcy minor is there, and refuses to return."

Mr. Railton knitted his brows.

"Then he must be sent for."

"Exactly! I think I shall have to make an example of this youth when he is brought back to the school," said the Head, with something of a glint in his eyes. "But the question now is, whom shall I send for him? It is too late for him to be brought back to-night from such a distance, and whoever goes will have to remain at Eastwood all night, or else go to-morrow morning."

Mr. Railton looked thoughtful.

"I do not see how a master could be spared," he remarked. "It would be better to send a prefect—or, better still——" he paused.

The Head looked at him inquiringly.

"You may remember, sir, that on one occasion when D'Arcy major went upon an absurd excursion without leave, Merry and Blake and another lad succeeded in bringing him back to the school. It is quite possible that the sight of a master or a prefect might only have the result of frightening this boy, and causing him to leave Eastwood, and perhaps keep up this absurd fight for a longer period. I should recommend sending Merry and Blake to Eastwood for him. If they can persuade him to return, so much the better; if not, they can be instructed to secure him, and keep him under observation till he can be fetched, or until Lord Eastwood can be further communicated with on the subject."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I am inclined to agree with you, Mr. Railton."

"Another point is that, as Merry and Blake are friends of D'Arcy major, and have visited his home before, there is no reason why they should not go at once, and stay the night with him. At all events, I will speak to them about it, if you decide that it is the best course to pursue in the circumstances."

"I leave it to you, Mr. Railton."

"Very good! Then I shall send Merry and Blake."

CHAPTER 8.

Merry and Blake are Called In!

TOM MERRY came out of the Shell class-room with Manners and Lowther.

The November evening had closed in, dim with mists from the river. In the wide, flagged passage groups of juniors stood, mostly discussing the disappearance of D'Arcy minor.

"Young rip!" said Monty Lowther. "He doesn't seem to have been heard of yet. Gussy hasn't succeeded in persuading him to come back."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I have my doubts about it," he remarked. "Wally wasn't likely to listen to the voice of the charmer, in my opinion."

"No fear!" said Manners. "He won't come back till he's lugged back by the ears. Hallo, Blake! Heard anything from the one and only?"

"No," said Jack Blake; "Gussy hasn't wired to us. He hasn't turned up with young Wally, either. I expected that. Wally wouldn't come back with him."

"I wonder what the Head will do?" said Lowther thoughtfully. "It would be a bit infra dig for a master to be sent after a Third Form kid, wouldn't it? Besides, if Wally wouldn't come, it would be a painful position for him. That youngster would be a tough nut to crack."

"More likely to send a prefect—Kildare or Darrell," said Blake. "I wish they'd send me. I'm make him hop!"

"Merry! Blake!" It was a fag's voice in the passage. "Mr. Railton wants to see you in his study at once."

"Phew! What's the row now?" exclaimed Manners. "What have you been doing?"

"Nothing," said Blake. "I've had an impot from Schneider this afternoon for talking in class, but nothing to worry Railton. Perhaps he wants to consult me about young Wally."

"Yes, a jolly big perhaps," said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "Perhaps the Head wants your opinion on how to run the school."

"Look here, Lowther——"

"Oh, come along!" said Tom Merry, putting his arm through Blake's and dragging him away. "Let's go and see what's wanted."

The two juniors quickly presented themselves at Mr. Railton's study.

The Housemaster was looking very grave.

"Come in!" he said. "Dr. Holmes has had a telegram from Eastwood, and it seems that D'Arcy minor is there, and refuses to return to school with his elder brother."

Tom Merry suppressed a grin. He was not in the least surprised to hear that.

"It is necessary to send for him," resumed Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy major is probably lacking in sufficient force of character to impress his younger brother with the necessity of immediately returning to the school. It is necessary to send for him. For reasons I need not enter into, I have decided not to send a master or a prefect, as I think the matter could be satisfactorily attended to by you two juniors, if you are willing to undertake it."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "In the first place, whoever goes to Eastwood will have to remain the night there. Can you rely upon being acceptable guests at D'Arcy's house for the night? I understand so."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Blake. "Gussy will be glad to do



A SALT and BATTERY CASE!



the hospitable host; besides, Lord Eastwood asked us never to go near his place without calling in, if we had time. He's a jolly good sort—I mean, his lordship is a gentleman I respect very much, sir."

"Then you might make it a point to speak of him a little more respectfully," suggested Mr. Railton. "Very well, you will go to Eastwood to-day, and bring D'Arcy minor back by the first train in the morning. You can wire from the village before starting, to let D'Arcy major know that you are coming."

Tom Merry's eyes danced, and Blake's eyes were dancing, too. This little excursion was very welcome to both of them. And the probability that Wally would lead them a dance before they captured him made it all the more exciting.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "We shall be very glad to go, sir."

"Yes, rather."

"You will bring D'Arcy minor back with you—if possible. If he absolutely refuses to come, it will not be advisable for you to use violence. You will merely take every care that he does not escape from you, and will wire me. Then I shall come myself and fetch him. If this course can be avoided, however, you will, of course, understand that I am very anxious to avoid it."

"Yes, sir; I think we shall be able to persuade him to come."

"Then you may start as soon as you like, my boys, and good luck!"

And the Housemaster shook hands with the two juniors and dismissed them.

Safe out in the passage, Blake threw his arms round Tom Merry's neck and hugged him ecstatically. Tom Merry grasped Blake and waltzed him down the passage.

"Hurrah!" gasped Blake.

"Hip, hip, pip!"

Mr. Selby's door opened, and the juniors waltzed into the master of the Third as he came out. The master of the Third gasped, and sat down suddenly on the mat. Blake and Tom Merry gasped, too, and cut off like lightning down the passage before the astounded master of the Third had time to look about him.

Mr. Selby staggered to his feet.

"Who—who were those boys?" he gasped. "The—the young villains! They were evidently lying in wait for me. I wish I had recognised them."

Blake and Tom Merry did not pause until they were in the Junior Common-room. There they sank down into seats, roaring with laughter.

"My only hat!" gurgled Blake. "That chap has a special gift for coming out of doors at awkward moments, I believe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the cackle about?" asked Digby, coming up with Herries. "And what did Railton want you for?"

"The cackle," said Blake, "is because Mr. Selby came out into the passage while I was waltzing with Tom Merry, and he got waltzed over on his mat. Why Mr. Railton sent for us was in this wise. He is a man of experience and observation—"

"What on earth has that got to do with it?"

"Patience, my son. He is a man of experience and observation, and, therefore, he knew that in a matter of this sort—"

"A matter of what sort?"

"Young Wally's bunking. He knew that in a matter of this sort there was only one fellow at St. Jim's quite up to dealing with it, and so he sent for me."

"Gammon!"

"Fact, my hopeful son. I am to go and look for young Wally, and bring him back by the scruff of the neck, and Tom Merry is to come and help me."

"Is that right, Merry?"

"Not quite. I am to go and fetch young Wally, and Blake is to come and help me."

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Now, be sensible, Blake. We've got to bring this thing to a success, or else Mr. Railton will never have confidence in us again, and so I really think you ought to drop this rot about being leader—"

"You ought to drop your rot about—"

"Better get me to come with you," said Digby. "While you're quarrelling over the giddy leadership, I can look after young Wally."

"Can't be did. Only us two have leave," said Blake. "And we're not going to quarrel over the leadership, either. Tom Merry will have sense enough to—"

"Blake will have sense enough to—"

"I'd better come," said Herries decidedly. "I'll bring my bulldog Towser. You know what a terror he is for following a track. Young Wally will very likely dodge you

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chaps, and you'll have to track him down. Towser is what you want."

"Can't be did, my son. I'd like both of you to come, but Railton doesn't seem to see it. As for Towser, he couldn't track down anything—but a kipper or another tripehound. Better get your things on, Merry; we've got to get to the station."

"Right you are, Blake. Don't be late."

"I'm not likely to be late when I'm leading this expedition."

"And don't talk such piffle, either."

"If you want a thick ear, Tom Merry—"

"That's right," said Herries. "Start with giving each other thick ears. Fat lot of use you are to go and look for Wally! Blessed if I know why Railton didn't ask me!"



"Extra special, sir?" said the newsboy. "Latest news. Star Arthur Augustus turned his monocle towards the newsboy in an effort to see what was going on." For the I

"Or me," said Digby. "Rather thoughtless of Railton, I must say."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry and Blake simultaneously; and they hurried off to prepare for the journey.

CHAPTER 9.

In London.

WALLY chuckled as he stepped into the train at Easthorpe.

He had walked there from the mansion of Lord Eastwood, and there had been no sign of pursuit. Had Arthur Augustus been aware of his flight he would undoubtedly have followed in a vehicle and overtaken the fugitive on the road.

It was clear, therefore, that D'Arcy major had no suspicion that Wally was gone. A circumstance that Wally found very amusing. He could picture to himself what

Arthur Augustus would look like when he peered into the room and found the bird flown.

Wally had taken a third-class ticket, with the idea of being economical. He meant to get to London, and he had none too large a supply of cash for the purpose.

What he would do in London he did not know very clearly. But the dominant idea was to escape capture and forcible return to St. Jim's. He was pretty certain that he could find something to do if he set his wits to work.

It was a long journey to London. The evening was well advanced when the train entered into the radius of the fog and noise of the great city. Wally, in spite of his nerve, was just a little scared, but he did not admit it to himself.



disappearance of a junior belonging to St. Jim's!" "What?"
 ant. Then, as he fairly caught sight of his features, he jumped.
 s Wally!

He had made up his mind that he would not go back to St. Jim's till he could make some kind of terms. It was, as his brother would have put it, a question of "dig" with him.

He came out of the station and looked about him. The glare and the blare of London was all about him now. A youth, in extremely ragged attire, wearing what had once been a man's morning coat, mercilessly sheared down to make it fit better to the figure of a boy of fourteen, shoved an evening paper under his nose.

"Piper, sir?"

"Eh?" said Wally.

"Piper, sir? Latest news, sir!"

"Paper? Oh, thanks!" said Wally, rather confusedly, taking the paper.

The newsboy stared at him. He was a diminutive but wiry lad. His face was extremely dirty, but plump and good-natured, and there was a merry twinkle in his eyes.

"Hain't you forgotten something, sir?" he said sarcastically.

"Really, I don't know," said Wally. "What do you mean?"

"I hain't giving them pipers away," explained the newsboy.

Wally turned red. In his confusion at this sudden entry into the whirl and glare of London, he hardly knew what he was doing, and he had omitted the rather important detail of paying for the paper.

"I am sorry," he said hastily, and felt in his pockets.

He had parted with his last change for chocolates at one of the stations, and had nothing left but the second of the pound notes his brother had lent him at St. Jim's. He withdrew it from his jacket pocket.

"Can you change this for me?" he asked.

The newsboy burst into a roar.

"Oh, my heye!"

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Wally indignantly. "It's a good one. If you're looking for a thick ear you have only got to say so."

"Eh? A thick ear?" said the newsboy. "Do you think you can give me one? If you can you shall have that piper for nothing."

"I'll jolly soon show you!" retorted Wally, all his combative instincts roused.

He put the pound note back into his pocket again, and put up his fists.

The newsboy laid down his pile of papers, and followed his example.

"A thick ear!" he murmured. "A young swell like you give 'Arry 'Arding a thick ear! My 'at! Ho, ho! Kim on!"

Wally came on, and started with a right-hander that came clear through 'Arry 'Arding's guard, and caught him under the nose. 'Arry sat down with startling suddenness.

"My 'at!" he gasped.

He jumped up again in a moment, however, and the combat would have been renewed, but a stalwart form in blue came striding along. 'Arry 'Arding promptly picked up his papers and fled, and his voice died away in the rumble of the traffic.

"Pipers! Pipers!"

Wally looked about him. He was rather surprised at the sudden departure of his foe, but relieved at the same time, for on second thoughts he did not like the idea of a fight with a ragamuffin in the glare of a lighted street.

He turned away, and was leaving the spot, when he felt a touch on his arm. He looked round, and beheld a rather flashily-dressed young man, with a rose in his coat and a ring on his finger, and a rather expansive smile upon his face.

"Blessed if I didn't think it was you, Frank!" exclaimed the young man.

"Who are you?" asked Wally.

The young man looked astonished.

"Oh, come, don't you recognise me?" he exclaimed. "You surely remember Tom Melville?"

Wally shook his head. The young man's manner was so friendly and cordial, and Wally was feeling so lonely and oppressed by the bigness and noise of the City he found himself in, that he really wished for a moment that his name was Frank, and that he was the friend of whom Tom Melville was evidently in search.

"Then, if you're not Frank you're his living image," declared Mr. Melville. "You must be a relation, at all events. What is your name, then?"

"Walter D'Arcy."

"D'Arcy! I know the name well, too."

"I'm from St. Jim's," explained Wally.

"Ah, yes, of course—from St. Jim's!" assented Mr. Melville, though a keen observer might have divined from his look that he hadn't the faintest idea what or where St. Jim's was.

"Do you know the school?" asked Wally eagerly.

A light seemed to break upon Mr. Melville.

"Know the school?" he exclaimed. "Well, I should say so! It's very curious—very curious indeed! Do you know young Frank Wainwright, at the same school?"

"No," said Wally. "What Form is he in?"

"I—I don't quite remember," said Mr. Melville. "But he's there right enough—a chap about your own age, and remarkably like you."

"Can't say I've seen him," said Wally. "Still, I'm only a new boy there. I haven't been at St. Jim's long."

"Ah, that accounts for it!" said Mr. Melville. "Frank has been away from school for a few weeks on a visit home, on account of his father being ill. Fancy my mistaking you for him! Curious, isn't it?"

"Very curious," said Wally.

"And you're up in town to see the sights, I suppose?" said

Mr. Melville, who was now walking beside the junior. "A holiday, I suppose?"

"Well, in a way," said Wally hesitatingly.

"Got relations here, of course?"

"Oh, yes; but—but they're away now, and I'm not going to the governor's house," said Wally. "I—if you could tell me some cheap and decent place where I could get a bed to-night, and a breakfast to-morrow morning, I should be awfully obliged."

Mr. Melville slapped him heartily on the shoulder.

"Lucky I met you!" he exclaimed. "You shall come home with me; I am staying close by here. You know the Hotel Pompon, of course?"

"No, no; I don't think I've heard of it," said Wally, hesitatingly, hardly liking to confess his ignorance to this dashing young man, who evidently knew London inside out, and was a townsman to the finger-tips. "I—you see—"

"Good! Then come with me, and I'll show you the place. You're going to be my guest for to-night," said Mr. Melville. "I insist upon that. Bless me, if it doesn't seem just like having young Frank with me!"

"I—I don't think—"

"Now, I insist," said Mr. Melville. "For one night, at least, you shall be my guest, and if you find the Hotel Pompon too expensive for you I'll help you to find new quarters to-morrow. Now, you can't refuse me."

"You're awfully good!" said Wally gratefully. "It's—it's so queer, arriving in London after dark, and all alone, and—and—"

"Yes, I dare say you feel a bit lost in our little village," said Mr. Melville genially. "That will go off in the daylight, you know. I'll show you round. I regard you as my guest. But come along; dinner is about the mark for you. You can do with some dinner, I suppose?"

Wally grinned.

"Well, yes; I've had a long journey. But really—"

"I repeat that you're my guest," said the hospitable Mr. Melville. "Any fellow from Frankie's old school is my friend. Take my arm, and I'll soon see you across the road. It's a bit thick here. Don't get under the motor-bus, and I'd advise you not to walk into that taxi. Here we are!"

Mr. Melville led the way, chatting pleasantly.

Wally was greatly relieved at having found so soon a friend in the maze of London. He had nerve enough, but the hugeness of the place, and the glare and the noise of it, and the stony indifference to himself expressed in the faces of the passers-by, had begun to scare him. The cheery and chatty Mr. Melville came like a plank to a drowning man.

"This way," said Mr. Melville. "The Hotel Pompon is a first-class show—really first chop—but it's quiet. That's its great advantage; it's quiet and retired. You would hardly guess what a ripping place it was from the streets you go through to get to it. Do you know Soho at all?"

"I—I don't think I have ever been there."

"Good! Of course, we're not going anywhere near Soho. I suppose you've been playing a lot of cricket lately at St. Jim's?" said Mr. Melville, changing the subject.

Wally stared at his new friend.

"Cricket in November!" he ejaculated.

"H'm! I mean—er—football," said Mr. Melville. "I should, of course, have said football. You play a lot of that, don't you?"

"Yes, rather!" said Wally. "We're thinking of getting up a Third Form team—I'm in the Third, you know—and challenging the Fourth. It would be ripping fun to give Blake and Figgins and their crowd the kybosh."

"By Jove, I should say so!" exclaimed Mr. Melville heartily. "I—oh!"

They had entered a narrow and obscure street, a considerable distance from their starting-point. How far they had gone, or where they were, Wally had not the faintest idea. Mr. Melville suddenly slipped on the greasy pavement, and caught hold of Wally to save himself. The sudden pull brought Wally to the ground. Mr. Melville struggled to his feet, and helped Wally up, with profuse apologies.

"Clumsy of me!" he exclaimed. "I suppose it was a piece of orange-peel. Shocking careless habit to throw orange-peel about on the pavements—don't you think so?"

"Yes," gasped Wally, who was looking and feeling rather dazed.

"Wait here a second for me," said Mr. Melville. "Don't stir from this spot, or you may get lost. I'll rejoin you in a moment."

He disappeared round the corner, without vouchsafing any explanation.

Wally stood still and gazed after him. He was very much surprised, and still aching a little from his fall. Mr. Melville had promised to rejoin him in a moment, but five minutes elapsed and he did not return. A feeling of un-

casiness grew up in Wally's breast. The conduct of his new friend was absolutely inexplicable, unless—

Was it a joke, played upon a youth from the country by a practical joker? It would have been a cruel and unfeeling one, and Mr. Melville had looked so good-natured. Wally looked round the corner for him. A dimly lighted, dirty street was all that met his view; there was no sign of Mr. Melville.

But Wally made a discovery just then—his watch-chain was hanging loose. He felt it in quick alarm—the watch was gone. And as, with sudden terror, he dived his hand into his pocket to feel for his pound-note, he found that that was gone, too. And Mr. Melville had disappeared.

The truth was clear enough to Wally now; and, in spite of his courage, the tears of vexation and dismay forced themselves into his eyes.

CHAPTER 10.

Stolen Away!

TOM MERRY and Blake hurried to the station and caught the train that bore them swiftly away to Wayland, where they changed for Winchester.

In the dim November evening they alighted at that beautiful old city, and took the local train to Eastthorpe.

The evening was growing old when they rang at the door of Eastwood House.

Arthur Augustus met them when they entered, in amazement.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I'm glad to see you! But fancy meetin' you here!" he exclaimed.

"We were going to wire from Rylcombe," said Tom Merry. "Sorry, but we stopped to cuff Mellish en route for smoking, so had no time. We've come for young Wally. Mr. Railton sent us."

"You must be hungwy, deah boys."

"Well, just a little peckish," grinned Blake. "No objection to refreshments, especially if there's plenty of them and they're good quality."

"You can wely upon me to do you down in good style," said D'Arcy. "I am weally pleased to see you, as I was gwowin' vevy puzzled what to do with Wally. Walkah!"

"Yes, Master Augustus."

"Pway have a wippin' suppah pprepared as quickly as poss for my fwiends in my woom upstairs. You will have to stay all night, of course, deah boys, and, if you like, I will have two extwa beds shoved into my woom, and we can all be togethah."

"Ripping!" said Tom Merry.

"By the way, where is Wally?" inquired Blake, as they accompanied Arthur Augustus up the broad staircase.

"Oh, he's in his woom, and he's sulkin'!" said D'Arcy. "He wefuses to speak, though I have called to him several times, and I have promised to intercede for him to the Head if he will accompany me quietly to St. Jim's. He is a wathah obstinate young wascal, you know."

The swell of St. Jim's stopped outside Wally's door and tapped.

"You may as well tell him you're here, you know," he remarked.

Blake thumped on the door.

"Hallo, in there, you young scallawag!"

There was no reply.

"Is the door locked on the inside?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, no. Walkah locked it on the outside and took away the key," said Arthur Augustus. "It was wathah a cheek on his part, but it was weally the only way of secuin' that obstwepewous young wascal of a bwothah of mine."

Blake thumped on the door again.

"Why don't you answer?" he shouted. "Are you anxious for me to come in and give you a prize thick ear?"

Still silence from Wally's room.

"Oh, come on!" said D'Arcy. "We'll attend to him aftah suppah. You fellows must be feahfully hungwy. I'm jolly glad to see you, deah boys! There's a fire in my pwivate sitting-woom, and we shall be vevy comfy there."

D'Arcy was right. They were very comfortable in his room, with a bright fire and a well-laid table. The feast was excellent, and it was plentiful, and the juniors from St. Jim's did it full justice.

"My hat!" said Blake, as the supper drew towards its end. "I rather think I approve of young Wally bunking at times. This beats supper in the School House hollow!"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Rather!" agreed Tom Merry. "Gustavus, my son, I drink your health." And he raised his coffee-cup to his lips. "May you live a thousand years, and may your shadow never grow whiskers!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake heartily.

"Weally, my deah boys, I weturn the sentiment," said D'Arcy, beaming across the table through his monocle. "I wegard this as a vevy happy occasion, when I have the pleasuah of entahtainin' two such esteemed fwriends undah the family woof."

"Good old Gussy! I wish your paternal home were nearer St. Jim's. I'd drop in here for supper every night," said Blake regretfully. "Now, Tom Merry, when you've finished we'll go and interview young Wally. You'd better ask Pooh-Bah for the key, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gussy obtained the key from Mr. Walker, whom Blake had disrespectfully alluded to as "Pooh-Bah," and the three juniors stepped over to Wally's door.

Mr. Walker watched them curiously. He wanted to see the effect of the long imprisonment on Wally, and he rather expected it to take the form of a violent assault upon the juniors of St. Jim's as soon as the door was opened. Mr. Walker kept well back out of the way, prepared to watch the scene of expected violence not without relish.

D'Arcy unlocked the door and threw it open. The room within was quite dark. The juniors looked into the gloomy interior.

"My hat!" said Blake. "Obstinate young beggar to stick it out so long. Why hasn't he a light, though?"

"Pewwaps he is westim'! Walkah, pway switch on the light!"

Mr. Walkah advanced rather gingerly into the room and obeyed D'Arcy's orders. The juniors looked round in the light, but there was no sign of Wally.

"Where is the young bounder?" growled Blake.

"My word! What hexpressions!" murmured Mr. Walker.

"He's not here," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus looked round the room in a bewildered way.

"Bai Jove, he appears to have gone!" he remarked. "But it's imposs, you know. He was locked up here, and the door hasn't been opened since."

"The window's open!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry ran to the window. The rope of twisted sheets and the blankets was still fluttering against the ivy. It was pretty plain which way Wally had gone.

"Stolen away!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Done!"

That was what Wally muttered to himself when the first shock was over. He had been done—hopelessly done.

The kind and obliging Mr. Melville, with his stories about an acquaintance at St. Jim's, was a humbug, and the Hotel Pompon existed only in his fertile imagination. He had led Wally to that obscure, dark street for the sake of picking his pockets with ease and safety, and he had done so.

Wally, who had prided himself on being the cutest card in the Third Form at St. Jim's, had been taken in as easily as the veriest country yokel.

Wally's eyes were wet for a moment; but they were gleaming now. He would have given a dozen watches and pound-notes if he had had them, to stand in front of Mr. Melville at that moment, and treat him to one of the Wally left-handers that were famous in the Third Form at St. Jim's.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally. "Where am I? What place has the beast taken me to? And how am I to get on without any tin?"

In the murky gloom of the November night the lost junior looked about him.

A ragged lad came whistling round the corner, and almost ran into Wally.

"Want all the pavement?" he asked politely. "My 'at, if it isn't young Nibs again!"

Wally recognised the newsboy with whom he had begun a combat before his meeting with the kind Mr. Melville.

"Young Nibs!" said 'Arry 'Arding. "Lor' fancy meeting you!"

Wally regarded him doubtfully, not quite knowing whether to recommence the combat or to ask the youth to direct him to a more lighted quarter. The newsboy, on his side, was looking at the junior with equal curiosity.

"Whatcher doing down 'ere?" he asked. "This ain't the place for your Nibs. You'll get your ticker bagged. Whatcher doing 'ere?"

"I—I have lost my way," stammered Wally. "Can you tell me the way to—Charing Cross Station?"

'Arry 'Arding whistled.

"Well, I could," he remarked.

"Then do," said Wally. "I've lost my way. I've been

robbed. A chap was going to—show me to an hotel, and he picked my pockets and left me here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally glared at the youth in angry indignation. He could not see anything to laugh at in his misfortune, but 'Arry apparently found a comical side to it.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Wally. "If you want a hiding, I—"

"Oh lor'! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"He, he, he!"

"You confounded, cheeky young rascal—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

Wally put up his fists, and advanced upon the newsboy, who seemed to be almost in a paroxysm of merriment.

'Arry backed away, still shrieking with laughter.

"Old on," he gasped—"old on, Nibs! No offence. But it's funny. Ha, ha, ha! Fancy being took in by a trick like that! Where were you born? He, he, he! But, of course, you couldn't help it—a kid fresh up from country. He, he, he! I'm sorry for you!"

Wally only glared. The knowing hand of the Third Form at St. Jim's did not like to be taken for a "kid from the country," but he realised that he must appear in that light to the experienced 'Arry 'Arding.

"It's all right," gasped 'Arry, controlling his merriment at last. "I'm sorry for yer. I'll help yer. I'll show you the way home, if you like. Where do you live?"

Wally hesitated. He did not care to take favours from a stranger, especially a stranger who had laughed so mercilessly at his misfortune. But there was something rather taking about 'Arry 'Arding, and his offer was very good-natured.

"Come on!" said 'Arry. "I ain't in a 'urry to get 'ome. I'll see yer safe. Where do yer live, my lord?"

"I—I can't go home," said Wally, colouring. "My people are away, for one thing, and I have other reasons, too. I—I am staying in London by myself."

'Arry stared at him blankly.

"You—you're staying in London by yourself?"

"Yes," said Wally, rather defiantly. "Why not?"

"He, he, he!" roared 'Arry. "Ho, ho, ho!"

"Look here!" broke out Wally angrily. "I don't want any more of your cackle! I can look out for myself without your help."

And he swung round angrily, and walked away.

The ragged youth stared after him, still laughing, and then called out:

"Old on! There ain't no way out that end!"

Wally coloured. He discerned, after a dozen steps, that the narrow street ended at a huge building, which looked like a warehouse. He turned back. 'Arry, too, seemed to have his merriment in check at last, and grinned at him in a friendly way.

"It's all right," he said. "Don't mind me larfin'! You see, you ain't the sort to live in London on your own. My 'at! You ain't got no money?"

"No; I told you I had my pocket picked."

"Anything you can pop?"

"Pop!" said Wally, looking at him. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, my 'at! 'E's going to live in London, and 'e don't know what pop means!" shrieked 'Arry. "I mean, anything you can lend to your uncle, you know—Uncle Moses—three brass balls—to the spout, you know!"

"Oh, you mean to pawn!" said Wally. "No. My watch was taken by that scoundrel, and I haven't anything else of any value."

"My 'at! Then what are you going to do if I guide you to Charing Cross?"

"I—I don't know."

"You can't stay out all night; it's going to rain."

"I suppose it can't be helped."

"Yes, it can. It's 'ard on you. You know, I suppose that downy bloke saw you offer me a note to change for the piper, and he spotted you," said 'Arry. "You shouldn't show your wealth in the street, you know."

"I didn't think of that."

"Think of it next time, my pippin," said 'Arry, with a paternal air. "But, just now, what are you going to do?"

"Oh, I shall manage all right, if I get out of this hole!"


(Continued on page 19.)

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HALLO, chums! Have you finished this week's school story of Tom Merry & Co.? Great, isn't it? The same applies to next Wednesday's grand long complete story by Martin Clifford. In

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you will find the ideal mixture of fun and adventure and healthy entertainment. For thrills you can't do better than read

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That's good advice, for there is a run on this famous book. As most of you know it contains ripping stories of Tom Merry & Co., Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, besides stirring stories of adventure on land and sea and in the air. Poems, hundreds of pictures, gorgeous colour and photogravure plates give this annual a quality that cannot be equalled elsewhere for the bargain price of six shillings. If you desire it, you can purchase a copy of the "Holiday Annual" through your newsagent's Christmas Club. Ask him about it.

THE MOON ROCKET.

Scientists recently were on tip-toe to learn the results of the very special rocket which had been designed by Dr. Winkler to reach the moon. A great number of them were present on the great day the rocket was "fired." But all this rocket did was to leap about two yards in the air and then hurtle along the sand dunes of Danzig Bay like a giant jumping cracker. Fifteen minutes of these dangerous capers saw the good doctor and his pals snugly ensconced in a dug-out. Suddenly the leaping, blazing mass of metal came straight for the dug-out. Fortunately it stopped a few yards away, spluttered dangerously, gave out one terrific blast which could be heard for a mile away or more, and then burst into a mass of splintered steel. Dr. Winkler was not dismayed. He declared that he "had learned something." So have I, namely, keep well clear of any similar rocket!

A REAL SAFETY-PIN.

How would you like to swallow a large safety-pin and then ride a galloping race-horse? Not much! I agree. But an

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experience like this befell Bernard Carslake the famous jockey, the other day. While changing his colours he swallowed his scarf safety-pin. But that didn't seem to worry him overmuch. He rode out his engagement in the next race and, furthermore, galloped into second place. The length of that safety-pin? Two-and-half inches! But don't you try swallowing one—not even half that length!

"FIRE! FIRE!"

He was an average type of young man; and suddenly he saw flames shooting out from a lonely house. Promptly he ran to the nearest telephone box, wherein had just been installed the very latest type of fire alarm. He pulled the necessary lever and—bang!—the door of the telephone box slammed shut! And there this Good Samaritan had to wait until the fire brigade arrived and set him free! The big idea behind this latest invention is to prevent practical jokers from giving a false alarm and then bolting. But, all the same for that, it's a bit hard on the hundred per cent citizen who wants to do the right thing at the right moment. Supposing the fire brigade didn't come along! There's another invention, too, to put a stop to the hoaxer who gives a false alarm. This one takes the form of an innocent-looking alarm box which invites the good citizen to thrust his hand into a certain opening and turn the dial. But, alas, the moment he has done that the bottom of the box falls out and completely handcuffs him. There he must remain until the fire brigade arrives to free him. An ingenious stunt. But what if a pickpocket is lurking near at hand? What a chance he would have of lifting the imprisoned fellow's valuables and making off! Neither of these inventions—at the moment—have been adopted by the authorities. Do we say "thank goodness"? I do, at any rate.

HEARD THIS ONE?

"Now, Billy," said mother, with a beaming smile, "sit down and tell me a story."

"I can't, mother. I've just told father one."

THIS WEEK'S STRANGE TALE.

Biff! The stone crashed against the window of a Croydon chapel and soon reduced that window to a state of splinters. And the boy who threw the stone promptly

made himself scarce as boys will in such circumstances. But this little par really starts eighty years ago, for that was when this incident happened. Now, after all that time, the thrower of the stone has sent the minister of the chapel a postal order to cover the damage he did!

A REPLY TO "PILOT" SHEFFIELD.

He asks: "Who was the famous French flying ace who was said to have a charmed life?" Georges Guynemer will fill the bill. His record shows that he brought down fifty-three German machines during the days of the Great War, and his hair-breadth escapes from death reached very nearly a similar total. One of the most interesting of them was when he was engaged in a dog fight and an enemy bullet went clean through his engine, his fuel tank, and finally came to rest in his gloved hand between his fingers!

FILM FAKES!

Crash! The big three-engined air liner rushed into view through a cloud of whirling snow and pushed its nose slap bang into a landscape of ice, overturned and promptly burst into flames. At the cabin windows of the plane you could see human beings tossed hither and thither at the moment of impact, and you realised then that the cameraman had given you a really first-class thrill. Perhaps you thought of the unfortunates who were in that burning plane. And for all you know to the contrary there were no human beings! Film-faking to-day has reached such a pitch of perfection that where a realistic air crash is required, which on the face of things means certain death for anyone in the doomed plane, the experts have devised a method which will supply all the genuine thrill and realism without endangering human life. It takes the form of model aeroplanes, model landscapes and miniature figures representing human beings. So cunningly is the deception worked that the average film-goer will never know but that he is looking at the genuine article. These model planes, perfect to the minutest detail, are worked by an expert who sits above the set in a travelling cradle. His job is to work the controls of the model plane. This he does by means of a multiplicity of strings which are invisible to the camera. Crashes of every description can be photographed by this means in the studio itself, but this film-faking—which is admirable in every way—taxes the patience of everyone concerned in it. One little slip and the whole effect is spoiled. Next time you see an aerial film, where big thrills are frequent, ask yourself whether it is a genuine full-sized plane that you see crashing or a model. But short of seeing the actual film in the making I doubt whether you will ever be able to spot the difference!

THE MOVING LETTER BOX.

"I'm just going to post this letter. Hang on a moment." The Englishman in Strausberg made his pal sit up and take notice, so to speak, when he said that, for the first speaker rushed across to a tram which had just stopped and slipped his letter through an aperture in the side of the tram. "What's the idea?" asked his friend. "Oh, that's the new stunt they have got up to here, old chap. All the trams are fitted with these letter boxes. Jolly convenient, too!" We agree.

YOUR EDITOR,

WALLY THE RUNAWAY!

(Continued from page 17.)

said Wally, looking round him. "If you'll show me the way—"

"I could tell you, but you wouldn't find it, all the same. Look here! You ain't been gammonin'? It's all straight what you told me? You ain't got no friends, nor no money, and you're on your uppers?"

"I've told you the truth, if that's what you mean!" said Wally angrily.

"Keep your wool on," said 'Arry. "What I was going to say is, that if you're on the rocks, as you say, you kin come into my place for the night—if you like."

Wally looked at him thoughtfully. After his recent experience at the hands of Mr. Melville, he was naturally inclined to suspect any offer of hospitality from a stranger. But he reflected that he had nothing more to lose except the clothes he stood up in. And good-nature and honesty really seemed to beam from the unwashed face of 'Arry 'Arding.

"You—you are very kind," faltered Wally, "but—"

"But you don't want to come," grinned 'Arry. "All right, my son. Don't! You see, I've got only 'arf a room at Mother Taffy's, and it's small and dirty and smelly, and Tadger ain't a nice sort to doss with. It ain't a place for a young swell like you to get into if you had anything else. But it's starting to rain—"

Big drops were coming down through the chilly November mists. Wally had no coat with him, and he was very cold. He was likely to be drenched, too, if he did not soon obtain shelter. 'Arry's offer came just at the right time. To spend a cold, foggy November night on the Embankment was not an enticing prospect.

"You're very kind," he said. "But I haven't any money, and I can't pay for anything."

"Who's asking yer to pay for anything!" said 'Arry indignantly. "Ain't I offering to take you in for nothing, young Nibs?"

"Thank you. If it won't put you out at all—"

"Well, I dare say it will a bit," said 'Arry calmly; "but I'm willing to stand it. Now, are yer coming?"

"Yes," said Wally, "and thank you very much. Do you live far from here?"

"Only round the corner," said 'Arry. "Keep close to me."

The newsboy turned into a narrow court, in the rugged pavement of which the rain was already collecting in puddles. A dim lamp flickered fitfully over the squalid place. At a door, sitting on a dirty stone step, was a youth of about 'Arry's age, but bigger and much less amiable-looking. He was eating fried fish from his cap. His fingers served as implements, and his cap was his only dish. There was not even a sheet of paper under the greasy, strong-smelling fish. It was evident that the youth was not fastidiously particular in his diet. 'Arry stopped and nodded to the youth with the fried fish.

"Allo, Tadger!" he said. "Ow many did you have left?"

"Didn't 'ave any!" grunted Tadger.

"I didn't, neither," said 'Arry. "Let's kim in, Tadger. I can't walk over you, you know. Leastways, I could, but you wouldn't like it."

Tadger grunted again, and moved a little aside. He stared blankly at Wally as he followed 'Arry into the house.

"Crumbs!" he gasped. "Who—who's that? What is it?"

"Friend of mine!" said 'Arry severely. "I dessay you didn't know I 'ad friends among the haristocracy, Tadger. You just let 'im alone!"

"My heye!" gasped Tadger.

Wally coloured as he followed 'Arry. He saw that his presence in the little court was likely to create a sensation among 'Arry's friends and acquaintances. Tadger stared after him, and broke into many a chuckle as he went on with his savoury supper.

CHAPTER 11.

'Arry's Quarters.

"THIS way!" said 'Arry. A narrow passage, with a floor bare save for the accumulation of many years' dirt, led to a narrow, unlighted staircase. The darkness was intense. From somewhere below, on the right hand, came a glimmer of light and a smell of supper, and the sound of a child crying.

"Gimme yer 'and!" said 'Arry. "Mind the third step, too—it's rocky."

The boy grasped Wally's hand in the darkness. Wally

was glad enough of his guidance. He could not see an inch before him, and when he felt for the handrail he found it so shaky that it rather increased than diminished the danger. The third step was indeed "rocky," and Wally would have lost his footing there but for the grasp of 'Arry's hand. But the strong grip of his new friend drew him on. They came out on a landing, where the door was open and allowed the light to escap' from a room.

'Arry stopped and looked in, and Wally stopped, too. A candle was burning, sagging sideways in a filthy bottle which took the place of a candlestick. The grease was dropping in chunks, and accumulating in a little heap on the floor. Within a foot of the burning candle a man was stretched on the ragged carpet, asleep. His red face, his stertorous breathing, and the horrible odour of intoxicating liquor that pervaded the place, showed the cause of his heavy slumber. "Hallo! Uncle's been at it again!" said 'Arry cheerfully.

"Wait 'arf a mo', Nibs!" Wally waited. He shuddered at what he saw. Nothing like this had ever come into his experience before. The smooth current of his life had flowed on far from such scenes as this. It was like a glimpse of the underworld, and a scene from a horrible nightmare, only this was grim reality!

There was no sign about 'Arry of his being shocked at what he saw. He had lived all his life in such scenes. To him they were the most natural in the world. Wally watched him curiously.

'Arry entered the room, set the candle upright in the bottle, and fixed it there, and removed it to a safe distance from the intoxicated man, setting it upon the mantelpiece. Then he shifted the sleeper into a more comfortable position, loosening his dirty neckcloth, and placed a folded coat under his head by way of pillow.

The steadier breathing of the man showed how much more comfortable he was, even in his brutal insensibility.

'Arry grinned as he rejoined Wally. "Uncle's been regular at it!" he said. "I suppose he's picked up something to-day and 'ad a rare old time!"

"Is he your uncle?" faltered Wally. "He, he! No. Everybody calls him uncle—dunno why. Come on; my room is at the top."

Up further weary flights of narrow, creaking stairs the newsboy led his companion. They reached the final landing at last. All the way up 'Arry's hand had firmly grasped Wally's, or the junior from St. Jim's would certainly have come to grief.

The newsboy halted at last. "Ere we are!" he said cheerily.

He let go Wally's hand and struck a match on his boot. The dim flicker showed a small landing, with two doorways opening from it. Literally doorways, for there were no doors to them. The doors had probably been there once, and had perhaps been used for fuel in some hard winter. 'Arry led the way into one of the rooms. There were two beds in it—little iron beds in the last stage of decrepitude, covered with a variety of things for bedclothes, among which sheets and blankets were conspicuous by their absence.

The bedclothes were of such a curious description that Wally did not know whether the beds were made or not.

"This 'ere is my bed," said 'Arry. "Rather a close fit for two, ain't it? But it's bigger than Tadger's."

"Does that chap sleep in here?" asked Wally, repressing a shudder as he remembered the fried fish in the cap.

"Yes; that's 'is bed. I say, this ain't much of a place for you," said 'Arry, "only it's out of the rain, you see."

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Wally. "Do you always live here?"

"I ain't 'ad this room long," said 'Arry, with a certain pride visible in his manner. "I used to doss on doorsteps, you know, but Tadger and mo' 'as been doin' well lately, and we jawed it over, and we reckoned we could stand the 'arf-crown a week atween us, you see."

"Tadger's rather a pig, you know but, bless you, I couldn't afford the room to myself. Maybe later. It ain't such an uncomfy room, either. The rain only comes in at one corner 'cept when it's very heavy. The winder's all right since I glued them newspapers over it. Think you can sleep here?"

"Of course!" said Wally.

His surroundings were unpleasant enough to the junior from St. Jim's, but he would not have shown that feeling about them for worlds, in the face of the kindness of his host. Besides, unpleasant or not, the room was certainly better than the open air on a rainy, foggy night. And the sense of adventure—the feeling of a daring explorer in unknown and dangerous regions—was rising in Wally's breast. He was beginning to enjoy the situation.

"Good!" said 'Arry, rather relieved. "Of course, I know

this ain't what you've been used to. I can tell that by your togs and the way you speak. You stick here, and I'll go down and get some supper, and bring it up 'ere. You couldn't go down into Mother Taffy's kitchen in them togs. They'd chivvy you."

'Arry left the room, and Wally sat down on the bed. He was tired and very hungry, and he felt that he could even have eaten some of the fried fish from Tadger's cap.

'Arry had lighted a candle set in a bottle—candlesticks seemed to be an unknown luxury at Mother Taffy's—and Wally looked round him in the flickering light. The possessions of his new friend seemed few enough. There was a small wooden box at the foot of the bed, and beside that, as far as Wally could see, no property whatever that might be 'Arry's.

The sound of footsteps on the creaking stairs made Wally look up, thinking it was 'Arry returning. But it was not his friend. It was the ill-humoured, lowering face of Tadger that looked into the room. He had his cap on his head now, so the fried fish was apparently all eaten.

He grinned unamiably at the sight of Wally.

"So you're 'ere," he said. "He, he, he!"

His laugh was ill-natured. But Wally, though usually quite ready—even too ready—for a row, resolved to be careful not to take offence. It would not do to have a row with 'Arry's friend in 'Arry's room.

"Can't yer speak, can't yer?" said Tadger aggressively.

"Yes," said Wally mildly, "I'm here."

"I see you are," said Tadger. "I see you're a-sittin' 'ere, a-turmin' up yer nose!"

"I'm not turning up my nose!" said Wally indignantly. "And I think you're a cad to say so!"

"Oh, I'm a cad, am I?" said Tadger, coming closer to Wally. "Wot's that? Suppose I chuck yer out the winder, eh?"

"Look here——"

"Cheeky young whelp!" said Tadger.

"I don't want to row with you——"

"Cheeky young whelp!" said Tadger, whose ideas and expressions seemed to be somewhat limited. "Cheeky young whelp! I'm a cad, am I?"

Wally made no reply, but his silence did not pacify Tadger. He had evidently taken deep and bitter offence at Wally's decent clothes and personal cleanliness, and he was not to be pacified.

"I'm a cad, am I?" he said. "Cheeky young whelp! Suppose I chuck yer out the winder?"

"Suppose you try it?" said 'Arry's voice from the door. "You'll go outer this room on your neck, Tadger, old man!"

Tadger turned round angrily as 'Arry entered.

"You couldn't put me out!" he snarled.

"Like me to try?" said 'Arry cheerfully.

Tadger made no reply, but began to take his boots off to go to bed.

'Arry had two plates placed face to face in his hands, with a couple of forks. He set down the underneath plate on the box, and removed the upper one. A really appetising smell proceeded from two large pieces of boiled fish.

Wally's eyes glistened; he was very hungry. 'Arry noted it, with a hospitable grin.

"That ain't all," he said, and he dived his hands into his pockets and brought out two large baked potatoes in their skins and a piece of paper in which a chunk of bread was wrapped. "Tain't so bad, eh?"

"Jolly good!" said Wally.

"I've got a fork each," said 'Arry. "'Ave you got a pocket-knife?"

"Yes; here you are."

"Good! I'm all right with a fork. I uses my fingers when I ain't got company," said 'Arry seriously. "You see, when I took these 'ere fashionable quarters, I forgot to lay in a proper supply of fish knives and forks. It was an oversight. What yer snorting about, Tadger?"

Tadger only grunted, and Wally laughed. The supper was rough-and-ready, but the junior from St. Jim's enjoyed it keenly. There was no sauce like hunger. The bread, the potatoes, and the fish disappeared in good time, and Wally felt decidedly better.

"I say, this is awfully ripping of you!" he said. "It was jolly lucky for me I met you, old man!"

"Come to think of it, it was," said 'Arry. "Though we started by punchin' one another's 'eads."

Wally coloured.

"I'm sorry!"

"Oh, that's all right! We'll try it over again some time," said 'Arry. "Not now. Are you ready for bed?"

"Yes; rather! I'm tired."

"Then we'll turn in."

CHAPTER 12.

Wally Takes Up a New Profession!

WHEN Wally awoke in the morning, the sun was glimmering in between the patches of glued newspaper on the window. He sat up in bed and looked around him.

He was feeling very much refreshed by his night's rest, which had been unbroken in spite of his strange quarters. Like a healthy lad, healthy in mind and body, he awoke in good spirits, ready to face the new day cheerfully.

For the moment he wondered where he was. By force of habit he expected to awake in a long, blue-walled dormitory at St. Jim's, with its row of high windows and white beds. But in a moment the happenings of the previous day came back to him.

The room, save for himself, was empty. Tadger's bed was unoccupied, and he was gone, and 'Arry was not to be seen. From below, through the doorless aperture, came the sounds of the busy life of the morning. Through the cracked window came the distant roar of London.

Wally yawned, and wondered where 'Arry was. He was still wondering when the ragged figure of his young friend came in.

"'Allo! Woke up?" said 'Arry cheerfully. "Thought I wouldn't call you. I've done a good bit this mornin'. I 'ad only two left!"

"Two what?" asked Wally.

"Pipers!"

"Oh, you have been selling papers this morning?"

"What do you think? Can't afford to let the grass grow under yer tootsies!" said 'Arry sagely. "I've done well, too. 'Ave you seen Tadger?"

"No; he was gone out when I woke up."

"Yes, he went out with me, but 'e said 'e would come back and 'ave you out of bed," explained 'Arry. "I warned 'im it would mean a thick ear for 'im, so I s'pose he thought better of it. Lucky for 'im! If you're ready to get up, we'll 'ave some breakfast. I'll just yell to Mother Taffy."

'Arry went out on the landing and shrieked something downstairs that was quite unintelligible to Wally. A female shriek from below answered him, and 'Arry came in again with a satisfied grin on his face—which, we regret to say, had been very hastily washed that morning, and still showed very plain traces of the previous day's dirt.

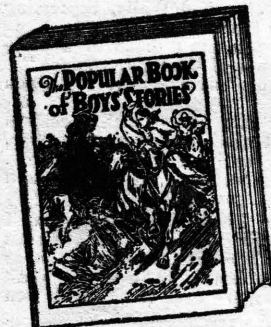
"It's kippers!" he said. "Do you like kippers?"

"Yes, rather! But, look here, I'm not going to sponge



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"I— Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Melville. He suddenly slipped on the greasy pavement and caught hold of Wally to save himself. As he fell the sneak-thief caught hold of Wally's watch-chain and in a moment the watch was in his hand!

on you," said Wally. "You've given me a supper and a bed, and I'm going to cut now."

'Arry put a hand on his shoulder as he was about to get up.

"You stay where you are," he said. "You can't begin a day without grub. I know that. I've 'ad to do it often enough, I know, but it takes it out of yer. You can't put any go into anything if you haven't had a solid meal to start with. I know that."

"I suppose so; but—"

"What yer going to do?" asked 'Arry. "Mind, I ain't prying. 'Tain't my business. But you said as 'ow you 'adn't any friends or nowhere to go. If that's the lay, what are you going to do? Kin I 'elp you?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Wally doubtfully. "Perhaps you might be able to give me some advice. I'm on my own in London. I don't know how it will end, but I suppose I must have grub 'o live on."

"You can't do without it, that's a dead cert," said 'Arry, from the fullness of his experience. "Going without grub makes you a lazy moocher, and when you get into that, it's 'ard to get out of it again."

"I've got to earn my living some way," said Wally.

'Arry seemed about to burst into a fresh paroxysm of the laughter which had so exasperated Wally the previous evening, but he controlled it.

"My 'at!" he said. "You earn your living? Why, I don't find it easy."

"I dare say I can do something," said Wally, a little nettled by the way in which 'Arry ranked his powers so frankly below his own.

"You're too young to make much use of your eddication," said 'Arry. "I dare say you can do French and Algebarer, and them things; but you ain't no chance of gettin' a job as a clerk or anything. You've got no character or experience.

And anybody can see that you're a kid fresh from school, especially in them togs. And you're too young, anyway. You might get in somewhere as an office-boy."

"Hum!" said Wally doubtfully.

"But I warn you it ain't likely," said 'Arry, "and you'd be weeks getting a job, too. And if you've got no tin, what yer going to live on?"

"That won't do, then."

"You might get taken on to mind a stall," said 'Arry. "A respectable-looking chap like you might get taken on for that—if you get some other clothes. But that can't be done in a 'arry, neither. If you'd like me to give you some advice—"

"I would, rather!" said Wally.

"Then chuck this, and go back to your friends," said 'Arry. "This ain't no place for you. You can't stick it. Better 'ook it at once!"

Wally's face set hard.

"I'm not going back," he said. "I can't go back!"

"Look here, you've run away from school—that's plain enough!" said 'Arry abruptly. "I s'pose it means a whacking when you go back. You don't look as if you was afraid of a whacking, though."

"I'm not!" said Wally. "It's not that. I was called a liar, and I was going to be caned for that, and it wasn't true. And I wouldn't stand it, and I won't—I won't go back. That's settled."

"Well, if that's settled, that settles it!" said 'Arry, without arguing further. "I only give you my advice, that's all. I like yer pluck, though. If you're going to stick it out I'll 'elp yer if I can. What can you do?"

Wally hardly knew how to answer. He could scrape through Latin and French exercises, and he could do things in arithmetic that would probably have made his ragged

friend stare. But he realised that these accomplishments would not help him now. This untaught, untrained lad sitting on the foot of his bed was far more fitted to fight the battle of life in the streets of London than the junior from St. Jim's.

'Arry chuckled.

"I suppose you can't do nothin' to earn money?" he remarked. "Cause why? You ain't been taught. You wasn't never born to 'ave to earn your living. You was born to 'ave other folk do things for you. But things turn out queer sometimes. I don't see what you can do, neither."

"Why shouldn't I sell papers like you?" said Wally, struck by a sudden brilliant thought.

'Arry stared at him and whistled.

"You? You couldn't do it!"

"Why couldn't I?"

"First of all, them togs—"

"I could change them."

"That's so; but it's a rough, scrambling sort of life—you don't know. You'd 'ave a dozen fights on your 'ands the first day."

Wally grinned at the anticipation.

"I don't mind that," he said. "I can look out for myself in that line. I wish I felt as sure of selling the papers."

"My 'at!" said 'Arry. "I don't see why you shouldn't try, anyway. If you made it pay, you and me could 'ave this room, and Tadger could shift. Then we could keep it clean, and 'ave a bed each, and be all right. It's not a bad idea. But it means a rough time for you."

"Oh, rats! I don't care for that!"

"If you mean it, I'll 'elp you start," said 'Arry. "In the first place, you'd 'ave to get some new toggery. They'd laugh, seein' a bloke in them togs sellin' pipers. I'll pop them, and get you some old togs in exchange. I kin manage that for you, if you really mean it."

"Of course I mean it!" answered Wally. "There's nothing else I can do, is there?"

"'Fraid not!" said 'Arry.

And Wally having removed a few articles from the pockets, 'Arry carried off the clothes in a bundle under his arm. Wally remained in bed, waiting for him to return. He reappeared in a quarter of an hour, with a fresh bundle under one arm and a couple of loaded plates in the other. The stairs at Mother Taffy's were not to be negotiated oftener than was strictly necessary, and 'Arry brought the breakfast up with him.

He set the plates down on the box.

"I got six bob on the things," he said. "That means that they were worth over a quid to Uncle Moses. Four bob went on new togs, and there's the other two and the ticket."

He unrolled the new parcel, and showed the purchases he had made. A shabby pair of trousers, somewhat too large, and a ragged waistcoat too small, and a jacket that had seen its best days long ago. They were not an attractive-looking set, but Wally glanced over them with satisfaction. They were what he needed for his new profession; he knew that. So long as they were clean, he did not feel inclined to grumble.

He was soon washed and dressed in the new habiliments provided by 'Arry. The change in his appearance wrought by the new garb was marvellous. Few would have recognised the junior of St. Jim's in that shabby, ragged attire.

"You'll do!" said 'Arry, eyeing him critically. "You'll do. Now 'ave your breakfast, and we'll go out, and I'll get the pipers for a start. This 'ere two bob will be all right to see you through."

And breakfast having been disposed of, the two boys left Mother Taffy's house and Snoop's Court, and made their way into the more open quarter of the great City, where, amid the roar of traffic, the scene of Wally's new labours lay.

CHAPTER 13.

On the Track of the Truant!

"HERE we are!" said Tom Merry.

Three youths stepped from the train at Waterloo Station in the November morning. Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had arrived in London in search of the missing junior.

After the discovery of Wally's departure from Eastwood, the juniors were at a loss. Inquiry at the railway station showed that Wally had taken a ticket for London, but it was too late for the pursuers to follow him that night. They had returned to Eastwood, and discussed the matter.

Arthur Augustus was determined to set out in chase of the truant by the first train in the morning, and Tom Merry and Blake felt that they had better go with him.

Arthur Augustus was certainly not likely to accomplish much alone. Both Tom Merry and Blake saw that clearly.

But they had been sent to fetch Wally home, and they were

not going home without him; that was what they were resolved upon.

"And a run up to London will be a lark," Blake observed.

To which Tom Merry agreed. To have such a "lark," and at the same time to be doing their duty to the school and the Head, was a chance not to be lost.

Their instructions from Mr. Railton had not provided this contingency. Whether he would have approved of this pursuit to London by three juniors was a question they did not trouble to ask themselves.

"We'll write to Railton and explain," said Tom Merry. "He won't get the letter till the second delivery in the morning, so it will be too late for him to wire us here. He really left the matter to our judgment, too."

"Yaas, wathah! And our judgment leads us to London," said D'Arcy.

"What a lark!" grinned Blake.

Tom Merry looked at him severely.

"Not a lark, Blake," he remarked. "When duty calls, you know. We are going to London in the morning, strictly from a sense of duty."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" said Blake. "I don't mind, so long as we go."

And they went. The earliest train bore them from the local station to Winchester, where they changed for the London express.

And now they were stepping out of Waterloo Station. They strolled out into the street with thoughtful expressions on their faces.

"Where shall we look for Wally first?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's no good goin' to my govannah's digs in Park Lane," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "The young wascal would be certain not to go there. I wathah think it would be a good ideah to have some lunch."

Tom Merry grinned at the idea of looking out for Wally in the busy crowds, numbering thousands, that were constantly passing and repassing. But D'Arcy's idea of having lunch was a good one, and his companions accompanied him willingly enough.

D'Arcy kept his eyeglass screwed into his eye, and cast glances in all directions in search of his missing brother, but did not find him. Once or twice there was a false alarm, D'Arcy being certain that he had caught sight of Wally in the distance; but after a couple of fruitless chases his comrades gave up listening to him. The swell of St. Jim's made a sudden rush into a street crowded with vehicles, and Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder and dragged him back.

"Welease me!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I have just seen young Wally in that motor-bus!"

"Which one?"

"That one stweakin' along there!"

"Rats!"

"I am suah it was young Wally. I could only see the back of his head, and he was weawin' diffevent clothes; but I am certain I was not mistaken! Pway welease me, Tom Mewwy! We may not have a chance of spottin' him again!"

"You howling ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! I—"

"It wasn't Wally, and, anyway, the bus has gone now. Come on, and let's get that lunch!"

"Vevy well," said D'Arcy, as the bus disappeared. "I weward it as entirely your fault, Tom Mewwy, that Wally has eluded us!"

"Good! Come on!"

D'Arcy looked somewhat indignant. He continued to glance round for Wally, but the missing junior was not to be discovered.

"I say, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, "we will sepawate heah, and look for the young wascal in three diffevent diwections. We will meet again at pwecisely twelve o'clock at the Populah Westauwant."

"Better keep close together."

"But we can get ovah threee times as much groud by sepawatin'. Pway do not be obstinate, Tom Mewwy. I pwesume you weally came to London to look for Wally, and not simply to have lunch?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Blessed if I think we've got much chance of finding him! I think the best thing would be to go to Scotland Yard. We'll leave that till after lunch, though. All right, we'll separate, and meet again at twelve. Don't get into mischief."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

But D'Arcy was alone. The chance of spotting the missing junior by looking about the streets of London for him seemed infinitesimal now that the pursuers were actually on the spot. At Eastwood it had seemed more possible. But London was bigger close at hand.

However, there was nothing better to be done, so the juniors conscientiously did what they could. And, as this

plan was to be followed, it was really better to separate with a rendezvous for lunch.

Tom Merry had set out for the Strand, Jack Blake had decided on Shaftesbury Avenue, and Arthur Augustus had chosen Piccadilly. Arthur Augustus decided to travel by Underground, and accordingly made his way into the station. He bought a ticket, and stepped carefully on to the escalator. Finding a crowd of people standing on the side of the stairs he began to walk slowly downwards, his head held high. Unfortunately, he failed to notice a banana skin dropped by some small boy. Suddenly his feet shot from under him, and the swell of St. Jim's began a speedy but inelegant descent of the moving stairs.

"Whoop! Bai Jove!" yelled D'Arcy, as he shot past the gaping passengers. He flung out a hand to save himself, and grabbed. His hand caught the cap of a portly gentleman and pulled it off—and the portly gentleman's wig came with it!

"Ow! Yaroooh!" D'Arcy fairly roared as he landed with a crash.

But at the sight of the wig and cap in his hand he leaped to his feet, dropped them on the ground—and bolted! Even the great Augustus could not face the job of apologising to a gentleman for removing his wig in public!

The swell of St. Jim's was still "wathah in a fluttah" when he stepped out of the station in Piccadilly Circus and made his way towards Piccadilly.

"Piper!"

"Thank you, no!" said D'Arcy politely to the ragged youth in a curtailed morning coat who offered him a paper. "I do not requiah a papah."

And he walked on.

"Dear me, it is Augustus!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the speaker.

She was a young lady, very fashionably dressed, and her companion, a tall, old gentleman, with white whiskers, had an unmistakable military air.

Arthur Augustus raised his silk hat at once.

"Bai Jove, it is Miss Mannewin!" he exclaimed. "What an unexpected pleasuah, Miss Mannewin! How do you do, Sir Wobert?"

Sir Robert Mannering looked curiously at the junior, and Miss Mannering smiled at him. They were old acquaintances of D'Arcy's at Eastwood, and during one summer vacation Arthur Augustus had been a little in love with Alice Mannering. She was only two years older than he, and that was a trifle to D'Arcy.

"How-curious to meet you here," said Miss Mannering brightly. "I imagined that you were at school, Augustus."

"Yaas, wathah; but I am up in town on important business, you know," explained Arthur Augustus, "in connection with my young bwothah—you know my young bwothah?"

"No. I think he was away at school when we were at Eastwood."

"Oh, yaas; I wemebah! I have to look aftah him, you know, while the matak is away. She particularly impressed upon me to look aftah young Wally," said D'Arcy. "Go away, you wude boy. I do not want any papahs!"

"Paper, sir?"

"Certainly not! Pway don't bothah me!"

It was not the newsboy who had spoken to him before, but that newsboy's companion. He persisted in offering his papers to Arthur Augustus.

"Extra special, sir?" he said. "Latest news. Startling disappearance of a junior belonging to St. Jim's!"

"What?"

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle towards the newsboy in amazement. Then, as he fairly caught sight of the features, he jumped.

For it was Wally!

CHAPTER 14.

Rough on Arthur Augustus!

WALLY grinned at his horrified brother. The moment he had seen Arthur Augustus talking to his Eastwood acquaintances the spirit of mischief had prompted the young rascal to claim him.

"Surprised to see me, Gus?" he remarked.

"Weally—"

D'Arcy broke off, staring in hopeless dismay at the scamp of the Third Form.

Wally was so raggedly clad, his face had become so dirty during his morning's rambling in the London streets that it was not easy to recognise him. The sheaf of papers under his arm added to his disguise.

D'Arcy would never have known him had he not drawn attention to himself of his own accord.

"Starting in a new line of business, Gus, you see!" said Wally cheerfully. He pulled off his cap to Miss Mannering. "Going to introduce me?" he murmured.

"You young wascal—"

"Oh, come off, Gus! Not ashamed of your own relations, are you?"

"Weally, I wefuse to wecognise you in any way!" said D'Arcy haughtily. "If you persist in bothewin' me, little boy, I shall give you in charge of a policeman!"

And Arthur Augustus walked on with Sir Robert and Miss Mannering.

The newsboy glanced after him with a chuckle.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was very red as he walked on with his friends. The encounter had been a most unfortunate one, and D'Arcy was very sensitive about looking ridiculous. In his confusion it had utterly passed from his mind that he was in London to find Wally and that he had just missed an opportunity of securing him.

"How curious that that rude boy should pester you so!" said Miss Mannering, with a lurking smile.

Perhaps she had detected some resemblance of feature between Arthur Augustus' aristocratic countenance and that of the ragged newsboy.

"Vewy wemarkable indeed!" assented Arthur Augustus, his face growing more crimson. "A cheeky young wascal, you know!"

"Very!" said Sir Robert dryly.

"Shall we see you again while you are in town, Augustus?" asked Miss Mannering demurely.

"I am afwaid not, Miss Mannewin," as I pwobably have to return to St. Jim's immediately," stammered Arthur Augustus.

And Arthur Augustus, feeling too much disturbed by the incident to think of looking for Wally, made his way to the appointed rendezvous, and there waited for Tom Merry, and Blake.

The two juniors were prompt to time, and they discussed a substantial lunch between them, D'Arcy announcing that it was his treat.

"I haven't seen anything of the young bouncer," Blake remarked. "How about you, Merry?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not a sign of him. And we needn't ask Gus."

"Bai Jove, that's where you make a mistake, Tom Mewwy!"

"Eh? You don't mean to say you've seen him?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise.

"Yaas; wathah!"

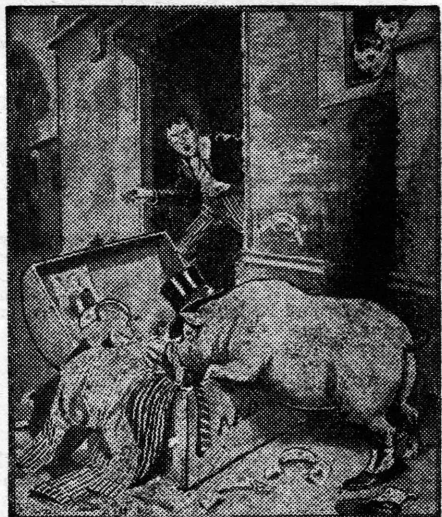
"You've seen Wally?"

"Yaas!"

"Where?" demanded Tom Merry and Blake together.

"In the stweet, deah boys. He was dwessed in wags and sellin' papahs—fact, you know! I was nevah so surprised and shocked in my life! But the worst of the matak was that the young wascal actually had the cheek to come up

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MIND YOU READ IT.

and speak to me while I was conversin' with some friends I met in Piccadilly!"

"Didn't you collar him?"

"I did not feel inclined to recognise the young wascal as my bwothah before Sir Wobert Mannewin' and Miss Mannewin', when he was dswessed in wags and sellin' papahs!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"You—you champion ass—"

"I wefuse to be called a champion ass!"

"You've let a chance slip now, and we may not meet him again."

"Oh, that's all wight! Place yourself undah my guidance, deah boys, and we shall discovah the young boundah soonah or latah."

And the chums of St. Jim's set out in the direction of Charing Cross.

The next moment they were on the scene of a disturbance.

CHAPTER 15.

The Capture!

"THIS 'ere is my pitch!" said Tadger aggressively.

"Now, look 'ere, Tadger, there's room for more'n two or three," said 'Arry 'Arding, in a tone of remonstrance. "Don't make a row."

"I ain't goin' to 'ave any cove a-queerin' my pitch."

"Come to that, it ain't your pitch, and you're only pickin' on young Nibs for a row."

"E ain't stayin' 'ere!"

"I says 'e is!"

"I'll soon shift him!"

"Will you?" said Wally, laying down his sheaf of papers. "I'd like to see you do it, my son! Start the shifting!"

Tadger was a head taller than Wally, and he did not think the task would be hard. As a matter of fact, 'Arry was right, and Tadger was only looking for trouble. He wanted a row with the new addition to the honourable fraternity of newsboys, and Wally was not the fellow to stop him.

"I say, don't take him on, young Nibs," said 'Arry.

"I—"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"Are you goin' to be hoff, young shaver?" demanded Tadger.

"Not much!" said Wally.

"Then I'll shift yer!"

And Tadger rushed at Wally. He expected to have everything his own way, but the champion boxer of St. Jim's Third was a surprise for him.

Wally put up his hands and brushed off Tadger's furious blows, and put in a right-hander that sent him reeling. He sat down against a railing with a bump, and 'Arry gave a yell of delight.

"My 'at! That was a oner! You'll do."

Tadger sat up, rubbing his eye, which was closing, and then his nose, which was swollen and emitting a copious stream of claret.

"Done?" asked Wally genially.

Tadger grunted.

"Ye-es; it's all right!"

"Good! Give us your fist, old son!" said Wally.

And he took Tadger's "fist" and shook it, much to the individual's astonishment.

Tadger stared at Wally, and then, picking up his papers, he put them under his arm and walked off, with one hand to his nose. He had been licked, and he knew it, and any thought of further disputing the possession of the "pitch" was not in his mind.

Most of the onlookers dispersed, but three did not.

They remained, exchanging significant glances, and moving round so as to cut off Wally's escape in any direction. A heavy hand fell on Wally's shoulder as he was rubbing his nose, and he looked up with a start, and recognised a familiar face.

"Tom Merry!"

"Yes, you young scamp!" said Tom Merry. "And a nice dance you've led us, too! You're coming back to St. Jim's now!"

"Rats! I won't!"

"Blake! Gussy! Line up!"

Blake and D'Arcy took a grip on Wally, too. There was no escape for the hero of the Third Form. But he was not without a friend. 'Arry sided up with him in an instant, dropping his papers he cared not where, and clenching his fists.

"Who's them coves?" he said. "I'm with you, young Nibs! Let 'im alone, will you?"

Tom Merry looked at the truculent lad curiously.

"I don't know whom you may be, but this kid's run away from school, and we've followed to fetch him back.

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It's no good playing the giddy ox, Wally. If you refuse to come with us, we shall call a policeman, and you will be taken by force. You can take your choice about it."

"You've no right—"

"Bosh! We've been sent by our headmaster to fetch you back, and you ought to be glad we've taken the trouble."

"Yaas, watah!"

"What's it to be?" said Blake. "Are you going to come quietly, giving your word not to bolt, or would you prefer a policeman and a cab?"

"I suppose I've got to come," said Wally reluctantly.

"I—I give my word."

"Honest Injun, mind!"

"Yes, hang you!"

"That's right," said Tom Merry, releasing him. "I say, is this chap a friend of yours?"

"Yes, he is!" said Wally defiantly. "He took me in last night, when I should have had to sleep in the street if he hadn't, and—and—"

"Bai Jove, I weward him as havin' acted weally hand-somely," said Arthur Augustus. "I should like to shake hands with you, my young friend."

Something like moisture gleamed in the eye of the street arab.

"You're going back, then?" he said.

"I've got to," said Wally. "I—I'm sorry, 'Arry. I'd have liked to stick it out. But look here, this isn't the last time I'm going to see you. You've been a good friend to me, old chap, and I mean to be one to you, somehow. Good-bye!"

He gripped 'Arry's hand hard. Then silently he walked away with the juniors from St. Jim's.

"So you have returned?" said Mr. Railton severely, two or three hours later, in his study at St. Jim's.

Mr. Selby was also there, looking somewhat annoyed. He had been having a talk with the Housemaster, and Mr. Railton had given his opinion pretty plainly on the cause of Wally's running away.

"Yes, sir," said D'Arcy minor cheerfully.

"And you have not the grace even to look ashamed of yourself!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"I'm not ashamed of myself, sir," said Wally steadily. "I bolted because you were going to punish me for telling a lie, and I never told one. I wouldn't. You had no right to call me a liar before the class!"

"Boy—"

"One moment, Mr. Selby," broke in the Housemaster. "Now, D'Arcy minor, do you still declare that it was an accident?"

"Yes, sir. I know it was careless, but I didn't know Mr. Selby was there. He had no right to call me a liar."

"You must not speak like that, D'Arcy minor. If you positively declare that it was an accident, I must believe you, and I have no doubt that Mr. Selby will do the same."

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Selby ungraciously enough.

The Housemaster's tone was significant, and the Third Form master felt that the time had come to give in.

"Very good! Now, D'Arcy, the incident of the football is closed. But you have broken the rules of the college in a most flagrant way by leaving without permission, and for that I shall punish you severely. Bend over!"

"Right-ho—I mean, certainly, sir!" said Wally cheerfully. "I don't mind a licking, sir; it was being called a liar that got my back up."

"That will do, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton; but it was probable that his sympathies were with the hero of the Third, for he laid the strokes on very lightly on that occasion.

D'Arcy minor was not much worse for the licking when he left the study.

Tom Merry and Blake were waiting for him.

"Now, then, you young scallawag," said Tom Merry, "I suppose you've taken your gruel?"

Wally grinned.

"Yes, it wasn't so bad."

"Good! Gussy has been promising you a fearful thrashing, but under the circumstances we have persuaded him to let you off during good behaviour. But what we've got to say is this. Manners and Lowther have got up a feed for us, ready for our return, and you can come and wire in, too, if you like."

"What-ho!" said Wally.

And he did. And when he left Tom Merry's study he was carried off to the Third Form room by his own Form fellows, and forced to account for his adventures over and over again, and for days afterwards D'Arcy minor was the lion of the Third Form.

THE END.

(Tom Merry & Co. spend a week on a farm in next week's rip-snorting St. Jim's yarn! Keep an eye out for "FATTY WYNN'S PRIZE PORKER!" It's a wow!)

BOYS, HERE IT IS! • THE GREATEST ADVENTURE YARN OF THE YEAR!

THE LOST LEGION!

By
DON ENGLISH.



A forced landing in Central Asia put a stop to Jim Nelson's and Phil Harris' round-the-world flight. But it was the start of the most amazing and thrill-packed adventures of their young lives!

In "Rome the Second"!

LIKE some vast, glittering serpent the Roman army wound its slow way across the plain, bright with the flash of brazen cuirass and gaudy with banners and tossing plumes. More than three legions there in that moving column, and a cheerful sound rose from the ranks, for the men were singing a gay marching-song as they swung along.

The Emperor, Valerius Martius Donatus, riding homewards at the head of his victorious forces, smiled as the tune came to his ears. He was a tall, handsome young fellow, wearing full armour beneath the gold-embroidered scarlet cloak that was the exclusive badge of his office, and mounted on a magnificent white horse.

His gorgeous apparel made amazing contrast with the simple clothing of the four who rode at his heels. Two men and two boys, they were the most weirdly, incredibly out-of-place figures imaginable against the background of tramping legionnaires. Instead of the picturesque Roman uniform, with its great, plumed helmet and bronzed cuirass, they wore twentieth-century khaki jackets and shorts, with solar topees, to keep the blazing sun from their heads. And revolvers took the place of short-swords in their belts.

In fact, a chance spectator, catching sight of this quartet, might have been excused for thinking that the whole brilliant scene was merely an elaborate setting for some super-film. But closer inquiry would have served to reduce him to utter bewilderment. For while these four spoke English together, the words of the legionnaires' song were Latin, and they jested among themselves in the same long-dead tongue.

The quartet consisted of the world-famous explorer, nicknamed Colonel K, his secretary, Rex Bruce, and his two schoolboy wards, Phil Harris and Jim Nelson. And though the time was the twentieth century, and the place Central Asia, the Romans who surrounded them, fantastic and impossible as it might seem, were absolutely genuine.

The explanation of this apparent anachronism was simple, if astounding.

Colonel K and his present companions, together with his faithful little Welsh servant, Llewelyn, had left England some days previously in his monoplane, with the intention of making an air cruise round the globe. But an engine defect had forced them down in the wilds of Central Asia, hundreds of miles from the nearest civilisation.

And there, to their unbounded amazement, they had found a colony of Romans who, entirely cut off from the outside world, still clung to the manners and customs of two thousand years ago. They were the descendants of an ancient expeditionary force which, shut up in a great valley by an earthquake, had settled down and intermarried with the original inhabitants, a mysterious white race.

Now there was war in the land, for Dolabella, son of the old king, was seeking to usurp the throne from the rightful heir, his nephew Claudius. Phil Harris and Rex Bruce had been captured by the rebel soon after the Albatross came down, while strolling about to stretch their legs. They were carried off, unknown to Colonel K, and confined in Dolabella's camp.

Meanwhile, the colonel had fallen in with the royal forces under Valerius Martius sent out to subdue Dolabella. Learning from them the fate of Phil and Rex, he immediately flew with Jim and the young general to the enemy camp, in the middle of which they landed and effected a daring rescue.

Next day there was a battle between rebel and royal armies, in which the Albatross played a large part, being used to stampede Dolabella's formidable cavalry. As a result, his forces were absolutely routed, though unfortunately he himself managed to escape to the hills.

That was two days ago. And now, after a rest in camp, the victorious legions were returning in triumph to their city. With them, breathlessly eager to see all they could of this strange relic of an ancient civilisation, went the world-flyers. Colonel K, Phil, Jim, and Rex Bruce had chosen to ride at the head of the long column with the Emperor; but not so Llewelyn.

The Roman engineers had constructed a flat carriage, drawn by fifty horses, to bring the Albatross across the plain, and the little Welshman had flatly refused to leave the monoplane during the trip. So he was somewhere far in the rear, behind the baggage wagons carrying the tents and the wounded, anxiously superintending the transport of his beloved craft.

Valerius Martius turned suddenly in his saddle to point ahead as they topped a little rise.

"Behold, O men of Albion, our city of Roma Secunda!" he said in Latin.

There, before them, a few short miles away, and white as a pearl beneath the glaring sun of noon, lay a glorious,

walled city, set down beside an incredibly blue lake, which faithfully reflected every detail. Colonel K had seen most of the recognised marvels of the world during his travels, but even he caught his breath at the wonderful sight.

"Truly it is a beautiful place, O Imperator!" he replied in the same tongue, which he fortunately knew well.

The road along which they were marching ran straight as an arrow to a gate in the city wall, and already they could see the townspeople thronging out to welcome the conquerors. Messengers had been sent after the battle to bring news of the great victory to the king and Senate, and it soon became evident that the defeat of Dolabella was a very popular one with the majority of the Romans.

By the time the van of the army was within a mile of the town, the roadsides were lined with cheering men and women, all decked in their best, and the broad avenue itself was strewn with flowers. Cries of excitement greeted the appearance of the Englishmen, of whom everyone had by now heard, and Colonel K, a striking figure with his golden beard and piercing blue eyes, naturally attracted most attention.

"Behold the chief of the lords of the air!" rose the shout, one which was taken up and repeated all along the line, and Valerius Martius turned to the flyers with a smile.

"You see that your fame has travelled on before," he said in Latin. "And I warrant that it has lost nothing in the telling. They take you for gods at the least!"

"H'm! Not for the first time I've been mistaken for one, anyway," observed the colonel coolly in English. "Hallo! What's this?"

"The reception committee, sir," suggested the irrepressible Jim, who was enjoying himself hugely.

"By Jove! Their cohorts are certainly 'gleaming with purple and gold,' whoever they are!" remarked Rex Bruce.

Just emerging from the gate was an impressive procession. At the head of it, on a prancing coal-black charger, rode a young man clad in magnificent golden armour, and behind him, six abreast, came rank upon rank of mounted men in purple cloaks, their gilded lance-points glittering in the sun. Valerius Martius indicated them with a proud wave of his hand.

"We are indeed honoured!" he told Colonel K and Phil, who were the only two who spoke Latin. "Claudius, heir to the throne, comes with the royal guard to welcome us home!"

"Does he, forsooth!" murmured Phil, as he translated to Jim and Rex. "So this is the laddie we've been fighting for. Prepare to do your best salaam, Jimmie, my boy!"

"What d'you mean?" demanded his friend. "Don't you know I'm one of the lords of the air? No salaams for me!"

But when the prince cantered up a few moments later, and he saw Colonel K giving him a military salute, Jim changed his mind, and followed his guardian's example. Claudius was a big, pleasant-looking fellow no older than Rex or the Imperator; the Englishmen liked him on sight.

"Hail, O lords of Albion!" he said, addressing the colonel. "Rumours of your greatness have already come to my ears, and I am eager to hear more. Where is this wondrous bird-chariot of which men speak?"

Colonel K explained that the Albatross was being towed in the rear of the army.

"But to-morrow it will take the air if you desire," he promised, "and you may fly with us, even as Valerius Martius has done."

"By Jupiter, it shall be so!" cried Claudius, but the Imperator looked doubtful.

"Lord, it seems to me unwise to expose yourself so often in public," he said gravely. "The greater part of the people love you, but it is probable that there are also some whose allegiance is with Dolabella. Remember that where one assassin has failed, another may succeed."

He was referring to an attempt which Dolabella had already made to murder his nephew. Claudius laughed.

"I am not afraid!" he said carelessly. "And if I were to stay within doors I should be branded as a coward!"

All the same, he came very near to paying for his bravery with his life.

By now the royal guard had wheeled about and was heading the vast column back into the city, Claudius riding between Colonel K and the Imperator, and the populace cheering the three of them to the echo. As they approached the great gateway, all hung with garlands and banners, some instinct made Rex glance up and to the left. The next instant he stiffened in the saddle, and his horse plunged wildly forward as he dug in the spurs.

"Look out!" he yelled in English, pointing up, and the others gave a gasp as they followed the direction of his finger.

There, standing in full view on the wall, was a man with a drawn bow in his hands. The arrow was already fitted to the string, and even as they looked he released it with a twang. But he was a second too late. Quick as light

Claudius had wrenched his mount aside, and the shaft, aimed at his unprotected face, missed him by a hairbreadth. Next moment the would-be assassin, seeing that he had failed, had leaped down on the inner side of the wall, and was lost to view.

Pandemonium broke loose. The cheering mob, furious at this fresh outrage, roared angrily, and made a rush at the gate, anxious to lay hands on the archer. Valerius Martius, shouting to make himself heard above the din, ordered forward the prætorian guard to assist the royal bodyguard, which was struggling to keep the road open. Some of the horses, frightened by the uproar, were kicking and dancing about, and ten minutes passed before the path was cleared.

Then the royal guard fell back to form an escort about the flyers and the two Romans, who were in danger of being mobbed by the enthusiastic throngs, and they passed at last into Roma Secunda.

"Pshaw! That was a narrow shave!" said Phil. "I shouldn't like to be that chap, if these folk catch him, though."

"Where are we off to now?" asked Jim, as their bodyguard battled its way slowly through the surging crowds down an avenue of blank-walled houses.

"Probably to the Senate, so that Valerius Martius can be properly congratulated on his victory by all the old fogies," hazarded his chum. "I expect they want to have a look at us, too."

And so it proved. A few minutes later they found themselves in a great, open square, flanked by many splendid pillared temples. None of them had any difficulty in guessing that this must be the forum, the political and religious centre of the city, where public sacrifices were offered to the gods, and all questions bearing upon the welfare of the state discussed. And there before them, at the farther end, rising high above the rest on tier upon tier of marble steps, and crowned with a snarling bronze she-wolf of gigantic size, was the Senate House.

In the Senate House!

THE next few hours reminded the two boys of speech day at Foxhurst School more than anything else.

They left their horses at the foot of the stairway and climbed to the top, where they were met by the senators. Innumerable orations were delivered, the Senate thanking Valerius Martius, Valerius Martius promising feasts and games to the tightly packed populace in the forum below, Claudius both thanking and promising.

Finally, when Phil and Jim thought it was all over, and were preparing to heave sighs of heartfelt relief, Claudius turned and led the way into the Senate House. They entered a big amphitheatre lighted by a central hole in the roof, and the senators filed silently into the seats about it. The flyers were given places in the front, and Jim looked about him with ill-concealed alarm as Valerius Martius took the floor.

"Oh, my only aunt!" he breathed, horror-stricken. "I believe they're going to begin all over again!"

It was almost, if not quite, true. The Imperator was describing the rout of Dolabella in full detail, and it was a lengthy business. Jim, understanding not a word, and drowsy after his long ride in the sun, kept nodding off to sleep, and Phil and Rex had a busy time trying to keep him awake.

When the general had finished, Colonel K was called upon to explain his presence in the lost valley. He told the senate what he had told Valerius Martius—that he came from the Island of Albion beyond the sea. He added that he was very anxious to remain among them for a short while to study their splendid civilisation, and promised to lend his aid against the renegade Dolabella should it again be needed.

After a debate, during which even Phil dozed, the senate agreed to accept the offer, and elected him to the Imperator's staff as an extra legate, or adjutant.

"Ouch!" said Jim a few minutes later, roused with a start from dreams by a vigorous thump on the back. "Ouch! What's the matter?"

"Wake up, you owl!" hissed Phil in his ear. "Three of the tribuni militum of the First Legion were killed in the battle, and they've just appointed you and me and Rex to take their places. You're an 'orifice,' my lad!"

The tribuni militum were the six chief officers of the legion. They were usually of noble rank, and not generally remarkable for their military ability or experience. But Jim did not know this.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, fully awake in an instant. "Does that mean that I've got to wear one of those cuirass things and a crested helmet, and lead chaps into war, and ride round on a horse the whole blessed time?"

His chum chuckled wickedly. "I shouldn't be surprised!" he replied. "But, anyway, the session's over, and we can get out of here."

"Thank goodness for that!" said Jim, rising stiffly from his seat as the Emperor and Colonel K came towards them. "I'm dying of hunger. I say, sir, when do we get our next meal?"

"Valerius Martius is taking us to his house immediately," answered his guardian. "We are to be his guests while we remain here. I expect he'll be able to prevent you from starving, my boy."

As he spoke they were all following the general across the floor of the now nearly empty amphitheatre towards a small door at the far side. They found themselves in a little round chamber with a beautiful mosaic pavement, and Valerius Martius, bending down, raised several of the tiny squares, which came up in a piece. Beneath was a ring in which he inserted his finger and pulled. At once a big oblong panel in the centre of the floor swung silently upwards, disclosing a flight of steps. The Roman smiled at the surprise on the faces of his companions as he replaced the covering over the ring.

"The secret entrance to the Senate, known only to the members," he said, in Latin. "The passage below has four exits—one in the Lake Palace, one in the Temple of Castor and Pollux, the third in the House of Canidi, and the last in my own dwelling. We will escape the enthusiasm of the populace in the forum by leaving under their feet!"

"By Jove, this is a jolly useful idea!" said Jim, as the Emperor started off down the stairway. "Must come in pretty handy when you want to sneak about the city without being seen. These old Romans knew a thing or two!"

"They certainly did," agreed Rex, descending in the wake of Valerius Martius. "But they didn't know about matches. Look!"

At the foot of the steps the Emperor was engaged in lighting several quaintly shaped lamps from a dish of wicks burning in oil, which stood beside them on a shelf. He handed one to each of the flyers, then pulled another ring in the wall. The trapdoor closed as noiselessly as it had opened, and they were left in darkness but for the feeble glimmer of their primitive lanterns.

"It is the solemn duty of each one of the Senate to descend into the passage on his appointed day and replenish the oil and wicks in these dishes," explained Valerius Martius. "By this means there is always light when it is needed. Come, let us go. Tread close upon my heels, and make as little sound as possible."

"I wonder how long it'll be before I wake up and find I've been dreaming all this?" asked Jim for the hundredth time, as they began their amazing journey through the centuries-old tunnel.

"If you say that just once more in my hearing I'll give you a thumping that'll convince you!" retorted Phil.

The passage was perhaps four feet wide and seven feet high. It was built entirely of slabs of white marble, and there was no sign of dampness anywhere in its length. After running straight as a die for fifty yards, it forked, and Valerius Martius took the turning to the left.

"This leads to my house and to the Lake Palace," he whispered to the others, his voice echoing eerily along the gallery. "It is not far now."

Presently the passage forked again, and this time he swung to the right. A few moments later the flickering lamps revealed another stairway ahead, and soon they were clambering out through a panel similar to the first into a gloomy little room.

"Welcome to the House of the Donati, my friends!" said their host, as he shut the trap behind them. "We are now in the private chapel, and you will see that the floor is identical with that of the Senate ante-chamber. It is the same at the other entrances to the passage, so that to know the secret of one is to know all."

"Quite a sensible arrangement, too," remarked the colonel, translating for the benefit of Rex and Jim, "though it might be dangerous in the wrong hands."

Valerius Martius stepped softly to the doorway, and, after drawing back the curtain and peering out, beckoned them to follow. The next minute they were all standing in the great central hall, or atrium, of his house. It was a magnificent apartment, lighted, as the Senate House had been, by a central opening in the roof. A fountain was playing in a marble basin in the middle, and four slender pillars rose from the edge of this pool to the corners of the rain-hole. Many flowering plants in tubs stood about, and the whole place was a pleasant contrast to the heat and bustle the travellers had experienced earlier.

As Valerius Martius clapped his hands a crowd of slaves came hastening on silent feet from a doorway at the end, and with them a boy of about Phil's age, who greeted the Emperor delightedly.

"Hail, Camillus!" said Valerius Martius, smiling in return. "Behold our guests and friends, the Lords of

Albion—Colonnus, Brutus, Arrius, and Nelsonius! Assist me in making them welcome!"

Turning to Colonel K, he continued:

"This is my younger brother—Camillus. He shall be host to your wards, since they are of a size, while I will provide for the comfort of you and Brutus."

"Stay a moment!" said Camillus suddenly, as his brother was about to move off. "What of the other man, one Luellinus, who was escorted here by a cohort of the First? The centurion in charge told me that he was the servant of the chief lord, so I commanded him to be bathed and freshly arrayed. This was done by the slaves, though I believe that he protested and gave some trouble."

"Llewelyn here already?" said the colonel, beginning to laugh. "And washed and dressed by force? Where is he? I desire to see him."

Camillus clapped his hands and gave an order. A few moments later Llewelyn appeared, clad in a white tunic, and highly indignant.

"Look you, an outrage it is, yes indeed!" he spluttered in English, and repeated the statement in Welsh, shaking his fist at the slaves in the background. "I won't stop a minute longer with these heathens, indeed to goodness, no, whatever!"

"But I shall need you to-morrow, Llewelyn," said the colonel, with a smile. "We're going to show these heathens what the Albatross can do. By the way, where is she?"

"She's safe enough, look you!" replied the little man, calming down bit by bit. "They put her in a great circus place, with a thousand men to watch. She'll take no harm."

"Splendid!" said the colonel. "We'll show them all something to-morrow!"

The Chariot Race!

"WELL," said Jim Nelson reflectively, looking about him, "I've been to a circus before, but never to one like this. And I've never been the chief exhibit on any other occasion, either."

He was seated with the other four flyers, Claudius, Valerius Martius, and Camillus, in the royal tribune of the Circus Maximus next day. The great stadium was packed to suffocation point with the citizens of Roma Secunda and their families, for, in addition to the display of the Albatross, there was to be another powerful attraction. Despite the entreaties of Valerius Martius that he should not take such a tremendous risk, Claudius had announced his intention of driving his own team in a chariot race, and the decision was an immensely popular one with the people.

While Valerius Martius and Camillus accompanied the prince to his changing-room, the flyers repaired to the huge hall beneath the circus where the monoplane had been stowed, and soon the powerful engines were ticking over softly under Llewelyn's skilful hands. Phil, after glancing about him curiously for a few minutes, decided that a little exploration would not come amiss, and started off quietly on a tour of inspection.

The underneath of the great stadium proved to be a veritable labyrinth of dark passages and small chambers, the larger part of them disused. It was as he was nearing the door of one of these that the name "Dolabella" suddenly struck his ear, and he stopped dead in his tracks, stiffening. Then, treading silently as a cat in his rubber-soled shoes, he crept closer, and settled himself to listen.

"Claudius is as good as dead, my friend!" were the startling words, in Latin, that he heard first. "On the fourth circuit, as we approach the second turn, I wreck his chariot against the wall. If his own horses do not kill him, then the team behind are hardly likely to fail."

"Excellent, O Marullus Appius!" said a second voice. "Do this, and rest assured that you will be recompensed. Dolabella will not forget his helpers when he is king."

Phil waited for no more. Wheeling about in a flash, he raced back the way he had come, quietly at first so as not to alarm the plotters, then careless of what noise he made. But all the passages were much alike in the gloom. Presently he was aware that he had missed the path, and precious minutes were wasted before he found it again.

When finally he dashed panting into the hall where the Albatross loomed like an enormous ghost-bird in the half-light, there was no one in sight but Rex, who looked up in alarm at the sudden apparition.

"Quick!" gasped Phil. "Where's the colonel?"

"He and Jim went back to the tribune," was the reply. "They thought you'd gone on ahead. What's the matter?"

"A plot to wreck Claudius' chariot in the race!" said Phil. "Marullus Appius, one of the nobles, is in it. We've got to stop it somehow."

Rex turned swiftly to Phil, as a tremendous cheer from the stadium showed the welcome the heir to the throne was receiving.

"Where exactly is the wreck to take place, laddie?" he asked coolly. "Right on the turn, I suppose. But which end?"

Phil cast a quick glance out into the arena before replying. "This end," he said. "They start and finish in front of the royal tribune, so this must be the second turn. And it's not to be till the fourth circuit."

"Good!" said Rex crisply. "Now just listen to me for a minute. Ah! They're off!"

A deep-throated roar from the multitudes, and a sudden thunder of pounding hoofs, announced the start of the race.

A shout went up as the rest of the chariots rounded the turn, and it was seen that Claudius had secured the coveted place on the inside. And he hung on to it grimly through the succeeding circuits, though more than once one of the other chariots tried to crowd him out at the corners, or cut in when he swung too wide. It soon became evident that his perfectly-matched team was too good for all the others, excepting that of Marullus.

"Steady, kid!" whispered Rex, laying his hand on Phil's arm as the two chariots whirled about the first turn, and came pounding down towards them, locked together. "Are you ready? Then—go!"

Side by side they raced out across the sand, and the packed stadium yelled with excitement as it saw them. A few instants later they were being treated to the supremest exhibition of nerve that any of them had ever witnessed.

Marullus, intent upon forcing Claudius into the wall at the turn, did not see the figures in his path, but the straining horses did. They swerved the tiniest fraction from their course in an instinctive effort to avoid them, and that was Rex's cue.

Gathering himself together, he launched himself at the heads of the centre pair just as it seemed that he must go down to destruction beneath their flying hoofs. Securing a firm grip on their elaborate trappings, he gripped his teeth and hung on grimly, half dragged, half carried along by the racing animals.

And at the same time Phil, choosing his moment skilfully, made a leap at the chariot itself, got a hold on the edge, and swung himself into the flimsy affair behind the driver's back. Marullus, white with fury at the failure of his plot, and slashing wildly at Rex with his long whip, was startled to feel a sharp blow on the shoulder. He turned to meet this new menace, and caught Phil's fist clean on the point of the jaw, delivered with every ounce of the boy's force behind it.

The half-crazed team came to a stumbling halt, quivering in every limb, a bare yard from the wall, and Rex, torn, bleeding, covered with dust from head to foot, but still wearing him famous grin, crawled out to face his companion.

"Where's Claudius?" was his first question. Before Phil could reply, thousands of throats gave the answer.

"The prince wins! Claudius victor! Hail, Claudius!"

Then, while the populace, understanding nothing of what was going on, but conscious that they had just seen the most daredevil act they were ever likely to see, rocked the mighty circus with their enthusiasm all about, he told the story of the plot. Colonel K, coming up at a run with Jim and the two Donati just in time to hear it, whistled softly.

"Your enemies are many, O Claudius," he said. "It seems that Dolabella has no lack of traitors to help him."

He turned to Phil and Rex with a stern air, though there was a twinkle in his blue eyes.

"As for you two," he boomed in English. "I refuse to congratulate you. You've completely ruined the chief event of the day. What crowd, even an ancient Roman one, wants to see a mere monoplane perform after an exhibition like yours?"

He looked round at the delirious throngs, cheering themselves hoarse, and chuckled delightedly.

"You're national heroes," he said, "and serve you both right!"

(Another thrill-packed instalment of this tip-top adventure yarn appears in next Wednesday's issue of the GEM! It's worth waiting for!)

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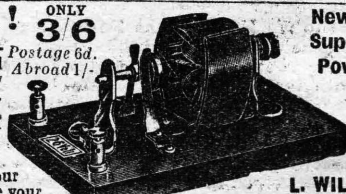
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