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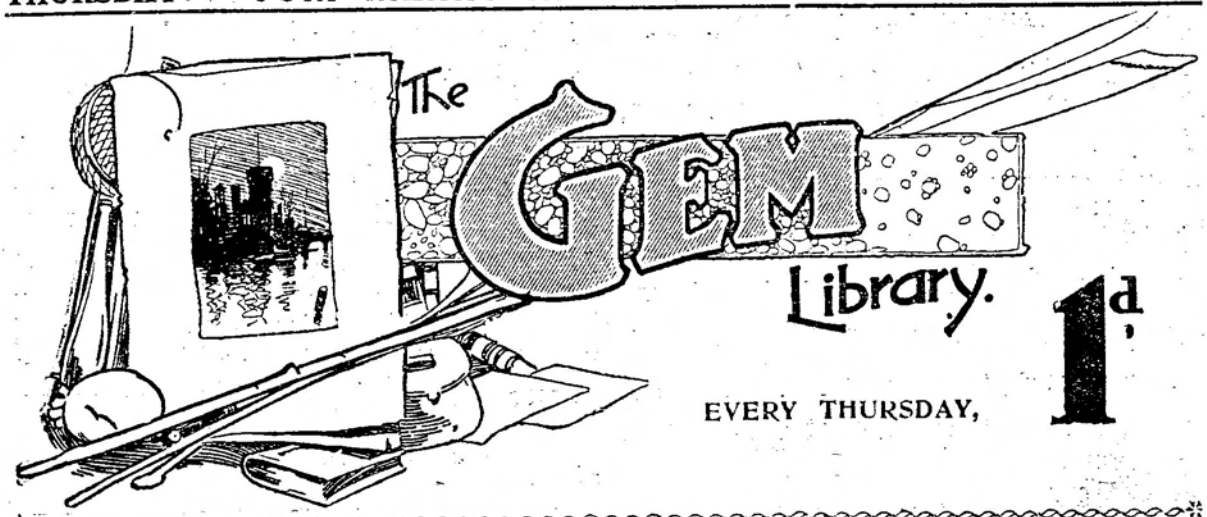
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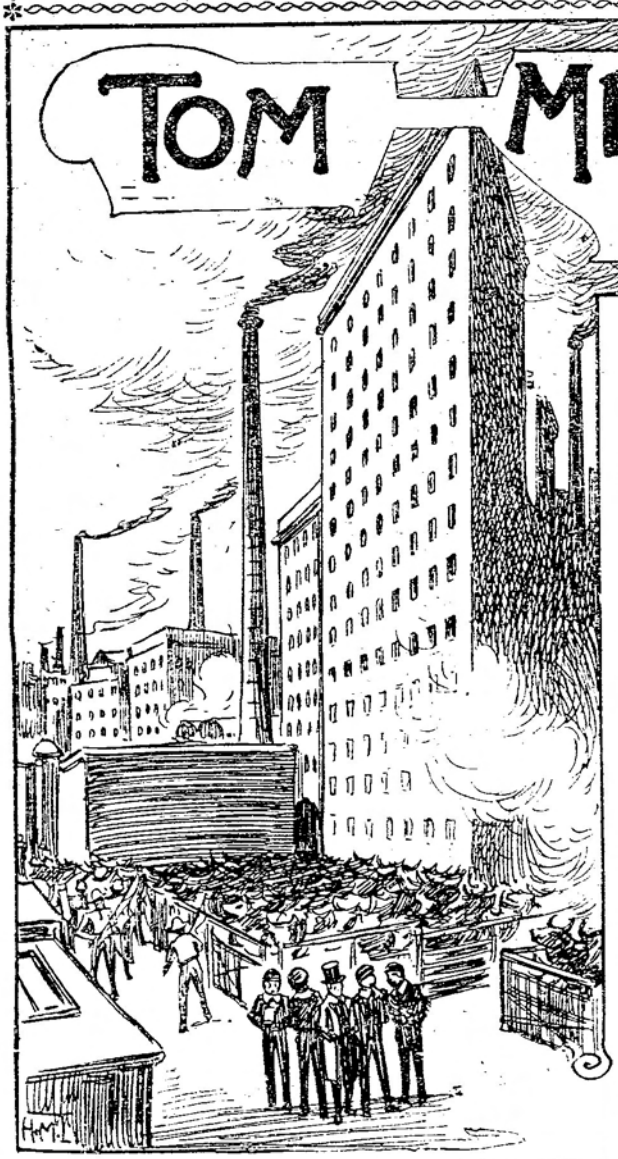
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TOM MERRY IN CHICAGO.



A Splendid, Complete Tale of the Boys of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Trouble in the Train.

"PONGO, Pongo! Have you seen Pongo?"

"Weally, Wally, I am not likely to have been keepin' a watch on your beastly mongwel!"

"Pongo, Pongo! Have you seen Pongo, Tom Merry?"

"Not since the last time."

"Pongo! Blake, where's Pongo?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Pongo, Pongo!"

Wally—once known in the Third Form at St. Jim's as D'Arcy minor—was looking anxious and worried. The westward train was speeding towards the city of Chicago, and Tom Merry & Co were looking round for their belongings.

They were on their journey to the ranch of Tom Merry's uncle in Arizona. Their last stopping-place had been New York; their next was Chicago, the "Windy City," as it is called by its inhabitants; better known to European fame as the city of canned beef.

Mrs. Stuyvesant—the stout, kind-hearted lady who had taken charge of the boys on their arrival in New York from England—was with them now, dozing in her seat. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—D'Arcy major—was carefully flicking a few specks of dust from his beautifully-creased trousers; Tom Merry and Jack Blake were reading a fortnight-old copy of "The Magnet" between them, and Skimpole, of course, was making notes for his book of travels, when a stir among the passengers warned them that

they were approaching their destination. Wally was looking for Pongo—as a matter of fact, he had spent a great deal of his time since landing in America in looking for Pongo. Pongo was not always to be found, and Wally lived in a state of apprehension of leaving him behind somewhere along the line.

"We're pretty near Chicago," said Wally. "Of course, we can't get out of the train without Pongo. If you don't want to go on to St. Louis, you'd better help me look for him."

"I should uttahly wefuse to go on to St. Louis," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am tired, and in need of west and wefweshment. Besides, I don't believe this twain goes to St. Louis."

"What did you do with the beast?" asked Tom Merry. "Sure you had him on the train at all?"

"You jolly well know I did!" grunted Wally. "The conductor said he would keep an eye on him on the platform, and I trusted to him. Catch me trusting a conductor again! Pongo's gone!"

"Well, you can pick up some stray dog in Chicago that will do just as well," suggested Jack Blake.

Wally's only reply to this friendly suggestion was a dagger-like glare. To his mind there was no dog, stray or otherwise, that was anything like Pongo. Arthur Augustus shook his head too.

"I'm afwaid it's extwemely impwob. that Wally will find a stway dog in Chicago," he said. "I have heard that all the stway dogs in Chicago are used up in the canned beef factowies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally looked more anxious than ever.

"My only Aunt Jane! If I lose sight of Pongo, that's what may happen to him! Look here, you fellows, help me find him!"

But the fellows only grinned. They were not inclined to enter upon a hunt up and down a crowded train on the track of a vanished mongrel. The seats were all full, and several people were lounging in the aisle which ran through the centre of each car. Near the boys two men were chatting—one of them, a keen-faced fellow, with the unmistakable air of the American reporter; the other a stout old gentleman, who, judging by his manner, might have been the owner of all the train, with Chicago thrown in.

"A hundred thousand, Mr. Potts," said the reporter, jotting it down in his notebook; "a hundred thousand a week!"

"I guess that's the number, sir," said the stout gentleman. "You can put that in the 'Evening Cocktail,' sir, and not be far wrong. A hundred thousand animals, sir, enter the gates of the Potts' stockyard every week. I guess so, sir."

And the stout gentleman put his thumbs into the armholes of his loud check waistcoat, and beamed with great satisfaction. He was evidently very proud of the number of animals that met their doom in the Potts' stockyard every week. The reporter, having apparently finished his interview, closed his book with a snap and strolled along the car, and Mr. Potts of Chicago sat down in his seat again.

There was a wild yell as the stout person of the Chicago merchant plumped down. A mongrel dog had been curled up on the seat, asleep, and Mr. Potts had not noticed him. Poor Pongo was nearly flattened, and he squirmed out frantically from under the stout gentleman with a yelping yell that made Mr. Potts jump up with remarkable activity.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Potts.

Wally came running along the car.

"Here he is! Here's Pongo!"

"You young rascal!" roared Mr. Potts. "How dare you bring a dog into a car?"

"How dare you sit on my dog?" exclaimed Wally, equally wrathful. "You've nearly squashed the poor beggar. Do you think you're a bantam-weight, to go about sitting on dogs?"

Mr. Potts turned purple. He certainly did not look like a bantam-weight.

"You—you—you——" he stuttered.

"Come on, Pongo! Jolly good thing I've found you before you got worked up into canned beef!" said Wally.

"Boy!" roared Mr. Potts.

"Eh?"

"Do you know whom you are addressing, sir? Hiram K. Potts, sir—Hiram K. Potts of Chicago, sir!"

"Good!" said Wally, affably. "My name's D'Arcy—called Wally for short—you may call me Wally if you like."

Some of the passengers began to chuckle. Mr. Potts glared at Wally in purple wrath, and seemed inclined to commit assault and battery on the spot. Wally tucked his shaggy favourite under his arm and beat a retreat. He was received by his elder brother with a portentous frown.

"Wally, I am afwaid you have been wude to the gentleman——"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"

"I insist upon beginnin'——"

"Then ring off as soon as possible!"

"I uttahly wefuse to wing off! I wegard you as havin failed in wespect to a gentleman oldah than yourself——"

"Yes," grinned Tom Merry, "a trifle older, I think."

"As head of the family, as far as Amewica is concerned, I feel called upon to apologise for you," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall immediately pwoceed to tendah an apology to the gentleman."

"Go it, old son! You can apologise if you like! It will keep you quiet for a time, anyway!"

"I wefuse to allow you to wegard it in that light, Wally!"

"Rats!" said D'Arcy minor cheerfully.

D'Arcy rose and adjusted his eyeglass. He felt himself called upon to sustain the reputation of the house of D'Arcy for politeness and respect towards elders. But as he was about to go along the car the train, which had been slackening, clattered to a halt.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Is this our station, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, rather—Pacific Avenue Depot."

"Pway wait a few minutes while I apologise to——"

"Yes, I can see us doing it!" grinned Jack Blake, passing his arm through Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's and pulling him along the train-platform. "You're coming along with me, my son!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Stuyvesant, gathering up her wraps; "we alight here, my dear boys! Pray, do not lose sight of me! It would be a great trial if you were to get lost in Chicago as you did in New York, my dears!"

And in spite of Arthur Augustus's great desire to tender an apology to Mr. Potts of Chicago, the travellers left the train and the station.

CHAPTER 2.

In Chicago.

WALLY kept Pongo tightly in his arms, determined to run no more risks with his favourite, and, careless of the rumpled and hairy state his waistcoat was getting into. Having given directions for the baggage to be expressed to her hotel, Mrs. Stuyvesant gathered the juniors round her—a great deal like a hen gathering her chicks—and entered a hack. Arthur Augustus handed her in with all the grace in the world, and just then he caught sight of Mr. Potts of Chicago coming out and looking round apparently for some vehicle.

"Pway excuse me a moment, madam!" said D'Arcy.

And he cut across to the stout Chicago merchant, and stopped before him, raising his silk hat in a way that was possible only to the swell of St. Jim's.

"My dear sir——"

"Eh?" said Mr. Potts. "What do you want?"

"Pway allow me to apologise!"

"Eh?"

"My young bwothah, I am afwaid, was somewhat wude to you," said Arthur Augustus. "It was simply the exubewance of high spiwits, my dear sir. It is imposs. for a D'Arcy to delibewately intend to be wude, especially to an old gentleman. I weally beg to be allowed to apologise for him, my dear sir!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Potts. "This is some more of your little jokes, I guess!"

"Weally, sir——"

"I guess I wish I had you in my stockyard, sir!" said Mr. Potts. "I'd make you larn, sir, I guess! Yes, sir! A dandified puppy——"

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a dandified puppay!"

"An eyeglassed, empty-headed johnny!" said Mr. Potts. "A brainless chump, sir! I wish I had you in my stockyard on the south side, sir! Yes, sir!"

"It is appawently useless for me to expwess——"

"Oh, get, do!" said Mr. Potts.

"Vewy well; I have done my best to set mattahs wight——"

"Popper!"

It was a sweet, girlish voice. A carriage had stopped, and a girl stepped out upon the sidewalk—a graceful girl, with beautiful features and a rich, clear complexion. D'Arcy glanced at her with interest; she reminded him of his Cousin Ethel.

The canned beef merchant's somewhat coarse face lighted up at the sight of the girl, and he turned away from Arthur Augustus, forgetting his existence.

"You're late, chuck," he said.

"I'm so sorry, popper."

"I guess it's all O.K.," said the packer. "Let's get."

"What are you looking so excited about, pop, dear?"



"Twenty thousand workmen fell into the machinery last fall, and were sent to Europe as canned meat," said the veracious Mr. Nawger. Skimpole dotted down these "facts" eagerly.

"I've been bothered by a pesky young son of John Bull," said Mr. Potts. "Let's get."

And the Chicago packer and his daughter disappeared into the carriage; a "turn-out" which D'Arcy, who had an eye for such things, noticed was a very handsome one, and drove off. Blake ran up and dragged D'Arcy away.

"You ass! You're keeping us waiting."

"It is necessawy to wait on important occasions, deah boy. And I wegard it as important to keep up the weputation of the D'Arcy family in a stwange countwy. I wegard that old gentleman as a howwid boundah."

"Come on!"

"But the young lady was wippin'! She called him popper. Do you know what popper means in the Amewican language, Blake?"

"It means father, dummy!"

"Then she is pwobably his daughter," said D'Arcy. "But pway wait a moment, Blake. Before we entah the hack, I wish you to clearly undahstand that I uttahly wefuse to be called a dummy—— Ow!"

D'Arcy went into the hack with some violence, and Jack followed him. The vehicle drove off towards the Grand Atlantic Hotel.

"Blake, I wegard you——"

"Shut up!" said Blake. "You've been keeping Mrs. Stuyvesant waiting."

"Bai Jove! I am weally vewy sowwy, madam. Pway accept my most pwofound apologies."

Mrs. Stuyvesant smiled, and accepted them, and they drove to the hotel. It proved to be a palatial building. The juniors of St. Jim's had been astonished by the "sky-scrapers" in New York. But they saw buildings in Chicago that effectually dwarfed the biggest they had seen there.

The boys were glad enough to get to their quarters. They had spent one night on the train, and it could not be called an eminently comfortable one. The handsome and well-appointed hotel was something like home, after a railway sleeping-berth.

The rooms taken by Mrs. Stuyvesant commanded a view of Lake Michigan, whose glimmering waters the boys could see in the fading daylight.

The juniors, as usual, had a large room to themselves, with five beds in it, and it recalled to their minds the old dormitory at St. Jim's in far-off England.

"Ripping view," said Tom Merry, looking out of the window. "We'll have a sail on the lake if we can squeeze in the time. Mrs. Stuyvesant is going to hand us over to the chap who is to see us to my uncle's ranch here. We may be able to persuade him to hang over a day here——"

"Yaas, wathah! We are to meet Colonel Staikah at this hotel, deah boys. And weally, although Mrs. Stuyvesant is kindness itself, I shall be pleased to twavel with a militawy

man. Mrs. Stuyvesant is wathah twyin' with her extweme anxiety for our safety."

"Well, you shouldn't have got lost in New York——"

"I wasn't lost; I was kidnapped by that wascal Captain Puntah——"

"Well, you shouldn't have got kidnapped, then," said Blake. "You're always doing something. What would have happened if I hadn't arrived from England and rescued you from that den in the Bowery?"

"As a mattah of fact, it was I who wescued you, Blake."

"Rats! Why, I——"

"Cheese it!" said Tom Merry. "We've got to dress for dinner yet, and I want a jolly good bath after all that railway travelling. Don't jaw, my sons, but get to work."

"I guess so," said Wally, who was quite an American by this time, as far as language was concerned. "Not so much chin music, you know."

"I wefuse to allow you to use such vulgah expwessions, Wally."

"That cuts no ice with me," retorted Wally placidly.

D'Arcy did not reply; he did not quite know what the slang expression meant, for one thing, and Wally had the advantage. He devoted his attention to changing his clothes—a labour of great love with Arthur Augustus. The best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's was anxious to keep up his reputation in the New World.

Mrs. Stuyvesant, who was a friend of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess, had met the boys in New York and brought them to Chicago. At Chicago they were to be handed over to Colonel Stalker, a friend of Mr. Poinsett, who was to see them to the Arizona ranch which was Tom Merry's destination. What Colonel Stalker was like the boys had no idea, but they had a vague idea of a white-whiskered military man, something like Lord Eastwood, D'Arcy's respected "governor," in appearance. Colonel Stalker was to take them in his charge for the journey over the Rocky Mountains, and, needless to say, the boys were looking forward to that adventurous journey.

The boys were dressed in good time for dinner, and they joined Mrs. Stuyvesant and descended to the dining-room, which was of almost endless dimensions. America is the land of vastness, and in the hotels the vastness is most apparent. Wally indulged in a slight chuckle as they reached the table where their places had been taken. Opposite was seated a stout gentleman, whom the juniors at once recognised as their acquaintance of the train—Mr. Potts, of Chicago.

Mr. Potts glanced across at the boys, and did not seem pleased to see them there. They were evidently staying at the same hotel as the Chicago millionaire. The girl who had met Mr. Potts at the station was beside him, and now they saw her in the full electric light, the boys could see that there was some resemblance between her features and those of the fat packer. But while the man's face was harsh and gross, that of the daughter was beautiful and interesting.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry looked at him curiously.

"What's the matter with you, Gussy?"

"Did you evah see such a wippin' gal, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"But not since we landed in Amewicah," said D'Arcy, with a faraway look. "Do you know, Tom Mewwy, that once or twice I fancied I was in love at St. Jim's?"

"I remember you making a silly ass of yourself."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—— But I can afford to pass ovah your wude wemarks. How old would you think that charmin' young lady is?"

"Blessed if I know; about twenty-four."

"Pewhaps undah twenty, I should say. Anyway, she is not so vewy much oldah than I——"

"My only hat!"

"It is vewy wotten that that young wascal Wally should have got on the w'ong side of her governah. I shall have to make it up somehow."

The dialogue had been in very low tones, audible only to the speakers. It stopped now, as the soup arrived. Arthur Augustus hardly ate any soup. He scarcely touched his fish. Entrees passed him unnoticed. Dinner was almost over, in fact, before he awoke to the knowledge that he had eaten next to nothing.

But he did not care!

The bright eyes of the American girl had worked havoc with D'Arcy's susceptible heart, and the swell of St. Jim's was in love again.

Tom Merry noted his expression with secret chuckles.

Arthur Augustus was deeply in earnest—as he usually was at such times—but to Tom Merry his new infatuation only presented a prospect of fun.

CHAPTER 3.

Pongo Causes Trouble.

AFTER dinner Tom Merry & Co. felt inclined for a stroll out to see Chicago. They had not much time for looking at the Windy City, for it had been arranged that they were to continue their journey at midday next day, when Colonel Stalker had arrived to take them in charge. As a matter of fact, their stay in Chicago was to be longer than they had anticipated.

There was one member of the party who was not inclined for the stroll. That one was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You can leave me here, deah boys," he said. "I am wathah fatigued, and I have a lot of shoppin' to do to-mowwow. There is an awfully big shoppin' place near here, Marshall Field's, you know, and I am cuwious to see a weally big Amewican store. It is one of the sights of Amewicah. And it is our last chance of shoppin' before we get to the Wocky Mountains."

"But what on earth do you want to buy?" demanded Tom Merry. "You bought enough things in London to last a regiment for a year's march."

"Yaas; but I ovahlooked many necessawies. For one thing, I shall want some cartwidges."

"Cartridges!" howled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I have no cartwidges for my wevolvah."

"Let me catch you with a revolver!"

"My dear fellow, I should nevah have been kidnapped in New York if I had not taken Tom Mewwy's advice, and left my twusty wevolvah at the bottom of my twunk in the hotel. I shall not make the mistake again."

"My dear ass——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. Besides, we are pewaps going to visit the Chicago stockyards to-mowwow, and I may wequire a wevolvah there. How do you know some feahful wild beast may not bweak loose?"

"Well, anyway, come along now and have a look at the city by gaslight."

"No, I think I will stay in this evenin'; besides, I have to apologise to Mr. Potts for Wally's feahful wudeness to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see why you are cacklin', Tom Mewwy."

"Put in a word for me," said Blake, grinning. "You're quite right; she's a ripping girl."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Oh, come on! Let's get off, and leave Gussy to compose an ode to an American girl's eyebrow."

"I guess it's time we moved," said Wally. "If we're not spry we sha'n't see much of the place, I calculate. Let's get."

And they got.

They had to take Louis, Mrs. Stuyvesant's servant, with them, or the good old lady would have been anxious. And Louis, who had lost D'Arcy in New York, was determined not to lose anybody in Chicago. He watched them like a cat watching a mouse; and if the St. Jim's juniors stopped to look in a shop window, Louis stopped also. When the boys started again, Louis started.

The surveillance was not pleasant, but Louis was doing his duty. Not that the boys could not have given him the slip if they had chosen. But the thought of causing their kind friend anxiety prevented them from "japing" the dutiful Frenchman.

They entered upon the seemingly endless State Street, and Wally, of course, had to dodge in front of a tearing car, and narrowly escaped with his legs unamputated. Crossings in Chicago are a great deal more dangerous than in New York or London, as the juniors were not long in discovering. Tom Merry & Co. joined him on the opposite sidewalk, and grasped him with one accord and shook him.

"Hallo! What are you up to?" roared Wally.

"You young ass!" said Tom Merry. "If you get killed under a cable car, I'll give you the licking of your life!"

"I should say so," chimed in Blake. "It's bad enough to have Skimpole mooning about with his nose in a note-book, without having you dodging under cars."

"Oh, really, Blake," said Skimpole, blinking at the Fourth-Former of St. Jim's through his big spectacles. "I must really take notes, if I am to produce a good book of travels on my return to England. I am noting many prominent facts with regard to Chicago. The number of fires——"

"The number of which?"

"The number of fires, and the slight attention that is paid to them, is surprising," said Skimpole seriously. "I have read that the whole city, practically, was burnt down in 1871, and really I am not surprised, by what I have observed."

"But I haven't seen any fire, Skimmy."

"I have not actually seen the burning houses," said

Skimpole; "I have deduced a great number of fires from the quantity of smoke that floats about the street. Some streets are quite overhung by it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Ass! That comes from the big chimneys."

"But smoke from the big chimneys would float upwards, Merry, and at all events it would mingle with the atmosphere. Here——"

"My dear ass, that's due to atmospheric conditions—the air's so clear, or something. Those clouds of smoke aren't made by fires, anyway. It's one of the ways of Chicago. You can tear that page out of your notebook."

"Upon the whole, I shall leave it there, Merry. I am not quite sure that you are right; but even so, it is very interesting information, and none of my readers will be likely to come to Chicago and see for themselves."

"Good! You'll get out a ripping book of travels on those lines," grinned Tom Merry. "I don't think it's an uncommon method, either. What are you pulling at my arm for, young Wally?"

"Have you seen Pongo?"

"Blow Pongo!"

"He's gone!"

"Let him go, then."

"I tell you he's gone. He must have dodged away when I was dodging that car, and perhaps he's on the other side of this confoundedly wide street all the time."

"Leave him there, then."

"No fear!"

"Stop, you young beggar!" roared Tom Merry, clutching at him. But it was too late. Wally was dashing off in the thick of the cars again.

And thick enough the cars were, streaming up and down the wide street. D'Arcy minor disappeared in a moment, and Tom Merry breathed wrath and retribution as he started after him. Jack Blake ran after Tom Merry; but Skimpole remained on the side-walk, entering some more notes into his book on the subject of the number of cars that passed up and down State Street.

Wally dodged through in safety, and gained the further side, and darted up and down through a considerable crowd looking for Pongo.

He called to him, and shrieked out the peculiar whistle which Pongo knew so well, but there was no answering yelp from Pongo.

The dog was lost again!

Tom Merry reached the junior, and made a clutch at him, but Wally eluded him, and dashed across the wide street again.

"Come back!" yelled Blake.

He might as well have yelled to the waters of the lake to cease flowing. Wally had decided that Pongo must have crossed the street after all, and he was after him. He did not mean to go back to the hotel without Pongo.

"Zat you come back viz you!" screamed Louis, in great distress. "Ciel! Zat you come back!"

But Wally was after Pongo and Blake and Tom were after Wally. The unhappy Frenchman dashed after them again across the street, shouting to them to stop. He caught up with Tom Merry, and grasped him by the shoulder.

"Zat you stops, viz you?" he gasped.

"The young beggar's getting lost. Let me go!"

But Louis held on. Blake came back towards them, looking red and excited.

"He's gone!" he said.

"The young villain!" growled Tom Merry. "I've a jolly good mind to tan his hide when he comes back to the hotel."

"Well, he's pretty certain to come back; he's not ass enough to get lost for good. We may as well be getting in now."

And the juniors, taking Skimpole with them, went back to the hotel with Louis. The Frenchman was very excited and anxious, but the boys had little fear for Wally. And Mrs. Stuyvesant fortunately did not have to be told that the junior was missing, for on their return the boys discovered that their friend had gone to a meeting of the Chicago branch of the Association for the Asphyxiation of Superfluous Dogs, a body of which Mrs. Stuyvesant was president.

As for Arthur Augustus, he was not to be seen; but they discovered him at last on the balcony.

CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy Makes His Peace.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had not been losing time. The moment his friends were out of the hotel, and he felt himself safe from their observation and chipping, he had set out to look for Mr. Potts, with the intention of completing the apology commenced at the railway station.

Mr. Potts was not immediately to be found, however. Arthur Augustus inquired of the hotel clerk, of waiters, and messengers. But the millionaire had disappeared after dinner, and it was some time before he reappeared. Doubtless he had had some business call, and, like the true American millionaire, he never allowed pleasure to interfere with business. Arthur Augustus was standing in the hall, when a grinning little darkey came up to him with the news that Mr. Potts was in the smoking-room.

"I guess, sah, dat Mr. Potts be in de smoking-room, sah," said the little fellow.

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"Thank you vewy much," said Arthur Augustus, feeling in his pockets. "I am sowwy I haven't any change. Can you change a five-dollar bill?"

The darkey grinned. His wages at the hotel amounted to four dollars a week, so he was hardly likely to have the amount of change about him that the swell of St. Jim's required.

"No, sah; sorry, sah, I can't, sah. I get de change debblish quick, sah."

"Vewy well," said D'Arcy, handing the note to the darkey. "What is your name, my lad?"

"My lad" was only some year or so younger than D'Arcy, but D'Arcy had a way of assuming paternal airs, even towards fellows older than himself.

"Pompey, sah; named after Pompey de Great, sah; called Pomp for short, sah."

"Vewy good, Pompay," said D'Arcy, pronouncing the name in his own peculiar fashion. "Pway give me the change pwesently."

"Yep, sah."

And Pompey grinned expansively and walked off with the note. Arthur Augustus made his way to the smoking-room. It was not a quarter of the hotel that the swell of St. Jim's would have frequented of his own accord, for he had never fallen into the way of smoking juvenile cigarettes. It was very probable that he never would take to smoking, being too anxious to preserve the whiteness of his teeth. He found Mr. Potts in the smoking-room, his fat person reposing upon a comfortable lounge, and a fat cigar in his mouth. It was a first-rate Havana cigar, as D'Arcy could tell by the scent of it, and he felt his respect for the millionaire increase somewhat.

Mr. Potts was talking to a younger man, fashionably dressed, who eyed Arthur Augustus somewhat superciliously as he came up.

D'Arcy was quick to note it, and to resent it, but he allowed no trace of his resentment to appear in his manner. He turned his attention wholly to Mr. Potts.

"Pway excuse me a moment, sir."

Mr. Potts looked at him.

"So it's you again, is it?" he said. "I guess this is the young cub I was telling you of, Fish."

"Shall I kick him out for you, sir?" said Mr. Fish.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass, and fixed a withering stare upon the young Chicago man-about-town.

"I should uttahly wefuse to be kicked out," he said. "If you should attempt anythin' of the sort, I should administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Oh, get!" said Mr. Fish.

"Slide!" said Mr. Potts. "I've had enough of your cheek. No more lip, siree. Slide!"

"I wish to apologise——"

"Get!"

"Get!" said Mr. Fish.

"Vewy well," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I will wetire, but I must say to you, sir"—and he turned his eyeglass upon Mr. Fish—"that I wegard you as no gentleman."

Mr. Fish grinned and sucked his cigar.

"Cub!" he remarked.

"And if I met you in a less public place, sir," went on D'Arcy, "I should thwash you on the spot."

"Oh, get!"

"As I do not wish to make any disturbance in this hotel, I will wetire. I am sowwy you will not accept my apology, Mr. Potts. As for this boundah, I wegard him as a wank outsidah."

And Arthur Augustus walked away. He strolled into the vestibule in a rather disturbed state of mind. His intended acquaintance with Miss Potts had not been made. A shining black face glimmered in the electric light.

"Guess dis your change, sah"

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy absently, "I had weally forgotten it! You may keep it for your honesty, my lad."

And he walked away, leaving Pompey staring after him. The swell of St. Jim's made his way to the hotel balcony, where a number of the guests of the Grand Atlantic were seated, the weather being unusually mild for the time of the year.

The swell of St. Jim's only wanted to get to a quiet place to think over his future plans; but as he stepped on the balcony, he caught sight of Miss Potts, sitting under the arched roof, which was ablaze with electric light, and reading.

D'Arcy stood still for a moment. His heart was beating, and his knees knocked together. It was the divinity herself.

But the swell of St. Jim's took his courage in both hands, so to speak, and made his way across to where the young lady was sitting. She glanced up as a shadow fell across her book, and D'Arcy raised his hat.

She did not know the boy, having barely noticed him at dinner, but there was something so earnest and so entirely gentlemanly and respectful in D'Arcy's manner, that no sensible girl could have taken offence. D'Arcy coloured as he realised the enormity he was guilty of in addressing a lady to whom he had not been introduced, but he went on courageously.

"Pway excuse me," he said. "You will pwobably wegard me as a boundah for addwessin' you, but I weally have somethin' most important to say."

The girl smiled.

"I guess you can say it," she said.

D'Arcy was rather sorry she "guessed." But her voice was very sweet and pleasant, and it made the objectionable word sound quite fascinating, when he came to think of it.

"I know it is a feahful cheek of me to speak," said Arthur Augustus, "but I have had the misfortune to offend your wespected fathah."

"Popper?"

"Yaas. My young bwothah was wathah wude to him in the twain, but it was quite unintentional, and I wished to explain, but Mr. Potts will not listen to me. I—I thought pewhaps you might allow me to explain to you."

The girl looked at him curiously.

"You are from England?" she asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What is your name?"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Pway do not mistake me for a boundah. I belong to St. Jim's. I am in the Fourth Form there. My governah is Lo'd Eastwood. I know you Amewicans don't think anythin' of titles, of course, as you live in a wepublic, but it is considahed quite wespectable in England."

Miss Potts laughed.

"You haven't been long in America," she said; and, to D'Arcy's great relief, she did not pronounce it "Amurrica."

"We are fonder of lords on this side than you are on your side, I guess."

"Bai Jove! But why?"

"Because we live in a Republic, I guess," said Miss Potts. "Sit down, Mr. D'Arcy. I guess I'll talk to you. It will be real interesting. Popper will be out here in a while, and I'll introduce you."

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"Bai Jove! Will you weally?" he exclaimed. "That will be awfully wippin' of you, you know!"

Miss Potts laughed. D'Arcy sat down, and they were soon talking amicably. Miss Potts found Arthur Augustus more interesting than her book. She had been reading an American novel dealing with the manners of the English aristocracy and learning that they were distinguished by an oberbearing and supercilious manner.

The quiet and respectful manners of the son of Lord Eastwood consequently interested her, and the veracious novel dropped unheeded to the floor.

Arthur Augustus told her of St. Jim's, of his home at Eastwood, of the time he had witnessed a debate in the House of Lords when his father was speaking. As a true Republican, Miss Potts was, of course, very much interested in the House of Lords. They were still talking cheerily, when there was a heavy step near at hand, and a heavy voice ejaculated:

"Constantia!"

"Pop!" she said, looking up. "I guess I want to introduce my friend, pop—my particular friend, Mr. D'Arcy, the son of Lord Eastwood."

Mr. Potts's face was growing purple, but at the mention of "Lord Eastwood," a gentle calm seemed to fall upon him.

"Lord—Lord—Lord Eastwood!" he said faintly. "A—a—a—lord!"

"That's it, pop."

Mr. Potts held out a fat hand.

"I'm pleased to meet you, your lordship!"

Miss Potts gave a perfectly unconstrained little rippling laugh. There was no humbug about the American girl, and she evidently had a strong affection for her father, commonplace and snobbish as he undoubtedly was, that raised her more than ever in D'Arcy's esteem.

Although the girl had had the benefit of the Potts millions in receiving an education and training that placed her socially in a place her father could never hope to reach, there was not the slightest trace of shame for him, although D'Arcy knew he must have made her unconsciously wince at times.

But a kind heart and a sense of humour saved Miss Potts from the most fatal of all kinds of snobbishness—that of being ashamed of one's own flesh and blood.

"You're off the track, popper," she said, in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone. "This isn't his lordship. The popper's the lordship, and my friend is Mr. D'Arcy—the Honourable Arthur Augustus."

Honourable was not so impressive as lordship, but anything in the way of titles was welcome to a true Republican.

"I am pleased to meet you, Honourable!" said Mr. Potts, as he shook hands with Arthur Augustus. "As to our little scrap, don't remember it. I was kinder mad over sitting on the dog, you know. That's all right. It's all over. I'm very glad to welcome your lordship to Chicago."

"Thank you vewy much, sir!" said D'Arcy. "I was vewy much disturbed in my mind at your supposin' me to have acted wudely, or to have intended any diswespect."

"I guess you're the real article, sir," said Mr. Potts. "All wool, and a yard wide, I guess. How is your noble father, Honourable?"

Why Mr. Potts called him honourable, D'Arcy couldn't understand, but he concluded that it was an American mode of address, and allowed it to pass.

"My governah is all right, sir, thank you!" he said.

"And your noble mommer?"

"My—my—my—— I—I—I——"

"Lady Eastwood," explained Miss Potts, laughing.

"Oh, my mothah is quite fit, sir, thank you!"

"We are plain Republicans on this side of the pond, Honourable," said Mr. Potts. "You will understand that I guess. We take no stock in titles, as you will observe. But we have a proper respect, sir, for the prejudices of an old and effete country, sir. Did you happen to meet Lord Swampbank before you sailed?"

"N-n-no, I don't think I know the gentleman, sir."

"Perhaps you can tell me how Lady Magillicuddy is?" said Mr. Potts, with an air of great solicitude.

"I have nevah seen her, sir."

Mr. Potts asked after a great many more titled people, and D'Arcy drew the impression from him that he had a wide acquaintance in English aristocratic circles. As a matter of fact, Mr. Potts's acquaintance with English titles



"My particular friend, Mr. D'Arcy, the son of Lord Eastwood, pop!" said Miss Potts. Mr. Potts' face was growing purple, but at the mention of "Lord Eastwood," a gentle calm seemed to fall upon him.

was gleaned wholly from the columns of the more snobbish New York papers.

"Bai Jove, it is pleasant to meet a gentleman who has so extensive an acquaintance in England," said D'Arcy, beaming. "It makes a fellow feel quite at home, you know. Mrs. Stuyvesant will be vewy pleased to meet you, sir."

"Mrs. Stuyvesant?"

"Yaas, the extwemely kind lady who is conductin' us here."

"One of the first families in New York!" gasped Mr. Potts. "I really did not know that you had such connections, Honourable. I can't say how sorry I am that little scrap occurred."

"Pway don't mention it, Mr. Potts!"

"I—— Ah, here are your friends. Introduce me."

It was at this moment that Tom Merry and Blake came on the balcony. Skimpole had gone up to his room to fill in his notebook with the day's entries. Tom Merry and Blake were forthwith made acquainted with Mr. Potts, who invited the whole party to dine with him the following week in his mansion on the lake front.

It was at present in the hands of the decorators—a fact that was inconceivably painful to Mr. Potts, for, having captured a lord's son, he would gladly have carried him off home and installed him there, and called upon all Chicago society to come down and see his prize.

He was greatly disappointed to learn that the juniors were going west the next day, but he insisted upon their visiting the stockyards the next morning, assuring them that it was one of the sights of Chicago—as undoubtedly it was.

When they parted for the night, the juniors were on excellent terms with both Mr. and Miss Potts. Wally came in just as Mrs. Stuyvesant returned, and he came without Pongo. He was looking very tired and muddy and cross.

NEXT THURSDAY: "TOM MERRY IN THE ROCKIES." A Tale of the Boys of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Haven't found him?" asked Tom Merry.

"No," growled Wally. "This means sticking in Chicago till he's found I'm not going to stir till I've got Pongo."

"Weally, Wally, it will be impos. We could not put our fwiends to so much twouble. I shall insist upon your comin' at the time awwanged."

"Rats!" said the disrespectful younger brother. "I'm not going without old Pong. I've hunted for him everywhere. My idea is that he has been scooped in by some of those canned-beef rotters, and canned."

"Well, if he's been canned, you can't wescue him now, deah boy."

"Hardly!" said Blake, grinning. "Besides, in that case, he will probably be imported into England as canned beef, and you can inquire for him after we get back, with more chance of success."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"He may not be canned yet," growled Wally. "I know I'm jolly well going in the morning to look at the stockyards, and see if I can see anything of Pongo."

"Well, we're going, as a matter of fact," said Tom Merry. "We've accepted Mr. Potts's invitation to go. But don't you start casting reflections on American tinned meat, you young rascal! You can't insult a man in his own quarters."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you can wely upon my youngah bwothah not to act in such an exceedingly ill-bwed mannah," said Arthur Augustus.

"I'm not so sure about the young scamp!"

"Oh rats!" said Wally. "I'm not likely to tell them I'm looking for Pongo, or they'd take jolly good care I didn't find him. I shall keep my eyes open, though. I'm not going to have them can him as beef if I can help it."

And in that determined mood D'Arcy minor went to bed, and rose up early in the morning in an equally determined frame of mind.

CHAPTER 5.

At the Stockyards.

MRS. STUYVESANT intended to shop that morning, and so she willingly gave the juniors leave to visit the stockyards, under the care of a person Mr. Potts sent specially to conduct them. The guide was a young man in a Homburg hat and with a nasal twang, and evidently "all there," like most of the Chicagoans the juniors had met.

He was cute; and he was spry, and he knew his way about. He told the juniors as much, and also gave them much information on the subject of the stockyards of Chicago, as they travelled southwards in the cable-cars.

"I guess Chicago lays over any other city east or west," said Mr. Nawger—for that was the young man's name. "Biggest buildings, biggest trade, biggest stockyards, biggest everything, I guess. I guess so, sir."

"Where do you go to inquire after a lost dog?" asked Wally.

"Police department, City Hall, or any station," said Mr. Nawger, looking at him "Have you lost a dog?"

"Yes, my dog Pongo. I say, Mr. Nawger, I—I——"

"Shut up!" said Tom Merry.

"I don't see why I shouldn't ask one who knows."

"I wefuse to allow you to put the question, Wally."

"Rats!"

"By the way, Mr. Nawger," said Skimpole, looking up from his notebook and asking questions, with his usual disregard for anything but the desire to have them answered, "as you are connected officially with the stockyards of Chicago, you may be able to tell me whether there is any truth in the allegations made against the packers?"

"Eh?" said Mr. Nawger.

"Is it true that dogs and cats are mixed up with the other meat and disguised by flavouring, and packed off as tinned beef, or devilled kidneys, or table delicacies?" asked Skimpole.

Mr. Nawger did not reply.

"Is it a fact that when a workman falls into the machinery, they don't stop the machine, but chop him up with the rest, and send him off to Europe as canned meat?"

"I guess so," said Mr. Nawger. "That happened to twenty thousand workmen last fall alone."

"Dear me!" said Skimpole, entering down that astounding number in his notebook. "Amazing!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Really, D'Arcy, I think I am quite right in characterising this fact as amazing. And does it cause no excitement in the city, Mr. Nawger?"

"None at all," said the veracious Mr. Nawger. "When a man is missed from his usual place, they all know what has become of him. A fellow will say, 'Hallo, there's Smith gone! Was it in the devilled kidneys, or the fertilizer?' It's become quite a standing joke in the stockyards."

"Dear me!"

"The workmen rather approve of it, as it gives them all a run for their money, you know, and makes room for the unemployed."

"Amazing!"

The juniors were laughing, but Skimpole did not heed that. He jotted down Mr. Nawger's information with eager interest, and asked for more, and received it. Mr. Nawger was not at all stingy with amazing facts concerning Chicago and its stockyards. Skimpole was hardly satisfied by the time they reached the famous stockyards.

Tom Merry & Co. and their amiable guide walked from Thirty-ninth Street into the Union stockyards. The stories of the horrors of the Chicago packing-yards were fresh in their minds; but on the surface of things, at all events, they saw little to bear out what they had heard.

It is a common thing for visitors to Chicago to be conducted over the stockyards, as one of the great sights of the city; but, needless to say, the visitors are not conducted everywhere, and they do not see more than the packers choose that they shall see.

The sight was certainly interesting enough. Packing-town seemed to form a community by itself—a town within a city, and a hive of industry where, early and late, thousands of workers toiled, from the slaughterers, under whose axes the great steers fell, to the labellers, who gave the final touch to the tins that went forth by myriads to all corners of the world.

It was over the works of Potts, Craggs, Scruggs & Co. that the British lads were conducted by the obliging Mr. Nawger.

He gave them many particulars as they went, with an eye to Skimpole's notebook; and although Skimpole jotted down everything in good faith, the other lads believed as much as they chose of Mr. Nawger's airy talk.

The slaughtering department they preferred not to see, but to the other sights they went in the regular order, and saw the progress of a steer from the slaughter-house to the labelled tin.

It was not a pleasant experience, but it was worth going through. A visitor can hardly be said to have seen Chicago without having seen Packing-town, from which so great a portion of the city's wealth is derived.

The vastness of it all, and the infinitesimal division of labour, struck the boys more than anything else.

Here was a man whose duty was to wield an axe, and give a single chop to a carcase that was brought before him, and this one chop he repeated an infinite number of times during the day. His work had grown mechanical, and he could hardly have made a faulty stroke if he had tried.

From the point of view of the packers, the system was excellent. It produced the best work in the smallest possible space of time—that is to say, for the lowest possible minimum of wages. But from a workman's point of view the result could hardly be considered so satisfactory.

Apart from the fact that by double rapidity he did two men's work, instead of one man's, and so kept a comrade out of employment, it was certain that a wholly mechanical employment, never varied from morning to night, and from day to day, must have a dulling and numbing effect upon all his faculties. The man was turned into a machine, and it could not be easy for the machine to turn out a man again at the close of the day's labour.

The same system of the division of labour carried to extremes, and the dull mechanical speed attained by all the workers, struck the boys everywhere. The strain upon the nerves of most of the employees must have been terrible.

They were set like machines to a certain speed, and if one slacked down, the whole machine was thrown out of gear—fifty workers, perhaps, were waiting if one man rested

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for a couple of seconds. The man who could not keep up the required speed was not likely to keep his job in Packing-town, either.

When the overstrained nerves gave way, when physical strength could endure no more, then it was time for the man to go—whither the packers could not be supposed to care—to starve in the alleys of Chicago, or to beg, borrow, or steal for a living, or drown himself in the waters of the great lake—there were always plenty of unemployed clamouring at the gates to take his place.

Indeed, the unemployed question was very keen in Chicago, and the boys noted it with surprise. They had had a vague idea that in America there was work for the willing always to be had, but they learned the contrary with a painful shock.

They were crossing a paved yard from one building to another, when they saw a crowd of hungry-looking men outside a little office, in which sat a tired-looking clerk with a pen in his hand, and a snappish expression on his face. Doubtless he was as overworked and overstrained as the rest, and was wreaking it upon the wretches who were unfortunate enough to be at his mercy for the moment.

"Who are those chaps, Mr. Nawger?" asked Tom Merry, with a curious sinking of the heart, as he looked at the wretched crowd.

Mr. Nawger glanced at them carelessly.

"Looking for a job," he said.

There were at least a hundred men in the yard, all looking eager and excited, with an eagerness that told only too clearly that their daily bread depended upon their getting speedy employment.

"So many as that?" said Jack Blake. "Do you often have as many?"

Mr. Nawger laughed.

"These are the picked ones," he said. "There's only about a hundred here, and they've been let into the yard because we want three or four hands. The rest are outside the gates."

"The rest?"

"Yes; more than two thousand."

Tom Merry looked at him quickly, but Mr. Nawger was not romancing this time. It was so commonplace a matter to a Chicago man that he never thought there was anything extraordinary in it.

Two thousand men at the gates of Packing-town was not an abnormal number—there were often as many outside each yard waiting for a chance to be taken on by the bosses.

"And you've let in a hundred to pick out three or four?" asked Blake.

"I guess so!"

"What will the rest do?"

Mr. Nawger stared.

"They'll go out when we've picked the hands we want."

"And the two thousand—what will they do?"

"I guess I'm not good at conundrums!" said Mr. Nawger carelessly. "I've heard that you've got unemployed in the Old Country."

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "Nothing like this, though, I believe. And yet fellows often go out to America to make their fortunes!"

Mr. Nawger laughed.

Tom Merry paused a little to look at the men in the yard. They were of all nationalities—chiefly the low foreign element that pours into Chicago by the thousand every month—Poles, Russians, Hungarians, Dalmatians, Italians, Germans, Swedes. But among them he saw many an English, Irish, or Scottish face, and his heart was heavy for them. Whatever they might have suffered in the Old Country, surely it could not have been as bad as this!

The tired clerk called out something, and shut the office door. Four men, with their faces very bright, followed a stout "boss" through a passage, and disappeared. The rest of the men in the yard looked dully wretched, and slowly turned to go out at the gates.

"They're not wanted?" asked Tom Merry.

"That's it!" said Mr. Nawger.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There must be somethin' w'ong in a countwy where a chap can't get work when he wants to. I suppose it's because there's no House of Lords in Amewicah."

The swell of St. Jim's thrust his hands into his pockets, and handed out all the money he could find to the unemployed poor fellows as they passed him. They stared at him silently, like dumb suffering cattle, but they gladly took the money. It meant life, instead of death, to some of them.

Mr. Nawger chuckled, evidently regarding the matter as a good joke.

"If you start ladling out kopecks to all the unemployed in Chicago, you'll want Rockefeller's millions, and they won't last you long!" he remarked.

"Somethin' ought to be done," said D'Arcy indignantly. "The Government in England is dealin' with the question of the unemployed. Somebody told me this was a fwee countwy. I pwesume that means that a man is fwee to starve if he can't find work."

Mr. Nawger seemed to regard this as a better joke than ever, for he simply roared.

Perhaps the idea of America—in the grip of the Trusts and the political "bosses"—being regarded as a free country struck him in a comical light.

"But pway excuse me, deah boy," said D'Arcy, remembering himself; "I had no wight to make that wemark—I should have wemembahed that I was addwessin' an Amewican. I beg to sincerely apologise!"

"Oh, never mind!" said Mr. Nawger. "You've given me a good snicker, I guess."

And he led them on their way.

The tour of the packing-houses was made, Wally keeping a sharp eye open for any sign of a doggy addition to the beef that was being canned.

But if the packers, as their enemies allege, added the stray dogs and cats of Chicago to the beef and pork, it was done very secretly, for the visitors saw no signs of it. All they saw was neat and clean and orderly, though they observed, of course, that there were doors that were not opened, passages that could not be entered, staircases into regions below that were not to be passed.

"I guess you've seen a sight of things," said Mr. Nawger, when the tour of inspection was over at last. "This way to Thirty-ninth Street, and I'll see you on the car uptown."

And the obliging Chicagoan, having seen them on the cable-car, took his leave, and the juniors whizzed off to a more savoury quarter of the city, sadder and more thoughtful for what they had seen.

CHAPTER 6.

Pompey Catches It.

THE boys were very silent in the car. They had seen a centre of huge industry, upon which the prosperity of Chicago mainly depended. They had come away saddened and depressed.

Tom Merry felt that it would be long ere he forgot the sallow, miserable faces of the unemployed at the gates, and the look of hopeless despondency that settled upon them when they found there was no work to be had. The wretched faces haunted him, and as he entered a brighter quarter of the city, he could not help contrasting what he had seen in Packing-town, with the wealth and prosperity of the richer quarter that lay along the Lake Park.

The gigantic "blocks," the heaven-scaling skyscrapers, the palatial hotels, and vast railway termini, the sweeping parks, and the cyclopean stores, represented one side of Chicago—a side not beautiful, but rich and thriving. But there was another side, and Tom Merry had just seen it—where the poor lived—where the working classes were crushed to the dust under the heel of Capitalism, in a ruthless and thoroughgoing way that was never known in England.

Wally, however, was thinking about Pongo. He had seen no sign of him in the packing-yards, but he meant to remain in Chicago till he found him. Arthur Augustus was looking at his watch. The juniors were to meet Colonel Stalker at the hotel for lunch, and in the afternoon to proceed on their journey westward.

"Bai Jove, I shall have to miss my shoppin', aftah all, unless we can persuade the colonel to stay a day in Chicago!" said Arthur Augustus. "I weally did desire to do some shoppin'."

"What price Pongo?" said Wally. "We shall have to stay a bit here till I find Pongo."

"I am afwaid that Colonel Stalkah will hardly see the importance of waitin' for a wotten mongwel, Wally!"

"Look here, if you think I'm going without Pongo——"

"Now, be reasonable!" said Tom Merry. "We can't ask a man who has come all the way from Arizona to wait in this city because you've lost a dog. The colonel may be in a hurry."

"You can leave an advertisement in the 'Chicago Mail,'" said Blake. "Also, go to the police headquarters at the town-hall. We shall go near it in this car."

"If you think I am going to leave Chicago without Pongo," said Wally again, "I can only calculate that you are talking out of your hat! I guess I'm sticking right here till he's found!"

"I shall insist upon your comin' away with us, Wally."

"Rats!" said Wally.

The juniors left the car, and Wally inquired of a policeman the way to police headquarters, and left the others to return to the Grand Atlantic without him.

Mr. Potts and Miss Constantia were at the hotel, the millionaire's house having not yet been placed in a state

for its owner's reception. Tom Merry had learned from a chance remark of Mr. Nawger's that Mr. Potts's house had been attacked by a mob of unemployed a week before, and all the windows had been broken, hence the exile to the Grand Atlantic Hotel.

The boys went up to their room, and as they were entering it, there was the sound of a wail along the corridor.

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h!"

"Somebody getting hurt," said Jack Blake.

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h!"

"Bai Jove, it's that niggah gettin' a whackin'!"

The juniors looked along the corridor.

Pompey, the little coon, was in the grasp of a stout lady who looked like a chambermaid, who had a grip on his woolly hair with one hand, and was boxing his ears with the other.

Pompey was squirming and wriggling painfully, and blubbering at the top of his voice.

"Bai Jove, that is wathah wuff on the niggah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I should be inclined to intahfere if it were a man, you know, but a chap can't vewy well punch a lady on the nose."

Tom Merry ran along the corridor.

The chambermaid was a large-boned, powerful woman, who looked as if she could have held her own pretty well in a prize-ring, and if D'Arcy had overcome his objection to smiting one of the fair sex on the nose, it is probable that he wouldn't have stood much chance in a combat with the aggressive female.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Draw it mild, you know."

The servant looked round at him with a baleful eye.

"You get!" she snapped.

"Yes, but——"

"You get!"

"What has he been doing?"

"Me do nuffin," wailed Pompey—"me do nuffin! No, sah! Me nebber put de blacking in de bed, sah! Me do nuffin'"

Whack, whack, whack!"

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h!"

"Oh, let him alone!" said Tom Merry. "He's had enough, even if he did put the blacking in the bed. You'll bust his cocoanut!"

"You get!"

"Yes, but really——"

"You get!"

If the chambermaid had been a man, Tom Merry would have hit out, for his temper was rising. But the impossibility of punching a lady on the nose was as apparent to Tom Merry as to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

But there was an alternative, which Tom quickly thought of. He had come to America with the idea that in that land of the free and the republican, it was impossible to tip the natives; but a day in New York had been sufficient to correct his error. He had found a tip go just as far in America as in England; with this difference, that an American expected a far larger tip than an Englishman in the same position.

He plunged his hand into his pocket and drew out a dollar. A shilling would have served the same purpose in England.

"I say, do let him off!" he said, putting the dollar into the chambermaid's hand.

The coin worked wonders!

The Medusa-like features of the chambermaid relaxed, and a grin, intended for a sweet smile, appeared thereon.

"I guess he's had enough," she remarked.

And Pompey's wool was released.

"You're all right now," said Tom Merry reassuringly. And he walked away, the little darkey standing looking after him, rubbing his woolly head and his large ears, with the tears glistening on his ebony cheeks.

But as Tom Merry reached his door there was a patter of feet behind him, and Pompey overtook him.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"Me tank you, sah," said Pompey. "Heap tanks, sah."

"Oh, that's all right!"

"Me do anyting for you, sah," said Pompey, with a curious earnestness in his voice. "You want anyting, me do him, debblish quick, sah."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Good! Then you'd better find Pongo."

"Dat de young gen'l'man's dog, sah?"

"That's it."

Pompey grinned. His tears had quickly vanished. The jolly spirits of the little darkey could not be long damped.

"Me find him, sah."

"Look here, if you find him, I'll give you five dollars," said Tom Merry, who thought it possible that the darkey, who, of course, knew Chicago well, might be able to discover the dog. At all events, he would have more chance than Wally.

Pompey shook his head.

"No dollars, sah. Me find him, debblish quick."

And Pompey vanished.

Tom Merry was smiling as he went into his room. There was something taking about the little darkey, and Tom felt that he liked him. But he had little expectation of seeing Pongo again.

CHAPTER 7.

Wally Makes Terms.

WALLY had not returned when Mrs. Stuyvesant and the boys went down to lunch. But at the foot of the stairs a messenger-boy approached Tom Merry and handed him a letter.

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "Where is Wally, my dears?"

Tom Merry, who had a feeling that the letter was something to do with the scamp of St. Jim's, opened it quickly. It contained a couple of lines.

"Can't leave Chicago till I find Pongo. Shall not return to hotel till it is agreed I am to stay here for him. If agreed, burn red light in window.—WALLY."

Tom Merry grunted.

He knew Wally well enough to know that he would keep his word, and it was difficult to say how the young rascal was to be caught, until he chose to come back.

"Is that from Wally, Tom?" asked Mrs. Stuyvesant.

"Yes, ma'am. He can't come back to lunch," said Tom Merry.

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "And I wanted to introduce you all to the colonel. I hope he will soon return."

As Mrs. Stuyvesant was leaving Chicago that afternoon, after handing over the boys to their new protector, Tom considered it best not to trouble her with the position Wally had taken up. Colonel Stalker would have to be told, but it was unnecessary to bother their kind old friend. She had had enough trouble over the disappearance of D'Arcy in New York, without having to worry about the disappearance of Wally in Chicago.

In the luncheon-room a tall gentleman was standing by a window, and he turned as Tom Merry & Co. entered.

Although he was dressed in the garb of the city, there was an air about the tall gentleman that smacked of the free prairie, and hinted that he was accustomed to looser and freer garments. His attire was somewhat striking. His boots had an aggressive polish, and seemed too small for him, and he walked a little painfully in them, and his waistcoat was of a glaring pattern that troubled the artistic eyes of Arthur Augustus the moment they fell upon it. His watch-chain was on the scale of a cable, and his necktie was adorned by a huge diamond, which would have been worth thousands of dollars if it had been worth anything. His hair was carefully parted in the middle, but showed a strong disposition to stand out in various directions. His face, browned by sun and all kinds of weather, was rugged and good-natured, and his moustache looked like a bush. There was a stain of tobacco-juice on his lips, and, as a matter of fact, on his shirt-front.

This gentleman came towards the juniors with a creaking gait, due to the new boots into which he had remorselessly crammed his big feet. He had evidently met Mrs. Stuyvesant earlier in the day. The good lady showed not a sign of the effect the gentleman's striking get-up must have had upon her.

"Ah, so here are the boys!" exclaimed the tall gentleman, with a courtly bow to Mrs. Stuyvesant. "These are the chicks."

"These are the boys, colonel," said the lady; and she introduced them all in turn. "Boys, this is Colonel Stalker, who has so kindly undertaken to escort you to Mr. Poinsett's ranch in Arizona."

Colonel Stalker gripped each boy by the hand very hard, but Tom Merry hardest of all. He had a powerful grip, and it made the boys wince, but it came from a warm heart. He looked with great interest at Tom Merry.

"So you are my old friend Gabe's nephew," he remarked. "You are Tom Merry, Gabriel Poinsett's nephew. Shake again!"

Tom Merry smiled, and shook hands again.

"He'll like you," said the colonel. "I like your looks,

ANSWERS



Tom Merry smiled and shook hands with Colonel Stalker again. "Gabriel Poinsett will like you!" said the Colonel. "I like your looks, by gum, and when old Stalky likes a galoot's looks, that galoot is all right, sir! By gum!"

by gum, and when old Stalky likes a galoot's looks, that galoot is all right, sir! By gum!"

And they went to lunch.

Colonel Stalker struck the juniors as being somewhat of a character, but they liked him from the beginning of their acquaintance. There was a breeziness about the colonel that appealed to them. He seemed a son of the boundless West, cramped as much by the city round him as by his new city clothes.

He had evidently donned that striking get-up to do honour to Mrs. Stuyvesant and Mr. Poinsett's nephew, instead of coming to Chicago in rancher garb.

Tom Merry could imagine that the powerful frame of the colonel, which seemed likely to burst out of his store clothes, would be set off to advantage by the rancher dress he wore on the grasslands of Arizona.

Colonel Stalker was very attentive to Mrs. Stuyvesant in an old-fashioned, artless way that was very taking, and he told Tom Merry about his uncle, and about the ranch in Arizona, as they lunched, in a vivid and picturesque way that greatly excited the boy's imagination.

The colonel had, too, a curious and amusing way of ringing the changes, so to speak, upon his own name, and he alluded to himself as Stalker, and Stalky, and Stalk, and old Stalk, in a way that made the juniors chuckle inwardly. He had, too, a strong smack of Westernism in his talk. He spoke of men as "galoots" and "pilgrims," of playing a trick as "ringing in a cold deck," and he "reckoned" oftener than he "guessed."

After lunch, Mrs. Stuyvesant, with her maid and her faithful Louis and her boxes, departed from the railroad depot, the colonel and the boys seeing her off. Then the colonel, who had hitherto seemed only a good-natured old fellow, showed that he had a keen and businesslike side to his nature too.

"Where's the other one?" he asked, as they left the depot.

"Wally!" said Tom Merry. "He's still out, the young rascal."

"Our train goes at four," said Colonel Stalker.

"I'm sorry. Better read this."

"Good! I thought you were keeping something from the old lady," said Colonel Stalker. "No good worryin' her; quite right, I reckon. What's this?"

He read through Wally's brief note; then he laughed.

"Guess the young colt's in want of a lamming," he said. "Still, if he's fond of the dog, I kinder reckon I'd hang on to Chicago a little longer to give him a chance."

"Bai Jove, that's awfully good of you, sir!" said D'Arcy. "I have a particulah weason for wishin' to stay in Chicago anothah day or two, sir, if it wouldn't put you to any gweat twouble."

"We should all like to see the city a bit, sir," said Tom Merry; "but it's not fair to give you more trouble, when you've taken so much already."

The colonel smiled good-naturedly.

"I reckon I ain't hung up for time," he said. "We'll stay in Chicager for a day or two, and no harm done. But we can't agree to stay until the dog is found, for he may never turn up again."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked troubled.

"But if we don't agree to the young scamp's terms, he won't come back, sir," he said.

"Then we shall have to trail him down, I reckon."

They returned to the hotel, but nothing had been seen there of Wally. It was clear that they could not catch the train as originally arranged. The prospect of staying a few days in Chicago was pleasant enough to the juniors. They had not yet seen a tithe of the sights of the great city.

"What about putting the light in the window as a signal to Wally, sir?" asked Jack Blake.

Colonel Stalker shook his head.

"I guess not. That would mean that we agree to remain till the dog's found; and we can't do it. Old Stalky never broke his word yet. You bet, sir. We shall have to find the young galoot, or hunt him out."

And if Wally was watching for the signal, he watched in vain. The colonel smoked a cigar on the piazza, as he called the balcony, and after that suggested a run on the North Side to see the city. The juniors gladly assented, Skimpole getting out a new notebook, the old one being quite full up with his notes on the Chicago stockyards. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not jump at the idea of the excursion.

"I am feelin' wathah fatigued," he remarked. "If you fellows will excuse me, I will wemain at the hotel."

Colonel Stalker looked at him.

"Guess you'll larn to be a little bit tougher on the ranch," he remarked.

D'Arcy coloured.

"Pway do not wegard me as a nincompoop, my deah sir," he exclaimed. "I assuah you that I am nothin' of the sort. But I should pwefer to wemain in the hotel, if you will kindly excuse me."

"I reckon it's a free country," said the colonel.

And Colonel Stalker and the juniors sallied out, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy alone in his glory.

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus is Angry

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS had remained behind to see Miss Constantia. He was fatigued, or he would not have said so, but his chief reason for staying in was to see the American girl who had won his susceptible heart. She had not been there to lunch, but he knew she was coming in before dinner, and he hoped for another little talk. Arthur Augustus was already considering whether to lay his fortune—consisting just then of seven or eight trunks of clothes, and about two hundred dollars in cash—and his heart at the feet of Miss Potts, to say nothing of his title of honourable, which would probably weigh more in Hiram K. Potts's estimation than either the heart or the fortune.

After all, an engagement for seven or eight or even ten years would be a good thing, and Arthur Augustus was quite certain that he would not change his mind during that time.

The question was, how would Miss Potts look at it?

In ten years' time D'Arcy would be twenty-five or so, but Miss Constantia would be about thirty-four, and she might not be willing to remain single so long, even for the sake of an undying affection.

D'Arcy pondered whether he should put it to her blankly, and hang his life's happiness on her answer; for, of course, his life's happiness was involved. It always was when he fell in love.

He was debating that momentous question, when he received a friendly tap on the arm, and turned to see Mr. Fish at his elbow

Arthur Augustus looked at him.

His previous meeting with Mr. Fish had been decidedly unfriendly, and he was surprised at the agreeable smile the young dude had worked up upon his face at the present moment.

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. D'Arcy," said Mr. Fish effusively.

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass, and surveyed Mr. Fish calmly.

"Thank you vewy much," he replied. "I must wemark that the pleasuah is entirely on your side, my fwiend."

Mr. Fish coughed a little. He had learned from Mr. Potts that the youth he had been so rude to was the son of an English lord, and his Republican heart was touched at once. He would willingly have allowed the son of any lord to walk over him, and he was earnestly desirous of repairing his blunder.

"I am sorry there has been anything like a scrap," he said.

"Pway what do you mean by a scwap?"

"I—I mean anything like a difficulty."

"A difficulty?"

"A quarrel," said Mr. Fish.

"Oh, I see! Pway excuse my ignowance, but I have not been long enough in Amewicah to study the language, you know," said D'Arcy.

Mr. Fish turned pink.

"I guess I wish I had known who you were," he said cordially. "I wouldn't have let out on you instanter as I did. It was really Potts who misled me."

"Vewy good. I am quite willin' to accept your apology."

"Good!" said Mr. Fish heartily. "Will you have a cigarette?"

"I don't smoke, thank you."

"Will you come and have something at the bar?"

"I don't dwink, thank you."

"Will you—er—h'm! I should like to have a little chat over the Old Country, you know," said Mr. Fish.

"I am weally sowwy that I have no time for a chat now."

That was enough even for the tuft-hunter. He walked away, and Arthur Augustus smiled, and resumed his meditations.

But Mr. Fish was not the only snob in the Grand Atlantic hotel.

The fact that D'Arcy was the son of a lord, and had the right to be called the Honourable Mr. D'Arcy, had been spread far and wide by Mr. Potts, and the swell of St. Jim's came in for a great deal of attention on that account.

It puzzled him at first, but as soon as he realised the truth, he carefully avoided the cordiality that was so generously extended towards him.

Anything like snobbishness jarred on the nerves of the swell of St. Jim's, and it was snobbishness pure and simple that actuated Mr. Fish and his friends.

But to Mr. Potts, when he saw him, D'Arcy, of course, was all smiles.

He was slow to believe that the father of his beloved was a snob, and though Mr. Potts had many curious little ways, D'Arcy was prepared to like him for Constantia's sake.

He wished the millionaire would not persist in addressing him as honourable; but, after all, that was only a trifle, and he was learning how pleasant a ring a title has in republican ears.

"Come into the smoke-room," said Mr. Potts, passing his fat arm through D'Arcy's. D'Arcy was nearly as tall as the millionaire, but only about one-third his girth. "I guess I wanter have a little chat with you."

"With great pleasuah, my deah sir," said D'Arcy.

He sat down in the smoke-room, though he did not smoke. Mr. Potts resumed his previous day's conversation on the subject of the British aristocracy, and asked for all sorts of information. But this time he took a deeper interest in D'Arcy's own connections. He was very interested to learn that Arthur Augustus had an elder brother, and smiled with satisfaction at hearing that he was called Lord Conway. The son of a lord and the brother of a lord assumed an almost holy importance in the eyes of Hiram K. Potts.

Arthur Augustus did not dream of the thoughts that were passing through Mr. Potts's mind, even when the millionaire asked if Lord Conway contemplated visiting America.

"Yaas, as a mattah of fact he does," said D'Arcy. "He has been thinkin' evah since he left Oxford of goin' to the Canadian Wockies to shoot gwizzly bears, you know; and if he goes, I shall insist upon goin' with him to look aftah him."

"Canada!" said Mr Potts. "Why, that's only just over the lake from here. Lord Conway would have to give Chicago a look in, I guess."

"Yaas, vewy pwobably he would."

"Why don't you write to him on the subject, and point out to him that your friend Hiram K. Potts would be only too happy to entertain him in his mansion on the lake front," said Mr. Potts encouragingly.

"Bai Jove, sir, you are vewy kind!"

"Not at all, Honourable. I shall be proud to make his acquaintance. By the way, you looked over the stockyards this morning. Hope you had a good time."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! But——"

"Anything you'd like explained?"

"Yaas, if you would not wegard the wemark as impertinent, sir."

"Impertinent! My dear lad!" exclaimed Mr. Potts, apparently horrified at anybody ever dreaming of regarding the son of a lord as impertinent.

"Well, sir, if you will allow me to make the wemark, isn't it wathah wuff on the poor wottahs who cwowd wound the gates and can't get a job?"

"The—oh, the unemployed!" said Mr. Potts carelessly. "What about them?"

"I wegarded it as wathah wuff on them."

"Oh, they don't count!" said Mr. Potts. "Nothing succeeds like success, you know. The man who can't get on has to get out. The unemployed! I can see that you are not businesslike. Of course, it's only natural to a gentleman in your social position, my dear Honourable. But what should we do without the unemployed?"

Arthur Augustus stared.

"Bai Jove, if they were all employed, I suppose evewybody would be vewy much happiah," he remarked.

Mr. Potts laughed.

"And in case of a rush of work, where should we get the extra labour required?" he asked.

D'Arcy paused. He hadn't looked at it in that light.

"Imagine every man employed," smiled Mr. Potts. "We could only get extra labour by paying high wages, and attracting other working men by that means from other places, or by paying high rates for overtime. I hardly fancy either method would recommend itself to a man on the trail of dollars. No, sir! There must always be a residue of unemployed, or else there would be no elasticity in the labour market. Why, if every man were certain of employment, the employers would be at their mercy. Look at it in that light. If you couldn't take another man to do the work, how could you boot anybody? I should never dare to fire a man from my works if there weren't plenty of unemployed round the gates anxious to take his place."

D'Arcy looked very thoughtful.

"Is that American business?" he asked.

"It's business all the world over, only everybody isn't as frank as I am," smiled Mr. Potts. "I'm giving you straight goods, Honourable. If I were speaking on a public platform, of course, I should deplore unemployment, and suggest remedies, as they all do. Only I should take pesky good care not to suggest a real remedy, for if the remedy ever came along, I might as well close my factory."

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Potts's frank explanation had given the swell of St. Jim's food for thought. It did not raise the millionaire in his estimation. Yet there was certainly something to be said for the millionaire's view of the question. But the remembrance that Miss Constintia would be on the balcony by this time, drew D'Arcy's mind from the matter, and he took his leave of Mr. Potts, and strolled away. Miss Potts was there, and she welcomed D'Arcy with a smile.

Arthur Augustus dropped into a seat by her side, and his heart beat. Should he or should he not?

Miss Potts was so frank and cordial, and so unconscious of his secret agitation, that he felt it would be impossible to speak on the subject just then.

The opportunity must come before he left Chicago, however, he was quite determined upon that.

They had been chatting some time when Mr. Fish appeared. Apparently he knew Miss Potts well, for he dropped into the chair on the other side, and entered into talk. He made it a point to ignore D'Arcy, in retaliation for Arthur Augustus's refusal to accept his acquaintance, and as he spoke about matters in which Miss Potts was interested, and which D'Arcy knew nothing about, he succeeded to a certain extent. D'Arcy was only a lad, and not quite up to dealing with an experienced man about town in a contest of this kind, and Miss Potts, who suspected nothing, did not see the cloud that was gathering on D'Arcy's brow.

D'Arcy's natural diffidence aided the cool American in his object, and ere long the English boy was sitting quite silent, while the American was monopolising the attention of Miss Constantia.

The girl left them presently, to dress for dinner, and then Fish glanced at D'Arcy with a curious glimmer in his eyes, but he did not speak. It was Arthur Augustus who spoke.

"Sir," he said, turning his monocle upon Mr. Fish, "I wegard you as a boundah!"

"Sho!" said Mr. Fish

"I wegard you as a cad!"

"Sho!"

"If it were not for cweatin' a disturbance in this place," said D'Arcy, his voice trembling with anger, "I would give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Sho!" said Mr. Fish, for the third time.

Arthur Augustus did not quite understand the force of this ejaculation, but he guessed that it implied an affected surprise, with an undercurrent of irony.

The American's coolness irritated the lad still further, as Mr. Fish fully intended that it should.

"I wegard you, sir, as a beast," said D'Arcy. "Only a wotten pwesumptuous cad would have thwust himself upon me at this moment. You are what we call in the huntin'-field in England, sir, a thwustin' scoundwel!"

"Sho!" said Mr. Fish, for the fourth time.

And he lighted a cigarette.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. Mr. Fish was in great danger at that moment of having his cigarette knocked down his throat by a right-hander; but Arthur Augustus was keenly conscious of the bad form of a quarrel in public.

He gave Mr. Fish a glance through his eyeglass, which spoke eloquently of the volumes of scorn in his bosom, and turned on his heel. And his ears burned as he heard Mr. Fish break into a mocking laugh behind him.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy's Honour Is Satisfied!

COLONEL STALKER came in with Tom Merry & Co. in good time for dinner, all of them tired and dusty, and in high spirits. They had seen a great deal of Chicago, but they had seen nothing of Wally. The youngest scion of the house of D'Arcy was keeping his word, and he was keeping out of sight. Colonel Stalker, with unfailing good-humour, was treating the matter as a joke. The gallant colonel went into the hotel bar for a cocktail after his efforts in the cause of the amusement and instruction of his young friends, and Tom Merry & Co. ascended to their quarters in the endless lift, or, rather, elevator.

D'Arcy was there, dressing for dinner when they came in. He had nearly finished, and was standing before a big glass, fastening a rose in his dinner-jacket. The chums looked at him and grinned. Arthur Augustus had been extremely careful with his dress, and he looked as bright and neat as a new pin.

He glanced round as they came in.

"Will you fasten this wose for me, Blake?" he said. "I have twied a dozen times, but I can't get it wight."

"Certainly," said Jack. "Where's the pin?"

D'Arcy handed him the pin, and Blake started. There was a sudden wail of anguish from the swell of St. Jim's.

Blake stared at him in surprise.

"What on earth's the matter with you?"

"Ow! You wottah! You have wun the pin into my shouldah!"

"Well, why can't you be more careful with your shoulder, and not run it on the pin?"

"You are a feahful wottah! I cannot help suspectin', Blake, that you did it on purpose for a bwutal joke."

"He's getting suspicious in his old age," said Blake. "Fancy suspecting that of me!"

"If you give me your word that you didn't do it on purpose——"

"But I did do it on purpose," said Blake calmly. "But that doesn't excuse your suspiciousness. I regard you as a suspicious beast, and I seriously question whether I can continue to regard you as a friend."

"Pway don't wot! I will ovahlook your bwutal joke, if you will—— Ow!"

"What do you want me to ow for?"

"Ow! You have wun the pin into my arm!"

"Curious that you must keep on getting into the way of the pin. You'll be saying that I've run it into your neck next——"

"Ow!"

"What's the matter now?"

"You have wun it into my neck, you beast!"

"There!" exclaimed Blake triumphantly. "I told you so! I said he would say next that I had run it into his neck."

"But you have weally wun it into my neck, you howwid wuffian!"

"If you are going to keep on grumbling like this, Gussy, it's not much good my trying to help you. If I keep on long enough, I'm certain to stick it in the right place at last. It's only a case of trying long enough."

"I wefuse to be punctured all over with that pin, Blake. Tom Mewwy, will you have the kindness to fasten this wose in my jacket?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes," said Tom Merry. And the rose was satisfactorily fastened at last.

The juniors descended to dinner, and they found the colonel in the dining-room. Colonel Stalker had not dressed for dinner, apparently having no evening clothes in Chicago. But he looked all the better for it. His town garb, which he had bought in the innocence of his heart on the recommendation of a shopman, was fearful and wonderful to behold, being of the ready-made-down variety, and fitting him only where it touched, so to speak. Evening clothes on the same system would probably have been still more wonderful and fearful. But, whatever his clothes might be like, nothing could exceed the good nature and kindliness of the colonel's rugged, bronzed face. The juniors of St. Jim's had taken a great liking to him, and were looking forward to their journey under his charge. The colonel was full of tales of the Wild West, and though he certainly exaggerated sometimes, that was merely the boundless fancy of the boundless West. A man who lived

on a ranch on which he could not see the boundaries with a telescope, and who thought little of riding ninety or a hundred miles in a day, naturally thought and spoke on a large scale; hence his exaggerated accounts of happenings on the other side of the Rockies.

It was noticed that Arthur Augustus was very thoughtful during dinner. His brow was clouded, and he replied only in monosyllables, or did not reply at all, to the remarks of his comrades.

Tom Merry and Blake guessed that something had happened while they were away from the hotel, and after dinner when Colonel Stalker adjourned to the smoke-room, they questioned the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy was not to be drawn at first. But his chums, who were really a little concerned, insisted upon knowing what was the matter.

"You're not feeling anxious about Wally, are you?" asked Blake. "He will be all right. He'll come back when he's run through his tin."

"Not at all, deah boy. Wally can take care of himself, I wathah fancy."

"Then what's the matter?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, deah boys——" D'Arcy paused.

"Well, as a matter of fact—get on with the washing."

"I have been insulted!"

D'Arcy made this statement solemnly, prepared to see it produce a great effect upon his chums. His expectations were realised. Tom Merry and Blake gave a simultaneous start of horror, and looked as solemn as owls.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Blake.

"Absolutely imposs.," said Tom Merry. "There must be some mistake. Surely no one in Chicago would have the unparalleled nerve to insult the one and only Augustus?"

"I wathah think you are wottin', you wottah! I have been insulted. Of course, it was imposs. for me to knock him down in her pwesence."

"Him! Whom? In whose presence?"

"A wascal of the name of Fish."

"Then you haven't strewed the hungry churchyard with his bones yet?" asked Blake.

"Pway be sewious, Blake. I am weposin' a gweat confidence in you fellows. I have been gwossly insulted, and it was imposs. for me to stwike him in her presence. You see, he would pwobably have stwuck me——"

"Yes, that might happen, unless you finished him off at one fell swoop."

"And then it would have degenewated into common, vulgah scwappin'," said D'Arcy. "Of course, anythin' of the sort was imposs. But I have wead that in Amewicah the custom of duellin' is not yet extinct——"

"Duelling!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, with a really ferocious look behind his eyeglass. "It is imposs. for me to soil my hands upon the wascal——"

"Especially as he might start soiling his hands on you," Blake suggested.

"Yaas, exactly. You see, it sounds so easy to knock a man down. But suppose he gets up again and knocks you down? The thing has its dwawbacks. It would be imposs. for me to entah into anythin' so bwutal. But I think I ought to be given satisfaction in a mannah suitable to a gentleman, you know. I should be pwepared to meet him on the field of honah."

"Well, you bloodthirsty young bounder!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Fancy wanting to shed the blood of Mr. Fish!"

"I don't believe fishes have any blood," said Blake. "You see, it would be imposs., Gussy——"

"If you cannot tweat the mattah sewiously, Blake, pway withdwaw fwom the discussion," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "As for bein' bloodthirsty, of course, I should be extwemely sowwy to hurt anybody, and I should wegard bloodshed with howwah. But I weally think the cad ought to give me satisfaction."

"This is what comes of visiting the stockyards," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "I never dreamed it would have this effect upon you, Gussy. You'd better ask Mr. Potts to give you a job as slaughterman."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Pway be sewious. Is it a fact, Tom Mewwy, that duels are still fought in Amewicah?"

"I believe so," said Tom Merry, wiping his eyes. "In the Southern States they still shoot one another, I believe; but probably the duels are on the French system, and nobody gets hurt."

"Well, as a mattah of fact, I should wegard that as more satisfactowy, as I weally do not wish to hurt this wascal, so long as my honah is satisfied."

"You'll have to challenge Mr. Fish, and get him to cross Mason and Dixie's line, and then you can kill him as much as you like," said Tom Merry.

"Vewy well! Will you chaps be my seconds?"

"Your which?"

"My seconds. I shall wequire seconds in a beastly duel, you know."

Tom Merry and Blake looked at one another. Gentle and good-natured as D'Arcy was, when he had an idea in his head it was no use arguing with him. And he apparently had a fixed idea now that Mr. Fish ought to give him satisfaction as a gentleman.

"If you will take my message to him I shall be vewy much obliged," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "Othahwise I will w'ite."

"But, my dear ass——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, and I am wesolute upon this mattah. Will you be my seconds," said D'Arcy, in a stately way, "or shall I act without seconds?"

"But think of his aged grandparents!" gasped Blake. "Think of his Aunt Selina and his Uncle James! Think of his children——"

"He is not a mawwied man."

"Hum! Then I withdraw the children. But still think of his Aunt Selina and his Uncle James!" urged Blake. "Suppose you bring him down in sorrow to the crematorium? Think of their grief. They will curse the name of Gussy——"

"Pway don't use such extwemely stwong expwessions, Blake."

"They will use stronger expressions if you start murdering Fish."

"I was not thinkin' of murdahin' him: I only want him to give me satisfaction as a gentleman, you know."

"It comes to the same thing. Besides, suppose you get any of his gore on your clothes; you might ruin your trousers."

"Pway don't wot——"

"Better think over it, Gussy. Besides, you can't ask Stalker to wait here in Chicago while you commit a murder. It wouldn't be reasonable."

"Pewwaps you are wight in some wespects. But how am I to tweat this man Fish?"

"Treat him to some ginger-pop."

"If you cannot be sewious, Blake——"

"Treat him with contempt," said Tom Merry seriously. "Sneer at him, curl your lip with scorn, and treat him as a worm. That will make him feel infinitesimal, and will be cleaner than any slaughtering business."

"Yaas, pewwaps so. Bai Jove, here he comes!"

Mr. Fish came by. He glanced at D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus fixed his monocle in his eye, and bestowed a glare of withering contempt upon Mr. Fish.

Mr. Fish, however, refused to be withered. A distinct chuckle was heard as he walked on, and Arthur Augustus turned pink with wrath.

"You observed that, Tom Mewwy? Contempt has absolutely no effect upon the bwazen wascal."

"Didn't you hear him groan with mortification?" asked Blake, with an air of astonishment.

"I thought I heard the cad chucklin'."

"Something wrong with your auricular apparatus," said Blake, with a shake of his head. "If that wasn't a groan of mortification, I never heard one."

Which was perfectly true; Blake never had heard one.

But Arthur Augustus was satisfied. If his enemy was groaning with mortification, honour was sufficiently satisfied—for that evening, at least. And the contented smiles once more revisited the countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 10.

Captain Punter Catches It—Hot!

THE next morning nothing had been heard of Wally. D'Arcy minor was keeping up the game. Colonel Stalker was inclined to grow a little anxious, but Tom Merry assured him that Wally would be all right. And, as a matter of fact, when they came out of the Grand Atlantic that morning, Blake sighted the truant on the other side of the roadway.

He dashed across, but it was in vain. Wally had seen him coming, and had disappeared. Jack came back red and exasperated.

But Colonel Stalker chuckled.

"I reckon it's all O.K. so long as the kid hasn't come to any harm," he remarked. "I kinder calculated that he might have dropped into trouble with some crooks, you know. I hear that one of you was kidnapped in New York."

"Yaas, wathah! I had the gweat misfortune to be kidnapped by a wascal named Puntah," said D'Arcy. "I was impwisoned in an extwemely dirty place, where I was not even allowed to wash, until I contwived to escape and



"I say, do let him off!" said Tom Merry, putting a dollar into the angry chambermaid's hand.

also to wescue Blake. I should not be surpwised to see that wascal Puntah in Chicago."

"Well, he haunted us in New York," said Tom Merry. "He might think it worth his while to try the same game on in Chicago. Why, my hat!"

"What's the matter?"

"Talk of the Prince of Darkness. Look there!"

Tom Merry pointed.

At a short distance from the hotel, on the same sidewalk, a man with a pointed moustache and an aquiline nose was standing, with a cane under his arm. The boys knew him again at once. It was Captain Punter, the sharper who had attempted to fleece them on the steamer coming from England, and who had kidnapped D'Arcy in New York by the aid of a gang of Bowery toughs.

Colonel Stalker glanced at the man, and a grim look came over his bronzed face.

"Is that the cuss?" he inquired. "Why isn't he in the calaboose?"

"The—the what?"

"The calaboose—prison, younker. Wasn't he arrested?"

"Oh, no; he was never caught. And besides, it would have been hard to prove, even if we had made a police case of it. Mrs. Stuyvesant thought it best to leave the matter alone, and get us away from New York at once."

"Correct! But I reckon he's hyer in Chicager after you," said Colonel Stalker. "And, anyway, he's up to no good. Wait here for me, sonnies."

And the colonel strode along to where Captain Punter was standing.

The sharper glanced at him, reading intended trouble in his lowering brow, and was on his guard at once.

"Name of Punter, I reckon?" said the colonel.

The sharper shook his head.

"My name is Brookes," he said—"Lieutenant Brookes, of the Secunderabad Lancers. I don't think I have the honour of your acquaintance."

"I hain't a keerd with me," said Colonel Stalker. "I'm Colonel Stalker—old Stalky, sir, and down on any sort of a mugwump, sir. I'm old Stalk of Arizona, sir—old Stalky of Tombstone. You can't play any kind of a gum-game on old Stalk, sir. No, sir! You're Captain Punter, who roped in my young friend yonder in New York, and rung in a cold deck on him. I guess so, sir."

"You are quite mistaken——"

"I guess I prefer to put my ducats on my young friend, sir," said Colonel Stalker. "I don't take any stock in you; not worth a Continental red cent, sir. I can see you are a galoot and a sharp fit for any skin game. I'm going to give you a warming up, sir, and show you how we treat galoots of your heft out West, sir!"

"Keep off—help—ow! Murder!"

But the colonel had the rascal by the collar, and had wrenched away his cane, and was lashing the unfortunate captain with that cane in the most vulnerable parts of him.

Captain Punter, as much amazed as hurt, leaped and squirmed and yelled, but the merciless lash of the cane continued.

Tom Merry & Co. hurried up, with some idea of stopping the colonel, but they could not very well interfere with their elder, and besides, there was no doubt that the rascal deserved his punishment.

The passers-by stopped and looked on, and the juniors stood looking on, and a crowd speedily collected, and stared at the strange scene.

Captain Punter struggled and yelled, but although he was no weakling, he was as an infant in the grip of the herculean Western colonel, and he had no chance.

The cane descended again and again in a shower of blows, and Captain Punter hopped and danced as if to music.

"Bwavo!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard that as a weally exemplawy punishment for the wascal! I should have been gwestly inclined to give him a feahful thwashin' myself!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "And Manners lent me his camera just before we sailed. If I only had it in my pocket now?"

Lash, lash, lash—yell, shriek, shout!

"Dear me!" said Skimpole, dragging out his pocket-book. "I must take some notes of this. A most peculiar scene witnessed in the streets of Chicago. Dear me! Can you tell me how many times the colonel has already smitten him, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I should like to be exact in the particulars I give in my book of travels—as exact as possible."

"Go it, uncle!" yelled a dozen little ragamuffins, as the colonel plied the cane. "Make him skip, granny!"

Lash, lash, lash!

A burly policeman came pushing his way through the throng.

"Hyer, what's all this about?" he demanded gruffly.

Colonel Stalker desisted at last.

"I guess that will do!" he exclaimed, throwing down the cane, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead with a huge red handkerchief. "I kinder reckon I've made the galoot hop!"

He was right. Captain Punter was staggering and very white. He had had a severe punishment, and there was a glint in his eyes like the look of a spiteful cat. He muttered savage words under his breath.

The policeman, swelling with importance, shoved back the onlookers.

"I guess you can't do this on the streets of Chicago!" he declared. "I reckon I'll take you in charge, old fire-and-thunder! I guess—— Hyer! Where are you goin'?"

But Captain Punter was gone.

As he was the injured party, and he had not chosen to make any charge, even an American policeman could not very well proceed with the matter. Colonel Stalker swung away, and the officer did not interfere with him. He vindicated the majesty of the law by cuffing the small boys within reach, and sending them howling away, and stalked off with great dignity. Tom Merry & Co., glad enough to get a distance from anything connected with the American police, followed the colonel.

Skimpole shut his notebook.

"Very interesting!" he exclaimed. "A most remarkable scene. I would not have missed it for anything. By the way, do you know the exact dimensions of the Auditorium, Tom Merry?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"Dear me! I shall have to ascertain. Where are we going now?"

"Shopping at a big store."

And the party reached the gigantic establishment of Marshall Field, and entered.

CHAPTER 11.

Arthur Augustus Does Some Shopping—and Does not Get to Canada.

LIKE everything else in Chicago, the stores were on a gigantic scale. The building of Marshall Field's was a magnificent structure as far as size went. The wholesale building, which the visitors had permission to view, occupies a whole square, bounded by four streets. The retail building, where D'Arcy had to do a great deal of shopping, was at the corner of State Street and Washington Street. A height of seven floors was quite modest for Chicago. But the floor space was over six acres, to compensate for the lack of height. When the boys commenced their shopping, they found that everything the heart could desire was to be had by those who could pay for it.

Arthur Augustus being plentifully supplied with money, his purchases were great. He bought something in nearly every department, ordering the goods to be sent to the Grand Atlantic. The shopmen, on learning that he was going West, recommended all sorts of things, pledging their experience that he would really need them. The swell of St. Jim's had brought his own outfit of guns, still packed among his baggage, but in other matters he was not so well provided. Folding tents and waterproof blankets and camp-kettles and patent stoves and all sorts and conditions of things, useful and useless, swelled the list of his purchases, and the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's was deaf to reason on the subject.

"My dear boys, we are goin' to a perfectly wild countwy," he said. "We may find ourselves absolutely up a tree for somethin'. Suppose we wan out of soap?"

"That's no reason for ordering a hundredweight of it."

"I have ordahed only one gwoss of cakes of soap. Then that patent bath for camping out, and turning it into a bed at night, and a packing-case by day, is a weally wippin' ideah, and you don't find inventions like that in any countwy but Amewicah."

"And even in Amewicah I don't suppose you find 'em work," growled Blake.

"We cannot tell that without givin' them a twial. It was a most polite chap sold me that camp bath, and he wecommended it on his own wesponsibility."

"Perhaps he wanted to make a sale."

"Oh, weally, Blake, you are a wotten suspicious boundah, you know. I suppose the man wouldn't sell a useless article simply for the sake of gettin' my tin. It would be next door to stealin'."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Blake resignedly. "It's no good arguing with you. You'll have a jolly big bill to pay."

"I suppose I can't allow considewations of expense to stand in the way of my personal comfort, deah boy."

"I suppose not, dummy!"

"I wefuse to be called a dummy. I——"

But Jack Blake was striding on, and the rest of D'Arcy's remarks were wasted on the desert air of the patent camp-bath department.

The tour of the vast building was completed at last, and D'Arcy's shopping was finished, too. Then they adjourned—by way of the elevator—to the refreshment-rooms, and enjoyed a good lunch.

"Shoppin' is wathah exhaustin' work," said Arthur Augustus. "I am twyin' to make out how much these bills come to. What is ninety dollars sixty cents and eighty-two dollars four cents and fifteen dollars twenty-six cents in English money, Tom Mewwy?"

"Is it a conundrum?"

"Certainly not. It's these beastly bills."

"Blessed if I know."

"I must work it out somehow. Lemme see. There are a hundwed cents to a dollar, and five dollars to a pound. Ninety and eighty-two are one hundred and seventy-two, and fifteen is one hundred and eighty-seven dollars. I can't weckon the cents; I shall have to leave them over. One hundred and eighty-seven divided by five bwings us the numbah of pounds. I make it thirty-seven pounds and two dollahs."

"I dare say that's somewhere near it."

"Then I shall have thirty-seven pounds to pay. That is wathah a large sum, and I am afwaid I have not enough money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughin' mattah, Tom Mewwy. I weally did not wealise that the things were wunnin' up like that. Those shopmen are such dweadfully persuasive fellows, you know. As they are so obligin', I suppose they won't mind the things bein' sent back again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I shall be sowwy to give them so much twouble for nothin', but people weally keep shops to oblige the public, don't they?"

"Not wholly, I think," grinned Blake. "Sometimes they have an eye to their own profit, you know."

"That is a much lowah motive, and I wefuse to take it into considewation. I shall apologise handsomely when I send the things back, and that will settle the mattah, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha! There must be something wrong with your supposing machine if you suppose that," shrieked Blake.

"I suppose they would not like me to keep the goods without payin' for them," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "That is the only alternative."

"I am rather glad this has happened," said Skimpole. "I shall be curious to see how they act in the matter. It will make a very interesting note for my book of travels."

Lunch over, the party left the gigantic store, and walked

along State Street. Arthur Augustus suggested that it was hardly the proper thing to visit Chicago without a trip on the lake. Lake Michigan rolled its wide waters before the city, and beyond the lake was Canada—British soil. Canada, it is true, was a good distance from England, and yet it gave the juniors a curiously home-like feeling to reflect that they were so close to land upon which the British flag flew, and gladly enough would they have taken a trip across the Great Lakes to set foot, at least, on the shore of the grand old Dominion. But Lake Michigan was not, as Blake ruefully remarked, as easily crossed as the Serpentine in Hyde Park.

"All the same, we'll have a look at Canada some time," said Tom Merry. "We haven't finished our travels yet. As for going on the lake now, Gussy, this isn't the best time of the year for boating."

"Yaas, wathah, I know that; but when the fellows at St. Jim's ask us what it's like on the gweat lakes of Canada, it's no good tellin' them that we were afwaid of the cold, deah boy."

"Well, we'll ask the colonel."

Colonel Stalker was not much in favour of a trip on the lake, but he consented, and arranged to wait for the boys on the shore while they had a pull. The juniors found that there were boats to be had on hire, and they were soon aboard, and pulling on the wide waters of Michigan.

"Bai Jove, the watah here is wuffah than it is on the Rhyll at St. Jim's!" said Arthur Augustus, with the air of one making a great discovery. "Howevah, I think it would be a good ideah to pull acwoss and have a look at Canadah."

"Oh, chain him up!" said Blake.

"I wefuse to be chained up—I mean, I wegard your wemark as widiculous, Blake. I feel that I am quite capable of pullin' acwoss to Canadah. I take a gweat intewest in Canadah, as the only weally wespectable part of this continent."

"Oh, you can pull across to Canada if you like," said Blake resignedly. "But it isn't the width, ass, it's the length of Lake Michigan you've got to cross, duffer, and then you've got to pull through the straits, ass, into Lake Huron, dummy, and then pull for Canada, chump."

"I weally think I am up to it, all the same," said D'Arcy. "I have no idea what the distance is, but I have vewy little doubt that I can manage it."

"Go ahead, then!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus cheerfully commenced to pull. There was a crash as his right oar struck upon a chunk of ice, and slipped from his hand. He caught a crab with the other, and the heels of Arthur Augustus shot up above his head, while the back of his head came with a bump against hard wood.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sat up. He rubbed the back of his head and glared at the shrieking juniors.

"You feahful wottahs! What are you laughin' at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy picked himself up. There was a bump and an ache on the back of his head, and he did not feel inclined for any more rowing. The project of pulling the length of Lake Michigan was given up.

"I weally think we had bettah go ashore," he said.

"But we've not got to Canada yet."

"Wats! I have a feahful bump on my head."

Skimpole had jerked out his notebook and pencil. He was grinning gleefully.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "I'm awfully glad this has happened. It will make a comic incident for my book of travels. I'm very glad—— Ow! Who's that knocking my hat off?"

"It is I, you uttah ass!" growled Arthur Augustus, ruffled for once. "I have a feahfully stwong inclination to knock your silly head off, too!"

"Really, D'Arcy——"

"Pway pull ashore, deah boys. I wefuse, undah the circs., to wow you ovah to Canadah."

And Tom Merry and Blake pulled ashore.

CHAPTER 12.

Declined With Thanks.

"HALLO! There he is!"

The boys had joined Colonel Stalker, and they were walking back towards the Grand Atlantic, when Tom Merry suddenly caught sight of Wally, and made a rush for him. The youngest scion of the famous house of D'Arcy dodged, but he dodged too late. Tom Merry's grip was upon his shoulder, and he was caught.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, we've got him! Pway hold him tight, Tom Mewwy, while I considah whethah to give him a feahful thwashin'."

Colonel Stalker looked down at the junior from his height of six foot three.

"So that's Wally!" he said grimly.

"Yes, I'm Wally," said D'Arcy minor. "I'm glad to make your acquaintance!" And he calmly shook hands with the astonished colonel. "Have you seen Pongo?"

"Thunder!"

"Sorry I can't join you at present," said Wally, with a wary eye on Tom Merry. "I'm still looking for Pongo, and I can't leave Chicago till I've found him."

"You'll leave this citay when we do, deah boy. As for Pongo, he is certainly turned into pweserved kidneys or sausages long ago. Don't be unweasonable."

"I'm not going till he's found. I've hunted up and down Chicago. I lodged last night in a dive in Clark Street," said Wally cheerfully. "If you chaps want to see the elephant, I can show you round. I've learned a lot about Chicago."

"Bai Jove! Where is the elephant? Is it in a menagewie?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason to cackle at that simple question, Wally."

"Naturally; you don't know the American language," said Wally patronisingly. "To see the elephant is American for seeing the sights."

"Is it weally?"

"Dear me! I must make a note of that," murmured Skimpole.

"I've seen the elephant, but I haven't seen Pongo," said D'Arcy minor. "I can't leave Chicago till I know what's become of him. But I don't want to delay your journey, Tom Merry, if your uncle is expecting you at his ranch. You fellows can go on and leave me here."

"Young ass!" said Tom Merry. "Of course we can't leave you. I'm sorry about Pongo, but I don't see what's to be done."

"I guess the dorg's gone," said the colonel. "It's a durned pity; I'm fond of dorgs. But if he's gone into canned beef you'll never get him back again."

"That young darkey at the hotel is looking for him, too," said Tom Merry. "He's promised to find him, though I don't see how he's going to do it. Look here, Wally, you must admit that it's no good."

Wally looked disconsolate.

"I'm beginning to think so," he said. "Poor old Pongo! I don't know what I shall do without him."

And for the first time in his experience, Tom Merry saw a suspicious moisture on the eyelid of D'Arcy minor. A very strong affection bound the scamp of St. Jim's Third to the shaggy mongrel which had always been the best-hated animal at the school.

The colonel's grim, bronzed visage softened.

"I guess I'm not the galoot to part a pilgrim from his dorg," he said; "but I reckon we kain't stay in Chicago for the rest of our lives, kiddies. Suppose we give you a couple more days to look for the dorg, sonny, and if you don't find him then, you will reckon to give it up, and come West?"

"You're awfully good, sir!" said Wally gratefully. "You don't know how much I think of that dog, sir. I—I—I agree!"

"Honour bwight, you young wascal!" said Arthur Augustus. "Come to the hotel. I am afwaid you did not stay at a vewy weputable place last night, for your jacket is extwemely dusty, and your boots have not been bwushed. Your necktie is not stwaight, either. I twust you will twy not to bwing diswepute upon the name of D'Arcy while you are in Amewicah, deah boy! Speakin' about Pongo, why don't you offah a weward for him?"

"I've been to the police department at the city-hall about it," said Wally despondently. "To tell the truth, I'm running out of cash. It goes, you know. I've offered five dollars."

"Then send a messenger and offah twenty."

"But I haven't the tin."

"I have, though," said Arthur Augustus. "You know that I dislike your dog as much as I dislike Hewwies's bulldog. Neither of them has evah showed anythin' like a pwopah wespect for a fellow's twousahs. But, under the pwesent circs., as you appeah to attach some importance to wescuin' Pongo from the stockyards, I shall back you up to any extent. Ow! What are you thumpin' me on the back for?"

"To show my gratitude!"

"Then I wish you would be ungwateful, you wuff young wottah! I was about to say that I am wathah in funds now, as I haven't done any shoppin'—or, to be exact, I have done a lot of shoppin', but I am goin' to send the things back, as I find they are more expensive than I

thought. I shall easily be able to spare twenty dollahs for findin' that wotten mongwel!"

And when they reached the hotel the message was sent off at once to the police headquarters. Then the party entered, and a number of packages being carried in attracted the attention of the juniors as they reached their room. The room seemed to be pretty well filled by them. There were packages to the right, packages to the left, and packages all round them; packages on the beds, packages beside the beds, and packages under the beds; packages on the landing, and packages in the corridor; and packages still coming up in the lift. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass, and looked over the varied and endless assortment

"Bai Jove, I wonder what all this means?" he remarked casually.

"Ah, Mr. D'Arcy, I presume?" said a smart-looking clerk, stepping towards the swell of St. Jim's. "I'm from the store, sir. Your little account, if you please!"

"Bai Jove!"

"One hundred and eighty-eight dollars less ten cents."

"Thunder!" exclaimed the colonel, aghast.

"Oh, it's all wight!" said D'Arcy airily. "I have changed my mind about havin' those things, deah boy, and I should be glad if you would give instwuctions for them all to be taken back again!"

The young man from the store stared at him, petrified. Arthur Augustus went into the room, and began to take off his hat and gloves. He was surprised by receiving a tap on the shoulder. It was the young man from the store.

"Yaas, what do you want?" said D'Arcy. "You shouldn't come in here without knockin', you know! I thought I had finished with you! Is there anything else?"

"I guess so, sir; there's your little bill!"

"I've changed my mind about havin' the things!"

"I'm afraid you can't do that, sir. I'll trouble you for this little bill!"

"Pway weturn the bill and the goods to the store, deah boy, and tell them I am sowwy that I have had to change my mind on the mattah!"

"Don't do anything of the sort," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's all right! Gussy, the bill will have to be settled."

"Impossible, deah boy! I haven't the necessary tin; and, besides, I object to spendin' money in weckless extwavagance!" said D'Arcy severely. "I am wathah surpwised at you, Tom Mewwy. You know I pwomised my governah not to be weckless in money mattahs!"

"You will have to settle the bill!" roared Blake.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! All the shopmen assured me that the goods were worth more than I was payin' for them. In that case, it is to their intewest to take them back."

"Oh, you shrieking ass! The things must be kept and paid for, as you ordered them."

"If the store persons would considah themselves as injahed in any way by the twansaction," said D'Arcy, with great dignity, "I should certainly keep them, and pay for them. Am I to understand that the store would wefuse to take them back?"

The young man from the store grinned.

"That's about the size of it," he remarked. "There would be trouble."

"Then I will take the things," said D'Arcy, with a wave of the hand. "And now pway don't bothah me any more, as I have to dwess for dinnah!"

"But you haven't paid the bill, sir!"

"Haven't I explained to you that I haven't any money?" said D'Arcy patiently. "I will take the goods. I am leavin' Chicago shortly, and will take them with me, and will w'ite to you from Awizonah."

The young man grinned.

"I'm afraid that's not good enough, sir!"

"Bai Jove, the chap isn't satisfied yet! I know I shall be late for dinnah! What do you want, then? Pway buck up!"

"The cash, please, sir!"

"I haven't any!"

The young man looked petrified.

"To be exact, I have some, but not nearly enough; and, besides, I must have some pocket-money," said Arthur Augustus. "You stwike me as bein' a most unweasonable person. I shall have to w'ite to England for a wemittance."

"Not good enough!" said the young man.

"Is it poss., sir, that you doubt my integwity?" said D'Arcy, in his most stately manner.

"I guess so!"

"Then I wefuse to discuss the mattah with you furthah!"

And D'Arcy turned away, and took his coat off, and prepared to make his toilet. The amazed young man from the stores tapped him on the shoulder.

"Bai Jove, are you still here?" said D'Arcy, turning round almost crossly. "You are weally a most persistent fellow! What do you want now?"

"The cash, sir!"

"Pway depart at once! I wefuse to discuss the mattah furthah!"

"But——"

"I wepeat that I wefuse to discuss the mattah furthah! If this is how you cawwy on business in Chicago, I must womark that I don't think much of your methods! I have nevah been tweated with such gwoss diswespect in Wegent-Stweet or in Piccadilly!"

"You'll hear from us, sir!" said the young man, as he beat a retreat to the door.

There he was stopped by Colonel Stalker, who was almost convulsed with laughter. The juniors were all roaring, too; and D'Arcy was the only one who could not see a comical side to the matter.

"It's all O.K!" grinned the colonel, gasping for breath. "Come along, and I'll give you my cheque, young man! It's all O K!"

The young man from the store left the hotel with Colonel Stalker's cheque in his pocket. And the bill was duly sent on to be honoured by Lord Eastwood. But Arthur Augustus did not trouble about that. He was thinking of Constantia, and he dressed for dinner with extraordinary care, and went downstairs with a flower in his jacket.

CHAPTER 13.

Rough on Mr. Fish.

WALLY was not to be seen in the dining-room, but Tom Merry caught a glimpse of him outside the hotel, talking to a policeman. The policeman turned away, and Wally turned round. He had something under his jacket, something that moved and wagged a shaggy tail.

"Pongo?" asked Tom Merry.

"No; worse luck!"

"Then what have you got there?"

Wally opened his jacket a little, and showed the hungry-looking countenance of a street cur. The animal was wriggling against his waistcoat.

"It's not Pongo," said Wally. "I believe that chap knew it wasn't Pongo when he brought it, but he wanted a tip."

"But if it's not Pongo, what the dickens have you taken it for?"

"Well, the poor brute's hungry," said D'Arcy minor. "Look at him! The policeman said it would be taken to the Dogs' Home and killed, and I didn't like the idea. I tipped him half-a-dollar, and took it."

"But what are you going to do with it?"

"Feed it!" said Wally, going into the hotel.

Tom Merry stared. Then he laughed, and followed Wally. He was kind-hearted enough himself, but he would not have ventured to take a shaggy, dirty mongrel dog from the streets into the dining-room of one of the most expensive hotels in Chicago.

Wally entered the dining-room, keeping the little street dog carefully concealed under his jacket. He knew that if it was seen, it would never be allowed to pass the waiters.

Arthur Augustus glanced at him with a disapproving eye. The swell of St. Jim's had secured a seat next to Miss Potts, by the favour of Hiram K. Potts, of Chicago, and he was looking his best. D'Arcy always looked his best in evening clothes, and certainly he was elegance itself now. Wally formed a striking contrast. He was not dressed for dinner, and his clothes were dusty, his hair somewhat untidy, and his jacket was bulged out by the dog.

He dropped into his place on the side of the table opposite his brother, and the serviette he quickly outspread helped him to conceal the presence of his protege.

"You know that lad?" asked Miss Potts casually.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, somewhat shamefacedly. "He is my youngah bwothah!"

"I notice a resemblance now. What a pleasant-looking lad!"

Arthur Augustus drew a breath of relief.

"I am vewy glad you do not considah him a little wuffian, Miss Potts!" he said. "He has actually come in to dinner in lounge-clothes."

Miss Potts laughed.

"Boys will be boys!" she remarked.

"Ya-a-as; I suppose so!"

Wally's proceedings during dinner puzzled Arthur Augustus, who kept an anxious eye on him. Wally ate his soup sedately, but when the fish appeared, D'Arcy saw him deliberately smuggle a piece down upon his lap. In the two or three following courses the same thing happened, and D'Arcy was amazed and alarmed. He trembled lest anyone else should observe the delinquencies of his younger brother, and he felt himself turn cold when he observed that Mr. Fish had his eye on D'Arcy minor.

Mr. Fish was on the other side of Miss Constantia, and he had certainly overheard D'Arcy tell the girl that Wally was his brother; but it suited the purpose of Mr. Fish to ignore that fact.

"Curious little beggar on the other side of the table!" he remarked to Miss Potts. "He can hardly be staying at the hotel."

Arthur Augustus shivered.

"I guess it's some kitchen-boy playing a joke of some kind," went on Mr. Fish. "I shall complain to the head-waiter!"

"Pray do nothing of the sort!" said Constantia.

"Do you take any interest in the ragamuffin, Miss Potts?" said Mr. Fish, in amazement. "Surely the impertinent young rascal ought to be turned out of the room?"

"He is Mr. D'Arcy's brother."

"Sho! I took him for a kitchen boy."

D'Arcy trembled with anger. He knew perfectly well that Mr. Fish had not taken Wally for anything of the kind, but it was impossible for him to speak.

Wally continued to help his protege from nearly every course, and more than one eye at the table was turned upon him as the dinner progressed.

By the time the dessert appeared, the head waiter had noticed that something was going on, and he sidled up behind Wally's chair. He was almost paralysed to see the shaggy head of a street mongrel peeping out from the boy's lap. He tapped Wally on the shoulder. He was a German waiter, and his command of English was not great. His fat red face became very excited.

"It is not tat it is allow," he said. "It is tat you take avay mit him."

"No, thanks," said Wally, under the impression that the man was offering him some delicacy. "Never mind."

"Ich sage, dass it not allow—tat it no do."

"I won't have any, thanks."

"Dass it not allow mit tog."

"Oh, take it away!"

"You take it avay—mit him!"

"The chap's drunk," muttered Wally. "Look here, you cut off! Go and have your say out in the vestibule."

"Ich sage——"

The head waiter broke off in despair, and rushed off to find the manager—a most gorgeous individual in evening attire, with a great diamond on a huge shirt-front, and a fraction of waistcoat into which most of the colours of the rainbow were worked. But Wally had realised by this time that it was his dog that had caused the excitement. Tom Merry was nearly choking with laughter.

"You'd better cut," he whispered.

Wally shook his head.

"Blessed if I'm going to cut," he said, with sturdy British independence. "I'm not going to cut for a lot of Yankee bounders."

Mr. Fish grinned across the table through the flowers.

"I am afraid they are going to turn him out," he remarked, as the manager came sailing up. "I guess Mr. D'Arcy had better step in and claim his brother."

The manager touched Wally on the shoulder. He evidently shared the indignation of his head waiter, but he was a cool American.

"I guess dogs aren't allowed in here," he said. "Git!"

"I'm feeding him."

"I guess I'll be glad if you'll get, and take him, and keep on the outside of my door next time you pass," said the manager.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wally.

The manager did not obey. He grasped the boy by the shoulder. Wally started up, and the frightened dog leaped from his lap. He bounded into the middle of the table, yelping with terror.

"Sho!" gasped Mr. Fish.

The waiters made clutches at the dog from Wally's side of the table. The animal made another bound, and landed upon the expansive shirt-front of Mr. Fish.

The Chicago dude gave a yell.

"Ow! Take him off! Ow!"

The dirty, shaggy brute was clawing at his shirt and waistcoat. Mr. Fish sprang up with such violence that his chair was hurled backwards. The dog dropped to the floor, and skipped out of the nearest door at top speed. Mr. Fish stood the centre of attraction, with his shirt-front clawed and muddy, and his trousers dripping with water from an overturned bottle.

His face was a study.

Miss Potts was smiling. Several of the guests at the table were laughing. Mr. Fish gave D'Arcy minor a furious look, and rushed from the room to change his clothes. In the excitement, Tom Merry and Blake dragged Wally away.

CHAPTER 14.

Rejected Addresses.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS succeeded in making Wally's peace with the irate manager, backed up by the influence of Mr. Potts. Mr. Potts regarded the matter as a good joke, and only laughed at Mr. Fish's wrath. Anything done by the son of a lord was right in the eyes of the canned beef potentate, and if the stray dog had jumped on his own shirt-front, he would probably have forgiven it.

Arthur Augustus had made rapid progress in the millionaire's favour, as we know; but about Miss Potts he was not quite so certain.

That the American girl liked him, he was aware; but he had a sinking fear that the disparity between under fifteen and over twenty-four might appear greater in her eyes than in his own.

He had determined once more to try his luck, but Miss Potts was absent from the Grand Atlantic that evening, and he had no chance. Tom Merry & Co. dragged him off to the theatre, too, and the chums spent a pleasant evening.

The next day there was more sight-seeing in Chicago, but Wally had eyes only for the missing Pongo; but the dog was not discovered.

The search for a stray dog in a great city was, indeed, a hopeless task, especially if it was a fact that such unfortunate creatures were roped in at the stockyards, as the chums found to be a current joke in Chicago.

But Wally would not give up hope.

He had given his word to leave Chicago with the party at a certain time if the missing mongrel had not turned up, and as the time drew near, he made up his mind to it, but he was very despondent.

During the last evening in Chicago, he went out for a long walk to have a final look for Pongo, and Tom Merry and Blake went with him, in sympathetic mood.

Arthur Augustus remained at the Grand Atlantic. Having seen Skimpole settled over his notebook, and the colonel comfortably ensconced in the smoke-room, Arthur Augustus looked for Miss Potts, and found her. The girl was with her father, but Mr. Potts soon walked away and left them together. Music was proceeding in the room, and, under cover of it, Arthur Augustus felt his courage rise to broach the dreadful question. He felt that he could not leave Chicago without revealing his love, and, if possible, inducing Miss Constantia to accept an engagement ring.

"We are leavin' Chicago to-morrow, Miss Potts," he remarked, with a heavy sigh.

The girl's eyes turned upon him.

"Yes! I guess I'm real sorry."

"I am glad you are sowwy."

Miss Potts laughed.

"I dare say we shall meet again," she remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! I hope we shall, Miss Potts. Since I have known you, I—I—I—may I call you Constantia?"

"Certainly, my dear boy."

D'Arcy's heart sank. He wanted to call the millionaire's daughter Constantia, but he didn't want her to regard him as a dear boy.

"I am not exactly what you would call a boy, you know," he remarked. "I am in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and shall get my wemove into the Shell, you know."

This was so much Greek to Miss Potts, but she smiled sweetly.

"Will you really?"

"Yaas, wathah! I was thinkin', Miss Con—Con—Constantia——"

Arthur Augustus stammered and broke off.

"Yes, you were thinking——"

"I—I—I—— Oh, Constantia, I—I—I——"

Miss Potts looked somewhat concerned. She liked D'Arcy, and she thought there must be something wrong. The swell of St. Jim's was stammering and confused, and his face was very red.

"Is there anything the matter, Arthur?" she asked gently.

It was the first time she had used his Christian name, and it made Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's heart beat very quickly.

"N-n-n-no, not exactly," he stammered.

"Have you a pain?"

"N-n-n-n-no, not a pain."

"An ache, then?"

D'Arcy smiled feebly.

"Ya-a-a-as, I have an ache."

"Dear me! Where?"

"I-i-i-in my heart."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Miss Potts. "A pain in your heart! You must see a doctor at once. Was it something you had at dinner, do you think?"

"Weally, Miss Potts——"

"Or have you been over-exerting yourself? I guess you make me feel anxious."

"Nothin' of the sort. It is a heartache. I—I—I am in love."

D'Arcy's face was absolutely scarlet by this time.

Miss Potts looked at him. She was strongly inclined to burst into a laugh, but she restrained the inclination.

"In love! Oh, Arthur! You!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, feeling more at ease now that the ice was broken. "I have been desperately in love for sevewal days."

"Is it a Chicago girl?" asked Miss Potts, with interest.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, do tell me her name!"

"Oh, Miss Constantia, cannot you guess?" stammered D'Arcy.

She fixed her eyes upon him in blank amazement, and then, as she read his meaning, she could not longer restrain the laugh. But it was only for a moment. She laid her hand gently upon his arm.

"Arthur, you must not be a little goose," she said. "Do you know I am twenty-four years old, and you are only fourteen?"

"Nearly fifteen," said D'Arcy, as quick as lightning.

"Well, fifteen. I guess it isn't a great difference. What would Lord Eastwood say if you went home engaged to an American girl nine years older than yourself?"

"I should show him your photogwaph, and then he would be charmed."

Miss Potts smiled. D'Arcy undoubtedly was a goose, but he was a very chivalrous and amiable goose.

"My dear boy, you must dismiss anything of that kind from your mind," she said. "I had no idea you were thinking of anything of the sort. You are a very nice boy." Arthur Augustus winced. "But you must remember that you are only a boy. I am very flattered, but I am not in the least in love with you."

"Oh!"

"When you are a little older, you will feel glad that you proposed to me, and not to some girls you might meet in Chicago," said Miss Potts, with a smile. "You are a little goose, and I almost wish you were fifteen years older. Now, if it were your elder brother, I might think of it. I guess I've made up my mind to marry a title."

"Oh!" said D'Arcy again.

"So we'll be good friends, and we won't talk any more nonsense," said Miss Potts. "Has your brother found his dog yet?"

"I weally do not know," said D'Arcy. To change the subject from love to Pongo was too bad—it was a drop from the sublime to the ridiculous, with a vengeance.

They parted a few minutes later, and Miss Potts shook hands with the swell of St. Jim's, with a smile.

"Good-night, Arthur, and don't be a goose! Don't forget me!"

"Nevah," said Arthur Augustus—"nevah! Your image will be evah impwinted upon my heart, and in the lonely watches of the night——"

Miss Potts laughed outright, and ran away. Tom Merry thumped the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder, and D'Arcy swung round to see Tom and Blake grinning at him.

"What's that about a watch?" asked Blake. "You're not buying a new watch, surely?"

"No!" said D'Arcy, with unusual brusqueness. "Pway don't be widiculous!"

"You were saying something about watches at night."

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus walked away.

Blake looked bewildered, but Tom Merry was laughing. He had an idea of what had happened.

"Well, what's the joke?" demanded Blake. "Has Gussy got a bee in his bonnet, or has he been drinking one of the colonel's cocktails, or what?"

"I imagine he's been proposing to Miss Potts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 15.

"Bravo, Pompey!"

THE juniors went up to bed, Wally and Arthur Augustus both looking somewhat gloomy. Arthur Augustus was thinking of Constantia, and Wally was thinking of Pongo. The last search had proved as fruitless as the previous ones, and nothing had been seen or heard of the missing dog. If he had not met a violent death at the stockyards, he had doubtless been stolen and taken away, and Wally had almost given up hope of seeing him again.

Tom Merry had remembered Pompey's promise to find the dog, and he had asked in the hotel after the little darkey, but, as it happened, Pompey was gone, too. Tom learned that he not been seen since that day, and if he turned up at the hotel again he would be "fired."

Tom Merry never expected to see either Pompey or the dog again, but Wally had a faint hope lingering in his breast.

At breakfast Arthur Augustus had somewhat recovered his spirits, sufficiently so to make a good meal. He was, of course, still in love, and would probably be in love for some days to come; but an undying affection and a never-fading memory were his consolations for being rejected. Wally, however, refused to be comforted. Pongo was gone, and without Pongo D'Arcy minor was disconsolate.

Colonel Stalker pulled at his moustache, and looked at the junior several times during breakfast.

"I guess I don't like to see you looking down in the mouth," he remarked. "If you reckon there's any chance of roping in the dorg, I'll hang on to Chicager a bit longer, youngster."

Wally shook his head.

"It's all right," he said heavily. "I don't suppose he'll be found now. It's no good sticking it out any longer."

"I guess it's hard cheese, too," said the colonel sympathetically. "I kinder reckon that it can't be helped, though. The police will get that reward if they can, you can bet your boots on that, boyees."

"Yaas, wathah! I am vewy sowwy, but I am afwaid it is no use staying any longer, Wally."

"I'm ready to go," said Wally.

And the juniors went to pack up their belongings.

Arthur Augustus had brought a great deal of luggage from England, and his purchases in Chicago had greatly increased the amount of it.

The express company were to collect the baggage at the hotel, and as they charged by the separate "piece," D'Arcy's array of boxes and trunks were likely to come to a good figure. Blake advised him to throw his camp-bath and some other articles out of the window, but D'Arcy declined to adopt the suggestion.

"That camp-bath will be extwemely useful," he said. "You can turn it into a packin'-case by day, and a bed by night, and bath in it in the mornin'. I don't quite know how to open it, but we don't want it open till we get to Awizonah."

"And you won't want it then, ass!"

"I object to the term 'ass.' Ah, here are the expwessmen! These boxes and twunks belong to me, my fwiends, and I want you to take special care of the largest twunk, as it contains all my silk hats."

And the baggage was despatched.

The train left for St. Louis at ten, and, the baggage having gone, Tom Merry & Co. prepared to walk to the station—or rather depot, as the Americans call it. As the party came out of the hotel Wally cast a last glance round, as if in the vague hope of catching sight of Pongo. But Pongo wasn't to be seen. A man hastily crossed to the opposite sidewalk as the party came out, but Blake caught a glimpse of him.

"Punter, by George!"

Colonel Stalker whisked round.

"Punter! That scallywag again! Where?"

"He's gone!"

The rascal had disappeared in the crowd. The colonel looked round wrathfully, and tugged his grey moustache.

"He savvies too much to let old Stalky get hold of him again," he remarked. "I guess I kinder made the critter's bones ache t'other day! Yes, sir, I opine that that hoss-thief will keep clear of our trail."

Tom Merry was not so sure of that. Captain Punter certainly had had a severe lesson, but he seemed to be haunting them as he had done in New York. But no doubt he would be left behind for good in Chicago.

The railway depot was swarming with busy crowds when they reached it. The train was waiting on the lines, and they had only to take their places.

Wally looked up and down before he stepped aboard the train platform. There was no glimpse to be had of a dog.

The train filled up, and the scream of an engine was heard. Just as the train was about to start a diminutive figure came tearing through the crowd, and flung himself upon the already moving platform, where the conductor stood, and rolled over. It was a little darkey, with a dog in his arms!

The conductor grasped him by the shoulder, jerked him to his feet, and shook him.

"You young black imp!" he roared. "You limb of darkness! You give me a turn!"

"I'se sorry!" gasped Pompey. "Me just catch train, sah!"

"Young black whelp——"

"I'se debblish sorry—— Ow—ow—ow!"

The man was boxing his ears right and left.

Wally ran out of the car, and caught him by the arm.

"Stop it!" he said.

"What the thunder——"

"He's brought me my dog! Let him alone! Come here, Pongo! Pongo, Pongo!"

It was indeed Pongo!

Wally gathered his favourite up in his arms and hugged him as the train swept on, and returned to his friends in the car. Pompey followed him, grinning from ear to ear, apparently none the worse for his rough handling.

"Bai Jove! That's the wotten mongwel!"

"Pongo!"

"Oh, that's Pongo, is it?" said Colonel Stalker. "Well, I'm glad to see Pongo safe and sound. Old Stalky's glad, sir!"

"Good doggie!" said Wally, keeping Pongo on his knees, and patting him. "I'll put his chain on now. I'm not going to run any risks with him. I wonder where the young rip has been all the time?"

"So you found him, Pomp?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The darkey grinned expansively.

"I'se found him, sah."

"How did you find him?"

"I'se look everywhere, sah: tink me find him to please Mass' Tom," said Pompey. "Me guess me find him, sah. Find him at last. He lead about blind man."

"My hat! Did you take him away from a blind man?"

Pompey grinned again.

"Not real blind, sah—spoof, sah."

"Oh, I see!"

"Wish I'd met him!" said Wally. "I'd have given him one of my left-handers, the rotter! Poor old Pongo! See how thin he is!"

"But you're on the train now, kid," said Tom Merry, looking at Pompey in a rather puzzled way. "You're leaving Chicago."

"Me know, sah."

"You've lost your job at the hotel through looking for Pongo."

"I'se no care, sah."

"But—— We must send you back somehow."

Pompey looked alarmed.

"No send back, sah."

"You don't want to go back to Chicago?" asked Tom Merry.

Pompey shook his head emphatically.

"No, sah."

"Have you any friends in St. Louis?"

"No, sah."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"No care, sah."

"The coon can be sent back from the next stopping-place," said Colonel Stalker. "I guess we'll pay his fare, and put something in his pocket."

"Yaas, wathah! He is entitled to the weward for findin' Pongo. That's twenty dollars, deah boys. Here's your twenty dollars, Pompey."

But Pompey refused to touch the greenbacks.

"I'se found dog for Mass' Tom," he said; "no find for cash. Me do it for Mass' Tom."

Tom Merry was curiously touched. The ebony face of the little coon was very earnest and serious.

"But you can take the money," he said. "You have earned it, Pompey."

"I'se no gwine take it, sah."

"But you have earned it, kid."

"If Mass' Tom say I'se take it, I'se take it," said Pompey.

"Well, I do say so," said Tom Merry, laughing.

And Pompey put the twenty dollars into his pocket. The conductor came along the car with a black brow.

"Guess that nig goes," he said. "He can travel in the nigger car, not here among white people, I guess."

Tom Merry flushed indignantly.

"Let him alone! I will pay for him——"

"The nig goes, I reckon."

It was Tom Merry's first experience of the colour prejudice in the United States.

Pompey settled the difficulty himself.

"I'se gwine," he said.

"You get off at the next station," said Tom Merry. "Here, take this—it will pay your fare back to Chicago, and something over."

But Pompey did not take it.

"I'se no gwine back," he said.

"Do you want to go on to St. Louis?"

"I'se gwine where Mass' Tom go."

Tom Merry laughed.

"But I am going over the Rocky Mountains."

"Den Pompey is gwine ober de Rocky Mountains."

"Don't be an ass, Pomp. Get back to Chicago, and get your job at the hotel again," said Blake. "Blessed if I can understand the coon"

"He gets outer this car, I calculate," said the conductor.

"I'se gwine!" said Pompey.

And he scuttled away, the conductor following, growling. Tom Merry looked at the colonel, who was pulling his moustache.

"Do people really object to black fellows in the car, sir?" he asked.

"I guess I do," said Colonel Stalker.

"But what harm does a little coon do?"

"I guess he's a nig, and not on an equality with a white man," said the colonel, with an air of finality. "I guess I don't dislike nigs. But I bar travellin' in the same car with a coon. Yes, sir!"

Tom Merry was silent, but he wondered. It was forty years and more since the great Civil War had abolished slavery in the United States, but the line of cleavage between black and white was as strongly marked as ever. Even the overflowing kindliness of the colonel's good nature was not proof against the prejudice in which he had been born and bred.

Little Pomp disappeared, and Tom Merry did not expect to see him again. But when, in the course of time, they arrived at St. Louis, where they passed one of the nights of the journey, Tom Merry found Pompey in his room when he went up to bed. He stared at him blankly.

"Pomp!"

"Yes, sah!" grinned Pompey. "I'se hyar, sah! I'se ready to help you, sah! I'se take off your boots, sah, clean 'em in de mornin', sah!"

"But you are not my servant," said Tom, half laughing and half vexed.

Pompey nodded emphatically.

"I'se nebber leabe you, sah!"

"You young ass!" said Tom Merry. "As you've come so far, you'd never get back safe, and I suppose you must come with us now."

Pompey beamed like the rising sun.

"I'se follow you sah, eberywhere. I'se go anywhere with Mass' Tom!"

"Bai Jove, here's that niggah again!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as wathah wemarkable that that niggah pops up wherevah we go!"

"Leave him alone," said Wally. "He found Pongo, and Pomp is all right. I stand by Pomp. Let him come with us, and I'll stand his exes. I can borrow the tin from Gussy."

"Weally Wally——"

"No, you won't," said Tom Merry. "I'll see him through, though I'm blessed if I know what to do with him."

"I'se follow Mass' Tom."

And Pompey kept his word. The colonel, who thought the coon might be useful to the juniors now that they were getting to the frontiers of Eastern civilisation, and about to enter a region where it would be necessary to rough it, willingly gave his permission for Pompey to accompany the party. And Pompey was happy. So long as he went with Tom Merry, he seemed to want nothing more.

And with Tom Merry he went; and Pomp was one of the party that set out the next morning on the long journey westward, with the Rocky Mountains looming ahead!

THE END

NEXT THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY IN THE ROCKIES."

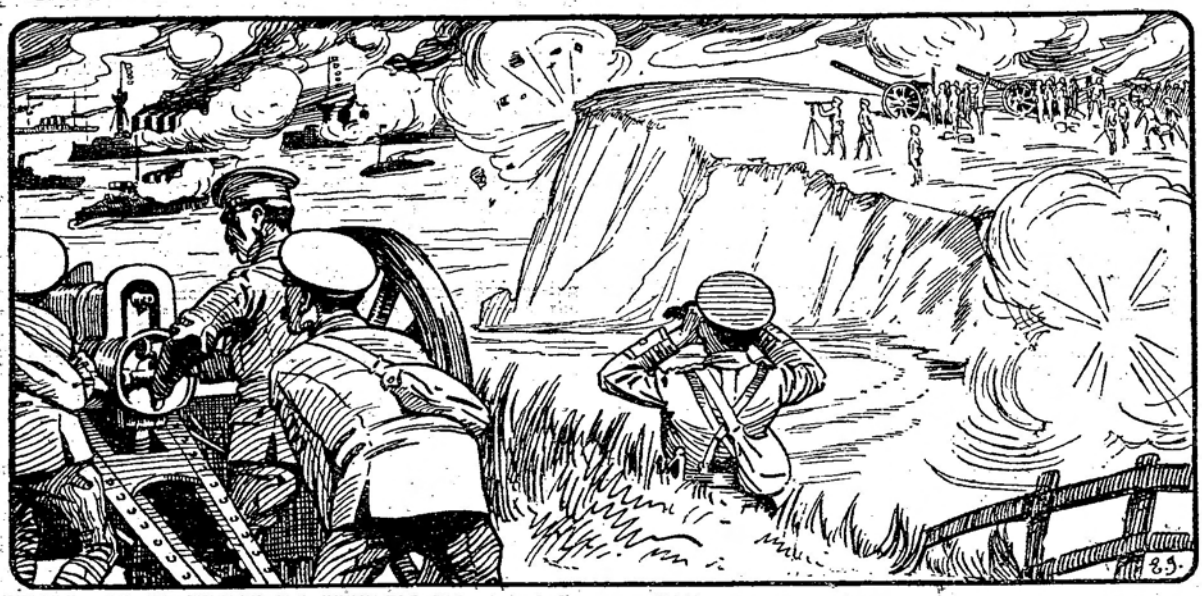
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The Greyfriars School Cadet Corps, commanded by Captain Sam Villiers, scout, are standing about in small groups, talking anxiously, when the clattering of hoofs is heard, and a young farmer from one of the homesteads on the cliffs comes galloping in on a sweating horse, and reins up hastily.

"The furriners are on us!"

he cries. "There's a whole fleet o' tugs an' barges an' ships o' war headin' in for Frinton Gap, wi' thousands o' men aboard! They're Germans, an' they're goin' to land!"

Captain Sam Villiers was at his side in a moment.

"How far off are they?"

"Four mile out when I left, an' comin' in fast. I seed the men aboard 'em wi' my owd telescope, an' the sun glintin' on their helmets; an' I've tried to send messages at the telegraph-offices, but none can't get through. They tells me all the wires is cut. Let me go! I must push on!"

. . . . . .

Nearly all the boys are killed or captured when the first German column attack and capture the school.

However, Sam Villiers and his brother, Steve, manage to escape and gain the Colchester garrison, who have turned out and entrenched themselves for the defence while the main forces come up.

The boy scouts tell their story to the British general, and, after a good sleep, go out and reconnoitre.

Sam Villiers is able to capture the German plans, and thus saves the British forces from a terrible defeat.

General Sir Sholto Nugent retires with his men, and manages for a time to keep the Germans in check.

Hearing that their home, mother and sisters, are in danger, the two boy scouts hasten with all speed to Cotehall Towers. Helped by a fisherman named Ned, they manage to save the women.

On their return to the British forces, Sam and Steve are sent for by Sir Sholto Nugent, who asks them whether they know anything of a fresh German landing.

"No, sir," said Sam frankly. "We didn't get any farther yesterday than about the point where your camp is now."

(Now go on with the Story.)

The Loss of the War-Balloon.

"I asked you on the chance," said Sir Sholto Nugent, "knowing what a complete knowledge you have of the country-side here. Very well. Lieutenant Howard, send me the staff Engineer in charge of the war-balloon at once. You may go, boys."

"War-balloon!" said Stephen, as they went out and joined Devine again. "Are we goin' to attack the Germans from cloud-land?"

"No, not quite that," said the adjutant, laughing. "They'd make short work of any balloon that went over them. It's a captive balloon held by a rope, that goes up to reconnoitre the enemy's forces. You could see right over the whole country and away to sea from here, if you were up in one."

The boys, eager to watch the operation, were afraid they would be kept back, but when the staff officer came out of the tent the general was with him, and the brothers followed at a respectful distance.

In a very short time the transport waggons bearing the balloon and its gear were brought up to a flat space on the hill, and the huge silk bag was inflated from the generating-plant and the cylinders of compressed gas. The war-balloon grew to its full size, and the car was tethered down.

"In this flat country, five or six hundred feet high should show you the whole district like a map," said General Nugent. "Please ascend without delay, Captain Stanley, and take your best signaller with you. I want full details of the enemy's position, but most important of all I must know where these newly-arrived lighters have landed, and how many troops have come from them."

"Very good, sir, I will signal the news down to you, and make a detailed report as well," said the R.E. captain in charge of the balloon, a keen-looking young man of only twenty-eight, getting into the car with a signaller, for there was no telephone attached.

"Off with you, then. I want to know what houses and buildings have been seized by the enemy, and if any of them are being fortified. Do you know the district?"

"Not in detail, sir, but I've my Ordnance maps here."

"That will take too much time," said Sir Sholto, tapping impatiently with his foot. "Here, where's that youngster, the cadet lieutenant? He knows every farmhouse and barn from here to the sea. Villiers!"

"Yes, sir!" said Sam, stepping forward in keen hopes of a job.

"I want you to go up at once with Captain Howard and supply the names and positions of all the houses you see in the hands of the Germans, with any notes about them that occur to you. The car will hold three, Captain Howard?"

"Yes, sir; we can just do it."

"Cast off, then!"

"You lucky beast, Sam!" groaned Stephen, as his brother, showing his delight in his face, hurried into the car. A few moments later the balloon shot up as the tethers were cast loose, and then it began slowly to ascend.

"Down again soon, Steve," said Sam, who was rather sorry for his brother's disappointment; and in another minute they were out of earshot.

It was Sam's first balloon ascent, and he watched with keen zest. The earth seemed to be creeping away from under them straight downwards, and the land appeared to slope up to the horizon all round like a great cup. Already the British troops looked like toy soldiers on a green chess-board, and still the balloon went up, the rope that held it paying out slowly.

A westerly breeze was blowing, and the great bag heeled over towards the eastward, straining gently at its rope.

As it ascended, the country to the east could be seen stretching right away to the sea, with the Blackwater estuary to the north, and the Crouch to the south. As Tillingham and Southminster came in sight, Von Adler's troops in their thousands could be seen moving about like ants, on a front four or five miles long.

"There they are!" exclaimed Sam, taking out his field-glasses. "They're massing all round Asheldam. There are two batteries at Steeple, I can see."

"They mean making a big stand," said Captain Stanley, his glasses to his eyes. "What point is that, down at the mouth of the Crouch?"

"Holywell Point," said Sam, "and, by Jove! its's right about the new landing of troops! See, there are three sets of tugs and lighters!"

"Empty!" muttered Stanley. "They've disembarked. Those must be them, marching inland there to join the rest. Three—five—six battalions and a battery."

"Only three tugs," said Sam to himself, watching eagerly. "Our torpedo-boats must have given the rest of the flotilla beans. But it's an awkward thing for us, all the same. With that big force of fresh men they're as strong as ever now."

Captain Stanley gave his orders crisply to the signaller, keeping the glasses to his eyes, and the twin flags began to signal the news to the British staff below. Nine empty lighters lay alongside the distant seawall at Holywell, and the troops they had brought were already joining the rest of Von Adler's forces. There was no time to think what the result would be then—the staff-captain and Sam were both hard at work, the former setting down in shorthand and on his own chart, the positions of the enemy, while the cadet supplied him with all the local details of the farm-houses and other buildings the Germans were holding.

So engrossed were they in their work, that they did not notice the freshening of the breeze, when, without warning, a heavy wind squall swept down across the sky—the dangerous, sudden blast which the fishermen on the Essex coast call a "slammer." It struck the balloon like a solid, invisible blow, and the car heeled with a lurch, throwing the three occupants in a heap at the bottom, while the wind screamed through the ropes.

"Look out!" cried Stanley, struggling to his feet. "The valve-cord there, quick!"

Before he could reach it, there was a heavier lurch, a rending crack, and away went the balloon like a leaf before the wind, with twenty fathoms of hemp swinging beneath it. The tremendous strain caused by the squall had snapped the stout rope that held the balloon captive.

"Great James! We're adrift!" exclaimed Stanley, grasping at the cord that opened the valve in the gasbag. Sam, clinging to the car-ropes and glancing down, saw that the British camp was already left far behind, and the balloon was whirling along at thirty miles an hour before the squall, right away to the eastward.

"Deuce take the valve! It's jammed again!" gasped Stanley, his voice hardly audible in the rush of the wind. And he tugged at the cord savagely.

"We're drivin' right over to the Germans!" exclaimed Sam, who saw the enemy's troops now barely a mile ahead.

"If we can't descend before we get there we're done!" said Stanley. And it seemed plain there was little hope of it, for the valve that ought to have let out the gas stuck tight, as balloon-valves sometimes will.

"Shall I climb up and slit the bag?" cried Sam.

Captain Stanley glanced down.

"No use now," he said grimly; "we should drop right in among 'em. Our only chance is to rise, an' drive right on to clear them, with the hope of droppin' on the other side of the Blackwater, or at sea. An' a precious poor chance it is!"

It was, indeed, as Sam now saw. The car was well weighted with its three occupants, and, having been a captive balloon, there was little ballast in it for throwing out to allow of rising; and to rise was their only hope of escaping the German guns. Stanley at once flung out the few sand-bags, but the balloon only went up another hundred feet or so, and at most was not more than four hundred yards above the earth. Sam, looking down, saw the thousands of upturned faces of the German troops, and amid the crack of rifle-shots, bullet after bullet sang past the car, many of them smacking into the great silk bag overhead.

"By Jove, they've got us!" said Sam.

Bang! went a German field gun, and the shell burst thirty yards to the right. It was the signal for a sharp bombardment, and the crash of the shells in the air all round became deafening; but as yet the balloon was not hit, for an object overhead in the air is the hardest of all things to find the range of with artillery.

The rifles were more accurate, three or four shots passing through the wicker of the car, and so many struck the great bag that the escaping gas lowered the balloon more and more.

The shouting of harsh voices was borne up to the three Britishers, and then a blind shell struck the silk bag with a rending bang, just as a rifle-shot drilled the signaller through the forehead.

The huge balloon, wilting and doubling up like a pricked bladder, with its living freight clinging to the ropes of the lurching car, swooped on a long slant right down towards the German troops, who raised a fierce, triumphant cheer as they saw their prey descending, crippled and helpless, into their grasp.

"I'm booked to be shot, anyhow, when they get hold of me," muttered Sam, clinging to the ropes as the wind whistled past his ears on the downward swoop, and he dragged out his revolver. "But if I can get one or two of 'em first——"

"You won't live to use that thing," said Captain Stanley grimly, though his words could not be heard in the rush of wind. "An' they won't waste cartridges on men with broken necks."

It looked as though Stanley spoke the truth. In the few seconds during which that long slanting fall lasted, the scene was burnt into Sam's brain.

He saw the grim faces looking up from under the spiked helmets, and heard the harsh cries of command. The Germans had ceased firing at the balloon—there was no need of it now their prey was falling into their hands. A troop of cavalry horses were shying and plunging at the sight of the strange monster descending upon them from the sky, and a whole regiment of riflemen were awaiting the fall. The wind had dropped to a mere breeze.

The body of the dead signaller hung across the edge of the car's basket-work, limp and inert, the crimson patch on his forehead showing how he met his death, and in that brief instant Sam almost envied him. The cadet grasped the ropes tight, steeling himself to meet the shock. Even as he did so, there came a wrench that shook him from his hold, and flung him into the bottom of the car once more.

A second squall had come hard on the heels of the first, and it gave the swinging car such a lurch that the body of the signaller was flung right out and hurled to the ground.

Suddenly eased of one hundred and fifty pounds' dead weight the balloon ceased its downward swoop, for the bag still contained much gas, and the wind drove it along parallel with the ground, a hundred feet above the heads of the troops.

A wild shout came from below, and the rifle-fire broke out again sharply as the balloon drove onward. So swiftly was it whirled along by the blast that the shots only whizzed round the car or drilled the wickerwork, and in a very short time it had cleared a small wood, bumped the car slightly against the crest of a hill beyond, and was whisked off out of sight of the German troops, now left far behind, as it swept low across the next valley.

"Great guns!" gasped Sam, fairly swung off his feet as the car rolled and jerked. "She's risin' again! We shall clear the lot of 'em!"

"It can't last. As soon as the squall ceases we shall go down smash, an' the whole district's full of Germans!" panted Stanley. "She can't go another half-mile!"

It seemed little choice between broken necks or bullets, for German troops were everywhere, and scattered shots were fired at the half-wrecked balloon from every other field, while mounted men galloped after from the troops they had left behind, to mark where the balloon fell. These it soon left behind, and the way the half-wrecked thing blew onward on the wings of the squall was amazing. The flight lasted but a few minutes, but they had already driven far when the shell wrecked them, and as they cleared the low hill Stanley gave a shout:

"The sea! That's the mouth of the Blackwater ahead, isn't it?"

"Yes; there's Bradwell Quay right in front of us!" replied Sam, shouting at the top of his voice.

"If it'd only hold to blow us over to the Brightlingsea side!" muttered Stanley, new hope springing in his breast.

But it was not to be. The Blackwater was two miles wide from Bradwell to Tollesbury, and in the offing they could see the lean grey warships of the Kaiser's fleet—three light-draught cruisers guarding the Bar. Away to the north was the spot where Sam had crashed the German store-ship into the old iron hulk a week before. There was no leisure to think or look at these things, for the squall was plainly losing its strength.

Right ahead on the higher ground was a grove of trees near a farm beyond Bradwell village, and the balloon was drifting towards them. Tearing full speed along the cart-road came a squad of a dozen German infantry, the only ones in sight, as fast as their legs could carry them, trying to be on the spot when the car fell.

For a few moments the aeronauts hoped they would be carried beyond the men; but the wind fell lighter as quickly as it had arisen. The silk bag, which had twisted itself in the squall, and kept the gas in, now fell slack, and the balloon swept earthwards for good. It looked as if it would be dashed to the bare ground, but the car caught in the trees with a heavy jerk, tore loose, flew onwards with two further jerks, stopping its way, and finally settled heavily in the branches of a low pollard oak not fifteen feet high.

The shock of it flung Sam and Stanley together, and nearly beat the breath out of their bodies; but neither of them took any more serious hurt than bruises. As they struggled to their feet in the car, they saw their wild career was stopped for good. The huge bag of the balloon, half-inflated with gas, was stretched along the ground below, and some distance away, at the end of the long ropes that held it to the car, like some great stranded whale. The wind, that still blew briskly, though the fierceness of the squall was past, had settled it well clear of them.

"Well, it's the bullets after all," said Stanley bitterly. "Our necks are saved, and here are the beggars who'll make the firing-party."

And the squad of Germans, shouting triumphantly, rushed up the cart-track towards the balloon.

The Fired Thatch.

"It's no good shooting!" said Captain Stanley, as Sam drew his heavy revolver. "They can pick us off like rooks!"

"We're done, anyway!" retorted the cadet wrathfully. "I'll leave my mark on those shovel-footed swabs!"

The Germans were coming at them from the direction in which the balloon-bag lay, and as they rushed towards it, making for the tree, Sam fired three shots as quickly as he could pull the trigger—not at the men, but at the wrecked silk gasbag.

There was a dull report and a tremendous roar of flame. The spitting revolver had at that short distance done what neither the blind shell nor the German bullets had been able to do at longer range. The sparks carried by the shots lit the great volume of gas like a powder-mine.

Sam staggered backwards in the car with his eyebrows singed, the wave of heat striking him like a solid blow. It was only for a moment, for the car was twenty feet from the gasbag, and well to windward of it. The breeze caught the flames and sent them roaring the other way with the force of a blast-furnace.

But the Germans, right in the track of the flame and all round the bag when it was fired, got the full benefit of it.

They were suddenly blotted out by the great blaze that leaped up, and their yells mingled with the first roar of the flames, for many of them were blown bodily backwards by the explosion that made the very tree rock.

What became of them neither of the aeronauts saw, for they had more than enough to do to save themselves.

"I can't stand this; I'm cooked!" gasped Stanley, reeling back, and trying to shield his face from the scorching heat.

"Drop to the ground! Now's our time!" said Sam, scrambling into the branches, and swinging down to the lower ones.

It was a fairly long drop, and both the balloonists landed in a heap on the turf. They scrambled up at once and darted away. Stanley had no notion which way to go, save to get away from the blazing gas, but Sam knew where he was well enough, as usual.

"Stick to me. I know the place!" hissed Sam, as they scudded along; and, darting through the trees, they left the cart-track behind them and ran southward against the wind.

A shout, some way behind, soon told them that at any rate all the squad of Germans had not been demolished, and that their escape was seen. Uniformed figures came racing after them through the trees, three or four hundred yards in the rear. Sam plunged through a gap in the first hedge he came to, with Stanley close at his heels.

"This way!" exclaimed Sam, turning sharp to the left as soon as he was through; and the pair of them raced down the field till they reached the bottom of it, where Sam led the way through the end hedge and once more made a sharp left turn.

The cries of the pursuers could be heard as they burst out of the grove above, but Stanley and Sam were now a field away, and screened from their sight by the thick whitethorn fence beside which they were running in the opposite direction to which they had started.

"I say, we're going back past the old place!" exclaimed Stanley, as he caught sight of the flames away up on the hill, now nearly abreast them once more. "I can see our car up in the tree there!"

"Yes; we've doubled right round. Safe rule—always go back past where you started an' scud in the opposite direction to the way you first led 'em. Fools follow their noses when they're chasing you. Don't talk so loud, an' make less row with your feet."

Stanley was well enough content to leave the choice of roads to Sam, for he saw the boy was as well used to it as a Red Indian.

They hurried along behind the hedges and circled right round, till they were near a deserted farmstead, well to leeward of the place where the balloon dropped, and in a line with it. There Sam stopped and reconnoitred carefully.

"Right-ho! We've shaken 'em off—they've all gone the other way, up-wind!" he said. "We can—confound it! There comes another lot!"

Straight from the direction in which they had hoped to escape came a second squad of Germans hurrying along, drawn by the noise of the shots and the blazing of the balloon. And down to the right, coming from the marshes, were five or six mounted scouts, riding hard towards the spot.

"The whole place is full of the beasts! Another minute, and those Uhlans would have spotted us!" muttered Sam in disgust. "Of course, it was too much to expect we'd get clear so easily. Keep low there, or they'll see you when they top the rise!"

"What's to be done?" queried Stanley, crouching low.

They were in a little thicket at the back of the farmstead, and hidden from sight for the time.

"We're hemmed in on all sides—we can't go in any direction without being spotted. Our only chance is to hide, an' the only earthly place is the farm-buildings. There's a good loft there."

"Won't they search it?"

"Likely enough!" said Sam grimly. "But it's Hobson's choice. There's no hiding-place outside it. When they come close, this thicket is no earthly. Hang on till I give the word, an' then slope for that barn as quick as you can. Keep behind me."

"My aunt! Ballooning's nothing to this!" murmured Stanley, who was out of his element on the ground.

Sam waited, watching the two newly-arrived parties through the leaves of the thicket, and, seizing a moment when neither of them were able to overlook the farmstead, he crept out and dashed across the paddock to the old barn.

Slipping in at the open door, he darted up the ladder and pushed up the trapdoor by which the hayloft was entered. In another minute both the fugitives were safe inside, and Sam took a survey through the numerous chinks in the crazy old planked walls.

"The beggars are leaving a couple of pickets behind while they push on to see what the row is," said Sam. "I thought they would!"

"This is all very well while it lasts," said Stanley, casting himself down on the hay, "but we shall be nabbed up here like rats in a trap, sha'n't we?"

"There's the chance they mayn't search this place, as they think we went in the other direction."

"Couldn't we try to push on to the waterside?"

"Can't get past as long as the pickets are there. The place is too bare, an' there's no decent cover. There's one thing—if they do run us to earth, we can bag a good few of 'em before they can get up through this trapdoor. They won't capture us very cheaply!"

"Don't see a lot of profit in that, if we're shot for it directly afterwards. My idea of a win is to get through 'em to fight another day!" said Stanley, with a dry smile.

"Well, we'll have a shot at it as soon as ever they move off."

Sam found, however, that it might mean a long wait, even if it happened at all. The Uhlans and the bulk of the infantry squad passed on, and were soon seen scouring the country on the other side of the grove when they had learned what was afoot.

But the two pickets left behind in spots where they could command a view of the whole place, showed no signs of moving. Any attempt to get past or between them would certainly result in their giving the alarm.

"Can't think why they take so much trouble over a pair of stranded balloonists," grumbled Sam, as half an hour passed and the pickets remained on the alert. "One'd think they'd have something better to do, considering the hole Nugent's got 'em in."

"Are we to stay here all day an' night, if they don't move?" said Stanley.

"Not all night, anyhow. I'll undertake to get past 'em as soon as it's dark, if you can go quietly enough, and do what I tell you."

"I'll leave it all in your hands. You're a youthful wonder at this sort of game; it's out of my line."

"Confound them!" said Sam, his face darkening as he looked through the chink on the other side. "They're coming back—one of the search-parties. Looks as if they meant to pry round here, after all!"

Stanley joined him anxiously at the peep-holes. Six or seven of the German infantry were moving back towards the farmhouses, looking rather blown with their exertions.

"Some of them belong to the lot who tried to nab us in the tree," said Stanley. "I know by the different uniforms—they're Hanovers. I say, the old balloon's still blazing! I should have thought it would be burnt out long ago!"

"It's set light to the brushwood round about," replied Sam; "and the oiled silk burns a long time—there was a rare lot of it. It's no more good to us, anyhow!"

The fire was still burning, and the brisk wind blew sparks and bits of burning stuff right across the meadow and over the buildings. The German infantry turned aside to speak to one of the pickets, after which they came straight to the farmstead.

"The beastly picket can't have seen us, surely!" growled Stanley.

"I expect they've orders to search everything. Afraid it's all up!" returned Sam gloomily. "The dickens take that fire! I say, it's catchin' the thatch, I believe!"

Many pieces of burning, smouldering oiled silk from the cover of the wrecked balloon were whirling high in the air, and one or two of them lit the roof and sides of the barn. The crackling noise of the fire could be heard plainly.

"We're in a nice hole now," said Stanley grimly. "Fire on top, an' Germans below. We shall soon be smoked out of here, even if they didn't find us. But they've as good as done that."

"Better not talk!" said Sam, in a whisper, as the riflemen entered the farmyard. "It's time to keep quiet!"

His heart misgave him that it would make any difference, for all that. The first building the Germans made for was the farmhouse itself, and the thorough search they made in it and in the stables left little hope.

Then they came straight for the barn, which was now beginning to blaze strongly, and the loft was already filling with smoke.

The outer wall, covered with a thatching of gorse all down its side, was well in the grip of the fire. The two fugitives, crouching on the closed trapdoor, revolvers in hand, and coats pressed over their mouths to keep out the smoke, prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible. They heard the harsh voices of the men as they entered the lower part, talking in rough German.

"It's waste of time," growled one. "They both went the other way."

"Orders are orders," returned another. "We've got to search that loft up there. The word's been passed it's one of those two cubs who've given the general so much trouble, an' you know what it's worth if we catch him. Give me your bayonet here, Fritz!"

Sam heard the sound of heavy ammunition boots on the ladder, and both the refugees kept their whole weight on the trapdoor to keep it down, their fingers seeking the triggers of their weapons.

Before the German who was mounting reached the top, they heard him curse, as the ladder twisted under him and came clattering to the ground, taking him with it.

"Potzansend! How can a man climb this thing with a fixed bayonet?" he growled savagely.

"Leave the bayonet, and go without it," said another sharply. "Here, let me come instead! Two of you set the ladder up again!"

"Be quick, if you're going to do it!" exclaimed another. "It's scorching hot here, and the place will be falling in on top of us in less than a minute. The wall's burnt out already. Donnerwetter! There it comes!" he cried, as part of the blazing planks from the side fell in.

"We shall get wiped out, and all for nothing," protested a fourth, skipping out of the way of the burning debris. "I told you they weren't here, Karl. Leave the loft alone, and let's get out of it while we can."

The man who was about to mount the ladder hesitated, and to hurry his decision, another big section of the windward wall fell in, nearly on top of him, and the place was filled with smoke.

"Come on, then!" he exclaimed, making a dash for the door. "Even if they were there they'd be cooked, and it's no use our getting smashed up for nothing."

"They weren't within a mile of the place!" growled Fritz, as he made his escape. "Blitzen! There goes the rest of the wall!"

"I couldn't get into the loft if I tried," said Karl. "We'll have to report that we searched it. Hurry back now. The men away on the other side of the hill will have caught the cubs by this time. Cursed folly, coming here!"

Only too glad to get out of the burning barn on any excuse, the Germans departed hastily. The sound of their going was music to the two refugees up in the loft, who drew deep, silent breaths of relief, and slipped their pistols back into their places.

Though the enemy had pictured the loft itself as a blazing furnace, it was not really in such bad case as the lower half of the barn, for the half of the wall nearest the ground, being covered outside with dried gorse, had burned out first.

But now the thatch overhead was beginning to roar and crackle, the loft filled thickly with smoke, and the entire barn shook.

"They're right. The whole place'll collapse in a brace of shakes!" said Stanley quickly. "When the thatch falls in an' sets this hay alight we shall be frizzled like kippers before we can get out!"

"Gloriana!" said Sam, snatching a swift glance through the chinks of the back wall. "The search-party is takin' the pickets back with them! We can make a dash for it now!"

"We've got to, anyway. Speakin' for myself, I'd rather be shot than roasted!" said Stanley, heaving up the trapdoor.

A perfect blast of smoke and sparks came up through it, for the floor of the barn was covered with burning gorse and timber.

There was no time to hesitate, for the thatch above was coming down into the loft in blazing masses, and already the hay was on fire.

The refugees were fairly smoked out of their hiding-place, and, dropping through the trapdoor, they scuttled over the burning rubbish as swiftly as they could, and reached the barn's entrance with nothing worse than blackened faces and scorched boots.

Sam took one quick glance across into the field, and darted down the yard and round at the back of the pigsties, where both of them crouched. The humble buildings screened them from the sight of the Germans, who had joined the pickets, and were making their way all together towards the grove as fast as they could.

As there was no chance of moving on till the enemy were over the bare hill and out of sight, Sam led the way into the swine-house, which gave shelter for the time from all sides.

The pigs had been commandeered by the enemy's troops, and the two fugitives waited among the straw and the potato-parings and gnawed turnip-peels.

"Quite like the Prodigal Son!" grinned Sam. "If ever we get out of it alive, I'll have a gold model of that balloon made. It's saved our lives twice in an hour—blowin' up the squad first, and then firing the barn."

"If the beastly thing hadn't broken away in the first place, we shouldn't be in this mess at all," said Stanley disgustedly, trying to find a clean place to stand in.

"You're an unthankful sweep!" chuckled Sam. "An' you're better off than I am. I've lost my cap gettin' through that trapdoor, and my jacket's split all the way up by a nail. I shall have to shed it, for it won't hang on me at all. I'm sorry to lose it, for it's seen me through some queer scrapes. It's my old Greyfriars cadet jacket," he added, looking at it regretfully as he pulled it off, for it

was in such rags as to be worse than useless; "an' now it's got to be left to rot in a pigstye!"

"Better than rottin' there yourself!" said Stanley. "Those other pigs have disappeared now."

"Then let's get out of it while the coast's clear!" returned Sam. "If the luck's held so far, perhaps it'll hang on a bit longer."

Stanley had learned to stick to the young scout by this time, and do as he was bid in the matter of direction.

Leaves the styes, Sam led the way round the back of the farmhouse, down on the far side of the nearest hedge, and in less than five minutes they had left farmstead and grove and Germans well in the rear, and were among the rough cover leading down to the wide Dengie Marshes that lie next the sea.

They found none of the enemy in that direction, and devoted themselves to getting as far away as possible. Sam was not satisfied till they had reached the marshes, and, striking right away to the south again under cover of the rushy dykes, placed a couple of miles between themselves and the scene of the wrecked balloon.

"We can hold up here an' rest a bit," said Sam, throwing himself down in a bed of dry reeds, "for there's tough work before us."

"How are we to get back to camp?"

"There's only one way—right through the enemy's country till we reach Nugent's troops again. We can't get away by sea. There are no boats, an' the flats an' shallows stretch for miles. There's the Blackwater to the north, an' the Crouch to the south, hemming us in on each side, an' both sure to be well guarded along their shores. We've got to get through overland the way we came in the balloon."

"Great Scott! It can't be done!"

"Yes, it can, if we're careful, an' you do what I tell you. I'm at home anywhere between here an' Maldon. There's a lot of difference in gettin' past troops who don't know you're there, an' dodgin' scouts who are lookin' for you. They'll have given us up long ago, an' they'll be busy on their own affairs."

"All right. We shall have to wait till dark, I suppose?"

"No. We'll go right on as soon as you're up to it."

"I'm ready, except for being pretty well famished."

Sam took out a tin box of emergency rations, and divided it with his comrade. The compressed tablets seemed small things to fill two empty stomachs with, but they were satisfying. A drink of the brown marsh water followed, there being nothing better to be had, and after a short breather the two started.

Of the journey that followed, and the way in which Sam worked his way through the district, Captain Stanley could tell little at the time. He only knew that the boy was as much at home as a young seal on its own beach, and that as far as they were concerned, there might have been no Germans in the country.

They left the marshes for the uplands, and travelled slowly but surely, avoiding all roads and byways, halting in a coppice here while Uhlans rode by, creeping up a hillside there for Sam to spy out the land with his glasses—which, with his revolver, were all he had saved from the wrecked balloon—and choose the safest path. A big circuit was made to avoid the main mass of Von Adler's troops, and at last, after over two hours' journeying, they found themselves abreast the southernmost outposts of the enemy. Sam made his way to a rise whence he could lie among the bushes and take a final outlook.

"We're nearly through them at last!" said Stanley exultingly. "Well done, Sam!"

"A dead easy job. They've got their hands full," said the young scout, scanning the hills each way with his glasses. "Look, Stanley! They're making their stand here, just to the north of us. It ain't far off the final big fight. You can see General Nugent's troops an' batteries on the hills ahead of us. They're within range already."

"There'll be a thumping big fight very soon," said Stanley, with suppressed excitement, "and it'll decide whether the King or the Kaiser rules Essex. We must hurry on an' get back to our side."

"Hold on!" said Sam, who was peering steadily at the top of a rise of ground three hundred yards away on his right. "Do you see those two field-guns?"

Stanley saw the two pieces. They were part of a battery of the Prussian Field Artillery, and stood by themselves, their grim muzzles pointing at the British position.

"That's about the southernmost battery in their line," said Stanley; "the rest are all away to the north. They'll do some damage from here."

"Yes; but don't you see the guns are alone? The men are short-handed. They're all working like niggers to mask those other two guns away beyond. They've left these unattended, for they don't dream there's an enemy nearer than two miles."

"What of it? I say, we'd better push on."

"Not if we can do more good here. I'm going to have a try to snaffle those guns. Think what it'll mean to our side!"

"Man alive, you're mad! You'll never get near them!"

"I'll bet I can. I'm goin' to try, anyhow. You'd better lie doggo here, an' if I'm wiped out you must get on as best you can. So long!"

Before Stanley could say anything to prevent him, Sam was gone. The sight of those two unprotected guns, and the knowledge of the havoc they might make on the British flank, stirred his blood. He wormed his way down the hillside, keeping as much in cover as he could, and in a very short time was within fifty yards of the guns.

The gunners were still hard at work masking their third gun some distance away. Just beyond the ones Sam was making for was a thicket of rough scrub and bramble, but it was on the wrong side to be of use to him as cover, and he crept up the grassy slope as quickly as he could.

In the days of old guns were spiked with a nail in the touch-hole, but a modern piece of artillery can best be put out of action by taking out the breech-pin. Sam knew the construction of the German guns well enough, and, making a quick dash for the nearest, it did not take him ten seconds to unship the pin, which he thrust into his trousers pocket.

He darted to the next gun, and at once set to work on it, when a bulky form suddenly emerged from the thicket just behind him as he stood. Sam did not see it in time. There was a quick spring, and a pair of huge arms were flung round him in a grip like a grizzly bear's.

A loud shout rang out at the same moment, and Sam found himself rolling over and over in the clasp of a huge Prussian artilleryman. He struggled desperately, but the man's strength was enormous, and he could not get his arms free. At the sound of the shout the other gunners left their work and came running up with all speed.

"Wreck the guns, would you, Englander?" snorted his captor; and Sam felt the man's hot breath on his face as they struggled.

It lasted but a few moments, for the cadet was soon in the hands of four or five of them. He was jerked to his feet, his revolver and glasses snatched, his pockets searched, and the missing breech-pin discovered.

"You cursed young imp!" cried the officer in charge of the battery, a hawk-faced, fierce-eyed senior lieutenant, glaring savagely at Sam. "Caught you in the act, have we? You know what it means to be summarily shot—eh? You've read the proclamations. Take him to the front there, men. Bind his hands!"

Sam realised that nothing but execution awaited him, without trial or inquiry, and that the enraged gunners would carry it out at once. He had done his best and failed.

"I am no civilian. I hold the King's commission," he said quietly. "But I've no doubt you'll neither believe it nor care about it. I'm in your hands. Bring your firing-party."

"Firing-party!" sneered the lieutenant. "Do you take us for riflemen? You've committed this crime upon the gunners, and you'll get the gunners' punishment. Look alive there, men! We've no time to lose. Form up! Clap in a cartridge, and put him before the muzzle!"

Not till that moment did Sam realise what was the punishment of the German Artillery for those caught wrecking a piece. He was to be blown from the gun's muzzle!

"As well one death as another," he muttered to himself.

But it took all his fortitude to show a calm front as they seized him and thrust him up to the gun, his hands bound behind him.

To move was useless, and would only brand him for a coward. He felt the hard ring of the gun's muzzle pressing him between the shoulder-blades, and his ears strained for the word that should blow him into eternity. A silent prayer passed his lips.

The men were formed up on either flank of the gun, the lieutenant at one side.

A sharp order rang out, and the gunner seized the lanyard by which the gun was fired.

The Sighting Shot.

Sam looked straight before him as he waited, with every nerve strained, for the word that should cause him to be blown into eternity. It seemed to him like an age.

Before him on the distant hill lay the British troops, mere patches of nearly invisible khaki against a background of green. The massed power of a great army corps was there, men of his own blood and race, yet he was helpless in the very face of them, and in the hands of the enemy. They would not even know how he had met his fate.

Would the word never come?

The gunnery lieutenant had opened his lips to give it, the gunner had his hand on the string, when suddenly a tiny

bud of white smoke seemed to blossom out on the hilltop above General Nugent's troops, and a shell came whooping and screaming across the valley.

It seemed to Sam that it came right at him. The first distant buzzing of it grew to a fierce roar, there was a sudden rush of wind close over his head that made Sam stagger, and the shell exploded with a rending crash about five yards beyond the gun.

Amid the splitting roar of the explosion the German gunner dropped his trigger-chain and fell limply forward across the gun, half his skull blown away by a fragment of shell. Three of the men drawn up to witness the execution lay dead on the grass, and the lieutenant coughed out a startled oath through the fumes of the shell, and sprang to the gun.

Sam threw himself flat the moment after the explosion. The gun that was to have sent him out of the world had actually saved him for the moment, since it shielded him from the shell that fell behind. But there was no telling where the next might fall, and it came before the gun could be remanned or any order restored.

The crash of it almost stunned Sam. It fell between the gun and the men, and the choking nitrous fumes blotted everything out, and made the prostrate cadet groan and gasp, hardly knowing whether he himself was hit or not.

The breeze blew away the thick yellow smoke, and Sam saw out of his smarting eyes a scene of absolute carnage. Not one of the gun's crew was standing. They lay like untidy heaps of rags, horrible to see. Something close by, that made even Sam's strong nerves quiver as he glanced at it, had been the lieutenant ten seconds before. Now it would be hard to say what it was.

Dazed and shaken, it was several moments before Sam could realise that the body of the gun had screened him from hurt, and that his intended executioners, to the last man, were now lifeless clay. As soon as he grasped this he staggered to his feet, and ran headlong down the hillside.

His legs were free, though his arms were tied behind him, and twice he nearly fell headlong. Whether anybody saw his flight or pursued him he did not know. He heard the blind drumming of the guns and the whir of shells—none of them near him now, but far away behind—and it was instinct more than anything that took him back towards the place he had started from

Before he reached it an arm stretched up out of the long grass and scrub, and a voice said:

"Here!" It was Captain Stanley, lying flat among the brambles, and Sam dropped beside him, panting heavily. "Heavens and earth, what a shave!" said Stanley, in a bewildered voice. "If ever a man came back from the grave, it's you!"

"Cut me loose," gasped Sam, rolling over on his face. And Stanley quickly whipped out a pocket-knife, and slit the rope that bound the young scout's arms. "Did anybody see me go? Are they following?" said Sam, trying to smother the coughs that his smarting throat made him give vent to, in spite of himself.

"Not they. There's nobody nearer than the next battery, an' they've got all they need to keep 'em busy. My aunt, but I thought you were a dead man when I saw them put you before the gun, an' when the shells burst, too!"

"They fell behind me, an' the gun shielded me," said Sam, raising himself to take a survey. "I can hardly see out of my eyes. That cordite of ours, or whatever they put in the shells, is awful stuff. Wouldn't be a gunner for something, I can tell you. Wiped out the whole crew, didn't it?"

"Clean as a whistle. The second shell did it."

"Poor brutes! If you'd seen 'em as close as I did!" shuddered Sam.

"How the dickens they came to pitch just then, an' so accurately, is more than I can guess at," said Stanley, "though Nugent's got some wonderful gunners with him—the pick of the R.F.A. It was a sheer stroke of luck for you, all the same. I told you it was a fool's game, tryin' to snaffle that gun."

"I didn't count on anybody being in the bushes just beyond," said Sam; "but one has to take chances. You've moved from where I left you, haven't you?"

"Yes. I was tryin' to crawl up on the chance I might do something with my revolver. I was far out of pistol-range, of course. I can tell you I was in a beastly stew when I saw they'd got you."

"It was good of you, old chap, but lucky it turned out as it has. You'd only have got wiped out."

"Had to do something. I wouldn't stick there an' see you shot in that beastly way. They do that to anyone they catch tryin' to scotch their guns, I believe."

"There's a new crew comin' to work them from the other battery," said Sam. "Look, they've got there! One of the guns is wrecked, though, I think. Well, it's no good tryin' it twice. We're lucky there are no scouts or infantry down this end of the line. There will be soon, an' we'd better hurry on while we can. Ready?"

Stanley nodded, and the journey recommenced. Sam led the way down the slopes to the next valley, where they were so far beyond the German lines that there was little risk of being caught, especially as the duel between the two armies seemed to have fairly begun, and the guns were beginning to answer each other rapidly. There were scouts and Uhlans still riding about the outskirts, and these were the chief danger to the two fugitives, but Sam's skill enabled him to dodge them without any great difficulty.

"They're such asses that it isn't hard to keep out of their way as long as they're playin' the game," said Sam. "They make as much row as a menagerie, and they don't know the country. The chief danger is that they may blunder on you by accident, which is a thing that's harder to guard against. We're within touch of our own men now. Keep behind me an' go just as carefully, for the last part's as bad as any. Another mile an' we're there."

"I never saw anything like it," said Stanley. "I shouldn't have had an earthly chance to get through if I'd been alone."

His joy and relief when at last they reached the British lines, after making a good round circuit to avoid the fire of their own side, was great.

"I've got to get to the general at once an' make my report," he said, "if he'll see me. I've got that Ordnance map in my pocket. It was the first thing I saved."

"Right-ho!" said Sam. "I won't come; the Grey Fox won't want me. I reckon he's busy."

Stanley hurried off post-haste to present himself before Sir Sholto, who was directing the battle as he watched it through his field-glasses, and one of the first persons Sam ran against was his brother, moodily nursing his carbine at the back of the shelter-pits—for there was no rifle-firing as yet—and looking the picture of wretchedness.

"Hallo, Steve!" said Sam. "You're pulling a mug as long as a mule's!"

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Stephen jumped up with a gasp, and in a moment he had gripped his brother's hand, his face flushing with relief and delight.

"Sam! Thank Heaven for this! I never dreamed of seein' you alive again! We gave you up for dead when we saw the balloon fetched down by a shell right over the Germans. How did you get through?"

"It's too long a yarn to spin now, young 'un. I'll tell you by the camp-fire if we last the day out. It looks as if the German Eagle was gettin' his wings clipped—eh? Where's Devine?"

"He's with the battery up there, that's perched next his battalion. They've just ceased firin' for a bit on that side. We're doin' well, but the music hasn't properly started yet. We're goin' to have it out with Von Adler once for all, now we can make him fight us in the open. Do you want Devine?"

"Let's go to the battery, anyhow, if they'll let us."

The booming of the guns had ceased on the left side of the position, and the brothers made their way back, taking care not to get in anybody's way. They did not expect to be allowed to go there, but the men of the battery were resting, in readiness for the next call, and Devine was there, having brought a communication from his colonel. He was as amazed to see Sam as Stephen had been, and so was a smart, elderly artilleryman with a keen, hard face, who recognised the cadet, and knew he had gone in the balloon.

"Holy smoke!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "Beg pardon, sir. Was it you who came through the German lines, an' who was caught by their gunners right at the end?"

"It was," said Sam, surprised. "Why?"

"Glory!" exclaimed the gunner. "If this ain't a go! My captain, he saw it first, through his glasses. It was before the firin' began. 'Gosh!' says he, or words t' that effect. 'They've got some poor beggar there, an' they're goin' to blow him from the end of the gun. I can't see if it's one of our chaps or a deserter of theirs they're punishin', the barbarians. Jenkins,' he says to me, 'see if you can pitch a shot on those two guns. 'Twon't be any the worse for the poor beggar, an' it'll wipe up his beastly executioners.'

"So I takes a fine sight, an' I pitches in a shell. 'Got

'em!' says the cap'en. 'Good shot, Jenkins!' An' so it was, 'specially for a sightin' shot, though I says it. We give 'em another as quick as winkin', an' thought we'd wiped the lot out, an' it'd be no worse for the chap they were goin' to blow to bits. We couldn't see if we got him."

"You didn't," said Sam. "Your shells pitched just behind, and the guns shielded me, and here I am. I owe you my life, Jenkins, and I hope you and I will meet when the day's over, if we both come through it."

"I know I've saved one o' the smartest kids we've got," said the artilleryman to himself, as he obeyed a hurried call to his gun.

There was no time for more. The bombardment, which had commenced fitfully, now began in earnest. All down the line the batteries roared and belched their hate, and the thunder of the German guns replied. The air was alive with the scream and crash of shells, and the boys, who could do nothing where they were, were sent to the entrenchments. There were but two ways to go for either foe—forward or back. The Lion and the Eagle had come fairly to grips at last.

The Storming of the Trenches.

Sharp and clear rang the calls for the "Advance!"—bugle answering bugle all along the line. Regiment after regiment moved swiftly out, like pawns on a chess-board, in response to the master brain that was directing them from the high ground, where the old Grey Fox stood with his staff around him.

"My aunt, but the fun's goin' to begin now!" said Stephen. "I wonder how many of us'll see the sun go down?" he added, looking across at the slopes, where Von Adler's trenches bristled with men.

"Let's get our horses—quick!" said Sam, hurrying as fast as he could to the back of the position, and making for the barn where they had left their mounts. They were afraid the beasts might have been commandeered for use by the troops, but they found them safe. Horses were at a premium now; in a few hours, however, there might be more horses than riders.

The brothers swung themselves into their saddles, and cantered out towards the front, the blood tingling in their veins as they thought of the mighty struggle that was to come. Even then they could hardly realise all that hung on the result of it.

They rode up to the back of the now emptied trenches, and wondered what part they would be allowed to play. Even Sam felt lost for the time.

"We can't ride with the regiments, I suppose?" said Stephen eagerly, letting out a hole of his stirrup-leathers. "Will they let us go on?"

"Wish we had the old corps with us," returned Sam. "There go the last of the German guns! If we can't get a place we'd better fossick about on our own."

But the boys soon found they could not travel round about a British brigade going to meet the enemy as they could in camp, and that no man was allowed to be where he wasn't wanted. The boys were starting down the slope on their own account to try and get somewhere in the neighbourhood of Devine, when an aide-de-camp came galloping past, and saw them.

"Whose orders are you under?" he cried sharply.

"That's what we want to know, sir," said Sam. "If we can go with the ——"

"All unattached mounted men are to go back with the cavalry reserve. Go and join the White Hussars for messenger service!" cried the aide-de-camp, as he galloped away amid a cloud of dust.

"That's behind the spur of the hill there. Come on, Steve!" said Sam. "Hang it, I believe they've dished us for the present; but we'll be able to see everything! They'll loose 'em presently!"

Away they galloped to the extreme right of the position, where, behind the rise of ground, they found the greater part of the cavalry brigade waiting, horsed, armed, and ready for the moment when they should be bidden to join the fray.

At the near side was that famous cavalry corps, nicknamed the White Hussars, and the boys, riding round in a circuit, and coming up from the rear, ranged up near the outskirts of it, wondering if the regiment, which has the reputation of being "haughty," would let the outsiders remain. But Sam and Steve were well known throughout the whole column by now, and were met with mingled chaff and welcome.

"Well, my young balloonists," said a major, as they came alongside him, "haven't you had enough fighting for one day? When I stayed with your father at Cotehall a few years ago, and you weren't much higher than a stirrup, we didn't think Villiers had turned out such a couple of fire-eaters. You seem to have the luck of the deuce!"

"Can't we get a job at scouting, sir?" said Stephen.

"Scouting! It'll be fighting now, not scouting, my boy. We know enough about each other now, and it's a case of hard knocks. Hear the Maxims opening? But what brought you here?"

"The aide-de-camp told us to attach ourselves, sir. Can we ride with you when you go?" said Sam anxiously.

"With us?"

"Let 'em come, sir. Best mascots in the column!" laughed a subaltern close by, and the men in the nearest rank echoed him. "Sure to bring us luck!"

"Yes, you can come, if you're so anxious to be cut down," said the major. "Keep clear of the ranks, and ride abreast the troop-sergeant, there."

Stephen, delighted with the permission, was next down-cast because they did not start at once. He did not remember that battles are not fought with cavalry, whose business it is to fling themselves on the shaken or flying regiments of the enemy at the proper time. So, chafing with impatience, he had to wait until the first roar of the battle went on below.

"There go the light guns!" said the major. "By Jove, our fellows have got to face it now! See there?"

Just over the crest of the rise the whole scene was before them like a map. The khaki-clad lines of the British troops were moving in, regiment by regiment, swiftly and steadily converging on the German front from either side, and their ranks could be seen thinning and melting under the rattling fire from the German trenches; but they kept on steadily.

The German heavy guns were silenced, save for two half-wrecked batteries that kept up a fitful fire. The British guns on the heights behind were now pouring a deadly hail upon the enemy's trenches, and General Nugent's troops were attacking under cover of them. The light field-guns opened with a roar and a rattle, flinging their shell and shrapnel over the trenches in a perfect storm of destruction, while the German light guns that were left replied.

Sam and Stephen watched in wild excitement, every nerve tingling as they saw the great struggle unfold itself before them. It was the victory of the British batteries in the artillery duel that had given General Nugent his chance to advance. Von Adler was cornered now; he could not slip away to right or left, nor go through any manœuvres, or bring up reinforcements. There was nothing for it but to sit tight and fight. The troops that had joined him from the newly-landed flotilla gave him only a slight advantage in numbers, and his position was not so good as when he was checked at Colchester.

"Great Scott, how our men are falling!" groaned Stephen. "Look, three whole companies of the Suffolks are wiped out!"

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