

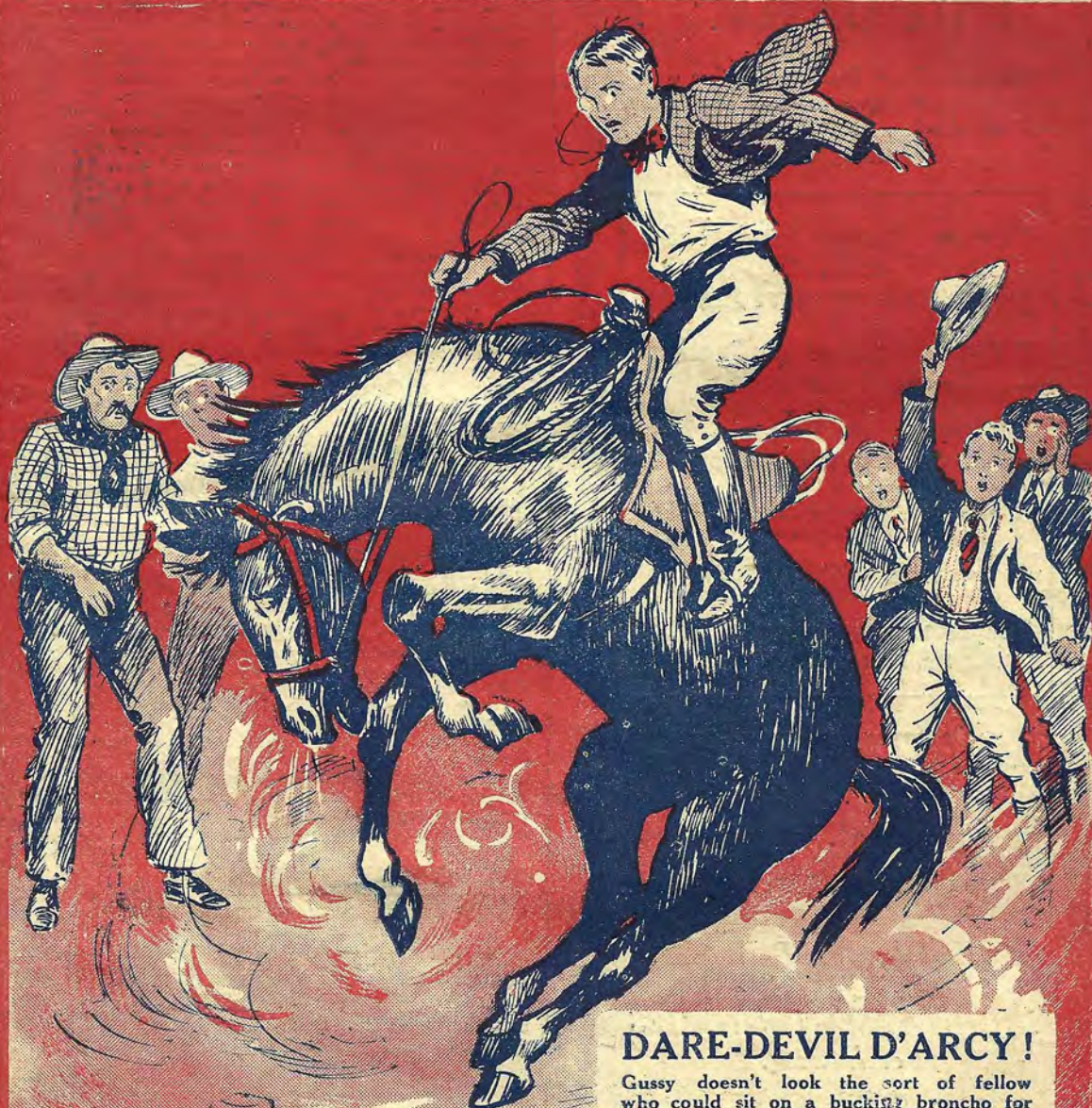
THIS WEEK: TOM MERRY & CO. IN THE WILD WEST!

EVERY WEDNESDAY

No. 1,015.
Vol. XXXII.
July 30th,
1927.

The GEM 2^d

LIBRARY



DARE-DEVIL D'ARCY!

Gussy doesn't look the sort of fellow who could sit on a bucking broncho for long, but appearances are sometimes deceptive! (Read the long complete story of the chums of St. Jim's inside.)

?

Have you seen this week's issue
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"Gem," go to your newsagent and buy
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it, chums!



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The
Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me;
you can be sure of an answer in return.

SPILLING THE SALT.

"KEEN READER," of Manchester, is very unhappy.
It's like this. He's rather clumsy, and the times
he's upset the salt-cellar would make the super-
stitious-minded very sorry for him. Now Keen
Reader is very sorry for himself. Of course he's heard of
the old bad luck tale attached to spilling any salt, and the
deuce of it is he's beginning to believe that there's some-
thing in it. In despair, so my correspondent says, he's writ-
ing to me for advice. "Will he have bad luck for umpteen
years just because he's upset the salt-cellar a few times?"
Of course not! Really, the idea is ridiculous. Oh, I know
there are thousands of people only too eager to prove that
ill-luck does dog the footsteps of the clumsy fellow who
upsets the salt. But to my mind that's all stuff and non-
sense, and anyone in his right senses will leave that sort of
twaddle to the credulous folk. The instances of bad luck
these people can quote must be put down to coincidence.
You can make a superstition out of anything if you look
round for the coincidences. The office-boy has just given
me a new one. He says that if you get off a bus the wrong
way you'll hurt yourself sooner or later. What do you think
of that? No worse, certainly, than that chestnut about the
salt. Take my advice, Keen Reader, and take no notice
of this ill-luck tale. Why, I upset the salt myself this
morning, but I'm not worrying about it.

GRAND NEW SCHOOL SERIAL!

Here's a tit-bit of news, boys, that will gladden your
hearts. A topping new school serial—think of that! And
it's about those cheery chaps of Rookwood, Jimmy Silver
& Co. How's that? Most of you fellows know Mr. Owen
Conquest's work. He runs Mr. Clifford pretty close with
his school stories. And his latest is written specially for
Gemites. You'll like this coming treat, believe me. And it
starts in a fortnight's time. Keep your eyes peeled for the
first instalment, boys. 'Nuff said!

BAD WALKER!

A loyal Gemite writes and says that he's very keen on
walking. Splendid fellow! It's a jolly good exercise, and
if he likes to train his powers of observation en route, so
to speak, his walks will do him a double service. Now my
correspondent admits that he's a bad walker. His ankles
would appear to be none too strong, for he "runs his shoes
over at the heels." That's a common fault. If my chum
takes to wearing boots for a time he may find that this
weakness of the ankles will disappear. The change won't do
any harm, anyway. Try it!

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"TOM MERRY & CO. IN CANADA!"

By Martin Clifford.

Here's another rattling fine tale of the boys of St. Jim's
on holiday in British Columbia. The Boot Leg Ranch is a
far cry from the old school in England, yet Mr. Clifford has
preserved that fascinating schoolboy atmosphere with com-
mendable ingenuity. Don't miss this yarn, chums!

"BEYOND THE SILVER GLACIER!"

By Arthur S. Hardy.

Look out, boys, for the conclusion of this popular serial
story in next week's GEM.

"BANK HOLIDAY!"

is the next jolly poem from the St. Jim's Rhymester, and
it's distinctly good. Order next week's GEM now, chums!

Your Editor.

THE WILD AND WOOLLY WEST! Tom Merry & Co.—not forgetting the immaculate and elegant Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—look forward keenly enough to their trip to the Boot Leg Ranch, for British Columbia spells romance and adventure, and the cheery chums of St. Jim's simply revel in adventure!



WESTWARD BOUND!

A Grand New Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., dealing with their Holiday Adventures.

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Looking after Wildrake!

"WILDWAKE, deah boy!"
"Hallo!"
"Stop!"

Kit Wildrake of the St. Jim's Fourth stopped. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's—the last half-holiday of the term. Tom Merry & Co. were busy on the cricket ground that afternoon; and Wildrake, the Canadian junior, was strolling down to the gates to go out, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down on him.

Arthur Augustus was in flannels, and had a bat under his arm. He had been on his way to Little Side when he spotted the Canadian junior going out.

There was a severe frown upon Arthur Augustus' face. Wildrake looked at him inquiringly. He was not aware for the moment of having done anything to cause that portentous frown to cloud the aristocratic features of the swell of St. Jim's.

"What's biting you, old scout?" he asked good-humouredly.

"Nothin' is bitin' me, Wildwake. I wegard the question as widiculous!" answered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You are goin' out of gates?"

"Sure!" assented Wildrake.

"I am surprisid at you!"

"Eh?"

Wildrake stared.

"Anything new in a fellow going out of gates on a half-holiday?" he inquired.

"In the cires, Wildwake, you are a weckless ass to think of goin' out of gates," said Arthur Augustus severely. "You may be in dangah."

"Bow-wow!"

"I wepeat, Wildwake, that you may be in dangah if you go out of the school," said Arthur Augustus. "It is only a week or two since that wascal, Wube Wedway, twied to kidnap you. Suppose he is still hangin' about lookin' for anothah chance?"

Wildrake laughed.

"I guess Rube Redway has vamoosed the ranch," he said. "The police are looking for him, Gussy; and while they're looking for him, I reckon he won't be looking for me. It's all O.K."

"It is not all O.K., as you express it, Wildwake. You had bettah we-main within gates. It would be all wight if I could come along with you, but I am wanted in the cwicket."

The Canadian junior chuckled. He was quite confident in his own powers to protect himself if necessary, but he did not quite see how the elegant swell of the Fourth would be able to assist him in doing so.

"All serene, Gussy!" he said cheerily. "You run along to the cwicket. It's all right."

"I do not wegard it as bein' all wight, Wildwake," said Gussy, shaking his head. "Come along to Little Side and watch the cwicket. It will be worth watchin', you know. I am playin' for the House."

"Then it's bound to be worth watching," said Wildrake gravely.

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus innocently. "Twot along with me, deah boy."

"But I'm going out," explained Wildrake.

"Weally, Wildwake—"

"Gussy!" bawled Jack Blake from the distance. "Where's that ass Gussy? Are you going to keep us waiting, fathead?"

"The fellows are waitin' for me, Wildwake," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway lose no more time. Come on!"

"But I'm going out, old bean!" said the Canadian junior, laughing. "I guess there isn't any danger; and if there is I'll look after it. Good-bye!"

Wildrake moved on, but Arthur Augustus promptly stepped into his path. The Canadian junior stopped again.

"I feel bound, as your fwiend, old chap, to keep you fwom wunnin' into dangah," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "In the cires, Wildwake, I shall not let you go out of gates."

"Oh, my hat!"

"For your own sake, you know," explained Arthur Augustus. "You are a weckless young ass, and I feel bound to look aftah you. I have awwanged to come out to Canadah with you for the vacation, to look aftah you, and I am jollay well goin' to see that you do not butt into twouble befoah the vac! I shall be sowwy to use force—"

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"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wildrake.

"I see nothin' to cackle at in that wemark," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I wepeat that I shall be sowwy to use force, deah boy; but I feel bound to pwevent you fwom wunnin' into dangah. Now, come along!"

Arthur Augustus slipped his arm through Wildrake's and drew him gently but firmly away from the gates. But he did not draw him far.

Wildrake stood like a rock, his feet seemingly rooted to the ground, and Arthur Augustus pulled, and then tugged, but did not succeed in shifting the stardy Canadian junior. Wildrake's sunburnt face wore a cheery grin, while Gussy's grew redder and redder with exertion.

"Bai Jove! Will you come, you silly ass?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Thanks, no!" chuckled Wildrake.

"If you wefuse to walk I shall cawwy you!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his noble wrath rising. "Go ahead!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dropped his cricket bat and laid both his hands upon Kit Wildrake. There was plenty of strength in Arthur Augustus' elegant form, but he was not quite so muscular as the hefty junior from the Boot Leg Ranch. Wildrake, still grinning, closed with him and returned grasp for grasp.

Arthur Augustus' intention was to whirl him off his feet and rush him along, willy-nilly.

But it did not work out like that.

To his great surprise, Arthur Augustus felt his own elegant feet leaving the ground, and found himself whirled into the air.

"Oh! Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy.

"One good turn deserves another, old bean," chuckled Wildrake. "I guess I'll carry you instead!"

"Oh cwumbs! Welease me!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove! If you do not welease me instantly, Wildwake, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Unheeding that dire threat, Kit Wildrake walked on to the gates, carrying the swell of St. Jim's like a bundle, Gussy's arms and legs thrashing the air wildly.

"Gussy!" yelled Jack Blake. "Are you coming down to the cricket, fathead? What on earth's that game?"

"Yawwooh! Wescue!"

Wildrake of the Fourth reached the gateway. In the middle of the old gateway of St. Jim's he set Arthur Augustus down with a bump on the hard, unsympathetic ground.

"So-long, old bean!" he said genially.

And he walked away down the road, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting dizzily in the gateway, gasping for breath.

"Oh! Ow! Bai Jove! Gwooooh!" spluttered Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake came up, grinning, and gave his noble chum a helping hand up. Kit Wildrake was already disappearing in the distance.

"You ass!" said Blake. "Tom Merry's waiting! What are you skylarking for, you duffer?"

"Gwoogh! I was not skylarkin', you ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I was pweventin' that weckless ass Wildwake fwom goin' out of gates!"

Blake grinned.

"You don't seem to have prevented him an awful lot," he remarked. "He's gone!"

"I am goin' atfah him—I am goin' to yank him back by his ears if-necessawy!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"You're coming down to the cricket, fathead!" chuckled Blake. "Let Wildrake rip!"

"I wefuse to let him wip! I am goin'—"

"Your mistake—you're coming!" said Blake cheerily.

And, as Blake grasped his aristocratic chum by the shoulders and ran him headlong in, that settled the matter. Arthur Augustus did not go—he came!

CHAPTER 2. The Gunman.

KIT WILDRAKE was smiling as he swung cheerily along the leafy lane. But his sunburnt face became grave and rather thoughtful. The fatherly manners and customs of Arthur Augustus might be

entertaining; but, as a matter of fact, Wildrake knew that Gussy was right, and that it was possible that danger lurked in his path that sunny summer's afternoon.

The possibility of danger would never have kept Wildrake within the school gates—the Canadian junior was fearless by nature, and quite confident in his ability to take care of himself. But he realised that he needed to be on his guard. It was a far cry from the Boot Leg Ranch in British Columbia to St. Jim's in the county of Sussex, but it was from the Boot Leg Ranch that the shadow of peril had fallen on the Canadian junior in the St. Jim's Fourth. Rube Redway, the American gunman who had sought to kidnap him, was fleeing and hiding from the police. His confederate had been captured, but Redway was still at liberty, and Wildrake knew the man's desperate character. His father's enemy was still in England, and it was more than possible that the gunman might make another attempt on the rancher's son. His motive was somewhat mysterious, but there was no doubt that it was a strong one.

For some reason, known only to himself, Redway was determined to obtain possession of the Pine Tree Patch on the Boot Leg Ranch, and Mr. Wildrake had refused all offers. With the rancher's son as a hostage in his hands, Redway had intended to force the rancher's hand. Only his blunder in kidnapping D'Arcy in mistake for Wildrake had defeated him. It was an interesting problem to the Canadian junior. Obviously the Pine Tree Patch on his father's ranch had some value unknown to the owner, but known or surmised by the gunman.

There had been gold strikes in the neighbourhood of Boot Leg, and Wildrake wondered whether Redway had struck some indication of gold on the coveted patch. He was eager for the vacation to begin, when he was to return home to the ranch, taking some of his schoolboy friends with him. He was looking forward keenly to exploring that outlying section of the ranch and discovering what it was that had led the American gunman to take such desperate measures.

He reached the stile in Rylcombe Lane, which gave access to the footpath through the wood to Wayland. Wildrake was bound for the livery stables at Wayland, where he frequently hired a horse on a half-holiday for a gallop across country. A man was seated on the top bar of the stile, and Wildrake glanced at him carelessly as he clambered over. The man was shabbily dressed, and had a grey beard, and grey hair under a battered bowler hat, and looked like a tramp. He touched the battered hat to the St. Jim's junior.

"Nice afternoon, sir," he said civilly.

Wildrake nodded and smiled. He supposed that that remark was intended as a preface to a request for coppers.

"Sure," he assented.

The man's eyes glimmered for a moment, as if that Western expression had struck his attention. Wildrake was probably the only fellow at St. Jim's who would have answered "Sure" to his remark.

"You belong to the big school, sir?"

"I guess so."

"I dare say you could spare a shilling, sir, for a poor man on the road."

"I dare say I could," assented Wildrake good-humouredly, and he felt in his pocket.

The man's eyes were keenly on his sunburnt face.

"No offence, sir; but I take it you're American?" he said.

"No fear! Canadian," said Wildrake.

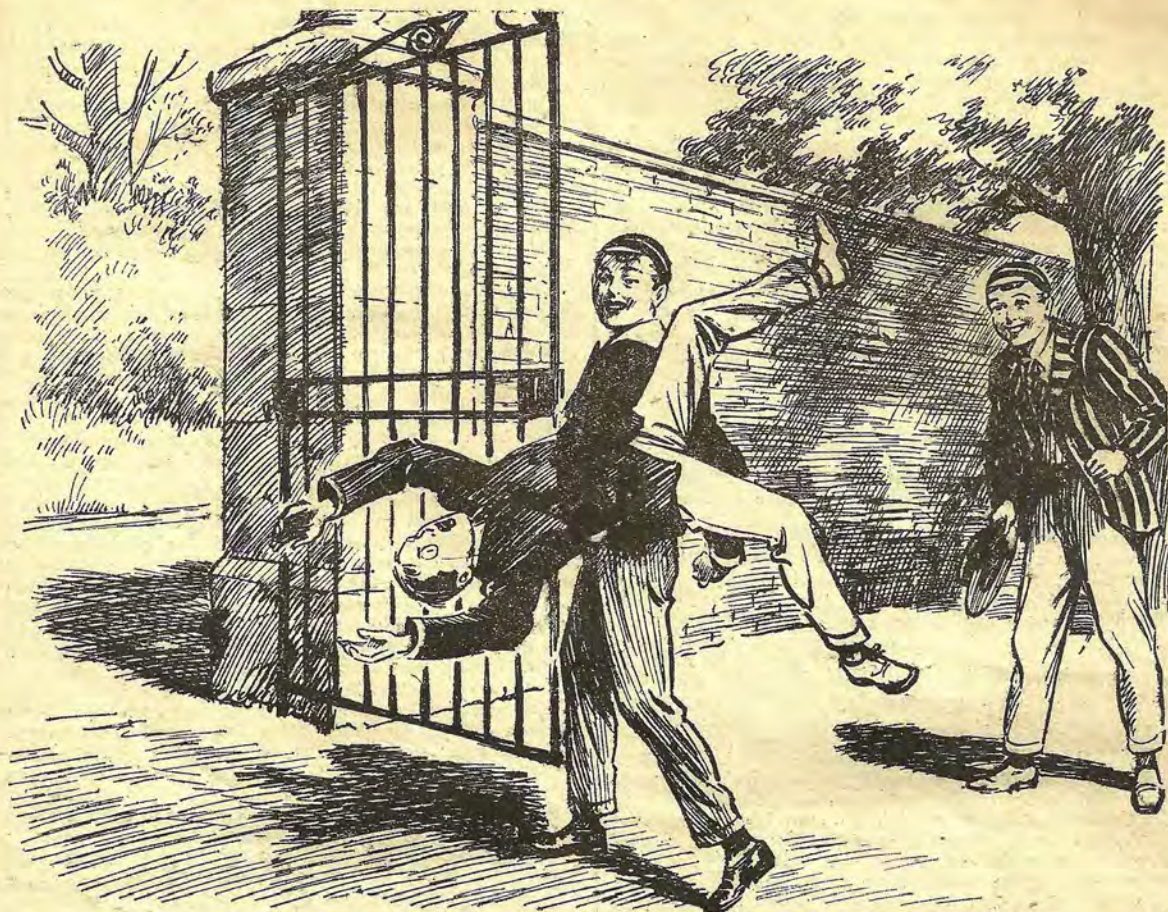
He tossed a shilling to the mendicant, and the man caught it in a grubby hand. Wildrake went on up the footpath under the thick, overhanging trees that almost shut out the sky.

The man on the stile, who had been facing the lane, faced round and sat staring after the Canadian junior. His eyes were glittering under his knitted brows.

"By hokey! You're in luck at last, Rube Redway!" he muttered.

And the grey-haired, grey-bearded mendicant slipped from the stile with a lithe activity remarkable in a man of his apparent age, and hurried up the footpath after the St. Jim's junior.

Wildrake tramped on cheerily under the trees. He had not given a second thought to the grey-bearded man on the stile. Keen as he was, he had noticed nothing



"Oh cwumbs! Welease me!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Bat Jove, if you do not welease me instantly, Wildwake, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!" Unheeding that dire threat, Kit Wildrake walked to the gates, carrying the swell of St. Jim's like a bundle, Qussy's arms and legs thrashing the air wildly. (See Chapter 1.)

about the man to arouse suspicion. Certainly the man did not resemble in the least the description D'Arcy had given of the kidnapper, Reuben Redway. Wildrake had taken him for what he appeared to be—a tramp at least sixty years old. But caution was second nature to the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch. At the sound of footfalls behind him on the footpath he glanced round with keen eyes.

"Gee-whiz!" murmured Wildrake.

The grey-bearded man was only a dozen feet away and coming on at a run. His footfalls made little sound on the grassy path; but, faint as the sound was, the Canadian junior's acute hearing had caught it.

Wildrake faced round at once.

The grey-bearded man paused a second, as if disconcerted; then he came on rapidly.

"Well," said Wildrake coolly, "what's the game?"

"I guess you're the kid Kit Wildrake, and you won't get away from me this time."

And the man came at the Canadian junior with a spring like a tiger. Obviously, he was not so old as he looked.

Wildrake sprang back and eluded his grasp.

The next moment he had plunged into the thicket beside the path and was scudding through the wood.

"Stop!"

Wildrake dashed on through the underwoods, crashing through briar and bramble.

"Stop!" The man was racing savagely in pursuit.

"Stop! By hokey, I'll shoot if you don't stop!"

Wildrake plunged on.

Crack!

The sharp report of a revolver rang through the wood. The bullet tore through the foliage a couple of feet from Wildrake.

Wildrake's heart throbbed.

At that moment probably he rather regretted that he

had not taken Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's fatherly advice.

He tore on.

"Stop!" yelled Redway.

Crack!

The revolver rang again. Wildrake's cap spun from his head. Redway was less than a dozen feet behind him, racing savagely through the thickets and firing as he ran. So far he had fired only to scare the schoolboy, as Wildrake was well aware. The gunman could have shot him down with ease if he had wanted to do so.

"Will you stop, you fool? I'll lame you with the next bullet!" panted Redway.

Wildrake darted round a big tree, and for the moment vanished from his pursuer's sight.

Redway came panting on. The grey beard was gone from his face now; it had been caught on the brambles and torn away. The hard, clean-shaven face of the gunman was revealed.

He plunged on past the big tree and halted. Wildrake was no longer in sight. Redway spun round and glared up at the schoolboy, who was swiftly clambering into the branches of the tree.

He raised the revolver.

"You young gink! Get down! Do you hear?"

Wildrake heard, but he did not answer. He clambered on desperately into the thick, leafy branches and vanished from the eyes of the desperado under the tree.

Redway glared upward savagely.

Thick branches and masses of foliage hid the Canadian junior from his sight.

"Will you come down?" he shouted fiercely.

"I guess not," came Wildrake's cool answer from above. "You can come up and fetch me if you like."

Redway gritted his teeth.

"I'll riddle you with lead if you don't come down!"

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he hissed. "Mind, I mean business, Kit Wildrake! You'll come down dead or alive!"

"Not alive, I reckon!"

"For the last time—"

"Oh, can it!" jeered Wildrake.

Crack, crack, crack!

The revolver spat lead into the thick branches of the tree, tearing away leaves and twigs.

Wildrake grinned.

He was thirty feet from the ground, crouched in a fork of the thick branches above the massive trunk, and almost completely covered from the bullets. The gunman was firing almost at random. Neither did Wildrake believe that the rascal intended the lead to touch him. It was only as a prisoner that the rancher's son was of any use to Rube Redway.

"Keep it up!" called out the Canadian junior mockingly. "You'll bring half the neighbourhood along here, I guess, before long. You're not in the Wild West now, Mr. Redway!"

"Durn your hide!" hissed Redway.

He ceased to shoot and thrust the revolver back into his hip-pocket. It was clear that the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch was not to be scared into surrender.

"Will you come down?"

"I guess not!"

"Then, by gad, I'll fetch you down, and I'll make you squirm for the trouble you're giving me!"

"I reckon I'm ready for you."

Rube Redway grasped the rough bark of the trunk and climbed.

CHAPTER 3.

A Narrow Escape!

WILDRAKE waited. His heart was beating fast, but he was quite cool.

In the deep, solitary wood it was not likely that help would come to the "treed" junior. He was at a distance from the footpath, and the footpath was little frequented. The danger against which Arthur Augustus had warned him was very real and very close at hand now. Redway, hunted by the police, had not fled, as was generally supposed. It was clear that, in his disguise as a grey-bearded mendicant, he had haunted the vicinity of the school, watching for a chance to "get at" the rancher's son. Luck had favoured him that afternoon, after many days of lurking and watching in vain. But he had not succeeded yet, and Wildrake was coolly resolved that he was not going to succeed. Securely perched in the fork of the branches, he waited for Redway to climb.

The foliage hid the man from his sight as he came, but he heard the deep breathing and grunting of the climber. The climb was not so easy a task to the gunman as it had been to the lithe schoolboy. But Redway came on quickly enough. His hard, evil face emerged from the foliage at last three feet below Wildrake's perch.

Wildrake's eyes met the savage, threatening glare of the kidnapper. The battered hat and the grey wig had gone now, brushed off in the ascent of the tree. Wildrake scanned the hard, wicked face coolly. The gunman spat out a curse.

"Now I've got you, you young hound!" he muttered.

"I guess not—quite!"

Redway clambered on.

Wildrake left the fork in the tree and climbed out on a long branch higher up. He swung to it by his hands, and as the gunman clambered higher his head came within reach of the junior's boot.

Crash!

There was a wild yell from Redway as Wildrake's boot crashed on the side of his head.

He lost his hold and went plunging down the tree. Fortunately for him, the lower branches stopped his fall, and he caught hold and clung on again. He hung there, breathless, dizzy, gasping. For the time Rube Redway could do nothing but hold on.

Wildrake clambered down towards him.

The Canadian junior's teeth were hard set and there was a glitter in his eyes.

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He leaned out over the branch to which Rube Redway clung with both hands.

"Drop!" he snapped tersely.

The gunman's eyes blazed at him.

He was swinging fifteen feet from the ground, and the drop was a long one. But the Canadian junior had no mercy to waste on the gunman.

He drew back his arm, his fist clenched hard.

"Drop, or I guess I'll knock you off!" he said coolly.

Redway, gritting his teeth, made a desperate effort to clamber up on the branch to which he clung.

In an instant the Canadian junior's clenched fist was dashed into the hard, evil face.

There was a panting cry from the gunman as he was driven from his hold. The lower branches crashed as he whizzed downward.

Wildrake, holding on, followed him with his eyes.

Redway caught on to a bough and broke it away with the force of his fall. A moment more and he was bumping in the grass under the tree.

The thick grass and bushes broke his fall to some extent, but he lay on the earth, breathless, aching, and dizzy.

Wildrake watched him coolly.

If the gunman had broken a limb there was a chance of escape. But in a few minutes the panting rascal scrambled to his feet. He was bruised and shaken, but not seriously hurt. And he dragged the "gun" from his hip-pocket, with savage fury in the glare he turned upward. Wildrake scrambled back into the fork of the thick branches, and the next moment tearing lead was stripping leaves and twigs round him.

Crack, crack, crack!

The gunman was firing in blind fury, and this time he was seeking to bring down the "treed" schoolboy. But the bullets whistled harmlessly round Wildrake as he kept close in cover. The nearest passed a foot from him.

The firing ceased, and he heard a savage oath below.

"I'll wait for you!" said Redway in a voice choking with rage. "I guess I'll wait till you drop in my hands, you young scallywag!"

Wildrake laughed.

"I guess you're welcome!" he called back. "I reckon I can keep it up as long as you do, feller!"

There was no answer from the gunman.

Wildrake, moving at last, peered through the interstices of the thick foliage and saw the ruffian leaning against an adjacent tree, waiting and watching. The scent of a cigar floated up.

The gunman was waiting while he rested his aching limbs. But Wildrake did not believe that he would wait long. The junior was secure in his perch in the tree, and he could keep up that game longer than his enemy could; for if he did not return to St. Jim's in time for call-over he was certain to be searched for. And as soon as a search-party entered the wood Rube Redway's only safety lay in flight.

Wildrake, as he sat in the forked branches high above, was thinking it over. Sooner or later the gunman would be climbing again, and if he chose to use his revolver at close quarters the schoolboy would be at his mercy. And if he found it impossible to capture the rancher's son there was no telling to what length the desperado's rage might carry him.

"I guess it would be healthy to mosey out of this," the Canadian junior murmured.

He stood up silently on the forked branches and scanned his surroundings. In the thick heart of the wood the great trees grew close, and many of the branches interlaced. Wildrake looked down; the foliage hid him from the gunman's eyes. Quietly, cautiously he crawled along a high branch, which reached into the boughs of a huge old oak. Slowly but surely he crawled upon a branch of the oak and along it and reached the tree-trunk. There was a lurking grin on the junior's face as he crawled and climbed on with hardly a sound. It needed a strong nerve to pass from one tree to another at such a height from the ground, but the nerve of the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch was of iron. Wildrake had played that hazardous game before, long ago when he had been "treed" by a grizzly bear in the timber on the Boot Leg Ranch.

There was no sound or movement from the gunman.

Rube Redway, in the belief that his intended victim was still in the tree above him, did not suspect that every moment the rancher's son was drawing farther and farther away from him.

A dozen high trees lay between Wildrake and the gunman, and still Redway had no suspicion of the junior's retreat.

Wildrake stopped his perilous transit at last, and with silent caution slid down the branches of a tree twenty yards from the spot where Redway watched and waited.

He made scarcely a sound as he descended, and at the foot of the tree, buried in thickets and brambles, he stopped to take breath.

There was a sound from the direction of the spot where Redway still stood. The voice of the gunman came to his ears.

"Are you coming down, you young hound?"

Wildrake grinned, as the gunman shouted up into the tree of which he believed that the thick foliage still hid the junior.

"I guess I'll come up for you again!" Redway's voice was hoarse and savage. "And mind, young Wildrake, I'll use my gun this time. I guess I'm getting you, alive or dead!"

Wildrake heard a sound of the man climbing at a distance.

Silently he stepped away through the thickets, treading lightly but swiftly.

In a few minutes he had reached the footpath, and there, throwing aside further concealment, he broke into a run. But he was too far now from the gunman for Redway to hear the light footfalls on the thick grass.

Meanwhile, Redway was clambering into the tree the Canadian junior had left a quarter of an hour before. He clambered up savagely, with bitter determination in his hard face. He was ready to draw his gun at sight of the schoolboy and bring him to the earth wounded, caring little if it was a dead boy that hurtled down. He knew that he would never have another chance to kidnap the rancher's son while he was at St. Jim's, and he was determined that, dead or alive, Kit Wildrake should not escape him. He clambered on with gleaming eyes, till he reached the fork in the branches which had been Wildrake's refuge. It was vacant now.

Redway stopped to rest and to peer about him in the blinding foliage. It was not for some time that the truth dawned upon him.

Then a furious oath escaped his lips.

The Canadian junior was gone—and Redway was beaten. In his rage the gunman loosed off bullet after bullet among the thick green branches round him, hoping that the schoolboy might yet be within range and that a bullet might reach him by chance and bring him down. But he emptied his revolver in vain.

Kit Wildrake, sprinting along the footpath, heard the cracking of the shots behind him in the wood as he went, and laughed lightly. He leaped the stile into Rlycombe Lane and trotted on cheerily towards the school. Fearless as he was, the Canadian junior was anxious to be within the walls of St. Jim's again—and to set the telephone to work before Rube Redway could vanish from the vicinity.

Redway, gritting his teeth with rage, descended at last from the tree. For a quarter of an hour he hunted savagely for a trace of the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch, but he gave it up at last and tramped away. He knew that he had no time to lose; that he would be searched for as soon as Wildrake could give the alarm; that the telephone and the telegraph would soon be spreading the news that he was in the vicinity of St. Jim's. He tramped away furiously to the Wayland road, and when, half

an hour later, Inspector Skeat and his men were searching for him he had vanished—never again to be seen near the old school. He was not done with Kit Wildrake yet; but it was in the wild land of the West that they were to meet again, on the rolling plains of the Boot Leg Ranch.

CHAPTER 4.

The Last Match at St. Jim's.

"HOW'S that?"
"Out!"
"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared down at his wrecked wicket as if he could hardly believe his noble eyes. Perhaps he hardly could.

Lowther of the Shell grinned along the pitch. He had sent down the ball that had spreadeagled Gussy's wicket.

"Bai Jove! Is that weally out?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Out!" rapped the umpire.

"Wemarkable!"

"Are you going off or are you staying there to ornament the landscape, D'Arcy?" called out Tom Merry from the field.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Get a move on, Gussy!" called out Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs——"

Figgins of the Fourth was already coming in to take Gussy's place. It was a Form match, between the Shell and the Fourth, and only a few minutes since Arthur Augustus had gone on to bat, warning Blake to look out for fours—if not sixes. The swell of St. Jim's had considered a century quite probable, and had not entertained the bare idea of retiring under fifty. And with two runs to his credit he had been clean bowled! It was, as he had said, remarkable—though Monty Lowther, the bowler, did not consider it remarkable at all. From Monty's point of view it was precisely what might have been expected—merely that and nothing more.

Arthur Augustus' face still wore an expression of surprise as he passed Figgins on his way out.

"Did you notice that, Figgy?" he paused to inquire.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Figgins. "We look like beating the Shell at this rate—I don't think!"

"It was wathah wearmable, wasn't it?"

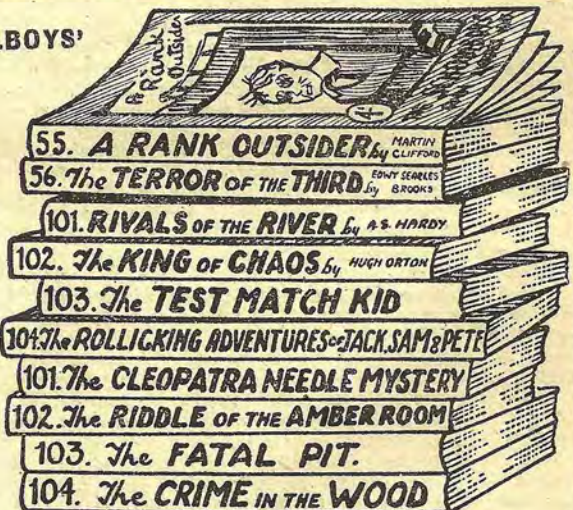
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"Very much so," agreed Figgins.

"Ah! You wealise that, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather! You actually took two runs before you were bowled," said Figgins gravely. "Who'd have thought it?"

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You know vewy well that I did not mean that. I meant——"

But Figgins of the Fourth did not stay to hear what Gussy meant. He went on to the wickets, and the swell of St. Jim's ambled on to the pavilion.

"Where are they?" inquired Jack Blake sarcastically.

"Eh?"

"Those fours and sixes."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Let's see—how many centuries were you going to make, Gussy?" inquired Levison of the Fourth.

"Weally, Levison——"

"Hard luck, old scout!" said the cheery voice of Kit Wildrake.

Arthur Augustus turned round quickly. The cheery junior from the Boot Leg Ranch gave him a nod.

"Bai Jove! You heah, Wildwake?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it," said Wildrake. "Just back in time to see your tremendous innings, Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I had wathah wotten luck in my innings, Wildwake. Who'd have thought that an ass like Lowthah would be able to take my wicket? It's weally wemarkable, isn't it? I could scarcely believe my eyes, you know. It's wathah wotten to let the Shell beat us in the last game of the term."

"They haven't beaten us yet!" grunted Herries.

"I am afraid the match is a gonah, Hewwies," said Arthur Augustus. "I was goin' to pull it out of the fish, and now——"

"Now you've put it in the soup instead," suggested Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Figgy is knocking them up!" said Fatty Wynn.

"We'll beat the Shell all right. Good old Figgy."

"Wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus.

"What's remarkable now?" inquired Blake.

"Figgy is standin' up to the bowlin' that knocked me out," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard that as vewy wemarkable. Still, cwicket is a vewy uncertain game. Vewy often the best batsman does not last so long as the worst, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus, and he turned away from the grinning batsmen grouped before the pavilion. "Wildwake, I have a bone to pick with you."

"Go ahead," said Wildrake cheerily.

"You tweated me with gwoss diswespect when I was pweventin' you fwom goin' out into dangah this aftahnoon," said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Guilty, my lord!" said Wildrake meekly.

"Howevah, I shall not give you a feahful thwashin', as I had intended," said Arthur Augustus. "As I am comin' home with you for the summah vacation, Wildwake, I feel that it would be wathah bad form to thwash you."

"That's lucky for somebody!" grinned Wildrake.

"Weally, you cheekay young ass——"

"But you were right, Gussy," said the Canadian junior. "I guess I've had a jolly narrow escape. I met Rube Redway in Friardale Wood, and he very nearly got me."

"Bai Jove!"

"So I've given up my ride for the afternoon and come back to watch you making runs," said Wildrake.

"But for a vewy wemarkable fluke, Wildwake, you would pwobably have seen me make a centuwy," said Arthur Augustus. "You are a weekless young ass, and I shall not let you out of my sight again till I hand you ovah safe to your patah on the Boot Leg Wanch."

Wildrake laughed and sat down in a deck-chair to watch the finish of the Form match. His sunburnt face was very thoughtful. He had reported the startling occurrence of the afternoon to Mr. Railton, who had telephoned at once to the police station, and there was no doubt that Rube Redway was now being searched for. But Wildrake doubted very much whether the

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gunman would be laid by the heels. He realised now that he had to be on his guard, not only during the few days that remained of the term at St. Jim's, but during the long journey from England to his home in the Far West. And, cool and self-reliant as the Canadian junior was, he was glad that he would have a party of his schoolboy chums with him on that long journey across half the world.

CHAPTER 5.

Off to Liverpool!

"BLAKE, deah boy."

"Hallo!" yawned Blake.

"You looked aftah the luggage?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You are suah you looked aftah it all wight?"

"Quite."

"You looked aftah my big twunk?"

Blake grinned.

"I did!"

"And the small twunk?"

"I did!"

"And the portmanteau?"

"I did!"

"And the cabin twunk?"

"I did!"

"And the hatbox?"

"I did!"

"All wight, then," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sinking back into his corner seat. "If you are absolutely suah that you looked aftah them, Blake——"

"I did!"

"Wight-ho!"

There was a general grin in the St. Jim's party.

Tom Merry & Co. were en route.

The old school had broken up for the vacation. The fellows who were to accompany Kit Wildrake to British Columbia had been home to say good-bye to their people; they had met again to take the train for Liverpool, and now they were on their way to that great maritime city. There they were to take the steamer; after which the wide Atlantic lay before them.

They were in great spirits.

Six St. Jim's juniors occupied the carriage. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, Blake and D'Arcy of the Fourth, were Wildrake's companions on his journey home.

The party might have been a much larger one. Indeed, had circumstances permitted it, Wildrake might have taken half St. Jim's with him on a visit to the Boot Leg Ranch. Certainly, plenty of the fellows would have been keen enough to go on such a trip.

But circumstances did not permit.

Tom Merry & Co. had obtained the leave of their people to accompany the Canadian junior home. Lord Eastwood, after much cogitation, had given permission to his hopeful son, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

But Herries and Dig were wanted at home, and could not join the party. Wally of the Third, Gussy's young brother, had been very keen to come, but his noble pater had declined permission. Wildrake would have been glad to include Levison of the Fourth, but Levison was booked for the vacation with Cardew. Trimble of the Fourth had offered to come, in the most pressing manner, and his offer had been declined without thanks. Grundy of the Shell had kindly volunteered to see Wildrake through, but to his surprise Grundy was not needed. Five fellows were going with Wildrake, and they started in the greatest of spirits. Arthur Augustus was the most serious of the party. Arthur Augustus felt that it was up to him to see Wildrake safe to the Boot Leg Ranch, this side up with care, as it were. And Arthur Augustus took his responsibility very seriously.

Arthur Augustus' preparations for the journey had been fearful and wonderful. The amount of baggage he had prepared for transit to British Columbia would have made eyes open wide on the Boot Leg Ranch, had it ever arrived there. As Blake had been looking after registering the baggage for Liverpool, however, it was



Wildrake drew back his arm, his fist clenched hard. "Drop, or I guess I'll knock you off!" he said coolly. Redway, gritting his teeth, made a desperate effort to clamber up on the branch to which he clung. In an instant the Canadian junior's clenched fist was dashed into the hard, evil face. There was a panting cry from the gunman as he loosened his hold. (See Chapter 3.)

probable that all Gussy's property never would arrive even as far as the steamer. It was useless to explain to Gussy that there were certain limitations in the way of luggage. Gussy was superior to such considerations. Had he been going to Central Africa, or the North Pole, he could scarcely have packed a greater assortment of goods to go along with him. Blake had looked after his baggage—not in the sense that Gussy understood.

Mr. Railton was to meet the schoolboys in Liverpool, place them on the liner under the charge of the captain, and see them off. It was very kind of the Housemaster, though Tom Merry & Co. fancied that they were quite capable of seeing themselves off.

Arthur Augustus, satisfied that his baggage had been looked after, leaned back in his seat and opened his "Times."

Gussy rather favoured the "Times" as a travelling companion. He had a copy of the "Magnet" inside it. The "Magnet" was for use, and the "Times" for ornament.

"I shall be able to get some good photographs out there," Manners of the Shell remarked thoughtfully.

Arthur Augustus looked up from the "Magnet," over his "Times."

"Bai Jove! Are you takin' your camewah, Mannahs?" he asked.

"Of course."

"But isn't this goin' to be a holiday?"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Ass!"

"I wefuse to continue a discush in which you make use of such oppwobwious expressions, Mannahs."

"Good!" said Manners. "You Fourth Form kids should be seen and not heard."

"Us what?" demanded Jack Blake.

"Kids!"

"If you want to take a thick ear out to Canada, Manners——"

"Order!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway do not wag, deah boys. We have a vewy sewious wesponsibility on our shouldahs. We have got to see that Wildwake is not kidnapped befoah he weaches the Boot Leg Wanch."

"I guess I shall get through," said Wildrake, with a smile. "Still, I'm jolly glad to have you galoots along. If Rube Redway is still hunting trouble, he won't have much chance with six of us."

"No fear!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"We have got to keep our eyes open, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "That wottah Wedway is a vewy determined wascal, and I shouldn't wondah if he dogs our steps all the way. He may be on this vewy twain in some disguise."

"Hem!"

"Have you got a cold, Lowthah?" Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely on the Shell fellow. "Or do you intend to express dewision of my wemark?"

"You've got it, old bean," grinned Monty.

"Then I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah. I think it is vewy pwobable that that wottah is watchin' us all the way to Liverpool, and that we may have to pwotect Wildwake at any moment. I am goin' to walk along the cowwidah and see if there are any suspicious chawactahs about."

Tom Merry & Co. grinned as Arthur Augustus stepped from the compartment into the train corridor.

They really did not think it likely that the American gunman was dogging their footsteps so closely. Redway, desperate as he was, could hardly have made an attempt on Wildrake on the crowded express.

But Arthur Augustus was very wary. He had constituted himself Wildrake's chief protector, and he was not taking chances.

He strolled along the corridor of the train, looking at other passengers and peering into the carriages, rather surprising some of his fellow-passengers by the keenness of his scrutiny.

"Good old Gussy!" smiled Tom Merry. "By the way, what became of his baggage, Blake?"

"I looked after it."

"You don't mean to say that all that stuff has been landed on this train?" exclaimed Manners.

Blake chuckled.

"No jolly fear."

"Then what—"

"I told Gussy I would look after it, and so I had to look after it," explained Blake. "The cabin trunk is on the train. I labelled the rest for Eastwood House, and handed them over to a porter to be sent back. He took them away on a trolley, and I looked after them."

"Eh?"

"I looked after the baggage until it was out of sight," said Blake. "I told Gussy I would look after it, and I did."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors.

All the party, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, had agreed that his stupendous baggage was too much of a good thing and could not possibly accompany the party to Canada. By Blake's system of looking after it, it had been considerably reduced.

"Bai Jove! You fellows seem vewy mewwy!" Arthur Augustus' eyeglass gleamed in from the corridor. "What's the jolly old joke?"

"Found any suspicious characters?" asked Lowther.

"Not yet. I am goin' along the othah way now."

And Arthur Augustus strolled off without learning what the little joke was. He was to discover that later. After a few minutes he put his head in again. There was a gleam of excitement in his eyes.

"You fellows—"

"Gussy's made a discovery," said Monty Lowther gravely. "Look out, Wildrake, Gussy's got an eye on the kidnapper."

Wildrake chuckled.

"I am not suah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus in a low voice. "But there is a vewy suspicious-lookin' fellow in the cowwidah, comin' along this way. I heard him speakin', and he had an Amewican accent. He has a gwey beard, too, and horn-wimmed glasses. You fellows look at him as he comes by. He looks wathah suspicious to me."

"Seize him!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, it would be wathah pwemature to seize him on bare suspicion," said D'Arcy.

"In a case like this we can't afford to run risks," said Monty. "Seize him while there's yet time, Gussy. If he turns out to be a harmless and necessary American tourist, it won't matter. A fellow with a grey beard, horn-rimmed glasses, and an American accent ought to be bumped. Bump him and chance it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway be sewious, you fellows. Heah he comes."

Tom Merry & Co. looked out rather curiously into the corridor, as the gentleman with the American accent came along. Certainly they did not suppose that it was the gunman in disguise, but they were interested in Gussy's suspicious character. He came in sight in the doorway and they had a full view of him. He was a rather bony gentleman, with a grey goatce beard, enormous horn-rimmed spectacles, and a sharp nose like a knife-blade. His American accent was not, of course, visible; but he was obviously a traveller from the other side of the Atlantic. Indeed, it was easily to be seen that he was an American commercial traveller. He stared into the carriage as he passed, and went on his

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way, leaving a reek of strong cigar smoke behind him which made Arthur Augustus cough.

"What do you think, you fellows?" asked the swell of St. Jim's. "You saw him stare into the cawwiage. Looks wathah suspicious, what?"

"It's a cert!" said Lowther. "Get after him, Gussy, and give that beard of his a tug. If it comes off, that's proof that he's in disguise."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gussy!" roared Tom Merry, as the swell of St. Jim's turned to pursue the unsuspecting commercial traveller.

"Eh?"

"Stop, you ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Let him rip," said Monty. "If that chap's Redway in disguise Gussy will show him up. If he's not, his face will be worth watching when Gussy yanks at his beard."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry seized Arthur Augustus by the arm and dragged him into the carriage.

"Shut up, Monty, you ass! Gussy, old man, sit down. You'll get run in if you start pulling people's beards, you footling ass! Monty's pulling your leg, you frabjous fathead!"

"Wats! Pewwaps, howevah, it would be wathah dwastic," said Arthur Augustus. "If his beard did not come off, the posish would be a little disconcertin'."

"Go hon!" said Lowther.

"I shall keep an eye on him, howevah," said the swell of St. Jim's, as he sat down. "I wegard him with suspicion. He speaks in a howwid Amewican accent and he smokes wotten cigahs. You fellows can cackle, but I am not goin' to let old Wildwake be kidnapped, you know."

And Arthur Augustus opened his "Times" again and proceeded to read the "Magnet" till the train ran into Liverpool.

CHAPTER 6.

At Sea!

"ONCE more upon the watahs!"

"Eh?"

"Once more upon the watahs, yet once more,
And the waves bound beneath me, like a steed
That knows its widah!"

Arthur Augustus was quoting Byron as the St. Jim's juniors walked on the deck of the Arcadia, the giant liner which was to bear them and some hundreds of other passengers to Quebec.

"I don't seem to see the bounding waves," remarked Monty Lowther, glancing over the Alexandra Dock, which certainly was not in a bounding mood. "Looks like a dead calm to me."

"You are an unpoeitical ass, Lowthah. I was quotin' poetw!" said Arthur Augustus witheringly. "By the way, Blake—"

"Hallo?"

"You are quite suah about the baggage?"

"Quite."

"This steward will show you to your state-rooms, my boys," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "I hope you will have a very pleasant voyage."

"Thank you, sir! We're going to enjoy it!" said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose it is all wight about the baggage, sir?"

"You will find your baggage in your rooms," said Mr. Railton. "I think I must leave you now. All arrangements are made, and in a week from now you will be in Canada. Good-bye, my boys!"

The St. Jim's Housemaster shook hands all round with the juniors, and they watched him ashore. Then they followed the polite steward to their rooms.

The great steamer was a scene now of hurry and bustle. Passengers crowded the side to wave their hands and call farewells to their friends. Tom Merry & Co. had been to sea before more than once, but it was a new experience to all the party, excepting Wildrake, to be starting on a voyage across the wide Atlantic to the St. Lawrence. In the excitement of starting Arthur Augustus forgot

his baggage—not that it would of been of much use remembering it, as it had already been delivered at Eastwood House.

The Arcadia glided out into the estuary of the Mersey, and Tom Merry & Co. on the promenade deck, looked about them with keenly interested eyes.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, suddenly catching Tom Merry by the arm.

"Eh? What's up?" exclaimed the captain of the Shell.

"That wottah!"

"Eh? Which?"

"That wascal who is shadowin' us!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!"

It was the American commercial traveller, whom the juniors had not seen since they had noticed him in the corridor of the train.

He was strolling on the promenade deck with a cigar

The American disappeared in the crowd, D'Arcy's eyeglass gleaming after him till he vanished.

"I guess the galoot's just an American drummer Gussy," said Wildrake, with a smile.

"Imposs, deah boy! He has not the slightest appearance of a musician," said D'Arcy. "Certainly he had no dwum with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Canadian junior.

"Weally, Wildwake—"

"A commercial traveller is called a drummer over the pond," explained Wildrake.

"Bai Jove! I weally do not see why a commercial twavellah should be called a dwummah, deah boy."

"There's Brighton," remarked Blake.

"Bwighton?"

"Yes, there—on the left."

"Wats! Bwighton is at the othah end of England, Blake. Your geogwaphy is wathah out, deah boy."

"New Brighton, fathead!"



CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE.

SHOPPING WITH GUSSY!

"I TWUST you'll come with me, deah boys?
The aftahnoon is toppin';
An' one of life's most perfect joys
Is that of goin' shoppin'!
A dozen times a term, you know,
My wardwobe needs wenewin':
So say the word, an' off we'll go—
Let us be up an' doin'!"

Blake gives a grunt, and Dig a groan,
And there's a snort from Herries;
"Why don't you shop by telephone?"
Is the remark of Merry's.
But Gussy has his own sweet will,
Meekly they make submission;
And as they all have time to kill,
They join his expedition.

When Gussy reaches Wayland Town
He cuts peculiar capers;
At first he enters, with a frown,
The little local draper's.
He chooses shirts and socks and ties
Slowly, and free from flurry;
His schoolmates, heaving weary sighs,
Beseech the swell to hurry!

Then to the hatter's he'll repair
With his small band of shoppers;
And he becomes a fixture there,
Trying on countless toppers
He buys a dozen of the best,
Assistants rush round busily:
He gives them not a moment's rest,
And soon their heads swim dizzily!

Another weary hour is spent
Inside the tailor's quarters:
Till Gussy's down to his last cent,
And all his tired supporters
Stagger beneath a mighty load
Of boxes, parcels, cases;
They trudge along the dusty road
With hot, perspiring faces!

Shopping with Gussy is a snare,
And likewise a delusion;
We'd rather linger in our lair,
Enjoying sweet seclusion.
Should Gussy tell us, by-and-by,
His wardrobe wants renewing,
We'll chant in chorus the reply:
"Dear man, there's nothing doing!"



in his mouth, and he glanced at the juniors as he passed them.

It was quite a casual glance; but D'Arcy's glance in return was not casual. His eye gleamed with suspicion behind his eyeglass.

"He is on the steamah!"

"Probably he is going to America!" suggested Tom Merry, not at all surprised or alarmed by the encounter.

"He is doggin' us, deah boy."

"No law against an American commercial going home by the Canadian route, is there?" asked Blake.

"I wegard that question as fwivolous, Blake! The man was watchin' us in the twain, and now he is on the same steamah. I wegard that as vewy suspicious."

"But there must be dozens of people who came up by that train to take this steamer," said Tom, laughing.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus was evidently not to be argued out of his suspicion.

"Bai Jove! Is that place called New Bwighton?"

"Yes, ass; and this river is called the Mersey."

"I am quite awah that this wivah is the Mersey, Blake. I did not suppose that it was the Thames," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"And that place behind us is called Liverpool—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And we're going out into the Irish Sea—so-called because it isn't Irish," went on Blake. "Later on we shall see the Calf."

"We are not likely to see a calf at sea, Blake."

"The Calf of Man, fathead!"

"What man, deah boy?"

"And this chap has learned geography at St. Jim's!" said Blake. "Haven't you ever heard of the Isle of Man, fathead?"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' down now to see about my

luggage. I saw only the cabin trunk and a couple of bags in my cabin. Do you know where the rest was put, Blake?"

"Certainly."

"Where?"

"On the train home."

"What?" roared Arthur Augustus.

"I looked after it," said Blake reassuringly. "I looked after it quite carefully while the porter was wheeling it away on a trolley."

Arthur Augustus' noble face was a study.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"You—you—you uttah ass!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "Do you weally mean to say that my baggage is left behind?"

"You've got as much as we have, old bean," said Blake. "There wasn't room in the steamer for the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hatbox—"

"Safe at Eastwood House by this time."

"My toppahs—"

"Safe as houses, unless young Wally's dog Pongo gets at them while you're in the wild and woolly West!"

"You fwabjous ass!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "I have not a single toppah in that cabin trunk!"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Mean to say that you're actually starting for the backwoods without a silk hat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And my evenin' clothes!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "And—and—you frightful wottah, Blake! You undah-took to look aftah the baggage."

"I did look after it," assured Blake. "I looked after it till it was out of sight. Fellow couldn't do more."

"I wefuse to listen to your wotten jokes!" roared Arthur Augustus. "What is to be done now? I cannot pwoceed without my baggage!"

"Looks like a case of Hobson's choice!" grinned Lowther. "Still, you can ask the captain to turn back."

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose that is the only thing to be done, in the circs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think the captain would turn back to Liverpool if I asked him, Tom Mewwy?"

"It's a bit doubtful," said Tom, laughing. "The odds are that he wouldn't. Long odds."

"I wegard you as a wuffian, Blake!"

"Thanks!"

"And a beast!"

"Go it!"

"And a howwid wottah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It is impossible for me to pwoceed without my baggage. Pway come on the bwidge with me and explain mattahs to the captain, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going down for a feed," yawned Blake. "You fellows coming?"

"Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry & Co. left the promenade deck. Arthur Augustus did not accompany them. But he joined them about ten minutes later, with a red face and a frowning brow. Evidently the commander of the *Arcadia* had declined to turn back to Liverpool for the missing baggage.

CHAPTER 7.

Across the Atlantic!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wore a frown the following day.

And the day after he was still frowning.

The beautiful silk hats, the handsome neckties, the innumerable changes of raiment, which he had so carefully packed in readiness for this journey, were never to be unpacked until he returned from Canada. The natives of British Columbia were destined never to know what the best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's looked like in all his glory. It was a heavy blow.

But on the third day Arthur Augustus recovered his

usual smiling good humour. For two days he mourned like Rachel of old for that which was lost, and could not be comforted. After that he made up his noble mind to it, and smiled again.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that another matter—not equally important, but still important in its way—occupied the attention of the swell of St. Jim's.

That was the presence of the American "drummer" on board the *Arcadia*.

Arthur Augustus' suspicions never slept. Upon his shoulders, according to his own view, lay the responsibility of landing Kit Wildrake safe at the Boot Leg Ranch, and he was taking no risks. To Tom Merry & Co. the American drummer was an American drummer, merely that and nothing more. They saw nothing suspicious in the circumstance that he had taken the same train to Liverpool, and was taking the same boat to America. Some hundreds of other people had done likewise. But Arthur Augustus was a fellow of tact and judgment, and he knew better.

By inquiry from the steward he had learned that the American gentleman was named Hiram K. Boker.

He apprised Tom Merry & Co. of that circumstance as soon as he discovered it.

"Well?" said Tom.

"I pwesume that you can see that that is an assumed name, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Not quite."

"Weally, deah boy! How could a man possibly be named Hiwam K. Boker?" said D'Arcy. "It is not a name at all—only a disagweeable sound."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I feel suah that his beard is assumed, as well as his name," said Arthur Augustus. "The question awises, how to put it to the test."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

"What do you think, Wildwake?"

"I guess I think you'd better let the galoot's beard alone," chuckled Wildrake. "He doesn't look a very good-tempered man, and he might get mad with you if you messed about with his beard."

"But if he is shown up, deah boy, the captain will put him in irons for the west of the voyage. He is bound to place a kidnappah undah awwest."

"But he isn't the pesky kidnapper, old scout."

"You are wathah an ass, Wildwake. It is pwetty plain to me that he is the kidnappah in disguise."

"Oh dear!" said Wildrake.

"Howevah, I shall think the mattah ovah befoah I pwoceed to extwemes," said Arthur Augustus.

While thinking the matter over Arthur Augustus kept a very watchful eye—and eyeglass—upon Hiram K. Boker.

That gentleman did not seem to observe him.

But—an extremely suspicious circumstance to D'Arcy's mind—he made the acquaintance of Kit Wildrake and talked to him many times on deck.

The other fellows, not being fellows of tact and judgment, failed to see anything suspicious even in that. As the man was an American, it seemed natural to them that he should like a chat with a fellow whose home was on the great Western continent, though in a more desirable part of it.

Day followed day, and Gussy's deep suspicions deepened and intensified.

That the man was a spy, that he had followed the juniors to Liverpool, taken the same steamer to keep them under observation, and fastened on to Wildrake specially because Wildrake was the destined victim, seemed clear as the sun at noonday to Arthur Augustus.

He wondered that his chums were too obtuse to see all this as clearly as he did.

Still, he hesitated to take the drastic measure of jerking at the supposed false beard. Had it come off in his hand, revealing the clean-shaven face of Reuben Redway, all would have been well. But in spite of his conviction on the subject, Gussy had a lingering doubt that it might not come off. It was unlikely that he was making a mistake—very unlikely. But if he was—

The great steamer ploughed on day after day over a summer sea. It was when they were only one more day distant from the American continent that D'Arcy finally made up his mind. As soon as the liner entered the St. Lawrence river, as soon as they touched Quebec, the

gunman would be in touch with his confederates, and dire danger would threaten the Canadian junior. The man had to be shown up and secured before that. Arthur Augustus' mind was at last made up.

"I'm twyin' it on to-day, Blake," he announced.

"Trying on what?" yawned Blake. "You haven't been able to buy a new silk hat on the steamer, have you?"

"I am not speakin' of twyin' on a hat, Blake."

"What is it, then—a necktie?"

"It is not a necktie, Blake. I am twyin' on a dodge to show up that disguised kidnappah."

Blake yawned portentously.

"On reflection, I have decided not to walk up to him on the deck and jerk his beard off," said Arthur Augustus. "It would cweate a vewy awkward situation if it turned out that he was not the man aftah all."

"It would!" chuckled Blake. "No doubt about that at all. It would!"

"But there are othah ways," said Arthur Augustus.

"I want you to give me a push, deah boy."

"Eh?"

"I want you to give me a vewy wuff push, and push me wight ovah—"

"Right-ho, old bean!"

Blake reached out, and the swell of St. Jim's sat suddenly on the deck with a gasp.

"That all right?" asked Blake.

"Yawwooh! You uttah ass!"

"What's the matter?"

"You fwabjous chump!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

He scrambled to his feet.

"You frightful ass! I do not weally believe you misundahstood me!" he gasped. "I mean, I want you to give me a push—"

"Well, I gave you a push! Do you want me to give you another?"

"Keep off, you howlin' ass! I want you to give me a push when I am passin' that wottah's deck-chair on the promenade deck. Then I shall fall on him, as if it were an accident—"

"Oh!" ejaculated Blake.

"And catch at him to save myself," explained D'Arcy. "Catchin' at him, I shall catch at his beard, see?"

"Phew!"

"If it comes off in my hand you fellows will collah him at once. If not, I shall apologise for the accident. I wegard that as wathah diplomatic."

Blake gazed at his chum.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You regard that as rather diplomatic, do you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You don't regard it as rather idiotic?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You don't regard it as absolutely potty?"

"Look here, you cheekay ass—"

"Cut it out, Gussy," said Blake, shaking his head. "If you can't see it yourself, take a pal's word for it that it's a fatheaded stunt. Drop it."

"If you wefuse to help me, Blake—"

"Dear man, I refuse to help you tug a harmless American by the whiskers," chuckled Blake. "Why, the merchant will be as mad as a hatter. He may kick you across the deck!"

"I should wefuse to be kicked across the deck."

"But perhaps his boot mightn't take a refusal!" grinned Blake. "Cut it out, Gussy."

And Blake walked away to save further argument. Arthur Augustus gazed after him, his very eyeglass gleaming with wrath and scorn.

"Bai Jove! I should nevah have expected Blake to let down a pal!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wish Hewwies or Dig was heah. Howevah, I will ask one of those Shell Boundahs."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled along the sunny deck of the Arcadia, looking for the Terrible Three.

CHAPTER 8.

The Genuine Article!

"LOWTHAH, deah boy."

"Adsum!" said Lowther cheerily.

Perhaps it was fortunate for Arthur Augustus, determined as he was to carry out his remarkable project, that he came on Monty Lowther alone. Manners was taking photographs of some lady passengers, and was too busy to be interrupted, Tom Merry and Wildrake were playing chess in the saloon, and Blake had already declined to have a hand in unmasking the supposed disguised kidnapper. For effecting his purpose it was really fortunate that Gussy found Monty Lowther—and found him unoccupied. Certainly, of all the party, the humorist of the Shell was the only fellow who would have been likely to lend his aid.

And Lowther was willing.

Not that he had the slightest faith in Gussy's theory that the American drummer was the gunman in disguise. Lowther would just as soon have believed that the captain of the Arcadia was the gunman in disguise. He did not suppose that Reuben Redway was anywhere within five hundred miles of the Atlantic liner.

But if Gussy was prepared to increase the gaiety of existence by tugging at the goatee beard of an American commercial traveller, Monty was not the fellow to stop him.

The effect upon Hiram K. Boker could not fail to be startling, and Monty did not see how it could fail to be entertaining.

So he listened with great gravity while the swell of the Fourth unfolded his diplomatic scheme.

"That's the ideah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, when he had finished. "Wathah diplomatic, what?"

"Oh, no end!" gasped Lowther.

"You would hardly have thought of such a wheeze, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus complacently.

"Not in a month of Sundays," admitted Lowther.

"For some weason Blake wefuses to lend me his assistance," said D'Arcy. "I twust you will back me up, Lowthah."

"I'm your mutton, with the wool on," said Monty. "I'm sure pronto, as they say in the American language."

"Come on, then, deah boy. That

disguised scoundwel is sittin' on a deck-chair now, smokin' one of his evil-smellin' cigars," said Arthur Augustus. "We walk past him, you know, conversin' about somethin', and then you stagгах against me as if your foot had slipped, you know, and push me ovah wight on him."

"Oh dear!" gurgled Lowther.

"Easy as fallin' off a form, deah boy."

"And—and then?" gasped Lowther. "What after that?"

"Then the captain will put him in irons, deah boy, and hand him ovah to the authowities when we weach Quebec."

"Oh, my hat! I mean, all serene, Gussy! Let's take a stroll on the prom and wake up the fellow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Monty Lowther suppressed his emotions with difficulty as he walked along with the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus was quite serious. It was a serious occasion, from Gussy's point of view.

Even Lowther was willing to admit that the occasion would become serious as soon as D'Arcy had bumped over on the American and pulled his beard. Something was bound to happen then.

It was probable that it would be something exciting.

There were a good many people strolling on the promenade in the fine summer's afternoon, and a good many more seated about in deck-chairs. Among the latter was Hiram K. Boker.

Mr. Boker, with his hat tilted on the back of his head, his long, bony legs stretched out, and a cigar



between his teeth, looked lazy and comfortable and at peace with the world; and so far from watching the St. Jim's party, he did not even observe D'Arcy and Lowther approaching.

His cigar was burning short, and a long ash had formed on it, but there was still a cent's worth of cigar left, so Mr. Boker was smoking it very carefully to the bitter end, with the intention of extracting from it the utmost of his money's worth. All his attention was concentrated on the stub of cigar, and he was watching for the psychological moment when the final cent of value should have been extracted from it and he would have to discard the fragment or burn his mouth. Naturally he had no attention to bestow on two strolling schoolboys.

"Weady, deah boy!" breathed D'Arcy.

"As that Indian chap at Greyfriars would say, the readyfulness is terrific," said Lowther solemnly.

"You pwetend to slip, you know——"

"I know——"

"And push me wight oval on him——"

"Just that!"

"If it turns out to be a mistake——"

"If!" murmured Monty.

"In that case, I shall apologise; and, of course, an apology is quite sufficient between gentlemen. Now, weady!"

The two juniors reached the spot where Mr. Hiram K. Boker sat, and passed in front of him.

Lowther slipped on the deck, as per programme, and fell against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He fell emphatically.

Arthur Augustus went spinning. He spun right at Hiram K. Boker and crashed on him headlong.

"Ow!" gasped Gussy.

He clutched wildly at Mr. Boker to save himself, forgetting that he was playing a part. He clutched the Transatlantic gentleman round the neck, dragging him over with his chair.

There was a fiendish yell from Mr. Boker.

He had smoked that cigar to the finish, not wisely but too well. Just as D'Arcy fell on him the psychological moment had arrived, when Mr. Boker had to eject what remained of the cigar or burn his mouth.

But he did not eject it.

As he went sprawling under the sprawling Gussy his mouth opened wide, and the cigar-end naturally fell into it.

A burning cigar-end is very hot when taken internally.

Hiram K. Boker found it so. He had reason to repent that he had extracted the last cent's worth of value from that cigar.

He rolled on the deck, yelling wildly, as the cigar burnt the interior of his extensive Transatlantic mouth.

"Yaroooooh! Yooop! Gee-whiz! Holy smoke! Yooopop!"

D'Arcy sprawled on him.

Mr. Boker hurled him off and sat up, spitting out the remainder of the cigar in frantic haste.

For the moment he did not heed the junior who had floored him, so occupied was he with the hot end of the cigar. But if he had forgotten D'Arcy, D'Arcy had not forgotten him. The swell of St. Jim's reached for his scrubby, straggly beard, gripped it, and tugged.

Mr. Boker had yelled when the cigar burnt his mouth. But the yell he gave as Gussy tugged at his beard was still more formidable.

D'Arcy did not leave anything to chance; he put his beef into that tug, determined that the beard should come off if it was a false one.

Had it been an artificial adornment, undoubtedly it would have come off in that tremendous tug.

As it happened to be growing on Hiram K. Boker's chin, however, it did not come off, but Mr. Boker felt as if his chin was coming off.

His yell was really alarming.

"Yaroooooooooop!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Yurrrrggggh! Gurrrrrrg!" spluttered Mr. Boker wildly.

He clutched at Arthur Augustus.

That cheerful youth released the beard; even upon Gussy's powerful brain it had dawned that it was a

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genuine beard, growing on Mr. Boker's bony chin, and no disguise at all.

Arthur Augustus had intended to apologise in case of a mistake, and he was convinced that an apology would set any matter right from one gentleman to another. But perhaps Hiram K. Boker was not a gentleman. At all events, he gave Gussy no time to set the matter right by an apology. His bony fists thrashed at the swell of St. Jim's, and Arthur



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fled for his life, with the enraged Transatlantic gentleman in furious pursuit. Mr. Boker's long, bony legs covered the deck at a great rate. He let out a boot, close behind the sided gink!" hooted Mr. Boker. "Are you

Augustus, instead of apologising, roared with anguish.

"Ow! Wow! Yawoooo! Keep off!"

"You pesky young gink!" raved Mr. Boker.

Thump, thump, thump!

"Bai Jove! Ow—whoop——"

Arthur Augustus tore himself away.

He jumped clear of Mr. Boker, panting. The American gentleman rushed at him again.

Arthur Augustus fled.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Monty Lowther helplessly. "Oh, my only summer bonnet! Oh dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus fled for his life, with the enraged Transatlantic gentleman in furious pursuit. Mr. Boker's long, bony legs covered the deck at a great

rate. He let out a boot, close behind the fleeing junior, and Arthur Augustus gave a wild yell. He let out the boot again, and Arthur Augustus pitched forward, roaring.

"You slabsided gink!" hooted Mr. Boker. "Are you plumb loco, or what? Take that—and that—and that—"

"Yoooop!"

Arthur Augustus rushed wildly for the cabin stairs.



A gentleman in furious pursuit. Mr. Boker's long, bony legs and the swell of St. Jim's gave a wild yell. "You slabsided gink, or what? Take that!" (See Chapter 8.)

Mr. Boker's boot helped him down, and he landed in a heap.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus picked himself up and fled again, and did not stop till he had locked himself in his state-room.

Even then Hiram K. Boker prowled outside the door for a good ten minutes, breathing blood-curdling threats.

Arthur Augustus collapsed on his bunk breathlessly.

"Oh deah!" he gasped. "Oh cwumbs! What a how-wid mistake for a fellow to make! Oh cwickey!"

"Let me in!" raved Hiram K. Boker. "I guess I'm going to skin you alive, you pesky gink!"

"Oh deah!"

"You slabsided jay!"

"Pway go away!" said Arthur Augustus faintly.

"You—you—you—" spluttered Hiram K. Boker. "I guess I'll fit you out for a funeral—some!"

"Pway go away! I owe you an apology," gasped Arthur Augustus, "but at the same time your accent is vewy offensive to my ears! Pway wetire!"

Thump, thump, thump!

Fortunately, the door held, and Hiram K. Boker retired at last, leaving Arthur Augustus in a state of breathless dismay and consternation. About ten minutes later there was a tap at the door.

"Go away!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Gussy, old bean—"

"Oh, is it you, Tom Mewwy?"

Arthur Augustus opened the door. He jammed his eye-glass into his eye and blinked dolorously at Tom. The other St. Jim's fellows were there, and they were roaring.

"You've done it now, Gussy, I guess!" gasped Wildrake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I seem to have made a mistake!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That howwid man's beard is a weal one—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"It is not a laughin' mattah, deah boys, and I fail to see any weason for this wibald mewwiment. I—I—I do not think that that fellow is the kidnappah in disguise, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Tom Merry & Co.

"It's all serene, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, wiping his eyes. "You can come on deck. We've explained to Boker. I mentioned to him that you're not quite right in the head—"

"What?" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"And he's quite sympathetic now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, you—you—you—"

Words failed the swell of St. Jim's. He grabbed up a cushion and hurled himself at his comrades, and drove them from the state-room, still howling like hyenas.

CHAPTER 9.

Across Canada!

"THE St. Lawrence!" said Tom Merry. Canada at last!

The Arcadia was gliding into the mighty river. Belle Isle had been passed, and the steamer threaded the strait of Belle Isle, between Newfoundland and the mainland of Labrador. The juniors had watched the long island of Anticosti, which cuts the Gulf of St. Lawrence in two, as the steamer glided by; and then, ahead of them, lay the great river, upon which they were yet to steam for many a mile.

Kit Wildrake's sunburnt face was very bright.

He liked the old country, and he liked St. Jim's; but Canada was his homeland, and his eyes grew brighter as he looked on the familiar shores.

"Neahly home now, old chap," remarked Arthur Augustus.

Wildrake laughed.

"Nearly," he agreed. "Only about three thousand miles more."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Canada is the country of tremendous distances," said Tom Merry. "How wide is this giddy river, Wildrake?"

"Thirty-two miles, I guess."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lowther. "It beats the Rhyl at St. Jim's."

"Eighty miles up the river it's thirty miles wide," said Wildrake, with a smile.

"Some river!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're sticking to the steamer for three hundred miles yet," said Wildrake. "We shall stop at Quebec, but we shall go on as far as Montreal in the steamer. After that, the train."

"For a million miles or so?" asked Lowther.

"Nope! Only about three thousand."

"A mere step, for Canada!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

It was an exciting experience to the St. Jim's juniors. Wildrake had made the trip more than once, but all was new and strange to Tom Merry & Co.

The juniors had no more than a glance at Quebec; but at Montreal they made a stay to rest and see the sights, and Wildrake showed them about the city. Then the Canadian Pacific Railway bore them on to Ottawa, the capital city of the Dominion of Canada.

Then, by day and night the great cars hummed across the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta.

The juniors caught their breath at the first sight of the Rocky Mountains.

"Bai Jove! The Wockies, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus.

Hour after hour Tom Merry & Co. watched the great mountains of the West, as the rushing cars bore them nearer and nearer. Beyond the great mountain barrier lay the smiling land of British Columbia, and the home of Kit Wildrake.

From Calgary the railroad ran through the green foothills of the Rockies, ever higher and higher.

Then came the Kicking Horse Pass, over the Rocky Mountains, and then the way descended, more and more, from the high altitudes, and Wildrake told his comrades that they were in British Columbia.

"This is Bwitsch Columbia, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, adjusting his eyeglass for a careful survey of "God's Own Country."

"Yep!"

"And where's the wanch?"

Wildrake chuckled.

"We haven't done with distances yet, Gussy. My popper's ranch is a good many hundred miles from here."

"Oh, bai Jove! I am beginnin' to think that Canadah is like the little bwok, you know, and goes on for evah."

At Kamloops, on the Thompson River, Tom Merry & Co. left the Canadian Pacific cars. For another day a branch railroad carried them on to the North-West.

The juniors smiled as they noted the growing eagerness in Kit Wildrake's sunburnt face. He was getting nearer and nearer to home. In England a fellow would not have considered himself near home, with a couple of hundred miles to go to reach it. But to Wildrake that distance was only the last lap of a journey.

"Rainbow!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Bai Jove! I fail to see it, Wildwake!" said Arthur Augustus, adjusting his eyeglass very carefully and staring from the railroad car.

"Gettin' blind, old scout?"

"I twust not, Wildwake," said D'Arcy. "But I uttably fail to see any sign of a wainbow."

Wildrake chuckled, and pointed towards a collection of lumber buildings up the line, where, in the glow of the rich sunset, the juniors could see the branch station, where the railroad, in that direction, terminated.

D'Arcy gazed very carefully at the little western town.

"I still fail to see the wainbow, Wildwake."

"That's the name of the terminus town," explained Wildrake.

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus understood at last.

The lumber town, on the Rainbow River, was the end of the railroad on the branch line. Beyond that other means of transit had to be used to reach the Boot Leg Ranch, many a long mile farther on in the direction of the foothills of the Coast Range.

"So that town is named Wainbow, is it?" said Arthur Augustus. "A vewy poetical name, Wildwake. I have noticed that the names of places in Canadah are genevally, more poetical or euphonious than those in the United States, which is a sign of a vewy supewiah wace. If that town were in the Amewican country, it would pwobably be named Jinksville or Mugginsville or somethin'. Can you see the wanch fwom there, Wildwake?"

"Not quite. But Boot Leg is only fifty miles on."

"A mere nothin' in Canadah," said Arthur Augustus. "I should not weally be surprised to heah that a Canadian chap goes out for a twot of fifty miles or so befoah bwekkah in the mornin'. What's the name of that wivah, deah boy?"

"The Rainbow River. We shall see it again by the ranch," said Wildrake. "Pine Tree Patch is in a loop of the Rainbow River. It runs for dozens of miles by my father's land."

"Then we shall pwobably get some canoein'?"

"Lots."

"Shootin' the wapids, and so on?"

"Sure."

"Bai Jove, you know, it was a wippin' ideah to come out heah with old Wildwake!" said Arthur Augustus. "We're goin' to have no end of a time. I dare say I shall get a chance at a gwizzly beah. Are there any gwizzly beahs left in this countwy, Wildwake?"

"Plenty in the hills and the timber," said Wildrake. "But you'd better not let a grizzly get a chance at you, Gussy."

"I have been thinkin' of takin' a skin home for a wug in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's, old bean," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall not lose an opportunity of shootin' a gwizzly."

"Better stick to shooting the rapids," chuckled Blake. "They don't bite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall be at the ranch to-morrow," said Wildrake, with glistening eyes.

"Good!" said Manners. "Lucky I brought my camera with me. It's my first chance of snapping a Wild-West ranch."

"To-morrow," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "One more day, then, and my wesponsibility will be at an end."

"Your whatter?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"My wesponsibility," said Arthur Augustus. "To-morrow I shall hand Wildwake ovah safe and sound to his patah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"You've seen me safe through, Gussy, old scout," said the Canadian junior gravely.

"Yaas, wathah."

Tom Merry & Co. chortled.

"We've seen nothin' of Wube Wedway all the journey," said Arthur Augustus. "If the wascal has been watchin' us, he has wecognised that he had no chance of gettin' hold of Wildwake. Fortunately, I have been on guard."

"No suspicious characters since we left the steamer," assented Monty Lowther. "Rather lucky, when you come to think of it. Something might have happened to Gussy if he had started tugging at people's whiskers on the Canadian Pacific."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Here we are!" exclaimed Wildrake, as the train rattled and banged into the depot at Rainbow. "We're done with the railroad now. Come on, you fellows."

And Tom Merry and Co. left the train with cheery faces.

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CHAPTER 10.

The Lumber Town!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked about them with the keenest interest as they left the railroad depot and entered the rugged street of Rainbow. It was their first experience of a Western "lumber" town.

Rainbow was very different from the cities and towns they had seen in Eastern Canada. At Montreal they could have fancied themselves in London. Rainbow was a lumber town on the edge of the prairie, with perhaps five hundred inhabitants, owing its existence to the fact that the branch railroad terminated there. A herd of steers was being driven along the main street by a tall, powerful cattleman, who cracked a long stock-whip with a series of reports like pistol-shots. A Red Indian, draped in a ragged blanket, passed the juniors, unaware of the deep interest he excited in the fellows fresh from the Old Country. Three or four dark-skinned half-breeds were quarrelling at a corner of the street, and one of them drew a knife and flourished it in the air to give point to his arguments.

The Rainbow Hotel, at which the St. Jim's party were to stay for that night, was a building entirely of wood, and very different indeed from the hotel they had stayed at in Montreal. In the more thickly settled parts of British Columbia, along the track of the Canadian Pacific, in Vancouver and New Westminster, they could have found all the gadgets of civilisation. But they were in the stock-raising country now and their surroundings were largely as they had come from Nature's hand.

A fat, good-tempered-looking French-Canadian kept the hotel, and he greeted the party hospitably. Wildrake's first step was to the telephone. Arthur Augustus quite jumped when he learned that the Boot Leg Ranch was on the telephone. That did not seem quite in keeping with the Wild-Western conditions he had imagined.

"The wanch is weally on the phone, Wildwake?" he asked in astonishment.

Wildrake grinned.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Extwaordinawy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Why, there are no end of farms in England, within a mile of a telephone exchange, who are not on the phone!"

"Canada is rather ahead of the Old Country in that line," said Wildrake. "There are little cabins and tiny villages here with the phone, miles and miles from everywhere. You, sec, we need it with our distances. In England you can't step out of one town without bumping into another, but out here you often can't see the smoke of your neighbour's chimney from your windows. There are a few things Canada can teach you."

"I have no doubt of it, deah boy. Weally, it would be a good ideah to have a few Canadian membahs in the House of Commons at home, to wake things up a little."

"Quite," said Wildrake, laughing. "And we ought to have a few members from the Old Country in our Legislature, to sit on things generally and prevent us from going ahead too fast."

"Bai Jove!"

Wildrake went to the telephone and rang up the Boot Leg Ranch. He talked with his father for a few minutes and then rejoined his comrades, and they sat down at a long trestle table in a wooden dining-room to a substantial supper.

"I guess we'd better get to bed early," Wildrake remarked. "We turn out to take the hack at eight in the morning. The hack goes as far as Lone Pine."

"Bai Jove! Is that a town?"

"A camp," said Wildrake. "From Lone Pine we get on by horseflesh. Some of the galoots from the ranch will be there to meet us."

"Weal cowboys?"

"Quite real," grinned Wildrake.

"Good!"

"You fellows can ride, of course?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, we can ride all right," he said. "I don't know about handling any of your buck-jumpers, though."

"I've asked popper to send horses; but, if you like, I'll phone again for the car."

"No fear—let's ride!"

"The cah," repeated Arthur Augustus. "You don't mean to say that they have motah-cahs on Wild West wanches, deah boy?"

"Sure."

"Bai Jove! A wanch does not seem quite so womantic, you know, with telephones and motah-cahs."

"A rancher can't live on romance," remarked Wildrake. "We raise cattle on the Boot Leg. There are fruit farms, and so on, in this section. Up in the foothills there are mining camps. There's a good deal of lumber work on the Rainbow. We're a long way off the beaten track; but you'll find a good many cars, and nearly everybody on the telephone. Canada has changed a bit since Hendrik Hudson sailed the sea, you know. My father's chauffeur is a Red Indian."

"Bai Jove!"

"Any jolly old Indians on the warpath?" asked Blake.

"Fraid not. The Indians you come across will try to sell you strings of beads and things. All the same, there are plenty of Redskins and breeds whom it wouldn't be safe to meet on a lonely trail. If we get a run up into the foothills you will see things a bit more like the films, which, I suppose, is what Gussy is thinking of. But round about the Boot Leg Ranch you'll find an awful lot of law and order."

"Then we're not likely to have a bwush with the Wedskins," said Arthur Augustus rather regretfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wildrake. "No, not quite. You've come along about half a century too late for that."

After supper the St. Jim's juniors strolled out to look at the town in the glorious sunset. Arthur Augustus was a little puzzled to see that many spaces along Main Street were enclosed, but not built; while at greater distances from the railroad depot and the stores there were many buildings.

"This awwangement does not seem to me vewy good, if you will excuse my sayin' so, Wildwake," he remarked thoughtfully. "If I were plannin' this town I should put a lot of these buildin's in more convenient places."

Wildrake laughed.

"There's as much human nature in Canada as in Europe," he answered.

"I don't see—"

"Those unbuilt lots have been taken up by speculators, who are holding them for a rise in the price of land," explained Wildrake. "A man who comes along to open a store in Rainbow can give a fancy price for a lot near the depot, or he can go farther out to a more inconvenient place. As soon as a town goes up here, the land-speculator gets his clutches on the best lots and holds them off the market."

"I wegard that as unpatwiotic."

"Horrid!" agreed Wildrake. "But I think I've seen the same game going on in England. Not to the same extent, of course; in England a new town doesn't go up in a week. But I've heard of a house shortage in England, and I've seen a thumping lot of vacant houses with fancy prices put to them."

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose human nature is much the same all ovah the world," agreed Arthur Augustus. "I do not appwove of it, howevah."

"And still it goes on!" murmured Monty Lowther, and the juniors chuckled.

As the sun sank behind the Coast Range, the juniors returned to the lumber hotel to bed. They slept soundly that night, tired from their journey, but bright and early in the morning they turned out to take the two-horse hack that ran from Rainbow to Lone Pine.

CHAPTER 11.

Held Up!

BAI JOVE! Is that a wevolvah?"

"Just that, I guess."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the gleaming weapon in the hand of Kit Wildrake. The Canadian junior was

examining it carefully and loading it, after breakfast, before going out to the hack.

Gussy felt rather a thrill. The telephones and motor-cars had disappointed him a little, but the sight of a revolver recalled his mental picture of the Wild and Woolly West.

"You know how to handle that thing, Wildwake?" he asked.

"Just a few!" grinned Wildrake.

"But what is it for?" asked Gussy. "I suppose there are no wobbahs heah—we are not likely to be held up on the twail, what?"

"Not likely, I guess, but a galoot can't be too careful," said Wildrake. "You see, we're in the west now, and the hack runs for twenty miles out of sight of anything in the shape of a house. If Rube Redway is still thinking of me, he may be looking for us on the trail."

"Gwest Scott!"

"I suppose it's possible," said Tom Merry. "That rotter must have come back to this country, I suppose."

"Sure."

"And if he's still after you——"

"He couldn't get at me on the Canadian Pacific, of course," said Wildrake. "But we're off the railroad now. He's got a last chance, if he looks for me between Rainbow and Lone Pine. I guess I'm not taking chances."

"And you'd have the nerve to pull trigger on him?" said Manners.

"You bet, if he came cavorting round."

"Pewwaps you had bettah hand me the wevolvah, Wildwake," suggested Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Perhaps not!" grinned Wildrake.

"No jolly fear!" said Blake emphatically. "I'm willing to take my chance of Rube Redway, but I'm not willing to take my chance of travelling along with Gussy if he's got firearms on him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You really think it's possible that the hack may be held up on the trail, Wildrake?" asked Tom.

"Quite possible."

Wildrake looked a little dubiously at his companions.

"If you fellows——" he began.

"Oh, we're not scared!" said Tom, laughing.

"Wathah not!"

"Nope! But after all you're here on a holiday, and I've no right to drag you into danger," said the Canadian junior. "We could hire a wagon here to take you on, while I go in the hack."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"I pwesume you do not mean to insult your fwiends, Wildwake," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner. "Certainly I should wefuse to be left out of the dangah——"

"If any!" murmured Lowther.

"Moreovah——" pursued Arthur Augustus.

"That's a good word!" agreed Blake.

"Weally, you ass——"

"The hack's ready!" said Wildrake, rising.

"Moreovah," repeated Arthur Augustus—"moreovah, Wildwake, you are twavellin' undah my pwotection, you know."

"Oh, I forgot that, old bean!"

"In the circumstances, I weally think you had bettah hand me the wevolvah."

"This way," said Wildrake; apparently deaf; and the juniors followed him to the hack, four of them grinning, and Arthur Augustus shaking his noble head very seriously.

The juniors were the only passengers in the little vehicle, and they almost filled it. Their baggage was piled on the top. The driver took his place and cracked his whip, and the hack rolled down Main Street, out on the prairie trail, and Rainbow was left behind.

Wildrake had slipped the revolver into his pocket, and seemed to have forgotten it.

But Tom Merry & Co. noticed that his eyes were very keenly on the trail as the hack rattled onward.

The last chimney of Rainbow dropped out of sight behind, and the hack rattled on through a rich

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solitude. In the distance were deep woods, on the western sky a line of mountain summits. The trail was somewhat bumpy, and the hack rocked as it went. Little more than wheel-ruts marked it off from the surrounding plain. Here and there clumps of trees grew beside the route, and the juniors noted that Wildrake's glance became sharper and keener every time he sighted possible "cover" for a lurking enemy.

Ten miles out of Rainbow there was a sudden ejaculation from the driver.

"Jerusalem! I guess it's a hold-up!"

From a clump of trees a score of yards ahead a horseman had ridden out into the trail.

His right hand was raised, and the sunlight gleamed on the revolver it held.

A gesture of the revolver was enough; the hack clattered to a sudden halt.

The driver grinned back at his passengers.

"I guess you-uns had better sit tight," he said. "That galoot is looking for trouble, and he's got a gun."

The juniors felt their hearts beating faster as they stared along the trail at the horseman.

His looks, if not his actions, showed that it was a "hold-up."

The horseman's face was completely hidden by a flour-bag that was drawn down over his head, under his Stetson hat. Holes were cut in the bag for sight and breathing, but not a feature could be seen. Whether the man was Rube Redway, looking for Wildrake, or whether he was some gunman looking for plunder, the juniors did not know. But they suspected that it was the kidnapper.

The horseman rode up to the halted vehicle.

The driver sat on his box with his hands lazily above his head. He had put them up without waiting to be told. Obviously, he had no intention of disputing the will of the man in the flour-bag. He was paid for driving the hack, not for exchanging lead with a road agent. Only, with a keen eye, he was noting all he could of the man's appearance, and the appearance of his horse, for a report later at the post of the Mounted Police.

"Keep them up, Nixon!" said the horseman tersely.

"You bet!"

"Tell your passengers to get out."

The driver squinted over his shoulder.

"You-uns light down!" he said.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at Wildrake. The Canadian junior was the leader now; even Arthur Augustus realised that the lead had to be left to the youth from the Boot Leg Ranch.

Wildrake's revolver was in his pocket, but he made no motion towards it. He smiled faintly.

"Better get down!" he said.

"Bai Jove! I think——"

"Jump out!" said Wildrake.

"I wefuse to submit to be wobbled," said Arthur Augustus hotly. "I wegard such a thing as dewogatory to my dig personally."

"Cheese it, Gussy, and hop out!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Follow my lead in this, Gussy," said Wildrake quietly. "You don't want to stop a bullet."

Wildrake jumped out of the hack. The Terrible Three followed him, and then Blake.

The horseman had halted on the trail beside the vehicle, and his revolver bore on the hack.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard with indignation; but even his aristocratic brain assimilated the fact that stopping a bullet would not serve any useful purpose. It needed only a slight pressure of the horseman's finger to end all things for the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy stepped from the hack after his comrades.

He gave Wildrake a glance of reproach as he did so. He had not expected this tame surrender.

"Put up your paws, the lot of you!" snapped the rider in the flour-bag.

Tom Merry & Co. put their hands above their heads.

With the exception of Wildrake, they were unarmed, and they had no choice in the matter. And Wildrake seemed to have forgotten that he was armed.

"That's better!"



"Dave Nixon!" rapped out the rider. "Hyer!" said the driver. "Drive on!" "Eh? What about my passengers?" "I'm not asking for any back-chat!" said the rider. "Drive on!" Nixon took to his reins again, shook them out, and drove on the hack. Tom Merry & Co. remained standing in the deserted trail, their hands above their heads, unpleasantly conscious of the big revolver which was looking at them, with a finger on the trigger. (See Chapter 11.)

The juniors expected to be told to turn out their pockets next. But that order did not come.

"Dave Nixon!" rapped out the rider.

"Hyer!" said the driver.

"Drive on!"

"Eh? What about my passengers?"

"I'm not asking for any back-chat!"

"Keep your hair on, boss!" said Nixon coolly.

And he took his reins again, shook them out, and drove on the hack.

Tom Merry & Co. remained standing in the deserted trail, their hands above their heads, facing the masked horseman, unpleasantly conscious of the big Navy revolver which was looking at them, with a finger on the trigger.

The hack disappeared round a bend in the trail.

Not till it was gone did the horseman speak. Then a harsh laugh came from under the disguising flour-bag.

"I guess we've met again, Kit Wildrake! And I calculate you won't get away as you did over the pond!"

It was Rube Redway!

CHAPTER 12.

Kit Wildrake Pulls Trigger!

"RUBE REDWAY!" muttered Tom Merry.

The juniors knew that it was the kidnapper now.

Wildrake, whom he had striven to kidnap in far-off England, was at his mercy now. The gunman had succeeded at last, here on the lonely trail in the west of Canada.

And his comrades could not help him.

The six schoolboys stood in a row before the horse-

man, with their hands up, and the big Navy revolver seemed to cover all of them as it swayed in the hand of the rider.

The man's eyes gleamed through the holes in the flour-bag.

"I guess you knew it was me, Kit Wildrake!" said the gunman.

"Sure!" assented Wildrake.

"You got away from me in England. I guess I've got you where your hair is short now."

"Looks like it."

"If I'd known you was coming back to Canada for your holiday, I reckon I'd never have taken the trouble to look for you in the Old Country," said Rube Redway. "It's a long step for a holiday, and I guess I never figured it out you were coming over the pond for the summer. When I found it out I left it at that. I knew I'd rope you in on this side of the Rockies."

He laughed again.

"And what's the game now, feller?" asked Wildrake coolly.

"I guess you're my mutton! And as you've chosen to bring a mob of your school friends with you, they're my mutton, too!" said Redway. "Old Man Wildrake will talk business when he knows that not one of you will reach Boot Leg Ranch till he comes to terms, I guess! I figured out that I'd get you into my hands, but I guess your popper will be a little concerned over your friends, what?"

"Sure!"

"You leave the trail here," said Rube Redway. "Keep your hands up, and walk off the trail in front of me. You see that big cedar yonder? Head for it, and if you give any trouble, look out for lead!"

He made a threatening motion with the revolver.

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"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry & Co. breathed hard.

"Hit the trail!" snapped Redway.

"Wildrake—" muttered Tom.

The Canadian junior shrugged his shoulders.

"We're for it," he said. "No good arguing with a Navy revolver."

"Weally, Wildwake—"

"That's hoss-sense!" grinned the masked horseman.

"Take a tip from the man who knows, you greenhorns!"

"You think he would shoot, Wildrake?" breathed Blake.

"Sure!"

"Then we're for it, and no mistake!"

"Pronto!" rapped out the gunman.

The juniors moved off the trail. The hack was out of sight now, rolling on towards Lone Pine. From the rough trail the St. Jim's juniors trod across the rugged grassy plain in the direction of the big cedar, about a mile distant.

Their feelings were deep as they went. But there was no help for it. They had Wildrake's word for it that the gunman would shoot, and they had no doubt about that. They would have taken their chances in dealing with a footpad in the Old Country. But it was hopeless to think of rushing at the horseman—he could have shot them down like so many rabbits, and there was no doubt that he would have done so. Rube Redway was playing a desperate game, and he was prepared to play it out without ruth or mercy.

Wildrake's face was expressionless as he tramped on with his comrades, his hands over his head.

After the tramping juniors, the horseman came on at a walk, his weapon still in his hand. But he had lowered his arm now, and the revolver swung in his hand at his side. It had probably not occurred to him that any of the party carried a weapon, and certainly he did not suspect for a moment that a desperate gunman, revolver in hand, had any resistance to expect from a party of schoolboys.

Wildrake caught his foot in a trailing root, and stumbled and fell headlong.

What happened next came like a thunderclap to the juniors.

As Wildrake sprawled on the ground, there was a sudden flash and a report, and for a second the juniors fancied that the masked horseman had fired.

But the next moment they knew.

There was a loud, sharp cry from the man in the flour-bag, and he reeled back in his saddle and crashed to the ground over his horse's tail.

Wildrake was on his feet in a twinkling.

The juniors, dazed by the sudden occurrence, realised that his stumble had been a feint to enable him to get at his revolver without drawing the fire of the man behind.

The instant the weapon was in his grasp he had fired, from the ground, and apparently without taking aim.

But the bullet had struck home.

The masked man was sprawling in the grass, and his riderless horse was kicking and plunging wildly.

Tom Merry & Co. stood spellbound.

Wildrake sprang towards the sprawling gunman, his revolver in his hand, his eyes gleaming over it.

Rube Redway, wounded as he was, raised his right arm with an effort, but before he could fire Wildrake's revolver cracked again. The Navy revolver spun out of the gunman's hand, as a bullet struck it.

Redway gave a cry of pain.

A moment more, and Wildrake's muzzle was jammed against his chest.

"Let up!" said the Canadian schoolboy laconically.

A fierce curse answered him.

"Oh! Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus faintly.

"Wildrake—"

"Oh, good man!" panted Tom Merry.

Kit Wildrake grinned.

The tables had been turned on the gunman with kaleidoscopic suddenness. He lay in the grass groaning, at the mercy of the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch.

"I guess it's our turn," said Wildrake.

"Bai Jove!"

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"This is the giddy Wild West, and no mistake!" gasped Blake.

Redway dragged himself to a sitting posture in the grass. His right arm was numbed by the shock of the bullet striking his pistol, and it hung helpless at his side. There was a rent in the flour-bag now, and from it blood was oozing.

With his left hand Wildrake tore the flour-bag from the man's head. The hard, clean-shaven, savage face of rube Redway was revealed. The blood was flowing from a deep gash on the side of his head, where Wildrake's first bullet had struck and glanced.

"I guess you've been near getting your ticket for soup, Redway," said the Canadian junior coolly. "An inch to the left and you'd never have moved again, you pesky rascal!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "That was a vewy lucky shot, Wildwake. I suppose you fired at wandom."

Wildrake laughed.

"Not quite," he answered. "I knew I should get him, or I shouldn't have tried it on, Gussy. But it was quick work and I hadn't time for much aim. I guess I'm glad I didn't put him out, scoundrel as he is."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, with a shudder.

The juniors' faces were very serious. Wildrake had acted with such suddenness that he had taken the gunman by surprise as well as the St. Jim's juniors. It was amazing to them that his hurried shot from the ground had hit the man at all; they had not even seen the revolver in his hand till the man had fallen from his horse.

"If I'd guessed you were heeled—" panted Redway.

"Lucky for me you didn't," smiled Wildrake. "But you might have guessed something when I tumbled over, feller. But you don't know everything on the south side of the border."

"A thousand curses—"

"Can it!" interrupted Wildrake. "Tom Merry, go through the brute while I keep this gun at his head. I guess he's got other fixings in his rags."

The gunman's eyes blazed with rage.

He made a movement as if to resist, and Wildrake's eyes glinted and his finger moved on the trigger of his revolver.

"If you want it—" he said.

"Hang you!"

The gunman made no resistance while Tom Merry searched him for weapons. A Derringer was found in one pocket, and Tom removed a knife from his belt.

"Now I guess you can tie up his cabeza, if you feel inclined to take the trouble," said Wildrake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

With their handkerchiefs and the man's own neckscarf Redway's wound was bound up. The kidnapper's hard face was deadly white now. He had lost a great deal of blood.

"What are we going to do with the brute?" asked Blake.

Wildrake glanced round.

The kidnapper's startled horse had galloped away across the plain and was far out of reach. The hack had long disappeared.

"I guess I'd like to tote him into Lone Pine and land him in the calaboose there," said Wildrake, "but I guess he can't walk it—and we can't carry him. We'll leave him here, and send a man from Lone Pine to rope him in, I guess. If he gets away I reckon he will have something to remember us by."

The gunman gave him a bitter look.

"You haven't done with me yet, Kit Wildrake!" he muttered hoarsely.

Wildrake gave a contemptuous laugh.

"If I were a galoot of your own kidney, Rube Redway, I guess I'd put a bullet through your head now and stop your gun-games," he said.

"Wildwake!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"All serene, Gussy. I'm not going to do it!" said Wildrake, laughing.

"Bai Jove! I should think not, deal boy!"

"Let him rip!" said the Canadian junior. "I guess he's come out at the little end of the horn, anyhow."

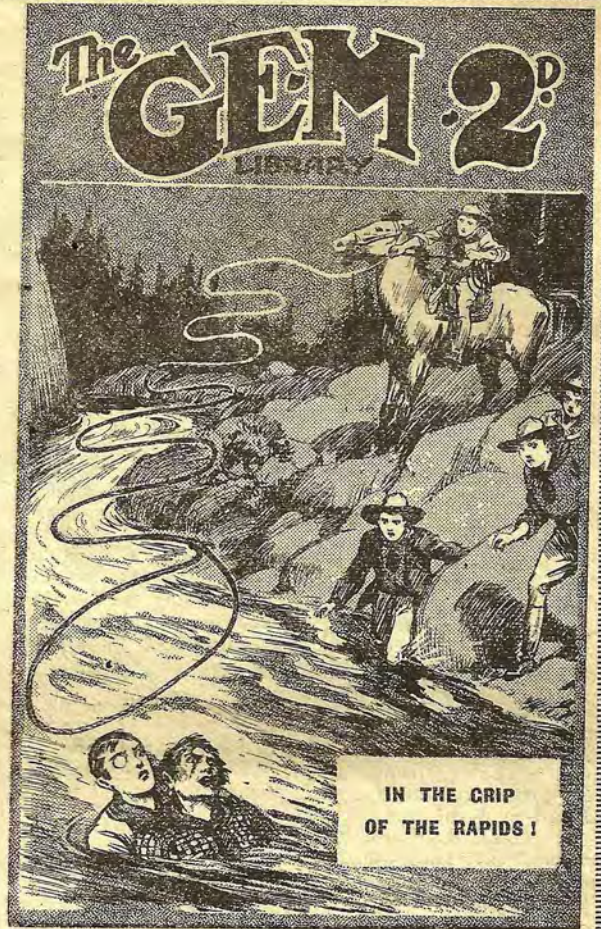
WHAT TO LOOK FOR NEXT WEEK!

This cover reproduction shows Arthur Augustus D'Arcy doing a gallant action—rescuing a ne'er-do-well from a horrible fate. It proves once again that, with all his elegant ways and affectations, Gussy has a heart of gold and unlimited pluck. You'll enjoy every word of next week's story—

"TOM MERRY & CO. IN CANADA!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

But a word of warning, you chaps—give an order for next week's GEM now! Saves all that disappointment, you know!



We've got eight miles tramping across country to get to Lone Pine. We're losing time."

And leaving the wounded gunman sitting in the grass, leaning against the stump of a live oak, the juniors started on their long tramp.

"Bai Jove! We're not followin' the twail, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed suddenly.

"It's over ten miles by the trail," said Wildrake.

"We save two or three by cutting across country."

"You know the way?"

"Ha, ha! Just a few!"

"Right-ho, deah boy!"

And the St. Jim's party tramped on by rugged ways where there was no sign of a path, but unfailingly guided by the Canadian junior. They were weary enough by the time they tramped into the lumber camp of Lone Pine.

CHAPTER 13.

A Surprise for Long Jim!

"HALLO!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

Outside a long, low wooden building in the frontier camp of Lone Pine half a dozen horses were hitched to the rail. A sign over the rambling building announced that it was the Continental Hotel—a rather imposing name that was not much in keeping with its appearance. In the doorway a tall, muscular man in chaps and buckskin shirt, with a Stetson hat on his head, was standing staring out into the street. As the St. Jim's juniors came tramping up, the big cattleman stared at them and rushed out from the doorway at Kit Wildrake. "By gosh!" he exclaimed.

He grasped the Canadian junior in his arms and swept him off his feet.

The juniors stared.

"Bai Jove! Weseue, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

And he rushed at the big cattleman and grasped him. Gussy's impression was that Wildrake had fallen into the grasp of another enemy.

"Hollo, who's the kid, and what's biting him?" roared the big cowboy in astonishment.

"Welease Wildwake at once, you wuffian!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"What?"

"It's all right, Gussy!" exclaimed Wildrake, chuckling. "It's Long Jim. All serene, old scout!"

"Eh?"

"It's Long Jim, the foreman of my father's ranch."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Weally, you fellows—"

Long Jim set Wildrake on his feet again. Evidently it was not an attack, but only an exuberant greeting.

The foreman of the Boot Leg Ranch stared at Gussy. Arthur Augustus had dragged at him manfully, but without shifting him an inch, any more than if he had dragged at a mountain pine. Long Jim grinned. Something in the elegant aspect of Arthur Augustus seemed to strike him as entertaining. Gussy was tired, and he was dusty, but he was still elegant. In spite of the loss of his extensive baggage, Arthur Augustus never failed to turn out well dressed. Probably so elegant a figure had never before walked the rugged, unpaved street of Lone Pine.

"What is it, Kit?" asked the big cattleman.

"Can it, Jim!" answered Wildrake.

"But what's it got in its eye?" persisted Long Jim. Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Weally——" he began.

Long Jim jumped.

"What did you say?" he demanded.

"Weally——"

"Oh, great gophers!" ejaculated Long Jim.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble accent seemed to have a striking effect on the foreman of the Boot Leg Ranch.

"Can it, Jim!" snapped Wildrake. "Have you left your manners at the ranch? These are my friends from my school in England."

Long Jim swept off his Stetson.

"Glad to meet you, young gents," he said. "I reckon Dave Nixon got in with the hack and told us you'd been roped in by some fire-bug way back on the trail. I've sent off half a dozen of the boys to look for you. But you've moseyed in all O.K."

"Rube Redway held us up on the trail," said Wildrake.

"By gum, did he?" exclaimed Long Jim. "I guess your popper told me that scallywag had been hunting you over the pond, Kit. So he's got back?"

"Yep."

"I guess we'd have rode as far as Rainbow if we'd been wise to that, Kit. I reckoned Redway had cleared out of this section for keeps. How did you get away from him, then?"

"I haven't forgotten how to handle a gun, Jim, while I've been in the Old Country," said Wildrake, laughing. "We left Redway on the trail nursing his cabeza. The boys may pick him up, if they go as far looking for us. Get into the hotel, you fellows. I guess you want to sit down."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

"We'll get a rest here," said Wildrake. "We needn't start for the ranch yet."

Tom Merry & Co. were glad to get rest and refreshment in the Continental Hotel. The long tramp across rough country had fatigued them, though Wildrake seemed made of iron.

"I guess I'll go and look for the boys while you're resting," said Long Jim, and he mounted his horse and galloped away.

Arthur Augustus cast a rather stern glance after him.

The swell of St. Jim's had come out to the West prepared to like everything and everybody he found there. But the ranchman's amused and disparaging glances had roused the noble ire of Arthur Augustus. Apparently Long Jim regarded him as a particularly helpless sort of a greenhorn, and he had been especially tickled by Gussy's monocle. Probably monocles were few and far between in the valley of the Rainbow River. Arthur Augustus would have looked on the big, powerful, good-humoured cattleman with admiration had Long Jim's greeting been otherwise. Now he was feeling extremely annoyed and resentful.

"Keep smiling, Gussy!" said Wildrake, as they sat down to a meal in the Continental Hotel. "You may find manners rather rough and ready out here, but Long Jim's heart is in the right place. You see, he doesn't know you yet."

"Yaas, deah boy; but——"

"Long Jim's no end of a good sort, when you know him!"

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Wight as wain, deah boy!" he said. "Pway, don't mench!"

Tom Merry & Co. felt better after a substantial meal and a rest. They sat in the hotel veranda in the golden afternoon waiting for Long Jim and the boys to return. A little later there was a wild clatter of hoofs in the rugged street, and half a dozen cowboys dashed up to the hotel. Long Jim jumped from his horse and came up to the St. Jim's party.

"Hyer we are!" he said.

"See anything of Rube Redway on the trail?" asked Wildrake.

The ranchman shook his head.

"Nope! I guess he had cleared," he answered.

"Now, if you're ready, we'll get off to the ranch. Your hosses are hyer, but——" Long Jim paused, and glanced doubtfully at D'Arcy. "Look hyer! Your

luggage was landed hyer from the hack, and it's going over to the ranch in the post wagon. Anybody who can't ride had better go in the wagon with the baggage."

"We can all ride," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"I can wide, Mr. Long Jim, if it is me you are thinkin' of," said Arthur Augustus in his most stately manner.

"Well, I guess I want to land Mr. Wildrake's guests at the ranch alive," said Long Jim. "I guess it would hurt you if you fell off a critter, you know!"

"I shall not fall off," said Arthur Augustus coldly.

"I twust that I can wide quite as well as anyone in Canada!"

"Oh, Jerusalem!" said Long Jim.

"D'Arcy can ride all right, Jim," said Wildrake. "Don't I keep on telling you to can it, you gink?"

"Well, the hosses are ready," said Long Jim, with a grin. "I reckon they mayn't be quite so quiet as the critters Mister D'Arcy is used to over the pond."

"That is all wight," said Arthur Augustus.

The juniors went out of the veranda into the street. Arthur Augustus frowned as he noted a general subdued grin among the cowboys who had come to escort the party to the ranch. Arthur Augustus was not particularly observant; but he could discern that his elegant clothes, his elegant manners, and his eyeglass struck the Boot Leg men rather as a joke. One of the punchers, after a murmured word from Long Jim, led forward a handsome black horse.

"Your critter, Mister D'Arcy."

"Thank you," said Arthur Augustus.

"Sure you won't go in the wagon, sir?" asked Long Jim.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely on the ranch foreman.

"I pwesume that you do not mean to be wude, Mr. Long Jim," he said. "But I wegard your suggestion as wiculous. Certainly I shall not twael in the wagon. But for the fact that I do not desiah to be wantin' in politeness, I should tell you that I considah you a sillay ass."

"Oh, gum!" ejaculated Long Jim.

"That horse looks a bit fresh, Gussy," said Wildrake.

"He is not too fwesh for me, deah boy."

"But——"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus stepped to the horse. Undoubtedly the black horse did look a little "fresh," and there was a wicked gleam in the animal's eyes. Long Jim and the punchers stood round, looking on, as Arthur Augustus swung himself to the saddle. Every bronzed face wore a grin, in the general expectation that the swell of St. Jim's would be dropped from the saddle like a sack of coke as soon as he was astride the horse.

Wildrake looked a little uneasy. He could have ridden that mettlesome horse easily enough himself, but he was rather doubtful about Arthur Augustus' ability to do so. But he was well aware that it was useless to argue with the swell of St. Jim's.

The moment D'Arcy was in the saddle the black horse woke to sudden life. The puncher who was holding him jumped back, and Arthur Augustus was left to it.

The horse shot forward like an arrow from a bow, as if about to race down the street of Lone Pine to the plains beyond. But after twenty yards it stopped suddenly.

The grinning punchers stared on, expecting to see the swell of St. Jim's shoot over the animal's head.

To their astonishment, Arthur Augustus sat in his saddle without turning a hair.

The black horse seemed surprised, too. For a few moments it stood stock still, and then suddenly started to rear and cavort. There was a wild clatter of hoofs as the black horse leaped and pranced and reared and twisted and turned.

"You pesky gink, Jim!" exclaimed Wildrake. "What the thump do you mean by landing him on a buck-jumper?"

"I guess he said he could ride," said the ranch foreman, with a grin. "Better let him drop off hyer and go in the wagon. If he drops off half-way to the ranch, who's going to carry him home?"



As Wildrake sprawled on the ground there was a sudden flash and a report, and for a second the St. Jim's juniors fancied that the masked horseman had fired. But the next moment they knew, for there was a loud, sharp cry from the man in the flour bag, and he reeled back in his saddle. (See Chapter 12.)

Blake chuckled. He understood that this was a rough joke of the cow-punchers at Gussy's expense. But Blake knew how his chum could ride. With all his elegant ways and his wonderful accent, there was little that the Boot Leg outfit could have taught Gussy about horsemanship.

"By gum! He's sticking on!" exclaimed Long Jim in wonder.

"Bravo, Gussy!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Ride him, old man—ride him!" exclaimed Blake.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

Undoubtedly the black horse was a buck-jumper, and undoubtedly he was trying his hardest to get rid of his rider. But he strove in vain. Arthur Augustus sat in the saddle like a rock. The black horse reared on his hind legs, towering up, and even Long Jim's rugged face grew anxious. He had expected the "dude" to be tossed off the horse's back at the first essay to ride him, and no harm would have been done. But a grim contest with a buck-jumper was a different matter. Higher towered the excited horse, and with a crash it came over backwards. The St. Jim's juniors watched with beating hearts; the cow-punchers with startled faces. But Arthur Augustus leaped clear, and as the horse struggled to its feet again he leaped into the saddle once more, with an iron hand on the rein.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" gasped Long Jim.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The black horse was tearing away now at a frantic speed. Horse and rider vanished down the street, past the last cabins, and disappeared into the open prairie.

"Well, carry me home to die!" said Long Jim. "Who'd have thought it? I guess you can call me a gink! I never reckoned he'd stick on that critter more'n a minute, Kit, you believe me. If he's hurt—"

Wildrake did not answer. He rushed to his own horse, leaped upon it, and dashed away after Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry & Co. were swift to follow, and the Boot Leg outfit came pelting after them. The whole troop swept out on the open plains under the setting sun.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

It was a mile from Lone Pine that they came on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But the black horse was no longer buck-jumping. He had met his master, and he knew it. Arthur Augustus, a little breathless, but cool and cheerful, rode up to the Boot Leg outfit with the black horse under complete control.

"Heah we are again, deah boys!" he said cheerily.

"Oh, Gussy!" gasped Wildrake.

Long Jim gave Arthur Augustus a rather shamefaced look.

"I guess you can ride, sir," he said. "I reckon you don't need to go in the wagon, Mister D'Arcy. I guess you ain't all the greenhorn I took you to be."

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"All sewene, deah boy. Shall we be gettin' on to the wanch, Wildwake?"

And the party rode on the ranch trail, under the sinking sun. Arthur Augustus drew in the black horse, quiet enough now, and rode with his chums. He was smiling and cheerful.

"You've astonished the natives, Gussy, old bean," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, it was wathah a tussle," said Arthur Augustus. "I vewy neahly dwopped my eyeglass once—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It would have been wathah sewious, deah boys, as pwobably I should have some difficulty in gettin' anothah eyeglass heah. Howevah, it is all wight."

The sun was behind the Coast Range, and darkness lay on the wide prairie. Under the stars the party rode on, till a gleaming light from the darkness ahead shone out in welcome.

"Home!" said Kit Wildrake.

And Tom Merry & Co., at the end of their long journey at last, rode up to the Boot Leg Ranch.

THE END.

(Mind you read the sequel to this story, boys, in next week's bumper issue. Make a note of the title: "Tom Merry & Co. in Canada," and be prepared for something good.)

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INNOCENT OR GUILTY? Walter Beavan is charged with killing his best friend: he admits it, much to everyone's astonishment. And then, unexpectedly, comes evidence that he is innocent. Which evidence will be believed?

BEYOND the SILVER GLACIER!



A Magnificent Story of Peril and Adventure in Central Africa.

By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

(Introduction on page 25.)

Beavan Confesses!

"I AM afraid of Del Rivo!" whined Symes. "He dislikes me! I'm afraid of Walter Beavan! I want to be with you, sir, or with men I can trust!"

And so it was arranged for him to share a hut with Jimmy Brown and Sandy McTavish, whose unending cheerfulness they believed would help the wretched man.

It was on the third night that an incident happened which set the whole settlement by the ears.

Night had fallen. Walter Beavan, as usual, had been out hunting, this time upon horseback, and he had returned to his bungalow. Adam and Harry Franklin having eaten their evening's meal had strolled to the far end of the great clearing to watch the natives piling up fuel upon the great fires which burned fiercely every night on the fringe of the forest—a precaution against prowling, wild beasts, for man-eating lions had made a habit of late of carrying off native children into the forest, and had even attacked and carried off a fully grown native who had set a trap for the beast and waited for it fully armed. The man's body had been discovered half-eaten the next day within half a mile of the settlement.

Adam and Harry watched the natives pile the brushwood high, enjoying the light given out by the curling flames and the great heat of the glowing fire.

It was as they were strolling back towards their own bungalow that they heard the echo of angry voices from within Beavan's bungalow.

Adam saw the man Symes skulking near the veranda.

"Harry," said Adam, "that is surely Del Rivo's voice?"

The man Symes, hearing them, swung round. His eyes were dilated in fear. He shivered as he looked at them.

"Walter Beavan does not like Del Rivo. What is the Portuguese doing in there?" asked Adam.

"I—don't—know," faltered Symes, and both knew that he lied.

Now they could hear Del Rivo shouting.

"Well, that's what it means, Beavan," they heard him saying. "You must by this time be a very wealthy man. If you haven't the money you can pay in kind. And you'll have to pay—to the uttermost farthing! I shall tell the world that you murdered your friend, George Holden—"

"Go tell the world, then," they heard Beavan answer. "What do I care? I've had the sin upon my conscience long enough. I am weary of it—my soul is sick! Let everybody know me for the thing I am. But get out of here—get out!"

Adam and Harry stood riveted in horror.

"I'll ruin you—I will!" they heard the Portuguese snarl. "It may mean gaol for you, Beavan, if you escape the hangman's rope!"

Then they heard a scuffle, heard the Portuguese cry out aloud.

A moment later Beavan appeared upon the veranda, his bearded face savage and sinister. He was carrying Del Rivo above his head, the Portuguese kicking and plunging and struggling in vain to free himself. The blows he struck

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at Beavan's face might have been the slaps of a child for all the effect they had upon him.

Seeing Adam and Harry standing there, Walter Beavan flung Del Rivo crashing to the ground and faced them, his head bowed in shame.

Del Rivo, rolling over, staggered to his knees.

"I'll never forgive you for that!" he snarled. "Adam Byrne, I accuse this man of the murder of his friend, George Holden, whom he slew when we were big-game hunting and treasure-seeking ten years ago! Don't let him get away! I want him delivered over to justice!"

Beavan, sighing deeply, turned to Adam.

"Do not be alarmed," he said. "For years I have prayed that this day might come. I shall not attempt to get away."

"Do you mean to tell me, then," asked Adam, staring at the settler in pity, "that what this man Del Rivo says is true?"

"It is only too true," answered Beavan, with great simplicity, as he bowed his head. "I killed my friend, George Holden. We were sick men at the time. We had been drinking hard—and we quarrelled. I knew not what I was doing—but I killed him. That is why I have lived the life of an outcast in Baruda."

So saying, he lowered his head into his hands, covering his eyes from the light, and his huge shoulders shook convulsively as he burst into an uncontrollable fit of sobbing.

The Tale of Terror!

IN spite of the terrible confession Walter Beavan had made, Adam felt his heart swell in sympathy for the man. It was easy to understand why, with such a crime upon his conscience, Beavan had buried himself in this far-away spot, shunning the men of his own race, herding with natives who, even if they knew of it, would not appreciate the enormity of his offence.

Adam and Harry remained silent for a moment. Then Del Rivo, springing to his feet and limping from the hurt he had received in his fall, turned away.

"I would have spared you, Beavan," he snarled, "but it is your own fault! I am going to tell—"

He stumbled against the man Symes. Grating a laugh, he seized the scared and nervous weakling by the shoulder.

With a hoarse cry of fear, Symes tried to struggle free, but the other's grip was too fierce.

"You were there at the time of his murder, Symes," laughed Del Rivo. "You will be a useful witness. Beavan has confessed. But he may go back on that. Come with me!"

They vanished up the clearing in the direction of the professor's hut, Del Rivo dragging the man Symes along.

Beavan, with bared head and master of himself once more, stood gloomily watching. He did not re-enter his bungalow. He did not speak to Adam or Harry, who felt that they must stay with him. He might have been moulded

in bronze as he stood there, an almost majestic figure, stricken by grief and remorse.

The scene burnt itself upon Adam's brain, to remain a vivid memory for all time, the clearing steeped in darkness save for the light of the flickering watch fires, the ghostly shadows of the huts showing against the darker fringe of forest; over there the outline of the Mirawala, its silvered hull lit by the distant dancing flames; here and there a light pricking the blackness, where candles or oil lamp illuminated an interior; tethered to the balcony of Beavan's veranda a horse—the horse he had used, but which he had not yet groomed and stabled as was his wont after a long journey. Above all else the towering figure of the bearded settler.

Some minutes passed away, and then they heard hurrying footsteps crossing the clearing, saw figures moving in the light of a swinging lantern.

Foremost among the newcomers were Professor George Willis Byrne, white king of the Hokahulas, Captain John Skinner, of the Mirawala, Sandy McTavish, and Jimmy Brown, and last of all, Rosa—whose beautiful face expressed the deepest alarm.

As he watched their approach Beavan sighed. But he did not budge. For years he must have suffered tortures under the haunting dread of one day being discovered as the murderer of his friend. Now that the moment had come at last he almost welcomed it. Adam saw his lips twitch as he and the professor came face to face. Perhaps he was afraid of losing the friendship of a man he had always admired.

For a moment they eyed each other, and then the professor mounted the steps to the veranda.

"Beavan, my poor fellow," said the professor, in a voice which trembled with emotion. "What is this I hear?"

"Has Julian Del Rivo told you?" asked Beavan.

"He came to me and told me and the others—that you murdered poor George Holden. I told him that he lied. Now I have come to you for confirmation. Speak, my friend—tell me that he lied?"

Beavan's eyes filled.

"I cannot," he answered. "What Julian Del Rivo says is true. I killed poor George—murdered him. I have been haunted by the crime ever since. If I had possessed twenty lives and by taking them all could have given my dear friend back the life I took from him—I would have done it. It was impossible—so—I have lived an outcast ever since, praying with the dawn of every day that it might be the last. Unluckily, nature gave me strength and endurance beyond the average. Even the liquor I have taken has not helped me. I stayed my hand against self-slaughter—for that would not have helped."

His voice broke. He seemed to be overcome for a moment. The next he faced the party proudly whilst they formed a ring and listened.

"When I saw Del Rivo return with you in the Mirawala," he said, "I knew that the end was near. The black-hearted Dago came to me to-night and offered to remain silent if I paid him well enough. But I would rather swing at the end of a rope than compromise with the villain."

Beavan, pulling up a chair he had made with his own hands, fell heavily into it and covered his face.

By this time the news that the great white chief was sick, had spread throughout the settlement, and men and women and children came running to crowd in front of the veranda, where they watched in awe the agony of the bearded white man.

Captain John Skinner, grimly silent, looked down on Beavan, a prey to many conflicting emotions. The professor, dropping a hand on Beavan's shoulder, counselled a full confession.

"It will ease your mind," he said. "And may be it is not so bad as you think. I have heard of the sufferings your party endured on that terrible march. You have told me bits of the story yourself at times—"

Beavan, clasping his hands, leaned forward in his chair. "That is the only consolation I have," he murmured, his deep voice shaking. "That we suffered and endured to the point of collapse—and I was half-mad at the time. We had travelled far into unknown lands, using Baruda as our base. Approaching Pocatella, where later your baggage

train was massacred, Professor Byrne, we were ambushed, and some of our natives died from the wounds they received from poisoned spears. By forced marching we managed to elude our enemies, but when we reached a point of safety we had abandoned most of our trophies and stores, had only a remnant of natives left with us, and were all stricken with fever, save Del Rivo perhaps—and the man Symes. Poor George Holden was the worst afflicted. For days I had helped him along, listened to his complaints and grumbings and upbraidings. He was unreasonable, for the fever had laid tight hold of him. There were times when he insulted me, though I nursed him night and day, never sparing myself, because I loved him. Julian Del Rivo seemed to take a certain delight in goading Holden on, and took sides against me. In those awful days and nights there was only one thing which kept the spirit alive in me—the liquor. I drank rations of it—Del Rivo wanted the natives to hurl the cases containing it away, but I would not have it. The day when I killed him,"—here Beavan shuddered, "was one of the hottest I can ever remember. The few natives who had remained faithful abandoned us at this point, and we were all too dead beat to travel farther. I had borne George Holden on my arm most of the day—and all the time he grumbled. Poor fellow, he had wasted to a shadow, and I knew that the hour of crisis had come—that if George did not rally by the morning, he must die. Yet oddly enough, his mind remained crystal clear.

"We sat in gloom and silence most of the day, and towards night, summoning up energy enough to build a fire, I lit it. Del Rivo and Symes ate and smoked. George wanted only a cigarette and Symes gave him the last one he possessed, poor George, in his delirium, cursing him because he had no more. My heart was heavy. My spirit was sick unto death. I felt the fever grip me, and to ward it off, drank more liquor than I have ever drunk in my life before. At last I fell into a troubled sleep. I don't know what awakened me. It might have been the crackling of the fire as the man Symes piled more fuel upon it; it might have been the ravings and moanings of George Holden, my friend. I sat up—and clutching me by the throat, he tried to strangle me, accusing me of trying to steal the valuable diamonds he had found during our travels and prospectings, and which he had stored in a belt around his waist. Odd thing—that—George had a way of smelling out precious stones that baffled the rest of us. I felt his fingers digging into my windpipe. I felt myself suffocating, and it was only by a supreme effort that I threw him off and covered him up as he lay, exhausted by his effort, at my feet. The incident unnerved me. I took more drink—and the next thing I remember is hearing the report of a revolver and finding myself half-kneeling with my smoking revolver grasped in my hand. George Holden was stretched out dead at my feet. In a drunken frenzy I had shot him."

A shudder ran through the group of listeners. Rosa, much moved by Beavan's story, was weeping silently. Even the professor was crying, and Adam felt a lump rise in his throat and choke him.

When Beavan resumed his story his voice was very gentle.

"I dug the grave, in which we buried him, with my own hands," he said. "We remained there two days whilst I piled up stones upon it to protect it from the prowling beasts. Then, fever-stricken and half-crazy from the want of food, we resumed our retreat and finally reached Baruda."

Beavan rose.

"I have lived here ever since," he said, with a sad smile, "waiting for death to come to me—an outcast—a man beyond the pale. Now, perhaps I am near the end of the long journey. I am ready to submit. God's will be done."

There was a stir among the natives at this juncture, and Julian Del Rivo, his face twisted by a malicious grin advanced, his eyes glittering savagely.

"Well," he jeered, as he glanced at the distressed and silent white men and at Rosa, "are you all satisfied? If I have kept the secret too long, it is because of the difficulties of the situation. Had I denounced Beavan a murderer out in the wilds with none to arrest him, he might have murdered me, too. What are you going to do with the fellow now? I suggest that he be arrested, shut up and taken away when the Mirawala sails from this accursed spot."

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

For four years or more Professor George Willis Byrne and his daughter Rosa have been held virtually prisoners in the hands of an unknown race of natives who inhabit the secret city of Bar-comba. But at long last a rescue party under the leadership of Adam Byrne and Harry Franklin reach the African city. The high priests of the Hokahula tribe, however, stir up trouble amongst the natives and urge them to kill the white men. Things are going very hardly with the professor and his companions when, unexpectedly, an airship piloted by Captain Skinner arrives. The newcomers are looked upon as gods of the air by the super-

stitious natives, and no objections are raised when Captain Skinner announces his intention of taking the professor and his party aboard the airship. After that, things are easy. A long cruise across the African jungle brings the party to Baruda, where Walter Beavan, a settler, has lived the life of a recluse for years. Del Rivo, the Portuguese—who has tucked himself on to the professor's party—recognises Beavan at once, and it is obvious that he has some hold over him. Symes, the professor's servant, is terrified of Del Rivo, and he begs to be allowed to share Jimmy Brown's lot.

(Now read on.)



Beavan appeared at the doorway of the bungalow carrying aloft the kicking, struggling figure of Del Rivo, the Portuguese.
(See Page 24.)

"Was it in your eagerness to see justice done that you told Beavan he could buy your silence, Del Rivo?" challenged Adam.

"If he says that, he lies," snapped the Portuguese. "Harry Franklin and I both heard you, and are prepared to swear to it," Adam told Del Rivo sternly.

"Del Rivo," said the professor. "Beavan has told us how George Holden died. It appears to me that, in the circumstances, he was scarcely responsible for his actions, and there had been considerable provocation. I may take it, I suppose, that you are prepared to corroborate that?"

The Portuguese, laughing derisively, answered with considerable heat.

"Nothing of the kind," he replied. "It was a cold and deliberate murder. In my opinion, Beavan was after the diamonds his friend possessed, and was sick of nursing a dying man. I was fully awake when it happened. Beavan drew his revolver and killed Holden where he lay asleep."

Symes Speaks Out!

A CRY of horror burst from Beavan's lips as he heard. "As I am a living man that is not true!" he cried. "I was half intoxicated at the time and a sick man. I knew not what I did. I had just awakened from a deep sleep."

The professor drew away from him. Rosa shudderingly stepped back.

The others recoiled. Del Rivo's accusation horrified them. It was the professor who took action.

"Fortunately there are other witnesses," he said. "Send for the man Symes; bring him here!"

The Portuguese laughed.

"This is not a court of justice. The case is not being tried here. The man Symes will give his evidence when it is wanted."

Then he started and turned his head, for a loud outcry across the clearing reached his ears. All looked with one accord in the direction of the sound.

The natives, uttering loud cries in response to the calls of others who came running towards them, scattered.

Adam could see some bearers carrying a stretcher made of boughs and entwined twigs towards the bungalows. Some of the crew of the *Mirawala*, bearing swinging lanterns, walked beside it. Upon the stretcher lay the form of a man.

The bearers moved with broken steps to the veranda. Adam could hear the natives crying out aloud. From somewhere near by came a cry that the man Symes had been murdered.

Murdered? And yet a few minutes ago he had been alive and well. Adam glanced at his father, at Beavan, at Del Rivo.

If Symes had been killed why should these men bring the body to Beavan's house, he wondered? The wailing of the natives set his nerves jangling. Beavan, standing stolidly still, did not seem to care what might happen.

Captain John Skinner, of the *Mirawala*, spoke sharply to the members of his crew, who were bringing the body to the bungalow.

"He has been shot through the head, sir. I heard the report and ran into the hut. He was lying on the floor, and I believed him to be dead. But as I stooped over him he spoke. He asked to be brought here."

Del Rivo pushed his way forward.

"If he has been shot through the head how can he speak?" he cried. "It doesn't sound like sense to me."

They set the stretcher down so that all could see the huddled-up form of the man Symes, who lay upon the entwined boughs, his head set upon a pillow which was stained an ominous crimson.

"Who has done this thing, I wonder?" asked the professor as he bent to look. "After all, only white men are armed in this settlement. No native, surely, would use a revolver?"

"The poor devil is dead," shrugged Del Rivo. "What does it matter who killed him?"

"It is a pity," murmured the professor, "for his testimony might have been useful. We might have learned through his evidence whether Walter Beavan spoke the truth or not."

And then, to the amazement of those who looked down upon him, the man Symes moved, raised himself upon his hands.

"Take me to Walter Beavan. I want to speak to him," he said in a hoarse whisper. "Take me to him!"

They could see the mark upon his head which the bullet had made. It seemed uncanny that a man so badly wounded as he appeared to be could speak at all.

The natives, who were looking on, scattering, fled with wild cries. The horse which Beavan had tethered to the rail of the veranda pawed the ground, whimpering in distress.

"It's all right, son," said Jimmy Brown, bending to speak to the man Symes. "Mr. Beavan is here, and the professor, too, and Miss Rosa. Don't worry, laddie."

"I am dying!" Symes moaned as he writhed, whilst the professor stooped to wipe the blood from the wound in his head, and called aloud for somebody to fetch sponge and water. "I want to tell the truth before it is too late."

Julian Del Rivo interrupted with a harsh laugh.

"He's mad!" he cried. "Don't listen to him! Is there anybody here who can lend first aid?"

The sound of his rasping voice roused the man Symes.

"Keep him away from me!" he cried. "Keep him away—Del Rivo, the murderer! He tried to kill me in Barcoomba, but the shirt of mail saved me! To-night he shot me through the head because—"

Del Rivo, with a curse, stepped forward.

"Don't listen to the raving madman!" he cried.

Then he tried to get away, but John Skinner, seizing him by the arm, detained him.

"Wait a moment," cried the skipper of the Mirawala. "There's something wrong here. Just stay where you are, Del Rivo!"

Seeing that the way was barred, the Portuguese, with a shrug, turned away, edging towards the balcony rail.

"Did you say that Del Rivo shot you, Symes?" asked the professor in a tone of horror.

"Yes. We quarrelled, and he shot me. I pretended to be dead, otherwise he would have fired again. He was afraid the reports of the revolver shots might be heard. I suppose, or he wouldn't have stopped at one!" groaned Symes, as they helped him up.

He was trembling violently.

The professor, glancing to where Del Rivo stood, saw the Portuguese move his hand towards his side where a holster hung. Afraid that he intended to shoot again, the professor set his lean body between.

"Why should Del Rivo want to kill you?" he asked Symes.

"Because I can hang him—because it was he who murdered George Holden—because he is a villain—because it was he who set the tribesmen on to massacre your baggage train, Mr. Byrne—because there isn't a more diabolical villain in the world than he is! He was afraid I'd tell the truth. He came to me and threatened me. When I told him that I intended to clear Walter Beavan and put him right with the world, he tried to bribe me, and when we were alone he shot me down—"

"It's lies—all lies! He's mad!" snarled Del Rivo from the railing of the veranda.

(Look out for the concluding chapters of this story next week, chums, and then get ready to welcome a topping new school serial, dealing with the frolicsome adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood.)



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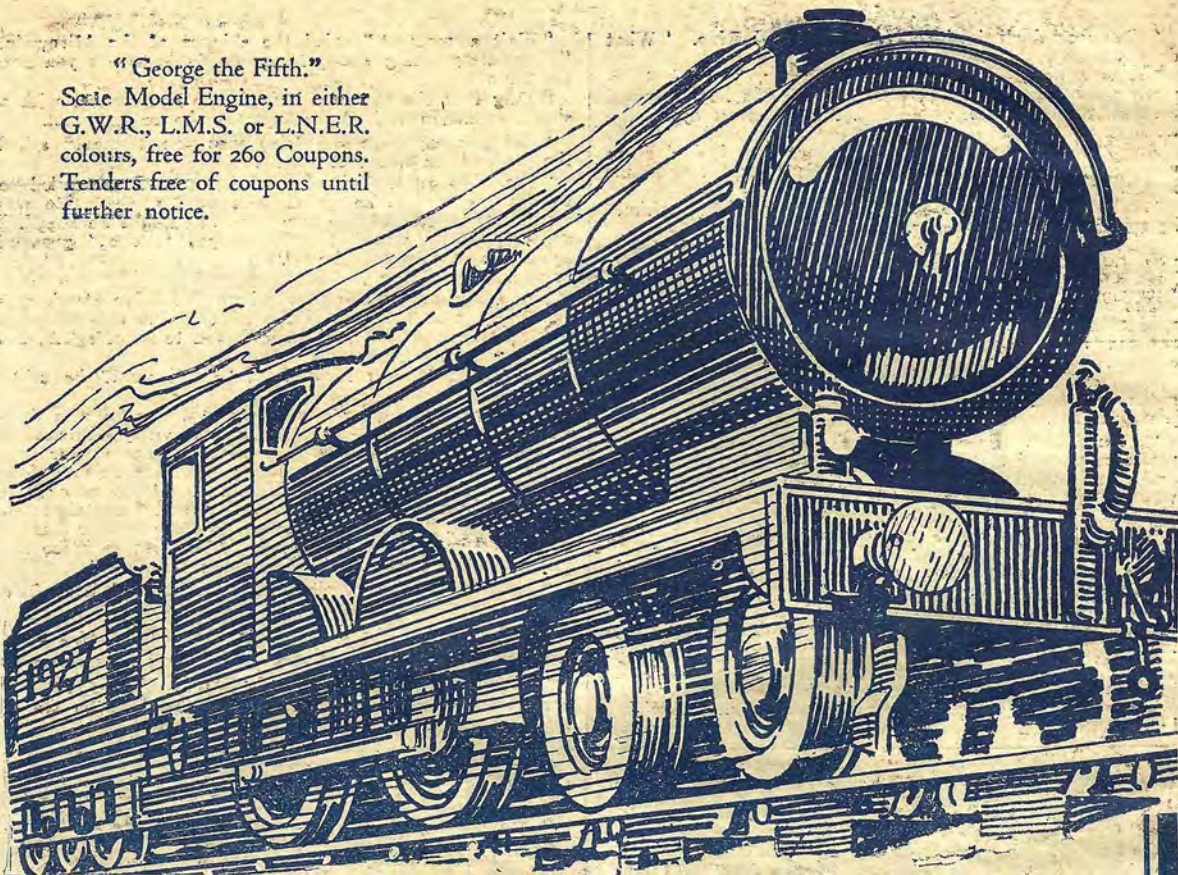
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