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BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



NO. 40.

VOL. 2.

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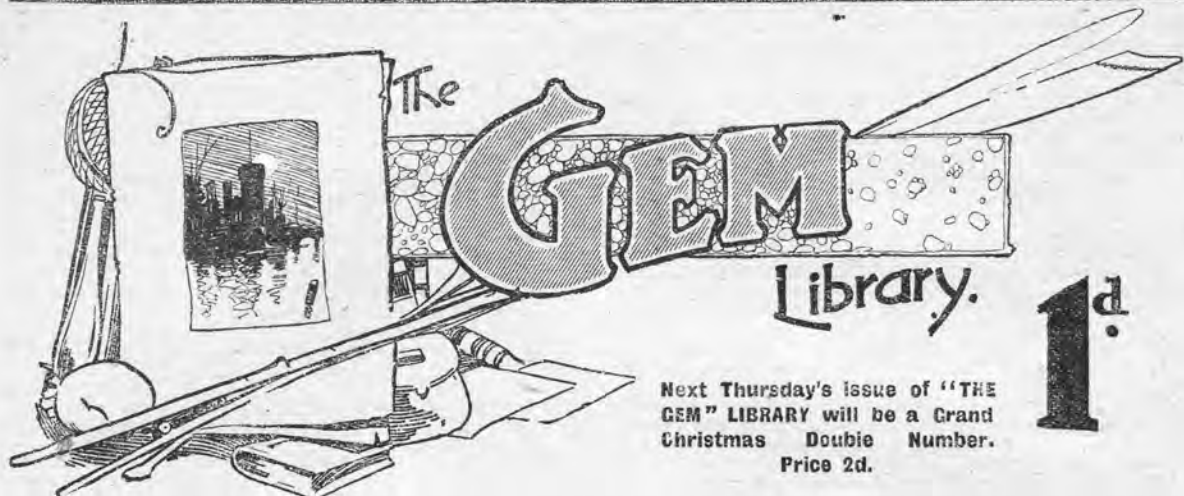
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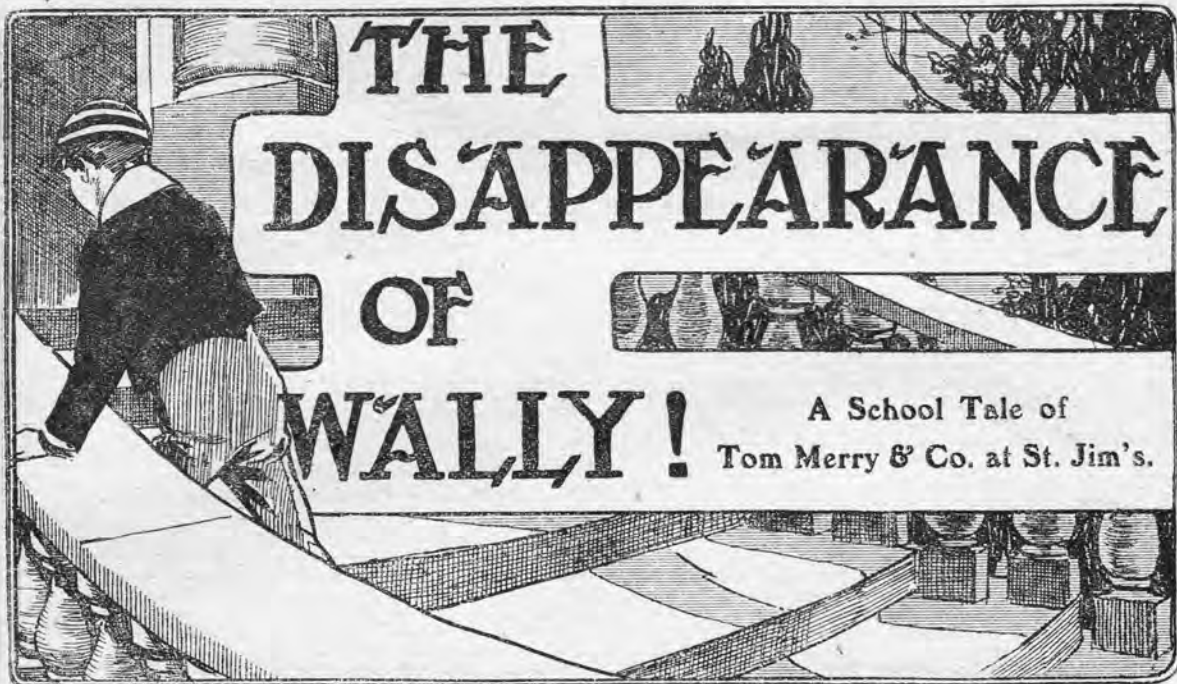
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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

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 out of the mist.

"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 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.

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"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.

"My only Aunt Jane!" 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. "W—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, you 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 scallywag—"

"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 scallywag?" 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 till 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, glaring 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. "Who ever kicked that ball, come here!"

Wally hesitated 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 this 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'm 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."

"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—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! Begone!"

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 Expressly Forbidden to Cut.

"GUS!"

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 replying, Wally. I notice that you are lookin' as disreputable as usual."

"Rats!"

"If you say wate to me, Wally, I shall exercise the privilege of an eldah bwothah, and give you a feahful thwashin'," said D'Arcy severely. "I have several times lately thought of doin' so, for your own good. You are a disreputable little wuffian. You have the great advantage of havin' the best-dressed fellow in the School House for your eldah bwothah, 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 beastly fingahs, too. Your jacket is shiny at the ends of the sleeves. Bai Jore, 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."

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Wally put in a right-hander that sent his opponent reeling!

"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 scallywag of a brother of yours."

"My word!" said Digby. "I should say not! If you tell him all his faults, it will take you 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 unky-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 instnuction at times," said D'Arcy. "The matath particularly impressed upon me to look atfah 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 see you when you don't want some tin. I would wathah hear somethin' owiginal."

"Can you lend me a sovereign or two?"

Arthur Augustus stared at him.

"Well, I must say I wegard that as cool," he said. "Not a shillin' or two—a soveweign 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 in the mornin'."

"Why this mornin', deah boy?"

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

"I have the wemains of a fivah the governah sent me last week," said D'Arcy. "I think I have either two or thweo soveweigns left. But weally, Wally, befoah I can give them to you, I must know what you want so much money for."

"I can't tell you."

"Then I am afwaid I must make it half-a-cwown."

"Don't be an ass, Gus."

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

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

"I am afwaid that is not quite good enough, Wally," said

"BRITAIN INVADED!"

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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 appwove."

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

"Vewy well, I shall be pleased to hear 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 fwinds."

"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 vewy weekless thing to do. I hope you apologised handsomely for the accident."

Wally grinned.

"He didn't give me a chance, Gas. He was awfully waxy, 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 untruth?"

"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 imposs. for my young bwothah to tell an untruth! 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."

"Vewy 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 ntahly wufuse to allow a Third Form fag to chawactewise me as an ass."

"That's what I want the cash for," went on Wally, unheeding. "I'm goin' to cut."

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

Wally granted 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 cires., I shall not wufuse to lend it to you. You can have two soveveigns, deah boy. But I expwessly forbid you to wun away fwom coll. Mind, I wegard you as a young ass, and I exahaise my authority as your eldah bwothah in this case. I expwessly forbid you to wun away, so wemembah."

"Oh, I'll remember, as far as that goes," said Wally, jingling the two sovereigns into his trousers' pocket.

"Thank you very 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 vewy 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'—"

"What with?" asked Monty Lowther.

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

"Horrid!" said Tom Merry solemnly.

"Yaas, wathah! As you vewy pwopahly wemark, 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 wudicrous 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 untruth, is as great an insult to me as to young Wally."

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry. "I shouldn't stand it!"

"I believe you are wotting, you wothah; but I don't intend to stand it. The question is, shall I complain to the Head, or shall I wemonstwat with Mr. Selby?"

"Neither, unless you are looking for a licking."

"The thought of a licking would not deter me fwom doin' the pwopah thing, Tom Mewwy. It is imposs. to allow such an insult to pass unnoticed."

"My dear ass—"

"I wufuse to be called an ass! I wegard the term as oppwobious and diswewpectful. Unless you immediately withdwaw that expwession, Tom Mewwy, I shall have no wesource but to administrah a fweshful thwashin'."

Tom Merry looked very much alarmed.

"Oh, I say, duffer—"

"I wufuse 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.

"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

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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' in to wemonstwate with Mr. Selby."

"Eh?" said Blake, staring at him. "What are ye utalkin' about?"

"Mr. Selby has accused my youngah bwothah of uttahn' an untwuth, and exposed him to the contempt of the class. Wally is quite incapable of such extremely ungentelemanly 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 do not weally want to get Mr. Selby into a wov, but—"

"Follow me, duffer—come and kick the ball, and keep off the grass," said Blake. "Selby will snatch you bald-headed."

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 Carly 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 speaking 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?" said Jameson.

"I wish to wemonstwate with him."

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

"It's all wight, Jameson," said D'Arcy. "He was thinkin' of wunnin' away from 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 extremely 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 morning, and a football biffed you on your nose."

"D'Arcy!"

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

"It was nothing of the sort!"

"Pwafy pardon me, sir, but I—"

"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 culprit in the pwesent case bein' my youngah bwothah, it is impos, to doubt his word, when he assures you that it was an accident, as young Wally is quite incapable of—"

"Leave my study!"

"Pwafy 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 nothin' 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 untwuth. It is for that 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 untwuthfulness run 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.

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

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

The Third Form master gasped.

"D'Arcy! Boy!"

"I came here," said D'Arcy, with dignity, "to wemonstwate. You have weceived me in an unfwiently 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, sir, and I weally considah that— Ow! 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 fiendish 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 ungentelemanly 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 by only 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 of 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.

Upon 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 classroom, 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 be as well hung up 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 here know where D'Arcy minor is?" said Mr. Selby, glancing over the class.

No one did!

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 the 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!" Sturt 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.

"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 doing so, but—"

"How do you know?" asked Blake.

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

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

"I forbade him to wun away."

"You—you—you ass!"

"I wufuse 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 wufuse a loan to my youngah bwothah. I expwessly forbade him to wun away from the coll, and I lent him the couple of pounds he wanted as a sort of compensation for havin' to obey my expwess ordahs."

"Catch him obeying them!"

"He would hardly treat his eldah bwothah with such gwoss diswewpect as to—"

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

"I wufuse to cwedit your statement, Dig. I do not

believe that he is gone, aftah I expwessly forbade him to entertain 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 wufuse to believe that he has gone. Besides, if he has, it is all Mr. Selby's fault. The wothah chawactewised him as an untwuthful person, and, of course, that got young Wally's monkey up. He wasn't goin' to stand that."

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

"I expwessly forbade him to wun away!"

"Oh, scat! 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-geese 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 brows 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 much 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 business 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 scallywag'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 weally believe that Wally has left the pwecincts 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 so doing. 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 mother would say, became very anxious. 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. Passengers were not as thick as hops at the little station, except at the opening or 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 wefused 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 Easthorpe," 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 governah's residence, 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 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 Winchestah?" asked Arthur Augustus.

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

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

"What the dickens for?" asked Tom Merry.

"I wegard it as a duty to go atah young Wally. My matah particularly impressed upon me to take care of him, you know."

"Yes, but—"

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

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

"My pawents are in the south of Fwance at the pwesent moment, and there is no tellin' what mischief that young scallywag may get up to. I wegard it as my duty. My matah particularly 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 feahful 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 matthah to him, but the twain would be gone before I could get back, if I weturned to St. Jim's to apologise first."

Tom Merry laughed.

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

"Vewy good. There was nothin' else to return for, as I am fortunately wearin' 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 remark, 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



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

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?"

"BRITAIN INVADED!"

IN NEXT WEEK'S GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER.

"Don't forget to apologise for me to Mr. Wailton for takin' Fwench leave in this vewy sudden mannaah—"

"You utter ass!"

"I wufuse 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 Arrives 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 a window, uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"If it ain't Master Walter!"

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," explained Wally. "I'm hungry. I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast, and I'm simply famished!"

"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 at the thought of lurching alone in that great apartment, where the furniture had—as he irreverently expressed it—its night-gowns on during the absence of the family. "Let them bring me something up into my room; I shall be snuggler 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 a brush 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 discussing 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.

"Praps I'd better send a wire to his lordship," Mr. Walker remarked at last. "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 bein' 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 despatched 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 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?"

"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 will stay the night, though?"

"I suppose I sha'n'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-loug, 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 larking 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.

BAI JOVE, I'm here at last!" It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who uttered the words, as he stepped from a hack 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 weputation of bein' the kind of scallywag 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 awwived and is still here. As a mattah of fact, Walkah, I have followed the young wapsallion, for the expwess purpose 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."

"Very good. You are sure that young Wally is quite safe in his quartsahs?"

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 had his lordship's reply to the telegram I sent to his lordship."

"Il'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 may repeat the vulgar expression he used."

"Yaas; you ought to be a good judge of vulgawity, Walkah," said Arthur Augustus languidly. "As young Wally is quite safe for the pwesent, I can't do bettah than have some lunch myself. I have missed my dinnah, and the railway 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 quartsahs. 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, and brought a slight smile to his features. 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 that 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 wapsallion is gone; but you had bettah do so, all the same, as his lordship diwects you. I have already sent a wiah to Mr. Waiton fwom 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 landing, and tapped at his younger brother's door. The hammering within ceased abruptly.

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

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Walker, as he went down stairs. "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 expwessly 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 governah, and the governah has wiahed back that he is to wiah to St. Jim's, and detain you here."

"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 weally did it for the best, as it is necessary to detain you."

"I won't be detained!"

"My dear 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 beastly door, dear 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 infwa dig," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I shall not begin anythin' of the sort. If you wewuse 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' expression. 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 wewuse to allow you to chawacterwise me as a duffah, Wally! The expression is uttably 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 wathah bettah for you to come back quietly with me, and much more dignified."

"Rats! Open this door!"

"As for Mr. Selby, I have already wemonstated 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 indignant at bein' chawacterwise as a fibbah—I will not uttah the word lih—at being chawacterwise as a fibbah by Mr. Selby. But I expwessly forbade you to wun away from 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 Term at St. Jim's to be called a good little boy was a deadly insult in itself.

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

"I should uttably wewuse to have the shape of my features altahed, Wally, and I have before remarked that I object to your usin' those oppwobwious expressions—"

"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 younger 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 very 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 ready 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 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, is 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 biffed 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 about a footer 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—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 that, Merry?"

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

"And you rely on his word?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Wally's a young scallywag—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 the 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 up his lips.

"It is a very unfortunate matter," he said. "I will see what is to be done. You may go, my boys. The housemaster 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 at the school now.

During afternoon lessons Wally and his adventures were probably more thought of than the work in 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 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 we send for him? It is too late for him to be brought back to-night from such a distance,



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. "My only Aunt Jane!" gasped the Third Former.

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 flight 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's, 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 under 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 had 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 for him."

"BRITAIN INVADED!"

IN NEXT WEEK'S GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER.

"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 Darrel," said Blake. "I wish they'd send me. I'd make him hop."

"Merry! Blake!" It was a fog'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 can be satisfactorily attended to by you two juniors, if you are willing to undertake it."

"Us, sir?"

"Yes," 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 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 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, 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 it.

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 till they were in the junior common-room. There they sank down into seats, gasping 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 his 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 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."

"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. When Tom Merry came down again, in coat and cap, Monty Lowther and Manners met him on the stairs.

"Hallo," said Lowther, "I hear you are going to look for young Wally! Digby says that we are not coming with you. Of course, that's a mistake."

"Must be!" said Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Sorry," he said, "but that's how it is. Blake and I are going. Orders, you know."

"Railton off his dot?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Looks like it," said Manners.

"Better ask him. Good-bye, kids!"

"Oh, we'll come as far as the gates, anyway."

Blake joined them at the door of the School House. A youth with a bumpy forehead and a large pair of spectacles came hurrying up, and he seized Tom Merry by the top button of his overcoat.

"Just a moment, Merry—one moment—"

"Sorry, Skimmy; got to be off. Let me go, there's a good chap. You can go and bore Digby or Herries."

"Really, Merry, I was about to offer my services," said Skimpole. "I hear that you are going to fetch young D'Arcy. He will probably give you the slip. With my wonderful skill as an amateur detective, I could track him down for you. If you—"

"Go and ask Mr. Railton's permission, then," said Blake.

"Will you wait for me while I go?"

"Not much."

"Really, Blake—"

"Can't be did, Skimmy," said Tom Merry good-naturedly. "Don't twist that button off!"

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE GHOST OF ST. JIM'S"
A 30-Page Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

and "BRITAIN INVADED!"
A Grand War Story.

And Tom jerked himself free from Skimpole, and the juniors went out into the dusky quad. Skimpole blinked after them with a shake of the head. He evidently thought that the truant-hunters would not have much success without his assistance.

Near the gates three forms loomed up through the mist. Figgins & Co. were taking a sprint round the quadrangle. They stopped.

"Hallo, going out?" said Figgins.

"Yes," said Tom Merry carelessly. "Railton has asked us to go and fetch young Wally back. He's bunked, you know."

"Yes, I know. I suppose he said we had better come with you!" said Figgins.

"No, he said nothing of the sort."

"Rather a strange oversight on his part."

"Yes, wasn't it? No accounting for it, except on the supposition that he knew a New House waster wouldn't be any good," said Jack Blake.

And the School House boys chuckled and went on their way. They parted with Lowther and Manners at the gate.

"Come on," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to walk sharp to catch the train."

"Come on," said Blake. "Don't lag behind there."

"Look here, Blake—"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

And so they started.

CHAPTER 9.

In London.

WALLY chuckled as he stepped into the train at Eas Thorpe. 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 looked 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 recapture and a 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 would not admit it to himself. He had made up his mind that he would not go back to St. Jim's, and there was nothing for it but to lose himself in London 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 at Charing Cross, 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 from Hosstria and Turkey."

"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, which were as bright as a parrot's.

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

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

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

Wally turned red. In his confusion at his 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 sovereigns his brother had lent him at St. Jim's. He drew it out in his thumb and forefinger.

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

The newsboy burst into a roar.

"Oh, my hey!"

"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 could give me one? If you can, you shall 'ave that piper for nothin'."

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

He dropped the sovereign 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 left-hander that came clean 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 Strand.

"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.

"My name's not Frank," said 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 at St. Jim's; I haven't been there 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—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 have 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 Frank'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 so soon found a friend in the maze of London. He had nerve enough, but the hugeness of the place, 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 a 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 uneasiness 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 watchchain 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 sovereign, 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.

Stole Away.

"**H**ULLO, where are you chaps going?" It was Mellish, of the Fourth, who asked the question. Tom Merry and Blake were entering the High Street of Rylcombe from the lane, when they met Mellish.

Tom Merry's lip curled as he looked at him.

Mellish was smoking a cigarette in the open street, and grinning through the smoke at the two juniors. Smoking was strictly forbidden to the boys of St. Jim's; but Mellish was a member of the "Smart Set"—a set that deemed it the finest proof of manly independence to smoke cheap cigarettes when a master's eye was not likely to fall upon them.

"We're going to look for young Wally," said Blake, "and you want looking after, too, you young ass! I'd like a prefect to spot you now."

"Rats!" said Mellish. "Why shouldn't I smoke if I want to?"

"How are you going to play footer if you ruin your wind?"

"I don't care about playing footer." "No, you rotten slacker!" said Blake, in disgust. "Smoking cheap cigarettes on the sly is more your mark. I've a good mind to ram it down your throat, only we've got to catch a train."

Mellish retreated in alarm. "You mind your own business, Blake! A Fourth Form kid isn't a prefect, anyway."

"Well, as head of the Fourth I ought to look after the morals of the Form," said Jack Blake. "And, among other things, to prevent a Fourth-Former making a silly ass of himself."

"I'll smoke if I want to." "You wouldn't if I hadn't got to catch a train," said Blake, over his shoulder, as Tom Merry dragged him on, "young ass!"

Mellish blew out defiantly a cloud of smoke. The next moment he gave out a terrified yelp as a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

For the moment, he thought it was a master belonging to St. Jim's; but when he saw whom it really was, he was scarcely less terrified.

The round face of Mr. Flump, the local policeman, glared down at him.

Mr. Flump had suddenly pounced on the junior, taking him quite by surprise.

"Now, then!" said Mr. Flump, with his grip on Mellish's shoulder. "Now, then, you young scamp, what do you mean by it?"

"I—I—" Tom Merry and Blake looked back grinning. Whether Mr. Flump was exceeding his duty or not they did not care. Mellish certainly deserved his fright.

"What do you mean by it?" roared Mr. Flump, shaking the junior.

"I—I—" "Come on! I'll march you straight hup to the school!" said Mr. Flump. "We'll see what the 'Ead has to say about this!"

Mellish almost fell upon his knees. "Oh, please, don't," he gasped. "Please—please, Mr. Flump."

"What do you mean by smoking in the streets, which ain't a place within the meaning of the Hact?" said Mr. Flump sternly.

"I—I—" "We'll see what the 'Ead has to say."

"Oh, Mr. Flump, I won't do so again," wailed Mellish. "I—I shall be caned. I might be expelled. If you'll take this shilling."

"Wot!" roared Mr. Flump. "Trying to bribe a hoffer in the hexecution of his dooty!" He slipped the shilling into his pocket. "I'll keep that to be used in hevidence agin yer! Trying to bribe a hoffer."

"Oh, indeed, Mr. Flump, I didn't mean to bribe you," gasped the terrified Mellish. "I—I— Oh, please let me off this time."

"Well," said Mr. Flump thoughtfully, "as the streets ain't a place within the meaning of the Hact, I don't see how I can let you hoff."

"Oh, please, Mr. Flump."

"Well, I'm a merciful man," said Mr. Flump, who had no mind to take the long walk to St. Jim's for the purpose of giving up Mellish to the Head. "P'raps, if you promise never to do so more—"

"I—I promise," gasped Mellish. A promise cost the cad of the Fourth little.

"Then I lets you off," said Mr. Flump magnanimously. "Throw that cigarette away!"

ANSWERS



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!

Mellish gladly did so. The village policeman released him, and he scuttled off at top speed. Mr. Flump grinned, and picked up the half-smoked cigarette. He withdrew under the shadow of the trees in the lane and finished it himself.

Tom Merry and Blake gasped with merriment as they hurried on to the station. The discomfiture of one of the shining lights of the Smart Set at St. Jim's struck them as comical.

"The young ass!" chuckled Blake. "That's as good as a hiding for him. Hallo, there's our train coming in! Put it on!"

They ran into the station. The train was caught, and it bore them away swiftly to Wayland, where they changed for Winchester. In the dim November evening they alighted at that beautiful old city, and took the local train for East-thorpe.

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 watch Mellish arguing with a bobby, and then had to cut for the train. 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' quite puzzled what to do with Wally. Walkah!"

"Yes, Master Augustus."

"Pway have a wippin' suppah pwepared 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 an extwa bed 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 pwomised 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 bumped on the door.

"Hallo, in there, you young scallywag!"

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 bumped 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 sittin'-woom, and we shall be vewy 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

close. "I rather think I approve of young Wally bolting 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 wogard this as a vewy happy occasion, when I have the pleasure of entertainin' two such esteemed twiends under the family wroof."

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

"Yaas, wathah."

D'Arcy 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 hadn't any matches! Walker, pway light the gas!"

Mr. Walker advanced rather gingerly into the room and lighted the gas. The juniors looked round in the light. 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 be gone!" he remarked. "But it's imposs, you know. He was looked 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 blankets was still fluttering against the ivy. It was pretty plain which way Wally had gone.

"Stole away!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 11. A Friend in Need.

"**D**ONE!" 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 Joskin.

Wally's eyes were wet for a moment; but they were gleaming now. He would have given a dozen watches and sovereigns, 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 at St. Jim's.

"My only Aunt Jape!" 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 meetin' 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 here?"

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

"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, ha! Fancy bein' took in by a trick like that! Where was you born? He, he, he! But, of course, you couldn't help it—a kid fresh up from the country. He, he, he! I'm sorry for yer."

Wally only glared. The knowing hand of the Third Form at St. Jim's did not like to be taken for a kid fresh 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 'elp yer. I'll show you the way home if you like. Where do yer 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 hurry to get 'ome. I'll see yer safe. Where do yer live, me 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 stayin' 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 indeed 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, yer ain't the sort to live in London on your own. My 'at! You ain't got no money?"

"No; I've 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 goin' 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—up 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 quite know."

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

"I suppose it can't be helped."

"Yes, it can. It's 'ard on you. You know, I s'pose that downy bloke saw you offer me a thick 'un to change for the piper, and he spotted you," said 'Arry. "You shouldn't show your spondulicks 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, wot are you goin' to do?"

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

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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 'ere, you ain't been gammonin'! It's all straight what you tell 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. "Wot I was goin' 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 doubtfully. 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 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. Only it's startin' to rain—"

Big drops were coming down through the chilly November mist. 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 askin' yer to pay for anythin'!" said 'Arry indignantly. "Ain't I offerin' to take you in for nothin', 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 willin' to stand it. Now, are you comin'?"

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

"Only round this 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 'ave left?"

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

"I didn't neither," said 'Arry. "Let's kin 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 eating his savoury supper.

CHAPTER 12

'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 your '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 a door was open and allowed

the light to escape 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 rum 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 was shuddering 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 these. It was like a glimpse of the under-world, or 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, loosened his dirty neckcloth, and placed a folded coat under his head by way of pillow. The steadier breathing of the wretch showed how much more comfortable he was, even in his brutal insensibility. 'Arry grinned as he rejoined Wally.

"Uncle's been reg'lar at it!" he said. "I s'pose 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 me 'as been doing 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 'ere?"

"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 a 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 wot you've been used to. I can tell that by your togs and the way you speak. You stick 'ere, 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 chivy 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 besides that, as far as Wally could see, no property whatever that might be 'Arry's.

The sound of footsteps on the creaky stairs made Wally look up, thinking that 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 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-turrin' up your 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, and bringing with him a smell of stale fish that almost sickened the lad. "Wot's that? S'pose I chuck you out of the window, eh?"

"Look here—"

"Cheeky young whelp!" said Tadger.

"I don't want a 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! S'pose I chuck you out of the window?"

"S'pose 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 apprising 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 snortin' 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 is 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 punching one another's heads."

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 13.

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 round 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 the 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.

"Ullo! Woke up?" said 'Arry cheerily. "Thought I wouldn't call you. I've done a good bit this morning. 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 he would come back and 'ave you out of bed," explained 'Arry. "I warned 'im it would mean a thick ear for him, 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 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 and pushed him back 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 goin' to do?" asked 'Arry. "Mind, I ain't pryin'. Tain't my business. But you said as 'ow you hadn't any friends or nowhere to go. If that's the lay, wot are you goin' 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 to live."

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

"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 livin'? 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 algebra, 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 could 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 goin' 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 hurry, 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 hook it at once!"

Wally's face set hard.

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

"Look 'ere, 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 goin' to stick it out, I'll 'elp you 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 s'pose you can't do nothin' to earn money?" he remarked. "Cause why? You ain't been taught. You wasn't never expected to 'ave to do nothin' for yourself. You was born to have other folks 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, scramblin' sort of life—you don't know. You'd have 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 not 'ave any insects in it, 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 foggeries. They'd larf, seein' a bloke in them togs sellin' pipers. I kin manage that for you, if you really mean it."

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

"No, that's right enough," said 'Arry, with a nod. "there ain't. Then if you mean it, I'll get rid of them togs for you, and get you some others. I kin pop them for you."

"Ah, that's a good idea! But will they lend a kid of your age money on things?"

"He, he, he! You don't know the uncle of Snoop's Court!" chuckled 'Arry. "He'll think I stole 'em, you know."

"But—but he might send for a policeman!" gasped Wally.

'Arry roared. The joke seemed to tickle him very much, for he roared and roared again. Wally looked at him in amazement.

"Oh, dear!" murmured 'Arry, at last. "You don't catch on. You see, the uncle I'm speakin' of isn't a reg'lar pawnbroker. 'E's a fence as well; lends money on things he knows 'ave been pinched. He wouldn't 'ave a policeman in his den for love or money. 'E'd rather 'ave the worst hooligan in the East End than a policeman."

"Oh, I see!"

"I'll get the things there before breakfast, then, if you've made up your mind," said 'Arry. "and I'll bring you back some fresh togs. You've settled it?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then I'll slide."

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 had 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, a

ragged waistcoat too small, and a jacket that had seen its best days long, 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.

"Good!" he said, jumping out of bed. "I say, where do you wash here?"

"The silver-plated bath-room is on the next floor," said 'Arry humorously. "To save trouble we use this tin basin, and our 'ands to wash with, and 'ere's a towel. I'm sorry it's the same one Tadger uses; it can't be 'elped."

Wally was discouraged for the moment. A towel that had been used by a dirty person was more repulsive to him than anything he had yet seen of the life in Snoop's Court; but he went through with it.

"If you sticks to the pipers," said 'Arry, "and we 'as this room between us, we kin 'ave a towel likewise. I tell you I don't like Tadger 'ere—e's such a pig; but it can't be 'elped."

"It's all right," said Wally cheerfully.

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 yer breakfast, and we'll go out, and I'll get yer 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 a more open quarter of the great city, where, amid the roar of traffic, the scene of Wally's new labours lay.

CHAPTER 14.

On the Track of the Truant.

"HERE we are!" said Tom Merry.

Three youths stepped from the train at Charing Cross 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. What they were likely to accomplish themselves they did not see so 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 for this contingency. Whether he would have approved of this pursuit to London by three juniors was a question they c'd 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 at Charing Cross 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 governah's digs in Park Lane," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "The young wascal would be certain not to go there. I wathah think it

(Continued on page 21.)

GRAND FOOTBALL PUZZLE-PICTURE COMPETITION.

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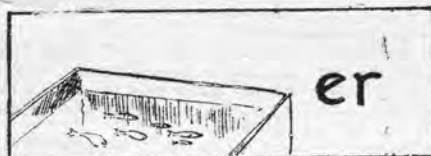
What Competitors have to do.—The Competition is very simple. We are publishing thirteen sets of Puzzle Pictures, each set consisting of six pictures. This is the Tenth Set. Keep this set until you have all the others. Each of these pictures represents the **name of a well-known Association Football Player.**

All you have to do is to write carefully under each picture the name of the Player you think it represents—it is not necessary to add the name of the player's club. Then place the set away until the others have appeared, when the latest day for sending in competitions will be announced. The Editor of the GEM LIBRARY will not be responsible for any loss or delay in transmission or delivery of the lists by post, nor for any accidental loss of a list after delivery. There will be attached to the final list a form to be signed by each competitor, whereby he agrees to these conditions, and no list will be considered unless this form shall have been duly signed by the competitor. No questions will be answered. Read the rules. The Editor's decision is final.

The easiest way to solve the Pictures is to get the issue of "The Boys' Realm" now on sale, price 1d. During the next thirteen weeks "The Boys' Realm" will publish a column of brief biographies of notable footballers, in which will be included all the names of the Players illustrated. Girls may compete. All competitors may get anyone to help them.

THE TENTH SET.

READ THE RULES.



No. 55.....



No. 56.....



No. 57.....



No. 58.....



No. 59.....



No. 60.....

KEEP THESE PICTURES BY YOU UNTIL NOTICE IS GIVEN TO SEND IN.

would be a good ideah to have some lunch. Let us stwoll down towards Piccadilly, and look out for Wally by the way."

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 two 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 motah'-bus."

"Which one?"

"That gween one stwearing along there."

"Rats!"

"I am sure it was young Wally. I could only see the back of his head, and he was wearing difwent 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 is gone, now. Come on, and let's get that lunch."

"Vewy well," said D'Arcy, as the 'bus disappeared. "I weward it as entirely your fault, Tom Merry, 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.

"Now, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, when they reached Piccadilly, "we will sepatate here, and look for the young wascal in thwee difwent directions. We will meet again at pweisely twelve o'clock at the Populah Westauwant."

"Better keep close together."

"But we can get over thwee times as much gwound by sepatatin'. 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 findin' 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 sepatate, 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 sepatate with a rendezvous for lunch. Tom Merry went down Regent Street, Jack Blake towards Shaftesbury Avenue, and Arthur Augustus strolled down Piccadilly.

"Piper, sir!"

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

And he walked on. Two newsboys had been standing near the corner together, and one of them had offered D'Arcy the paper. The other was staring at him, open-mouthed. D'Arcy had no eyes for him. He stroked on gracefully, his cane twirling in his hand, till a sudden exclamation in a female voice caused him to look round.

"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 pleasure, 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 wemembah! I have to look aftah him, you know, while the matah 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 bother 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 15.

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 the 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?"

"You-you young wottah! Cut off!"

"Rats!"

"You are disgwacin' me!" murmured the perplexed and horrified Arthur Augustus. "Pway wan off!"

"More rats!"

"Who is this boy?" said Sir Robert Mannering. "Is this one of the acquaintances you have formed in London, Augustus?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said D'Arcy hastily.

"He seems to know you," said Miss Mannering, a little maliciously. "He knows your name."

"Yaas; but—"

"Now, old Gus, don't pretend you don't know me," said Wally cheerfully. "Look here, old son, I'm hard up. I want you to lend me a sov."

"Go away, you wude boy!" said D'Arcy loudly; adding, in a whisper: "I'll make it a fivah pwesently if you'll cut off!"

Wally grinned.

"Trying to bribe me, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "Gus, I'm ashamed of you! Trying to deny a poor relation because he's down in the world?"

"Weally—"

"Now, don't be a snob, Gus!"

"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's 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!"

"Vewy!" said Sir Robert drily.

"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.

He could not explain why he was in London without giving the clue to the truth of the little incident that had just occurred. He was not sorry when Sir Robert and his daughter bade him good-bye at the corner of Bond Street.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, as he stood alone again, "I nevah weally felt so doocid awkward in my life! The young wascal! Bai Jove, I will give him a feashful thwashin' for that when he comes back to the coll.!"

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 bounder," Blake remarked. "How about you, Merry?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

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

"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 sweetest, 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 mattah was, that the young wascal actually had the cheek to come up and speak to me while I was conversin' with some fwends I met in Piccadilly!"

"Didn't you collar him?"

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

"You—you champion ass—"

"I wufese 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."

"Which way did he go?"

"I weally did not notice, but I think it was towards Piccadilly Circus. Pway finish your lunch, Tom Mewwy. We can look for him aftahwards."

"That's so," said Blake. "No good missing a meal. You're never fit for anything if you've missed a meal. Wire in!"

"Yaas; wathah!"

"Well, buck up, then!" said Tom Merry. "It's too bad to miss a chance like that. Did you say he was selling papers, Gussy?"

"Yaas. The young wascal was in wags, you know, sellin' beastly papahs!"

"Perhaps he's stony, and trying to turn an honest penny!" grinned Blake. "I'll give him selling papers when we find him!"

Arthur Augustus was inclined to be leisurely over his lunch; but Tom Merry hurried him through, and at last he was finished. Then the three juniors walked forth again, with higher hopes of meeting Wally. They knew now what to look for; and, as Tom Merry pointed out, if he was trying to earn money selling papers, he would be bound to keep in the public places, and might very probably be spotted.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass searchingly on every newsboy or newsmen he met, somewhat to their astonishment. Whenever he stared hard at a newsboy, the latter took it as a sign that he wanted a paper, and offered him one; and as the swell of St. Jim's did not like to refuse, he was soon laden with various editions of various papers.

"What are you going to do with that little lot?" grinned Tom Merry, as they reached the corner of the Strand, and paused to look about them.

"I weally do not know," said D'Arcy. "I suppose they will do to wead in the twain goin' home when we have found Wally."

"We haven't found him yet."

"Hallo! What's that row?" asked Blake suddenly, as the sounds of conflict and loud voices reached their ears from a corner. "Sounds like a fight."

"No time to watch a fight now, deah boy!"

"Rats! We can spare a minute," said Blake, turning the corner into Duncannon Street, and hurrying towards the scene of the conflict.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry; and he slipped his arm through Arthur Augustus's, and followed Blake.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, we shall be wastin' time."

"Never mind. We don't want to miss Blake."

"But weally—"

"Oh, come on!"

The next moment they were on the scene of the disturbance.

CHAPTER 16.

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 going 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."

"He ain't stayin' 'ere."

"I says he 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 edition to the honourable fraternity of newsboys, and Wally was not the fellow to stop him.

"I say, don't you 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 jumped up in a fury. He rushed at Wally, and they were soon going it hammer and tongs. Wally got some of the punishment now, for Tadger, though a bully, had pluck, and he was not a despicable adversary. But for every blow he received, Wally returned two or three, and Tadger soon sickened of it.

A crowd was collecting, and a policeman hove in sight. 'Arry caught his friend by the arm.

"Old on! 'Ware coppers!"

But Wally, letting out with his disengaged arm, laid Tadger on his back.

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 that 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 lookers-on 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," he remarked, "but this kid has run away from school, and we've followed to

fetch him back. 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're no right—"

"Bosh! We've been sent by our housemaster to fetch you back; and you ought to be glad we've taken the trouble."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"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—"

"Bai Jove, I wegard him as havin' acted weally hand-somely," said Arthur Augustus. "I should like to shake hands with you, my young twiend."

There was a curious look on 'Arry's face. He had not known Wally long, and all the favours that had been done had been done by him. Yet he was sorry to lose his friend. The little scheme he had so gaily planned—of sharing his room with Wally instead of with Tadger—had been a very attractive one, and it had to be given up now. Something like moisture glimmered in the eye of the street arab.

"You're goin' 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.

Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy had fitted him out with some new clothes before they brought him back. Wally was his old self again; and, though he knew that the matter was serious, he was quite cool, and prepared to face it.

"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 the kicking of the ball into Mr. Selby's face 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 flagitious way by leaving without permission, and for that I shall punish you severely. Take off your jacket!"

"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 scallywag," 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 recount his adventures over and over again; and for days afterwards D'Arcy minor was the lion of the Third Form!

THE END.

NEXT THURSDAY!

NEXT THURSDAY!

Our Next Issue will be a

GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER,

and will contain

"The Ghost of St. Jim's,"

A 30-Page Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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A THRILLING TALE OF THE COAL-MINES. By MAX HAMILTON.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

David Steele, fifteen years of age, leaves his home in a North-Country village to tramp to Wrexborough. On his way, he is instrumental in preventing the murder of a man who proves to be William Scott, a Wrexborough mine-owner, who afterwards takes David into his employ.

One night, William Scott is trapped by his brother George and a miner named Markham and imprisoned in a disused mine, while he is impersonated in Wrexborough by his brother. David accidentally becomes cognisant of this, and, having gained entrance to the mine, schemes to rescue William Scott. One day, on visiting the mine, David finds Scott gone. He comes across Markham, however, in a state of madness, caused by a rock falling on his head. The frenzied miner seizes the boy and carries him to the surface, where a snow-storm is raging. David struggles free from the madman and loses his way in the snow. Shortly afterwards he hears a cry, and a man dashes past him. David, half-frozen, gropes in the direction of the cry, and enters a shed. At the threshold, he stumbles on an object, which he mechanically picks up, and then he falls asleep on a heap of hay. He wakes to find himself clutching a blood-stained knife, while the shed is full of policemen. The sergeant informs him that there is a dead man lying outside, and that he (David) is suspected of the murder.

(Now go on with the Story.)

A Prisoner.

For a moment David gazed at him in open-eyed amazement. Then the memory of the events of the night before rushed back upon him—the horrible cry in the darkness, the figure seen for an instant ere it disappeared in headlong flight, the finding of the knife! The cries, then, had been the last shrieks of a man as he was done to death—that flying figure the murderer hastening from the scene of his crime.

"A man killed!" he gasped. "Who is he?"

"The body has been identified," returned the sergeant, mentally noting what an excellent actor David would have made—in all his years of police service he had never seen a better simulated expression of horrified astonishment—"by Constable Wilmot, who comes from these parts, as that of Mr. William Scott, of Wrexborough."

"I know his face as well as I know my own," broke in Constable Wilmot confidently.

"What?" cried David, his brain reeling. He sprang to his feet. "Where is he? Let me see him!" he cried, rushing to the door.

Before he could reach it he was tightly gripped by a couple of policemen.

"Gently!" said the sergeant drily. "You won't be wanted to show your face yet awhile, young man."

"Let me see him!" David reiterated.

The sergeant made an affirmative sign, and the two men who held him escorted the boy to the door.

Outside it were yet more police. As a matter of fact, the detachment which had thus suddenly appeared upon the moor was one of the strong ones which had been despatched from various centres to aid in putting down the Wrexborough disorders. In the ordinary course of things it would have detained at Wrexborough Station; but the night's snowstorm had played havoc with the railway communications. Snowdrifts had stopped trains all through the North of England, and early in the morning the special carrying the police was blocked half-way between Roxley and Wrexborough. As the distance to the latter town was only three miles, the sergeant had promptly turned out his men to tramp it. Thus it had come to pass that as, under the guidance of the Wrexborough man, Constable Wilmot,

they struck across the moor they had passed the deserted old farmhouse in which David was at that moment sleeping; and suddenly they had come across the body of a man, which the cutting wind had swept bare of the snow with which it must have been covered during the night.

That man Wilmot had at once identified as William Scott, whom he had known well enough in his Wrexborough days.

It needed only a glance to show that the unfortunate man had met his death by violence. As the sergeant said, he had been stabbed twice in the chest; and his attitude seemed to betoken that he had struggled hard for life.

Naturally the march of the detachment of police had been interrupted while a search was made for traces of the crime—a search that had quickly resulted in the discovery of David Steele, asleep and with the bloodstained weapon in his hand.

These things David learned later. At present his one thought was to assure himself whether it was indeed William Scott who lay dead.

A shudder ran through him as the group of men who were standing round the dead man parted before him and his escort, and he saw the distorted face and glazed eyes looking up at him.

Then a cry of relief broke from him.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed.

Even the well-disciplined faces of the police expressed astonishment.

"That is not Mr. William Scott," he said; "it is his brother! I know him by the clothes—the same he was wearing last night!"

An Unexpected Discovery.

There was a moment of incredulous amazement, and then a constable was seen hurrying round the side of the house. He was one of the men who had been detailed to make a thorough inspection of the ruinous premises, in the hope of discovering some further clue to the crime; and it was plain by his face, as he pushed his way to the sergeant, that he had something of importance to communicate.

"There's someone in the cellar, sergeant," he said, "he was locked in."

"What's that you say?" asked Sergeant Watts.

"There's a man in the cellar," the constable repeated.

"Vaughan and I were going down the steps, when we heard a groan—quite distinct. We called, but got no answer, and so we went in. Will you come and see, sir?"

It was Sergeant Watts who was the first to enter the cellar, lantern in hand, and as he flashed the rays round the gloomy walls a shout rose to his lips.

"Right you are, Warner!" he exclaimed. "There is a man here!"

In truth, on a heap of straw in a corner of the cellar, a man lay huddled up, but for the moment so still was he, and so ghastly pale, that the sergeant doubted whether he were alive or dead.

As became a prudent man about to enter upon a campaign, Sergeant Watts had come provided with a little flask of brandy. Having ascertained that the unfortunate man's heart still beat, he ordered one of his men to raise his head while he himself forced the spirit between the clenched teeth, with the result that a long sigh soon told of returning animation.

At the same moment the man who was supporting the helpless body exclaimed involuntarily:

"Blest if this chap ain't as like as two peas to the dead man up there! Put 'em side by side, and you wouldn't know 'em one from the other."

There was a murmur of astonishment. What the man had said was absolutely true.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE GHOST OF ST. JIM'S," and
A 30-Page Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"BRITAIN INVADED!"
A Grand War Story.

Sergeant Watts drew his eyebrows together in a frown. He was thinking of David's words—his assertion that the murdered man was not William Scott.

The dose of brandy stimulated the unfortunate man's faculties. He opened his eyes, and surveyed his surroundings with an alarmed and bewildered stare.

"You're all safe," said the sergeant reassuringly. And then, as the man's features grew more composed, he added: "Will you tell me who you are?"

"Scott—William Scott," was the feeble but perfectly audible reply.

Watts checked the murmur among his men by a sharp glance, and was about to add a further question, when the sick man broke forth with:

"Ah, I remember now! This awful den—they brought me here from the mine. For Heaven's sake take me out of this horrible place! It is killing me!"

With the aid of a couple of sturdy arms he staggered to his feet.

"Get me out of it," he muttered impatiently. "It is killing me. I have been a prisoner for weeks. Oh, just to see the light of day again!"

"One moment, sir," said the sergeant respectfully. "Would you tell me if you have a brother—a brother who strongly resembles you?"

A flash of uncontrollable agitation passed over Scott's face. For an instant he seemed undecided how to reply.

"Yes," he said faintly at last. "It—it has all been discovered, I suppose?"

He groaned, and his head fell forwards. It was evident that, for the present, he was quite incapable of further speech or effort.

A couple of stalwart constables carried him up the cellar stairs to the open air, and it was as he reached it that David's eyes first fell upon him.

A cry of surprise and horror broke from the boy's lips; for his long imprisonment in the noisome den from which he had just been rescued had reduced the coal-owner to the mere shadow of his former self. He was as thin as a skeleton, his hair matted and disordered, and his clothes, rotted by the damp, hung about him in rags.

The stupor into which Scott had again sunk prevented him from seeing David, or noticing the plight in which he stood—in the grip of two policemen. Neither did he see the body of his brother, which was carefully screened from his sight by the sergeant's orders, lest the shock might prove too much for him in his feeble state. He was barely conscious of being laid on an improvised litter—a door torn from its hinges—covered over with a coat, and borne along through the keen, frosty air. Had there been any accommodation for an invalid at the ruined old house the sergeant would have left him there, for he was certainly in no condition to brave a winter's day. But, as it was, he judged that the best thing to do would be to convey him as quickly as possible to Wrexborough, where he could receive proper medical attendance.

Six constables took charge of the door, and the force of police which had been so strangely delayed in its march to Wrexborough set out across the moor, David closely guarded in its centre. In vain the boy told himself that the charge against him could not fail to be disproved immediately. The indignity of his position made itself keenly felt, and he writhed beneath it.

And when he sat in his little whitewashed cell, thinking of the charge against him, he realised the full horror of it—when he thought of his mother's grief when she heard of the accusation against her son—for a time his courage gave way, and he was thankful that he was alone, and could yield to his grief unseen by prying eyes.

The Trial.

Before darkness fell that day, wild rumours were flying round Wrexborough. The whole place was agog with a story that seemed too strange to be true—yet true it was!

Hardly anyone in the town had been aware that Scott had a brother; and Wrexborough was in a state of amazement when it realised the trick that had been played upon it—the trick that had now ended so tragically for the perpetrator.

For the body of the dead man was identified at the inquest by his brother as that of George Scott, and the coroner's jury having returned a verdict of "Wilful murder" against David Steele, the boy lay awaiting his trial in Wrexborough Gaol.

The question of his guilt or innocence was the one absorbing topic of conversation in the town. His complete innocence few people maintained, the evidence pointing so plainly to his having struck the fatal blow; but now that the whole story was known, it was generally believed that, if he had not actually killed George Scott in self-defence, he had at least received great provocation for the act.

In other respects, Wrexborough was settling down. With the return of the real William Scott the lock-out had, of course, come to an end, and the miners resumed work—needless to say, at their former wages.

Of these things David Steele heard while he lay in Wrexborough Gaol, a prisoner on remand, waiting till the day when the opening of the assizes should decide his fate.

At first—in his more hopeful moments, at least—he had confidently believed that something must come to light, some fresh clue be discovered by the police, which would put his innocence beyond the shadow of a doubt. But as day after day went by, and such new evidence as was collected seemed—so far as he could gather—to point rather to his guilt than the other way, his heart sank lower and lower.

There were two people, however—including his mother—to whom his simple assertion that he was guiltless of the blood of the murdered man was quite sufficient.

Never for an instant did Scott's belief in David waver, and all that man could do to alleviate the misery and suspense of that awful time of waiting he did. It was he himself who broke the bad news to the boy's mother, and brought her to Wrexborough, where she was to await the trial.

Glad as he was to see her again, David could almost have wished that she were not there. She did her best, poor soul, to hide her distress when she visited the gaol; but her drawn face showed too plainly what she was suffering, and gave the lie to the assumed confidence with which she tried to cheer her son.

The day of the trial dawned at last—the eventful day that was either to clear David Steele's name, or to brand him as a murderer, and consign him to a murderer's doom. And, remembering what that was, David could not bring himself to believe that the trial would go against him—could not believe that justice could be so blind as not to discover that he was innocent of the crime.

Thus the beginning of his trial found him calmer and more hopeful than he had been for some time.

The last person who had seen George Scott alive was Thomas Reece, the butler at the Hall. In his evidence he deposed that on the night of the murder he was unable to sleep. About half-past twelve he had heard someone descending the stairs, and hurrying out into the hall to see what was the matter, he had found his master—as he then thought him—in the act of unbarring the door. In answer to counsel's questions, he stated that Mr. Scott wore his hat and overcoat, and carried in his hand a leather despatch-box, such as is used to contain papers or valuables. On this point he was positive.

He testified further, that Mr. Scott seemed exceedingly annoyed at being thus discovered in the act of leaving the house, and had peremptorily ordered him—the witness—to go back to his room. In spite of this, Reece had ventured to remonstrate with his master on the danger of going out alone, in view of threatened attacks by the out-of-work; whereupon Mr. Scott had declared that he was not going into Wrexborough, but to walk over the moor to Roxley Station, and should therefore run no risk of meeting anyone.

He had added, when the butler expressed his surprise at this sudden departure, that he had been unexpectedly called away to London, and that the household were not to be alarmed if he did not return the next day.

Concerning the contents of the despatch-box which Reece was positive he had seen in his master's hand, it transpired that George Scott had, during the few days preceding his flight, realised in his brother's name securities amounting to nearly six thousand pounds. These, it was surmised, he must have been carrying with him. But the most painstaking search had hitherto failed to reveal a sign of the leather case, either in the place where the body had been found or anywhere on the moor.

The police theory, of course, was that David Steele, after murdering Scott, had stolen and concealed it.

The witnesses for the defence were chiefly witnesses as to character, and it was obvious that the sympathy of the crowded court was with the prisoner.

At the conclusion of the judge's speech, the jury filed out to consider the decision.

David was not kept long in suspense.

In answer to the question as to whether their finding was that the prisoner was guilty or not guilty, the foreman rose and said, in an almost reluctant tone:

"Guilty; but we most strongly recommend the prisoner to mercy."

"On what grounds?"

"On the grounds of his youth, and the great provocation received in the murdered man's previous attempts upon his life."

David set his teeth. The foundation of the world seemed

to be shaken beneath him. He was innocent, and circumstances had made him appear guilty in the eyes of his fellow-men—he was a proven criminal, a murderer!

A hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he was hurried out of the court; and, half believing that he was in some awful dream from which he would presently awake, he was taken back to the prison-van, and so again to Wrexborough Gaol.

Reprieved!

On the succeeding day the governor entered David's cell to inform him that the Home Secretary had seen fit to alter the sentence to one of penal servitude for life; and the boy was immediately removed from the condemned cell, which he had hitherto occupied, to another part of the prison.

Two days later the order was issued for his transference to Portland, where his term of penal servitude was to be spent.

He was allowed an interview with his mother before he left—an interview that, much as he had longed for it, yet went nearer to breaking down his courage. Scott, also, he saw again; and the mineowner reiterated his assurance that he would never cease to work for David's freedom.

It was early morning when David, clad in the rough suit of a convict, marked with the hateful sign of the broad arrow, left Wrexborough Gaol. A thick white mist lay on the ground, and the air was chill with frost. The boy shivered as he was hurried from the prison gate into the "Black Maria," waiting to convey him to the railway station. He had a strange, dull feeling that what he was going through was all some horrible dream—that he should wake up presently and find that it was time for him to hasten off to his work in the pit.

When the station was reached, however, and he was forced to descend from the prison-van and cross the platform to the third-class carriage reserved for him and his escort of two warders, the dream-like sensation left him. He realised only too acutely the misery and shame of his position; and he walked with drooping head and his eyes upon the ground, acutely conscious of the glances—some curious, some pitying—that were cast upon him by the passengers upon the platform. It was a relief to take refuge from their eyes in the carriage, and to see the warder to whom he was handcuffed promptly draw down the blinds on the station side.

Five minutes later the train was in motion, and David had begun his journey to Portland.

"I wonder," he thought drearly, looking round the carriage, "how many years it will be before I am in a train again?"

Even as the thought passed his mind, the train plunged with a roar and a rattle into the first of the three tunnels that lay between Wrexborough and Roxley; and one of the warders, who had provided himself with a paper, laid it down with a grunt of annoyance.

"Why the dickens don't they give us lights?" he growled, half aloud.

The tunnel was a short one. In a minute, or thereabouts, the train emerged from it, and the warder leaned forward to pick up his paper again from the opposite seat.

As he did so his prisoner started imperceptibly.

He had seen—and his heart had given a wild leap at the sight—that the handcuff by which he was secured to the warder was not properly fastened; in fact, it had actually come unclasped upon his wrist.

For a moment he could scarcely believe his eyes. Such a gross piece of carelessness was incredible—impossible! But a second glance assured him that, impossible or not, the thing was so.

Instantly his brain was at work contriving, scheming, how to take advantage of this piece of official neglect. And that advantage, he saw at once, if it was to be taken at all, must be taken immediately; for at any moment the hitherto unsuspecting warder might make the discovery that his prisoner was only fettered as long as he chose to remain so. But, to David's infinite relief, he sat motionless and absorbed in the study of his paper until the train again plunged into darkness, as it entered the second, and longest, tunnel between the two stations.

It was in this tunnel that David had decided to make his desperate dash for liberty.

Both the doors of the compartment were, as a matter of course, locked. The boy's first idea had been to leap up, make a rush for the window, lower it, and precipitate himself through it upon the line, be the risk to life and limb what it might.

But a second and better expedient was suggested by the construction of the carriage.

The compartment in which he and the warder were travelling was one of those built with a small space between the

roof and the partition cutting it off from the next one, a space of only a few inches, but sufficiently large—so, at least, the boy hoped—to enable anyone as slim as himself to squeeze through it into the next compartment. There one of the doors, at any rate, that on the platform side, would be unlocked, and the risk of dropping on to the line from a train in motion would, therefore, not be nearly so great as if he were to leap from the window.

A long whistle came from the engine as the train rushed into the gloom of the tunnel. David drew a deep breath; then, as darkness closed over them, he sprang to his feet, wrenched his hand loose, gripped the edge of the luggage-rack, and swung himself bodily into it.

There was a shout from the astounded warder. Naturally concluding that his prisoner was making for the window, he leaped across the floor of the carriage, with arms outstretched, to grasp—emptiness! He turned and felt for him on the seats and under them, cursing the prisoner, the tunnel, the railway company for their parsimony in lamps, and himself for having come without a box of matches.

The boy was not there. There was nothing for it but to open the window, seize the alarm-cord, and pull it for all he was worth. And this the exasperated warder promptly did.

"The window hasn't been opened; then where, in the name of thunder, has he got to?" he asked himself.

The next moment he was somewhat enlightened.

From the neighbouring compartment came a chorus of extraordinary sounds—sounds that suggested that a whole cartful of passengers were engaged in a free fight. Shouts, shrieks, the noise of people tumbling over one another, women's voices appealing to the guard to stop the train—all those brought enlightenment to the listening warder.

"He's got in next door!" he gasped, in astonishment. "How did he manage it?"

The warder had guessed rightly. It was David's sudden and unexpected entrance into the next compartment that had caused the tumult. While his gaoler was instinctively making for the window, with the idea of preventing his escape, the boy had squeezed and struggled through the space at the top of the partition until he succeeded in getting into the rack of the neighbouring compartment.

He had no time to lose if he was to leave the train unseen, since the end of the tunnel must now be close at hand. Without pausing an instant, therefore, he dropped from the rack.

He had intended to land on the seat; instead he landed on the top of the substantial lady who occupied it, and who not unnaturally gave vent to a terrific yell. Extending her arms, she thrust her unseen assailant from her with all her might, with the result that David was precipitated against a man on the opposite side of the carriage. The back of the boy's head came in violent contact with this individual's nose; and, under the natural impression that he was the victim of an unprovoked assault, he struck out wildly.

Unfortunately, in the dark and crowded carriage, the blows which were intended for David went astray on a peppery old gentleman, who, believing that robbery with violence was the object of this extraordinary attack, proceeded to defend himself with great gallantry.

Thus, in a few seconds from the time David had entered it, the whole compartment was in a state of indescribable uproar; a pitched battle was in progress in the dark, and one might have thought that pandemonium had broken loose on a small scale, so appalling was the noise made by the terrified and furious passengers.

Meanwhile, David Steele, the cause of all the tumult, had struggled through it to the carriage door, and taken the perilous leap!

And the train rushed on, and had gone some two miles before it pulled up in response to the frantic pulling of the alarm by the two warders, who immediately alighted and made their way back to the tunnel—only to find that the convict had escaped.

Micky's Strategy.

For at least five minutes David lay stunned in the six-foot way, and with difficulty eventually crawled slowly along to test whether he had broken any bones.

"Thank Heaven—thank Heaven!" he repeatedly muttered, on coming to the conclusion that he had escaped practically scathless—for he had come off with nothing worse than one or two cuts and bruises.

"I must get out of this tunnel, and as quickly as I can," David thought.

Walking as fast as possible, he came to the mouth of the tunnel. He ran on for some little time, up the embankment, and so on to the moor, and then, pulling up from sheer

need of breath and strength, he sat down and began to think over the situation. Anyway, he was safe for the moment!

But no—for suddenly between the low branches of the bush he was sheltering under he saw a pair of bright eyes fixed upon him!

He was discovered!

He gave a gasp, and would have sprung to his feet in a mad attempt to escape, when to his astonishment a familiar voice exclaimed sharply:

"Hush, Dave! Don't move! It's me—Micky!"

"Micky?" cried David.

"Yes, Micky. I've just been down to the signal-box to take some oil, and thought I saw you come out of the tunnel. Don't 'ee stir. I'm coming through!"

And with a crash and a scramble Micky forced his way to David's side.

David smiled faintly.

"Micky," he said, pressing the small boy's hand, "you mustn't be found talking to me. It might get you into trouble. You'd better go away, and leave me to take my chance."

But Micky's face had suddenly begun to work with excitement, and, seizing David's arm, he exclaimed:

"Dave, could you get into my clothes?"

"Your clothes, Micky?"

"Yes," the smaller boy went on eagerly. "I believe you could. They're a sight too big for me, owing to their being dad's old ones cut down. Here, try." And he tore off his coat. "Put it on."

But David shook his head.

"If you mean you want me to change clothes with you, Micky," he said, "thank you very much, but I won't. They wouldn't be taken in by the trick for a minute. It wouldn't help me, and you would be punished for it."

But Micky was pulling off his trousers now.

"Garn!" he replied cheerfully. "I've got a better plan

then he seated himself upon the ground a short distance from them, and then he listened.

David listened, too. At last the voices of the two warders were close at hand. He could distinguish their very words, and it seemed probable that, in another instant they would appear on the crest of the slope.

What was Micky about to do?

The question was soon answered. As the head of the first warder came in sight Micky's face was suddenly contorted. He screwed up his eyes, he opened his mouth to its fullest extent, and then he burst into a tremendous howl.

The noise brought the searchers hurrying to the spot, and they gazed in amazement at the sight of a small boy, minus coat and trousers, seated on the frosty grass, and apparently plunged in the very deepest grief.

"Hallo! Who's the kid, and what's the matter with him?"

"What have you done with your clothes, sonny?"

Such were some of the exclamations that David heard from his place of concealment—exclamations to which Micky seemed to pay no heed whatever, for he continued to howl in the same loud and melancholy tone.

Suddenly one of the men gave a shout.

"Look here!" he cried, pouncing upon David's discarded clothes, and then lifting them high in the air for general inspection.

There was a chorus of exclamations, and then David heard one of the men say excitedly:

"Don't you see? He's stripped the kid of his togs, and gone off in them!"

David's heart leaped. He saw Micky's plan clearly now. Never before had he given the boy credit for so much sharpness.

Meanwhile, his pursuers were besieging Micky with questions.

"He's gone off in your coat and trousers, you say?"

"Yes—took 'em from me," returned Micky, gulping down

NEXT THURSDAY:

BRITAIN INVADED!

A Powerful and Stirring War Story.

than that, Dave Steele. I'm not going to be locked up by the coppers—not me. But if I don't take the coppers in beautifully, my name ain't Micky Jones. Only be quick, and off with them togs o' yours. Quick, I say! There ain't no time to lose—and no time to explain, neither. Be quick!" he repeated impatiently, as David still hesitated.

"You're sure you won't get into trouble, Micky?" he asked once more.

"Dead certain. Hurry up!"

David delayed no longer. Micky's excitement had infected him with hope. He tore off the arrow-marked garments. Instantly Micky seized them, and tucked them under his arm.

"Now then," he directed, "you'd better not try and get into my togs till after it's all over. Just you lie still and listen. It'll be a lark, I tell you." And he chuckled audibly. "When I've got those two warders out of the way you can make off. And if you're hungry there's a bit o' bread an' cheese in my jacket pocket."

David gripped the speaker's hand.

"How can I ever repay you, Micky?" he muttered huskily.

"Garn!" was Micky's rejoinder. "And now to see the fun!"

Still holding the convict suit under his arm, he began to creep out of the bushes. What he was about to do David had not the least idea. Crouching down in his hiding-place, he watched him breathlessly.

Cautiously Micky protruded his head from the prickly screen of furze and bramble. There was no one in sight, so he crawled out into the open. Anxious as he was, David could scarcely help laughing at the figure he presented, clad in the very scantiest of garments—garments quite insufficient for a frosty winter's day.

But Micky was evidently too much bent upon the success of his design to notice the biting cold. First he flung down the convict's coat and breeches in a conspicuous position,

a realistic sob. "Made me take 'em off, or said 'e'd kill me. Left 'is own things behind."

"Yes, yes; we can see that. But how long ago was it?"

"Don't know," whined Micky.

"Can't be long," broke in the other man.

"Which way did he go?"

Micky wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, and then, giving a gigantic sniff, pointed away from the railway line.

"Long there," he said. "'E went creepin' in and cut among them bushes, an' then in between them two little hills. That's as far as I could see him."

"After him!" cried the inspector, who had been putting the questions to Micky.

"You'll fetch me my clothes back?" said the latter imploringly.

"Yes, we'll fetch your clothes back, my little man," returned the inspector. "And, meanwhile, if you don't want to freeze without 'em, you'd better cut along to that farmhouse over by the high-road, and ask the people there to lend you something to go home in."

He was off almost before the words were out of his mouth—off, and the other man with him, leaving Micky one huge grin at the success of his scheme. So well had he played his part that no suspicion entered the minds of the searchers that they were being deceived.

Separating a little, they hurried on in happy ignorance of the fact that they had been actually standing within a few feet of their prey.

As soon as the police were out of hearing—though not out of sight—Micky executed a caper.

"Hear me take 'em in? Hear me howl?" he cried exultantly.

"I should think I did," returned David, from the midst of the bushes. "Micky, I never thought you were such an awful prevaricator!"

"BRITAIN INVADED!"

IN NEXT WEEK'S GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER.

"Can you get into my clothes?" Micky inquired anxiously.

"Yes," David replied, cautiously protruding his head from his hiding-place. "They aren't such a bad fit as you'd think, considering the difference in the size of us."

"That's all right. Then as soon as they're right out of sight you'd better make a bolt in case they come back this way."

"Right you are!" answered David, his mouth full of the bread and cheese which he had just extracted from the pocket of Micky's coat. "Micky, you've saved my life with this grub; I was right down hungry. Look here, it's no good your stopping here any longer, and you'll freeze if you do. You'd better take that chap's advice, and go and ask those people if they can't give you something to wear."

Micky nodded. Now that the excitement was over he was beginning to feel cold.

"I think I will," he said, his teeth chattering, as David emerged from the bushes and cast a quick, cautious glance in the direction in which the police had vanished.

But there was not so much as the top of a helmet to be seen.

Side by side the two boys mounted the little slope above the bushes. The top of the farmhouse for which Micky was bound was visible about a mile away.

"Good-bye, Dave!" the younger lad said.

David gripped his hand, and then the two separated.

David stepped out as briskly as he could. He had no fear of immediate pursuit, but he judged it well to put as great a distance as possible between himself and the police. The beginning of the long winter's night was not now far distant, and when once darkness had fallen he would have a chance of boarding a goods train he had observed ready for despatch on the siding by the tunnel.

"That train's sure to be bound for Leeds," he thought, "and it'll be dark when it gets there, and I can drop off before they shunt into the siding, and make my way into the town."

And so it all worked out as he arranged. Early the next morning David Steele found himself at the end of a straggling street in the suburbs of Leeds, which was still wrapped in midnight darkness, though here and there a light was beginning to show in a window.

As time went on, the workers in factories began to pass him on the way to their daily toil.

The sight of a coffee-stall in the side street reminded the boy that it was time for breakfast. He had a steaming cupful, accompanied by a thick slice of bread-and-butter, and felt all the better for the meal.

He ventured to ask the keeper of the coffee-stall if he knew of any work going; but the man shook his head, and said that trade was slack in Leeds just then; a good many of the factories were working short time.

This was not particularly encouraging; but David was determined to look on the hopeful side of things.

By this time the town was waking up. David wandered aimlessly about until his attention was arrested by the shouting of a newsboy who was hawking his wares on the kerb.

"Ere y'are! 'Yorkshire Post!' 'Orrible colliery disaster! Wrexborough mine flooded! Sixty men entombed! Colliery Disaster! 'Yorkshire Post!' Wrexborough pit flooded!"

David pulled a penny from his pocket, thrust it into the newsboy's hand, and snatched a paper from him.

The headlines had not exaggerated. An awful catastrophe had befallen the Wrexborough Pit. Without the slightest warning, a torrent of water had broken into one of the lower galleries and quickly flooded a large section of the mine.

How many lives were lost it was as yet impossible to say, but sixty men were missing. It was hoped that most, if not all of them, had had time enough before they were cut off by the rising water

to take refuge at the further end of the seam. This sloped upwards, and was therefore believed to be above the level of the flood. Even if that were the case, however, their rescue was more than problematical, for not only must the intervening galleries first be pumped out, but a large section of rock, which had caved in under the pressure of the water near the foot of the shaft, would have to be cut through.

This, it was feared, would be a labour of days. There would be little hope, therefore, of reaching the unfortunate men alive.

The report went on to state that among the missing men was the owner of the mine, Mr. William Scott, whose name had recently been before the world in connection with the extraordinary story revealed at the Wrexborough murder trial.

How David Returned to Wrexborough.

All day long the pumps had been clanking at the head of the Wrexborough shaft; but those who worked there had little hope of saving the lives of the sixty men who were known to have been cut off by the inrush of the water.

With a worn, haggard face, Grafton, the manager of the mine, turned homeward, as the long winter night began to descend.

He had been at his post for four-and-twenty hours without bite or sup, and he would not have left it now but for the fact that, if he was to be of any further use on the morrow, rest and refreshment were an absolute necessity.

He stumbled wearily into his house, and sank down in a chair. Hungry as he was, he could not eat. He stopped after he had swallowed a few mouthfuls.

"It chokes me!" he groaned. "I cannot eat when I think of those poor chaps down there, dying by inches! And Scott among 'em!"

He started, and looked up. A smart tap had resounded on the window-pane. It was repeated more loudly. He rose, and lifted a corner of the blind.

Outside a face was pressed against the glass, and as the manager saw it he started again, for the eyes into which he looked were the eyes of the missing convict, David Steele!

With an exclamation of surprise, Grafton hurried to the door and opened it. In an instant David had slipped inside.

"David Steele!" the manager said, in a low voice. "What brings you here, lad?"

"What brings me here, sir?" David repeated eagerly.

"The accident in the mine—the flood! I heard of it this morning in Leeds, and I've managed to get back into Wrexborough, and been hiding about here until I saw you come in. Mr. Grafton, is what this paper says right?" And he pulled a thumbed leaf of the "Yorkshire Post" from his pocket. "It is hoped that the men at work will have been able to take refuge at the end of the top level seam, where the galleries have a decided upward trend. In that case, it is just possible that they may be rescued alive."

"Yes, that's right," returned Grafton, astonished at the boy's excitement. "But it'll be a matter of days before we can get at their bodies, I'm afraid."

"No, sir," cried David, his eyes sparkling, "not if you work from the old pit! It's pretty well on a level with the bed of our dead level with the bed of our lower seam. You know, then, I went from one to the other after Markham, and those chaps who are shut up there now could have done the same thing, if Markham hadn't fired a charge there and blocked the passage up. But there'll be no pumping to do from that end, sir; you'll get at 'em ten times sooner. That's what I've come from Leeds to tell you."

(To be concluded. Next Thursday's Grand Christmas Number of THE GEM LIBRARY will contain the opening chapters of a Splendid War Story, entitled, "Britain Invaded," a tale no Britisher should miss reading.)

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